



PATRICK HENDERSON as King Cyrus is pictured with the chorus.

PUPILS of Wetherby High School delighted audiences last week with their exciting new opera "Daniel, Bel and the Dragon" written and composed by two of their teachers, Robert Thomson and Martin Horton. The show, which is based on three stories from the Apocrypha, was given a much-acclaimed premiere at the Arts Centre, York earlier in the month before returning home to Wetherby.

In the first part of this fast moving show the prophet Daniel, ably portrayed by Nicholas Boschi, reveals that King Cyrus (teacher Patrick Henderson) is being tricked by unscrupulous priests. Gail Yates plays the wicked High Priestess with vigour, and is banished from the land along with the massive figure of the god Bel. No sooner has one case been solved when a dragon, said to live on children, lumbers on to the stage and refuses to budge. Unhunted, Daniel feeds the beast an unpleasant cake of pitch, oil and hair which ex-

plodes with a mighty bang and a litter of streamers.

Following the report (made by a deafening stage-maroon), the mess is swept up by Ruth Bateson, Sirtol Jenkins, Helen Leaf, Susan Myers and Katherine Pavley — Babylonian road sweepers — who sing the amusing number "He used to be one of the lads". All agree that Daniel has meddled too much and must be thrown into the lions' pit — cunningly suggested by a slide of lions projected on to the floor.

On the opening night the lions stole the show as they prowled in wearing icotards and Cleopatra-styled wigs like night-club dancers of the 30s. Daniel in this predicament sings "I've got the lions' den blues" as Lena Turner, Toni Patterson, Susan Myers, Katherine Pavley dance a slinky Eartha Kitt routine.

Angel and prophet — A dangerous situation, but help is

not far away in the form of an angel (Gillian Hirst) who brings to his aid the prophet Habakkuk (Han Foo Kune) introduced by a beautiful series of slides suggesting the flight from Judaea.

When the people return to view the remains, they are amazed to find him still alive and so finally accept the power of Daniel's God.

The music is lighthearted, modern and full of musical jokes and foot-tapping routines which the children obviously enjoy singing. Caroline Brickell, clarinet, and Tony Newiss, trumpet, made an impressive contribution to the orchestra, led by composer Martin Horton at the piano.

The show was directed by Robert Thomson, who wrote the words and the stage-management was in the efficient hands of Stephen Barrow and Clive Beske. The show attracted full houses throughout the run. It was revived and will be available on 12-inch LPs obtainable at the school after Easter.