



THE COMBINED VOICES OF
ABERDEEN BACH CHOIR & ABERDEEN CHORAL SOCIETY
CONDUCTOR: PETER PARFITT
ABERDEEN SINFONIETTA LEADER: BRYAN DARGIE

HANDEL'S MESSIAH

SOPRANO: JUDITH HOWARTH
COUNTER-TENOR: NICHOLAS SPANOS
TENOR: NICHOLAS MULROY
BASS: DOMINIC BARBERI

SUNDAY 15 DECEMBER 2019
AT 7.00PM
THE MUSIC HALL
ABERDEEN

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Charity Number: SC008609
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*And is it true? And is it true, this most tremendous tale of all?
A baby in an ox's stall?
The maker of the stars and sea, become a child, on Earth, for me?*

Sir John Betjeman

*O Virgin of virgins, how shall this be?
For neither before Thee was any like unto Thee, nor shall there be any after.
Daughters of Jerusalem, why marvel ye at me?
The thing which ye behold is a divine mystery.*

Antiphon for Christmas Eve

MESSIAH

Messiah is a biblical oratorio by George Frideric Handel (1685-1759) for SATB soloists, SATB chorus, orchestra and continuo. It was written during a three-week period in August/September 1741, and given its first performance in Dublin, on April 13th 1742 at the New Music Hall in Fishamble Street. The first London performance was a year later in Covent Garden at Easter in 1743. Originally intended as an Easter offering, *Messiah* these days is as bound up with Christmas as tinsel and mince pies. It is one of only two oratorios by Handel where the entire text is taken from the bible, the other being *Israel in Egypt*, written in 1739. The text was assembled by Handel's trusted friend and librettist, Charles Jennens (1700-1773). *Messiah* is a unique oratorio – neither historical fact, nor dramatic tale, nor chronological narrative, nor philosophical presentation. It is a meditation, using Holy Scripture and pointing to, and detailing the purpose of, the anointed one, the expected one, the promised royal and spiritual leader of the Jewish people. It presents us with an insight into key Christian beliefs. It focuses on the contrasts between darkness and light, metaphorically aligned with the frailty of man and the power of God. What *Messiah* does not set out to do is to tell the story of Christ's mortal life on earth. There is scant mention of the miracles attributed to Christ in the gospels, no spectacular healing, no feeding of five thousand people, or the turning of water into wine, no reference to the weighty parables of his teaching, and no detailing of his interaction with other mortals. Also missing from *Messiah*, often found in other oratorios, are the confrontations between characters who form part of the tale.

Christopher Hogwood, founder of the specialist Baroque ensemble, *The Academy of Ancient Music*, states:

"Messiah is not a typical Handel oratorio: there are no named characters, as are usually found in Handel's settings of Old Testament stories, possibly to avoid charges of blasphemy. It is a meditation rather than a drama of personalities, lyrical in method. There is no dialogue – the story is carried along by implication rather than by action."

Unlike many of Handel's oratorios, where the action is driven by recitative and elaborate arias from the soloists, *Messiah* is very much a piece where the chorus takes pole position, propelling the story forwards with dramatic impact and uplifting messages. Seventeen of the nineteen choruses begin with either a single vocal part declaiming the text, or a strong homophonic statement of it. This is to ensure that the text is clearly delivered – Handel would not have known in advance how good his Dublin chorus was going to be and this is a sure-fire way to get the text across. (As a composer of Italian opera, opportunities to write dramatically for a chorus were somewhat limited – in his oratorios, Handel wastes no time in exploiting this feature of the genre.)

Structurally the work is divided into three parts, which follow the liturgical sequence of the Christian year, beginning with Advent and Christmas, moving into Lent, Easter, Ascensiontide and Pentecost, and concluding with the end of the year, and the end of time. Or, put more simply, the Nativity, the Passion and the Redemption with its promise of eternal life. The text for the birth and death of Christ are not drawn exclusively from the gospels, as one might logically expect, but largely from the Old Testament words of the Prophet Isaiah – the passion, resurrection and ascension are told exclusively in the words of prophecy rather than gospel. The entire text is very carefully extracted from a total of seven books of the Old Testament (including the Book of Psalms in the translation by Miles Coverdale, as found in the Book of Common Prayer of 1549) and, from the New Testament, the Gospels of Matthew, Luke and John, the Pauline Epistles to the Romans, the Corinthians and the spurious one



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Photography and recording are not permitted.

to the Hebrews, and the Book of Revelation, all from the authorised King James translation of 1611. The passages of text which Jennens chose would have been very familiar to the eighteenth century audiences through their regular, daily worship with the Book of Common Prayer. In selecting his text, Jennens flits restlessly about his sources, somewhat erratically, taking both whole verses and extracts from verses, and sometimes combining a sentence, or even part of a sentence, from the Old Testament with one from the New. He does not shirk from taking the end of one sentence and combining it with the beginning of a sentence from another book in the bible altogether, or missing out a whole clause in a verse, cherry-picking just the words he wishes. He also takes liberties with the translation, often changing the first person for third person in order to turn a personal account from an Old Testament text into a narrative which can be applied to Christ's mortal experiences as detailed in the gospels. He often omits the word 'for' from the start of a verse to make the text more direct and assertive. For example, 'For I know that my redeemer liveth' becomes 'I know that my redeemer liveth'. On one occasion he even turns a question into a statement by removing a key word, and on another occasion changes the tense from present to past. The only biblical 'scene' represented in the work, according to its literal biblical description, is the annunciation to the shepherds on Christmas Eve, the words for which are drawn directly from the Gospel of St Luke. There is no direct speech in the libretto, only the reported speech of God and an angel. The metaphorical imagery of the shepherd and the lamb run throughout much of the work, like a recurring thread. The aria *He shall Feed His Flock* is the only part of the work where the text speaks directly about Christ and his mortal life on earth. The choice of texts can be seen as a fulfilment of the seventh of the thirty-nine articles of religion, as found in the Book of Common Prayer, which connects the Old and New Testaments through prophecy, and promises everlasting life through the mediation of Christ. Surviving concert programmes (or word books as they were known) from eighteenth century performances show us that the text was given to the audience to read as they listened, and was divided into sixteen 'scenes' within the three main parts, which take us through this meditation in a logical sequence, labelled (presumably by Jennens) as follows:

PART 1

The prophecy and realisation of God's plan to redeem mankind by the coming of the Messiah.

NO.	TITLE OF MOVEMENT	SCENE DESCRIPTOR
SCENE 1	1 Overture	Isaiah's prophecy of salvation
	2 Comfort ye my people	
	3 Every valley shall be exalted	
	4 And the glory of the Lord	
SCENE 2	5 Thus saith the Lord	The prophecy of the coming of the <i>Messiah</i> , and the question of what this might portend for the world
	6 But who may abide the day of His coming	
	7 And He shall purify	
SCENE 3	8 Behold a virgin shall conceive	The prophecy of the virgin birth
	9 O Thou that tellest good tidings to Zion	
	10 For behold, darkness shall cover the earth	
	11 The people that walked in darkness	
SCENE 4	12 For unto us a child is born	The appearance of the angels to the shepherds
	13 Pifa (Pastoral Sinfonia - instrumental)	
	14 ^a And there were shepherds abiding in the field	
	14 ^b And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them	
	15 And the angel said unto them	
SCENE 5	16 And suddenly there was with the angel	Christ's redemptive miracles on earth
	17 Glory to God	
	18 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion	
	19 Then shall the eyes of the blind	
	20 He shall feed His flock	
	21 His yoke is easy and His burthen is light	

PART 2

The accomplishment of redemption by the sacrifice of Christ, mankind's rejection of God's offer, and mankind's utter defeat in the face of the Almighty.

SCENE 6	22 Behold, the Lamb of God	The redemptive sacrifice, the scourging, the crucifixion, and the agony on the cross
	23 He was despised	
	24 Surely, He hath borne our griefs	
	25 And with His stripes we are healed	
	26 All we like sheep have gone astray	
	27 All they that see Him laugh Him to scorn	
	28 He trusted in God	
SCENE 7	29 Thy rebuke hath broken His heart	Sacrificial death, hell and resurrection
	30 Behold, and see if there be any sorrow	
SCENE 8	31 He was cut off out of the land of the living	Ascension into heaven
	32 But Thou didst not leave His soul in hell	
SCENE 9	33 Lift up your heads, O ye gates	God discloses His identity in Heaven
	34 Unto which of the angels said He at any time?	
SCENE 10	35 Let all the angels of God worship Him	Pentecost (Whitsun), the gift of tongues, the beginning of evangelism
	36 Thou art gone up on high	
	37 The Lord gave the word	
SCENE 11	38 How beautiful are the feet of them	The world and its rulers reject the gospel
	39 Their sound is gone out	
SCENE 12	40 Why do the nations so furiously rage together?	God's triumph
	41 Let us break their bonds asunder	
	42 He that dwelleth in Heaven	
	43 Thou shalt break them	
	44 Hallelujah	

PART 3

A hymn of thanksgiving for the final overthrow of death, and the life to come.

SCENE 13	45 I know that my Redeemer liveth	The promise of bodily resurrection and redemption from Adam's fall
	46 Since by man came death	
SCENE 14	47 Behold I tell you a mystery	The resurrection and the day of judgement
	48 The trumpet shall sound	
SCENE 15	49 Then shall be brought to pass	The victory over death and sin
	50 O death where is thy sting?	
	51 But thanks be to God	
	52 If God be for us	
SCENE 16	53 Worthy is the Lamb that was slain. Amen	The glorification of the <i>Messiah</i> as victim

OFF TO DUBLIN

Handel's career took an unforeseen development in 1741 when he received an unexpected invitation to visit the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (3rd Duke of Devonshire) and to give concerts for charitable trusts. After decades of success with Italian opera, Handel's reputation in London was waning, and this invitation to Ireland was no doubt very welcome. Handel hastily requested a new oratorio text from Jennens, by now his librettist of choice, and in the three short weeks between August and September composed *Messiah*. Handel travelled to Dublin with John Smith (1712-1795), his amanuensis and secretary, and took lodgings. Handel was extremely well received by the Dubliners, and within weeks his popularity was evident and his reputation in Ireland assured. He remained in Dublin for the remainder of 1741 and throughout 1742, giving performances of oratorios and concerts of anthems and instrumental music for a personal subscription series and also for local Dublin charities. The first performance of *Messiah* in Dublin was something of a spectacle. The audience numbered over 700 – a somewhat greater capacity than the theatre was designed for, and ladies were asked “not to wear hoops in their skirts” and gentlemen “to leave off wearing their swords” in order to accommodate as many people as possible. The presence of Handel himself was certainly a huge draw – the man had celebrity star status after all, and the presence of the solo contralto, Susannah Cibber, who was, at the time, embroiled in a hugely scandalous and public divorce, would also have been an attraction. This first performance so incensed Jonathan Swift, Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral Dublin at the time, that he published a notice forbidding any person connected with the cathedral from attending or participating in any way. However, the large number of performers drafted in who were in fact on the musical staff of the cathedral, as well as the sheer volume of people in the audience, suggest that he was somewhat in a minority. His objection was the performance of sacred text in a secular venue; the oratorio, thinly disguised as theatre, was regarded as an act of religion – welcome in a church but totally unsuitable and inappropriate in a theatre. The first performance in London, at Covent Garden on March 23rd 1743, also divided opinion somewhat. Some thought the work blasphemous, and again there were objections to sacred text being performed within the walls of a secular theatre more accustomed to the presentation of vulgar comedies. In an attempt to pre-empt this, Handel dropped the title *Messiah*, and advertised the performance without any reference to it being a sacred work. Unsurprisingly, this didn't really seem to make any difference, and once the audience realised what the libretto was about the performance fell flat. It was to be almost another decade before the work eventually found favour in London, and then not in a theatre, but in the Chapel of the Foundling Hospital. After this brief revival, regular presentations of the work continued throughout the remainder of Handel's life, and it was, in fact, the last piece he performed in public, playing the continuo part just eight days before his death, by then completely blind.

Although today the work towers over all of Handel's other oratorios and operas in terms of popularity, it was neither the first oratorio of his, nor the culmination of the genre, as a further dozen or so followed it. We know from existing manuscripts in the British Museum that Handel revised the work numerous times, changing the time signatures and keys of some of the arias and the aria allocation, making bespoke editions according to which singers were available or in favour at the time.

As was common at the time, Handel parodied, or copied, portions of the work from music he had written previously for another purpose. At the time the parodying or recycling of music, either one's own or that of somebody else, was a perfectly acceptable technique, and one employed by many composers. (Of the thirty-nine movements in Handel's oratorio, *Israel in Egypt*, sixteen have their origins in music by other composers – including Giovanni Gabrieli.) The fact that some of the music in *Messiah* was already written goes some way towards explaining how the work was completed in such a short space of time. Today, this technique of parodying music from other people and passing it off as one's own is known as plagiarism, and is generally considered wholly unacceptable. In *Messiah* four sections of the work have been parodied from earlier works – or at least, only four have been detected!

Only two of the movements are purely instrumental – the overture, and a movement which Handel titled *Pifa*, which is an instrumental sinfonia for strings used to set the scene for a change of venue and action.

The work is scored for two oboes, bassoon, two trumpets, timpani, strings and continuo. The original Dublin orchestration did not include oboes or bassoon – these were added for the first London performance in 1743.

HANDEL'S USE OF MUSICAL RHETORIC IN MESSIAH

Rhetoric is defined as ‘the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, especially the exploitation of figures of speech and other compositional techniques’. In *Messiah*, we see Handel's skills in musical rhetoric brilliantly applied to raise the art of composition, combining words and music to a new height of expressiveness, judged to be sublime by his contemporaries, and adored by audiences since the eighteenth century. Handel applies three separate and identifiable types of musical rhetoric. Firstly, the *deliberative* mode, which he uses for text concerning what is to occur in the future, for example, the very beginning of the work, the annunciation of the virgin birth, or the passages at the start of Part 3, confirming the promise of the resurrection of the dead and subsequent eternal life. Secondly, the *forensic judicial* type, which he uses to scrutinise the evidence for events that lie in the past, for example the betrayal of Christ in the movements which refer to these retrospectively. And thirdly (based on the definition attributed to Aristotle), the *epideictic*, which covers text where praise is given to God or Christ in the form of ceremonial oratory or commemoration, for example in the movements *Glory to God*, *Lift Up Your Heads*, *Hallelujah* and *Worthy Is the Lamb*. It is no coincidence that these were the very same principles of literary rhetoric which were used in the compilation of the King James Bible in 1611, a work designed to be read aloud in church, as if in performance, in order to promote and reinforce belief in the Christian message as theatrically and dramatically as possible. The seventeenth century literary style, recently refreshed and reinvigorated by the wonderfully creative and inventive use of vocabulary by Shakespeare, uses sounds, metres, rhythms and patterns which makes it enjoyable, catchy, memorable and congruent with the meaning it intends to convey. Almost every word of text in *Messiah* which is not *secco recitative*, is set by Handel with musical and literary repetition, brought to life by a combination of melodic shape, harmonic invention, rhythmical precision, orchestration, or significant decisions with regard to musical texture. Handel's music reveals the way in which he introduces these devices, overlaps them, piles them up on top of one another, literally painting the text in sound. The term ‘word painting’ is often frowned on by serious academic musicians as being a phrase which is undesirable to use in musical analysis. I ignore this sentiment, and use the term unashamedly in my commentary. Whatever else Handel is or isn't doing, there is absolutely no doubt in my mind that he is deliberately painting the text in vivid musical colours – his musical rhetoric is as strong in *Messiah* as in any of his dramatic operas, and the text compiled by Jennens lends itself wonderfully to such musical rhetoric. (There are far too many uses of musical rhetorical devices in *Messiah* to point them all out, but I have mentioned a few in the commentary.)

THE OPENING OF THE HALLELUJAH CHORUS FROM MESSIAH, IN HANDEL'S HANDWRITING



Programme notes, Commentary and Glossary by Peter Parfitt

MESSIAH - THE TEXT, WITH A MUSICAL COMMENTARY

*See glossary at the end of this commentary which explains some of the technical musical terms used.
[Words in square brackets indicate Jennens' omissions, additions and deviations from the original text.]*

PART 1**OVERTURE**

As he would with any opera, Handel creates a sinfonia type overture to Messiah which takes the form known as a French overture – a tradition for a work of a serious nature. This is a rather severe binary^o form piece with a slow opening, written in a minor key, and apparently avoiding any hint of major tonality, based heavily on dotted fanfare rhythms with a homophonic^o texture, followed by a much faster polyphonic^o or fugal^o passage which is heavily imitative^o. Its orchestration is quite simple: two oboes, strings and continuo consisting of keyboard, cello, double bass and bassoon.

E minor turns immediately to E major as the tenor begins the narrative with Isaiah's optimistic prophecy of salvation. Accompanied by gently pulsating chords, Handel sets the first part of the opening sentence always to a phrase which falls, in a pacifying shape – as if the words of Isaiah are being handed down, whereas the second part of the opening sentence is set always to a rising phrase of authority. We are only five bars into the opening movement of text when Handel uses the first of many rhetorical devices that will be deployed – that of 'epizeuxis' which is the repetition of words within a sentence to emphasise them – 'comfort ye, comfort ye my people. The word, iniquity, is symbolically set to a rising tritone^o and the word 'pardoned' settles on a major chord with a palpable release of tension. The final sentence is set to secco^o recitative and is particularly declamatory in nature. The rhetorical device of 'apocope' is used here – this is where the music regularly drifts into silence or is cut off for effect.

Recitative Tenor Comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Isaiah XL, vv 1-3

This fast and anticipatory aria is jammed full of word painting. The word 'exalted' is set to a sequence of long rising melismas^o, and the 'mountain and hill made low' with a falling phrase to the final word, with 'mountain' always being at a higher pitch than 'hill'. The word 'crooked' rocks back and forth between adjacent notes and the word 'straight' is set to a single unwavering note.

Aria Tenor Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill [shall be] made low; [and] the crooked [shall be made] straight, and the rough places plain.

Isaiah XL, v 4

The orchestra begins this first choral movement with a ritornello^o phrase. When the vocal parts take up this phrase, individual parts and pairs of parts alternate with the full SATB texture. There are two distinct musical shapes to this opening clause: 'And the glory of the Lord' is triadic^o and outlines a rising octave, whilst 'shall be revealed' takes the music back down in pitch sequentially'. 'For the mouth of the Lord' is set to a pedal^o at various points in the texture, both top and bottom, as if to emphasise the gravitas of this sentence. As is common in Handel, this triple time music is rife with hemiolas^o – especially at the cadences^o. Handel uses the rhetorical device called 'noema' in this movement – this is where the four choral parts all come together at times to sing the same words simultaneously, giving emphasis to the text.

Chorus And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Isaiah XL, v 5

The mood changes abruptly here and the focus of the work now moves to the prophecy of the coming of the Messiah. The jagged, dotted fanfare rhythms of the overture reappear in this accompagnato^o recitative, and the full force of the bass voice is heard as we prepare for the regal word of the Lord. (If this were an opera, one might imagine the singer rushing on stage from the wings.) The minor key of the overture also returns. Again, word painting can be heard in the melismatic setting of the word 'shake' which contrasts with the declamatory nature of most of the rest of the movement. The omission of the word 'for' at the start makes the text more direct and assertive. The solo bass voice is reserved for the representation of anger, rage and darkness in this oratorio.

Recitative Bass [For] Thus saith the Lord of hosts; yet once, [it is] a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, [and] the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; [and] the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in, behold he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

*Haggai II, vv 6-7
Malachi III, v 1*

Versions of this aria exist in Handel's hand for counter tenor, bass and soprano (although it is likely that the version which ended up in the first printed edition by Novello, for bass, was heavily influenced by Mozart who re-orchestrated the work in Vienna in 1789 adding flutes, clarinets, French horns and trombones). The movement falls into a double binary structure (ABAB) with a lyrical, lilting A section followed by a fast and furious B section. The gentle barcarole^o type rhythms of the A section conjure up a sense of false security before the dramatic and vivid word setting of 'For he is like a refiner's fire' where the musical representation of God burning away the impurities of mankind is laid bare, with fast-running passages for the strings, and wild leaps in the vocal part, creating the image of flashes or sudden stabs of flames and sparks. In achieving these violent contrasts, Handel uses the rhetorical device known as 'antithesis' – music of contrasting styles placed adjacent to one another.

Aria Soprano But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire.

Malachi III, v 2

Material from this chorus is parodied^o from the Duetto di Camera (Chamber Duet) 'Quel fior che all'alba ride' ('The flower that laughs when day breaks', HWV 192) written about six weeks earlier in the summer of 1741. There is some interesting imagery in this chorus which is fugal and in the minor tonality. The subject begins immediately with the sopranos and passes through the basses, altos and tenors in turn, although there is no obvious countersubject^o, which is unusual and means that the texture does not build up from the beginning like a conventional fugue. The second phrase of the subject has a repeated pattern of four insistent notes followed by a long melisma. As the movement progresses, and this is reiterated with increasing intensity in different parts, it seems to resemble repeated metal hammer blows on an anvil – continuing the theme of refining and purifying. This pattern of four repeated notes is known rhetorically as a 'bombus'.

Chorus And he shall purify the sons of Levi, [.....] that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

Malachi III, v 3

As we move to Scene 3, and in contrast to the previous movements, Handel sets this first prophetic mention of the virgin birth to a serene and very simple recitative, in which the major key is reinstated and the mood softened.

Recitative Counter Tenor Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel. God with us.

*Isaiah VII, v 14
Matthew I, v 23*

The anticipation of a Messiah is extended in this free-flowing movement based on a gigue^o and we are back to Old Testament words. The geography of the opening violin part is alternately markedly high and low, the motifs separated by more than an octave; possibly a musical illustration of the 'high mountains' and the 'cities of Judah' down below. The first and second violins play identical notes and rhythms in this movement. The words 'behold' and 'arise' are at times separated from the rest of the text, and the words 'arise and 'are risen' are set to rising melodic shapes. After the counter tenor has had his say, the oboes join in and the movement erupts into a full-blown imitative chorus developing and re-working the same musical material.

Aria Counter Tenor [O Zion that bringest good tidings] O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain [O Jerusalem]. O thou that tellest [bringest] good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid, say unto the cities of Judah, "Behold your God". Arise, shine for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

*Isaiah XL, v 9
Isaiah LX, v 1*

The music returns to the minor key for this short accompagnato recitative and the dark timbre of the bass voice is used, with the bassoon also darkening the orchestral sound. The strings oscillate between adjacent notes in intimidating couplets, and notable word setting is used on the words 'gross darkness', where again the tritone is used, and 'arise' which does just that in pitch terms, moving through the major tonality. Handel uses the rhetorical device of 'amplificatio' here, where the second clause of the text is repeated, but at a higher pitch and a louder volume to heighten the effect of the word 'gross'. Handel's omission of the definite article in the opening words serves to give greater emphasis and a sense of doom to the text. (Haydn's vivid portrayal of darkness and light at the start of his oratorio 'Creation' (1797) may owe something to this movement. Haydn will have heard Messiah in London, and would almost certainly have heard Mozart's re-orchestration of it in Vienna almost a decade earlier.)

Recitative Bass For behold, [the] darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

Isaiah LX, vv 2-3

The oscillation of adjacent pitches is continued into this movement but with a broader feel. The idea of walking is portrayed though the bass line which has a perpetually moving, 'walking', restless, angular feel. The minor tonality is used and the voices and all instruments are locked in an harmonically barren unison, full of chromaticism", except for the word 'light' which is always harmonised with a bright major chord. The Baroque flautist and composer J.J. Quantz (1697-1773), described the concept of a walking bass with legato lines and a consistent harmonic pulse over the top as 'sublime'.

Aria Bass The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; [and] they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

Isaiah IX, v 2

It is arguable as to whether this movement belongs at the end of Scene 3 (the prophecy of the virgin birth) or at the start of Scene 4, as a prelude to the Gospel words of Luke on the annunciation to the shepherds, which are to follow shortly. The music for this rousing chorus is borrowed from the secular Italian Duetto di Camera for two sopranos and continuo, 'No, di voi non vo fidarmi' ('No, I do not want to trust you' HWV 189) written by Handel just a few weeks earlier in the summer of 1741. The opening motif of this boisterous duet is used without alteration for the subject and countersubject of this fugal chorus. Handel maintains a thin texture, again dropping the strict use of countersubject and limiting himself only to pairs of voices and single vocal lines, only to explode into full SATB magnificence on the words 'wonderful, counsellor...', again using the rhetorical device known as 'noema'. As the fugue progresses, the texture becomes increasingly dense with four-part polyphony and homophony. In her book 'Handel's Messiah, a Rhetorical Guide', Judy Tarling describes the word setting of this movement as incompetent, as it puts emphasis on the word 'for', arguably the least important word in the text. (We should perhaps remember that English was not Handel's native tongue, but, after German and Italian, his third language.)

Chorus For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah IX, v 6

In his Christmas Oratorio of 1734, Bach includes an orchestral pastoral sinfonia at exactly the same point in the Christmas story as Handel has done here, although Handel could not possibly have known this in 1741. Both composers chose simple keys and a time of 12/8, allowing for gentle lilting rhythms in the style of a Siciliano". Bach's is considerably longer and more detailed whereas Handel satisfies himself with a simple melody in thirds, accompanied largely by a drone/pedal. This music introduces the scene on the hillside at night on Christmas eve, and it is as though we are being transported there, where the shepherds entertain themselves with music. The word Pifa is an abbreviation for Pifferari which is the Italian name for a shawm (a woodwind instrument like an early oboe) often played by shepherds. They also played a bagpipe-type of instrument, hence the simple harmony and drone present in this movement. (Bach uses the oboe da caccia in his equivalent movement, which produces a very similar nasal-type timbre.) The English organist and musicologist, Dr. Edward Rimbault (1816-1876), writing in his preface to Messiah in the edition for the Handel Society, professes to identify the melody note for note as that from a MS collection of ancient hymns written in 1630; but what collection, and where it is to be found, he does not say.

Pifa (Pastoral Sinfonia)

Here begins one of the few (almost) continuous passages of biblical text selected by Jennens, as the next four short movements run together without a break, and alternate secco recitative with accompagnato. The secco passages are very simple, allowing the text to come through without hindrance. However, the accompaniment in the other passages consist of fast, repeating, upward arpeggios in the strings, suggesting the motion of angel wings, whilst the tessitura" of the continuo is very high and harmonically static, generating a musical illusion of hovering. The suddenness of the appearance of other angels is also described by the way in which the soprano starts the final section.

Recitative Soprano [And] There were [in the same country] shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.

Luke II, v 8

Recitative Soprano And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid.

Luke II, v 9

Recitative Soprano And the angel said unto them, fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Luke II, vv 10-11

Recitative Soprano And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying;

Luke II, v 13

In this chorus, which includes the trumpets for the first time, and which concludes the recounting of the nativity, Handel's genius truly comes through. We can see his experience as a composer of dramatic opera clearly in the music as he combines and integrates three separate musical ideas whilst simultaneously isolating and highlighting three separate concepts and actions from the text. Firstly, the music portrays the physical location of the angels as they change from hovering overhead to coming down to ground level – this is heard in the strings as the pitch falls in a musical fluttering of strings, and an ostinato" at a much lower pitch, which is used to accompany the words 'and peace on earth'. Secondly, the setting of the words 'peace on earth', is still and serene, always dropping an octave, assuaging the earlier fear of the shepherds. Finally, the imitative way in which the words 'goodwill to men' are set, with all four parts imitating one another in quick succession – literally passing the good news from one to another. The final few bars of the movement see the angels disappear from the earth in a brief coda for strings, a final high trill being one last, disappearing flutter of wings. The movement is in the key of D Major to suit the home key of natural (valveless) Baroque trumpets; in this key they are at their most strident, most versatile and most powerful.

Chorus Glory to God in the highest, and [on earth] peace on earth, good will toward men.

Luke II, v 14

The focus of the work in Scene 5 now turns to Christ's redemptive miracles on earth. Although this aria for soprano has an ABA structure it is not in a strict Baroque da capo" form. The A section is forthright, bold and strong, with the word 'Rejoice' usually set to a florid melisma, and the word 'shout' given appropriate distinction. The middle section, which focuses on a message of peace, is naturally more serene, and both the momentum and the harmonic pulse" slow down, with the use of pedal, and gaps between repetitions of the word 'peace'. Following this, a more elaborate version of the opening section returns.

Aria Soprano Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold thy king cometh unto thee. [He is the righteous saviour] And he shall speak peace unto the heathen.

Zechariah IX, vv 9-10

This simple secco recitative deals efficiently with the text. The first three short phrases rise sequentially, as if Handel is portraying a sense of growing amazement at the miracles alluded to.

Recitative Counter Tenor Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.

Isaiah XXXV, vv 5-6

This aria is the only part of the work where the text speaks directly about Christ and his mortal life on earth. It begins with the counter tenor and then the music passes to the soprano. The style of the music is very similar to the 'Pifa' with the same 12/8 time signature, similar rhythmic patterns, melodic phrases based on passages of parallel thirds and the presence of sustained pedal notes. The word setting is mostly syllabic", and the lilting 12/8 time signature and moderato tempo give scope for gentle phrases of reassurance. The section given to the soprano is almost identical to that of the counter tenor, but a perfect 4th higher in pitch.

Aria Counter Tenor & Soprano He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, and he shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom and [shall] gently lead those that are with young. Come unto him [me] all ye that labour that are heavy laden, and he [I] will give you rest. Take his [my] yoke upon you and learn of him [me]; for he is [I am] meek and lowly of [in] heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Isaiah XL, v 11

Matthew XI, vv 28-29

This short, dance-like, fugal chorus, which ends Part 1, begins quickly with the subject in the sopranos, passing in turn to tenors, altos and basses. The texture is always choral and ranges from two to mostly three and four parts, growing increasingly dense as the movement progresses. The subject and countersubject from this chorus are also parodied from the Duetto di Camera 'Quel fior che all'alba ride' ('The flower that laughs when day breaks', HWV 192). The subject has an interesting rhythmic quirk of a dotted semiquaver and demi-semiquaver, where one might expect notes of equal value. The words are repeated frequently in this chorus, but Handel ignores the word 'and' until the very final repetition of them – as if to add one final degree of emphasis.

Chorus [For my] His yoke is easy, and his [my] burthen is light.

Matthew XI, v 30

INTERVAL

PART 2

Part two, without doubt the emotional core of the work, opens with a sequence of movements which tell of the redemptive sacrifice of Christ, the scourging, and crucifixion. This is known rhetorically as a 'hypotyposis', where the action is represented in a progression of vivid sound pictures. This opening chorus, short on text, begins in the minor tonality with jagged double-dotted notes pervading the melody in all parts – reminiscent of the opening overture. The choral parts are highly imitative. Intent is paid to the word 'behold' at the start of each phrase in so far that the two syllables are an octave apart, the second being higher – a call for attention. The first part of the text is treated polyphonically and the second part homophonically.

Chorus Behold the Lamb of God, that [which] taketh away the sin of the world.
John I, v 29

Surprisingly, Handel chooses a major tonality for this da capo aria, and, after hesitant and tentative writing for the strings, the soloist enters. The music of the A section is full of longing, regret and torment. The B section, in which the second sentence of text is set, has a complete change of mood however, and the music moves to the minor key and becomes urgent, pushing forward with resolve and determination, driven by a relentless dotted ostinato rhythm and a regular pulsating bass part. After this the A section is repeated. Again, the rhetorical device of 'apocope' is used here – with the music exhibiting a stop/start style.

Aria Counter Tenor He was [is] despised and rejected, rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He [I] gave his [my] back to the smiters and his [my] cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; he [I] hid not his [my] face from shame and spitting.
Isaiah LIII, v 3
Isaiah L, v 6

The opening of this angry chorus is also driven along by a persistent, staccato, dotted ostinato rhythm in the strings, which accompanies outbursts of indignation from the chorus. The movement is in a brief ternary form and the middle clause of the text is more reflective and mellow, and accompanied by sustained notes, before the dotted rhythm reappears for the final section of text. In each section the choral writing is entirely homophonic suggesting a unanimity of sentiment from the people.

Chorus Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; [but] he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him.
Isaiah LIII, vv 4-5

A second short chorus follows – this one fugal and 'alla breve'. The minor tonality facilitates an awkward and jagged melodic shape to the subject. The sopranos begin, the other entries then cascading downwards through the vocal parts in turn. The texture, once built up to the full four parts, remains fairly dense until the end. The musical material consists entirely of two motifs, the subject and the countersubject, repeated across the pitch spectrum and vocal range and used to generate all of the melody and harmony in the movement with no sign of development. The instrumental parts double the vocal parts.

Chorus And with his stripes we are healed.
Isaiah LIII, v 5

The music for this third consecutive chorus, which follows without a break, is much more substantial. Handel makes full use of the biblical order of the words, with the word 'sheep' falling in the middle of the sentence, and divides this line of text into two short phrases, set to two rapidly alternating musical ideas for the first and second clauses of the line, plus new material for a coda for the second full line of text. The music is boisterous and lively, mixing short bursts of homophony with polyphony. The entire movement is accompanied by a bass part of regular continuous running quavers. Creative word painting exists in the first musical idea with the words 'have gone astray' being set to pairs of vocal parts, which move in exaggerated contrary motion, either simultaneously or in a call and response manner. More word painting can be heard in the second musical idea, on the word 'turned', where the melismatic vocal parts turn around on themselves, randomly changing direction numerous times in each phrase, as if spinning out of control. The second line of text is reserved for a slow, solemn coda to the movement, where earlier light-hearted musical material is abandoned, and a new, much more serious, motif is introduced. The music for the first line of text is also borrowed from the same secular Italian Duetto di Camera as we heard in the chorus 'For Unto Us a Child is Born' in Part 1. Here the music is taken from the final movement of that work 'So per prova i vostri inganni' ('I know to prove your tricks').

Chorus All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.
Isaiah LIII, v 6

The texts of the next three movements are taken from Psalm 22, the first part of which is an Old Testament prophecy of the crucifixion. These words would have been very familiar to eighteenth century audiences through their daily worship and use of the Book of Common Prayer. Aggressive double-dotted notes are again a feature of this accompagnato recitative and put us in mind of the flaying of a whip. The music moves from minor to major during the course of the music.

Recitative Tenor All they that see him [me] laugh him [me] to scorn. They shoot out their lips and shake their heads, saying,
Psalm XXII, v 7

This chorus is a weighty fugue in C minor. The voices enter immediately from the basses upwards. After the final initial entry of the subject in the sopranos, a new, falling motif is introduced on the words 'let him deliver him'. This new idea jostles for space with the subject and countersubject for the remainder of the movement.

Chorus He trusted in God that he would deliver him. Let him deliver him, if he delight in him. [...if he will have him.]
Psalm XXII, v 8

The opening phrase of this accompagnato recitative is, significantly, based on a double falling tritone. This time the accompaniment is a contrast to previous recitatives, consisting of long sustained notes in the strings where diminished chords abound. The tenor repeats all of the words during the course of this movement – this is highly unusual in recitative, and is Handel's way of drawing attention to Christ's abandonment by mankind.

Recitative Tenor Thy rebuke hath broken his [my] heart; he is [I am] full of heaviness. He [I] looked for some to have pity on him, but there was no man, neither found he [I] any to comfort him [me].
Psalm LXIX, v 21

In this brief arioso the tenor and the strings have a conversation, taking it in turns to speak. As we enter Scene 7, the words of the Old Testament allude to the sacrificial death, hell and resurrection. The accompaniment of the short, secco recitative, which follows on immediately to introduce this, returns to sustained string notes. Again, the rhetorical device of 'apocope' is used here – with the music exhibiting a stop/start style.

Arioso Tenor Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto his [my] sorrow.
Lamentations I, v 12

Recitative Tenor [For] He was cut off, out of the land of the living; for the transgression of thy [my] people was he stricken.
Isaiah LIII, v 8

This aria, which sets Jennens' somewhat unusual choice of text to cover the resurrection, given the many biblical options available to him, is understandably more upbeat than the previous movements. The accompaniment is characterised by a continual moving or 'walking' bass line, which gives the music energy and a sense of forward movement, in sympathy with the events which are unfolding. Again, the omission of the word 'for' at the start makes the text more direct and assertive.

Aria Tenor But thou didst [For why? thou shalt] not leave his [my] soul in hell, nor didst [neither shalt] thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption.
Psalm XVI, v 11

In Scene 8, the focus turns to the triumph of the ascension as an inevitable consequence of the resurrection. For the opening of this chorus Handel divides the choir into upper voices (SSA) and lower voices (TB) which have a conversation – the lower voices asking the question and the upper voices providing the answer antiphonally. Eventually the four voices come together. The writing is entirely homophonic.

Chorus Lift up your heads O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this [the] King of glory? [It is] The Lord strong and mighty, [even the Lord mighty] in battle. [Even] The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.
Psalm XXIV, vv 7-10

In Scene 9 God discloses his identity in Heaven.

Recitative Tenor [For] Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?
Hebrews I, v 5

This short, highly imitative chorus, initially pits together pairs of voices before developing into three, and then four, part polyphony.

Chorus [And] Let all the angels of God worship him.

Hebrews I, v 6

Scene 10 alludes to the events of Pentecost and the birth of evangelism. Surprisingly, Handel chooses a minor key for this aria, which has long melismatic lines for the counter tenor, filled with both straight and dotted quavers and ornamentation. This movement is also characterised by hemiolas at cadential points. The melody is played by first and second violins in unison.

Aria Counter Tenor Thou art gone up on high, thou hast led captivity captive and received gifts for men, yea, even for thine enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among them.

Psalm LXVIII, v 18

The tenors and basses open this short whirlwind of a chorus with a strong, bold statement, followed by fast and furious SATB polyphonic writing with long melismas in each part. 'Great was the company of the preachers' is illustrated by all four parts singing simultaneously throughout when these words are present – nowhere does Handel diminish the texture to two or three parts – he asks for a crowd singing all together.

Chorus The Lord gave the word: great was the company of the preachers.

Psalm LXVIII, v 11

This beautiful aria has a lilting Siciliano-type structure to its rhythm. Once the soprano enters the strings have a notable and uplifting countermelody leaving the actual accompaniment and the provision of all harmony to continuo alone. Historically, five different versions of this aria exist from different occasions, in the hand of either Smith or Handel, both with and without chorus.

Aria Soprano How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.[!]

Romans X, v 15

The music in this chorus is highly imitative. The voices enter in a type of stretto, starting with the sopranos and working downwards. Again Handel uses only two different musical motifs in this movement; the first line of text has a phrase which falls and then rises, ending up one octave above where it started, and the second line of text is treated fugally, with a faster moving motif of running quavers, with the word 'world' treated melodically.

Chorus Their sound is gone out into all lands [Yes verily their sound went into all the earth], and their words unto the ends of the world.

Romans X, v 18

As we move into Scene 11, and the world and its rulers reject the gospel, the majestic sound of the bass voice is brought to bear in order to exert the necessary gravitas to the sentiment. Handel writes a lengthy, intimidating and dramatic introduction to this with fizzing strings rising ever higher in pitch and heavy tremolando pedal bass parts. These techniques for dramatic effect are first found in the operas of Monteverdi, which Handel may well have seen when he was in Venice in 1710. The word 'rage' is treated with appropriate musical venom and the technical demands placed on the soloist are considerable. The second sentence of the text is treated much more gently however, and the music transitions from the major to the minor tonality.

Aria Bass Why do the nations [heathen] so furiously rage together? And why do the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth rise [stand] up and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his Anointed.

Psalm II, vv 1-2

Again, the device of stretto is deployed at the start of this lively and forceful chorus, with tenors and sopranos leading the action, singing a short, pointed motif falling in intervals of a fourth. Handel uses the voices in pairs to begin with, T/S and B/A. The second clause in the text is treated fugally, again led by the tenors. These two musical ideas alternate throughout the movement with the frequency of the alternation speeding up as it progresses.

Chorus Let us break their bonds asunder and cast away their yokes [cords] from us.

Psalm II, v 3

In Scene 12 the focus of the work is centred on God's triumph. The words 'shall laugh' are ominously spread across a tritone.

Recitative Tenor He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn: the Lord shall have them in derision.

Psalm II, v 4

The accompaniment to this aria is very distinctive, with wide leaps across almost two octaves over very short phrases in the violin, and chords from the continuo on the final quaver and first beat of each bar. This rhythm gives the music a jerky, almost lumpy – one might even say a 'broken' – feel to it. The word 'dash' is frequently set to a note high up in the tenor's range, colouring it with a certain distinctive timbre.

Aria Tenor Thou shalt break [bruise] them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash [and break] them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Psalm II, v 9

This chorus – probably the most universally recognisable of all of Handel's compositions – brings a triumphant end to Part 2, proclaiming God as an invincible king-eternal, having triumphed over those who rejected his message. The use of the entire orchestra brings these words vividly to life. Again, the movement is in the key of D Major to suit the trumpets. (Trumpets and timpani were associated with the presence of royalty in Handel's time.) The music, which contains a number of prominent devices, speaks for itself: there are fanfare figures ('Hallelujah'); a short reflective passage ('The kingdom of the Lord is become...'); strong passages of homophony and unanimity which contrast with excited passages of chattering and fragmented polyphony; a short fugal episode ('and he shall reign'); rising sequences where both pitch and excitement are continually ramped up ('King of Kings and Lord of Lords'); and a triumphant coda. Handel freely uses the rhetorical device known as 'copia' here, as he continually changes which syllable of the word 'Hallelujah' receives natural musical emphasis. (HALlelujah / HalleLUjah / HALLEluJAH all feature.) He also uses the device known as 'commoratio' where a phrase ('the kingdom of this world') seems to linger and then repeats itself in a reflective or exaggerated way, and the device of 'noema', used in previous movements.

Chorus Hallelujah, [Alleluia,] for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, hallelujah. The kingdom[s] of this world is [are] become the kingdom[s] of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. [Hallelujah.]

Revelation XIX, v 6

Revelation XI, v 15

Revelation XIX, v 16

PART 3

Scene 13 alludes to the promise of bodily resurrection and the redemption from the fall of Adam. This beautiful and well-known aria, in a warm major key, exudes comfort at the promise of eternal life and cushions the listener in waves of rising, sequential, optimistic phrases. The soprano voice, used as a representation of the angel in the nativity movements, now leads us into the afterlife. Once the soprano has entered, the violin melody (firsts and seconds playing in unison) alternates between countermelody and silence (leaving much of the accompaniment to the continuo alone), and links the soprano phrases with imitations of the vocal line. The rhythm, with its lilting three-in-a-bar structure is frequently treated with hemiolas. Yet again, the omission of the word 'for' at the start makes the text more direct and assertive. The movement of worms is described in the movement of the violins at the point where they are mentioned with 'wriggling' dotted quavers and semiquavers across the same two notes for five consecutive bars.

Aria Soprano [For] I know that my redeemer liveth and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though [after my skin] worms destroy this body yet in my flesh shall I see God; for [but] now is Christ risen from the dead, [and become] the first fruits of them that sleep [slept].

Job XIX, vv 25-26

1 Corinthians XV, v 20

Handel divides these two lines of text into four short statements. The first clause of each line is initially slow, subdued, cautious, sustained and in a minor key, but, using the rhetorical device of 'amplificatio' again, Handel repeats it, but at a higher pitch and a louder volume, to heighten its effect. The second clause of each line is lively, fast, joyous, articulated and in a major key. In the final line of music Handel uses a different rhetorical device – that of 'epizeuxis', where the words 'shall all' are immediately repeated within the sentence, with double note values to draw emphasis to them.

Chorus [For] Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

1 Corinthians XV, vv 21-22

As we move into Scene 14, the next three movements (which take their text from another of the few sequential passages of biblical text, namely Chapter 15 of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians) form a sequence of text which was used in exactly the same way by Brahms in his 'Ein Deutsches Requiem'. The end of this recitative contains a fanfare figure which pre-empt the movement which follows.

Recitative Bass Behold I tell [shew] you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet [trump].

1 Corinthians XV, vv 51-52

This well-known da capo aria, for bass and trumpet obbligato, is a confirmation of the promised eternal life. As such it is joyous, energetic, and comforting. Again, Handel chooses the key of D major in order to exploit the capabilities of the trumpet effectively. Fanfare figures pervade the music, and the trumpet and bass are used largely antiphonally. The word 'changed' is often set to a long melisma, and the word 'raised' is almost always at a high pitch. For the B section, the trumpet is omitted and the music becomes more reflective. Significantly, the longest two melismas in the entire work are reserved for the word 'immortality' before the A section is recapitulated.

Aria Bass [For] The trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.
1 Corinthians XV, vv 52-53

The penultimate scene focuses on the victory of the grave over death and sin.

Recitative Counter Tenor Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory.
1 Corinthians XV, v 54

The only duet in the entire work comes at this point with the two voices being allocated one of the questions each to begin with, but later sharing the text equally. The questions are very similar; to illustrate this, Handel uses two voices adjacent in pitch range and writes parts for them which are always extremely close together in pitch, and on occasions even cross over. This is not so much a conversation between two voices, but more like two people thinking the same thing out loud at the same time. The accompaniment is very sparse – for continuo only, and features a permanently moving, restless bass line for the most part. Eventually the movement blossoms into a hymn of praise for the chorus which is uplifting and confirmatory to begin with before developing further into a fugue. The rhetorical device 'epizeuxis' is used extensively throughout this duet ('O death, O death, death where is thy sting?') and again in the chorus, ('But thanks, but thanks, thanks, thanks, thanks be to God').

Duet Counter Tenor/Tenor Chorus O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be to God who [which] giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
1 Corinthians XV, vv 55-57

This aria, sometimes allocated to the counter tenor, is a triple time movement where, again, hemiolas, one of Handel's trademarks, pervade the music. Surprisingly the aria is in a minor key, although the elegant phrases and arch shaped melodic lines draw attention away from this. The movement is really a duet between the singer and the violins with firsts and seconds playing in unison. The violins introduce the melody and then it is passed between singer and instrumentalists with the continuo alone accompanying the singer and providing all of the harmony. The movement ends with an instrumental coda.

Aria Soprano If God be for us who can be against us? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is [even] at the right hand of God, who makes [also maketh] intercession for us.
Romans VIII, vv 31, 33-34

The final scene, consisting of a single extended movement encompassing two fugues, glorifies the Messiah as victim ascended to his Father in Heaven. This epic chorus is back in the key of D major so that the trumpets can be used to maximum effect. The conclusion of Messiah begins with weighty statements presented homophonically and forcefully by the chorus. These alternate with faster more staccato passages. At 'Blessing and honour' the first fugal section begins with tenors and basses in unison. A dense, polyphonic passage of imitative writing follows interrupted on occasions by strong, unanimous interjections of 'blessing, honour, glory and power'. After this passage draws to a close, a more extended fugue takes over with the single word 'Amen'. This is an emphatic and powerful conclusion. The subject starts in the basses and spreads upwards through the vocal parts. The polyphony is intense, but a brief respite to the singers is given in the shape of two short fugal passages for the strings before the full force erupts again.

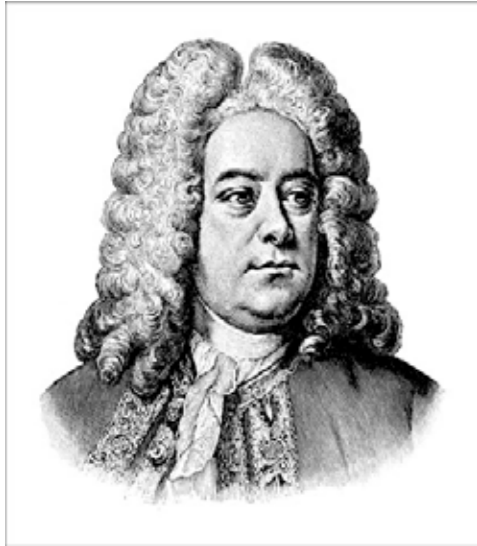
Chorus Worthy is the Lamb that was slain and hath [hast] redeemed us to God by his [Thy] blood, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing. Blessing and honour, glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the lamb for ever and ever. [Amen]
Revelation V, vv 12, 9, 13

SIMPLE GLOSSARY OF MUSICAL TERMS

<i>Binary</i>	<i>A piece which falls into two clear and distinct sections (AB)</i>
<i>Homophonic</i>	<i>Where individual parts move together, with the same rhythm simultaneously</i>
<i>Polyphony / Polyphonic</i>	<i>Where individual parts move independently of each other, starting and stopping at different times</i>
<i>Fugue / Fugal</i>	<i>A strict form of music where one part begins with a clear motif, or subject, which is then repeated by other parts in turn joining the texture; similar to a round</i>
<i>Imitation / Imitative</i>	<i>Where individual parts deliberately imitate each other at a short distance</i>
<i>Tritone</i>	<i>The interval of three adjacent tones (augmented 4th). Historically known in music since the middle ages as 'diabola in musica' (The devil in music), and used as a musical sound to represent fear/evil</i>
<i>Secco</i>	<i>Literally dry – recitation for solo voice with minimal accompaniment from the harpsichord and cello</i>
<i>Melisma / Melismatic</i>	<i>A passage of vocal or choral music where one word or syllable is set to several or many notes</i>
<i>Ritornello</i>	<i>In this context, a persistent repeating phrase in a movement</i>
<i>Triadic</i>	<i>Based on the triad – the 1/3/5 notes of a scale which form the basic key chord</i>
<i>Sequence / Sequential</i>	<i>Where a fragment of melody and harmony is repeated several times, each time becoming successively higher or lower in pitch</i>
<i>Pedal / Pedal Point</i>	<i>A sustained note in the texture, like a drone (usually the bass), whilst melody and harmony move freely above</i>
<i>Hemiola</i>	<i>Where the natural emphasis of the time signature is temporarily displaced for effect; e.g. where two bars of three time suddenly sound like three bars of two time, or vice versa</i>
<i>Cadence</i>	<i>The final two or three chords of a musical phrase or sentence</i>
<i>Accompagnato</i>	<i>The opposite of secco when used to describe recitative; recitative with a more fulsome and ornate accompaniment</i>
<i>Barcarole</i>	<i>A traditional folk song sung by Venetian gondoliers, typically with a lilting 6/8 rhythm reminiscent of a Gondolier's stroke</i>
<i>Parodied / to Parody</i>	<i>To copy, arrange, borrow, plagiarise music already written – either by oneself or another person</i>
<i>Countersubject</i>	<i>A second melody played concurrently to the main theme or subject – especially in a fugue</i>
<i>Gigue</i>	<i>A movement from a typical Baroque Dance Suite, such as the 'Water Music', in compound time</i>
<i>Chromaticism</i>	<i>Where the music moves up or down by very small intervals, usually just a semitone at a time</i>
<i>Siciliano</i>	<i>A dance of medium to slow tempo, in compound time originating from Sicily. The lilting rhythms often give it the character of a slow gigue</i>
<i>Tessitura</i>	<i>The average pitch of the notes. Whilst some movements may have the odd high note, if the notes are consistently or frequently higher than normal, the movement is said to have a high tessitura</i>
<i>Ostinato</i>	<i>A pattern of notes or rhythm which is successively repeated several times</i>
<i>Da Capo Aria</i>	<i>An aria with an A section, a contrasting B section, and a repeat of the A section (Ternary form)</i>
<i>Harmonic Pulse</i>	<i>The frequency with which the chords (harmony) change</i>
<i>Syllabic</i>	<i>A passage of vocal or choral music where each word or syllable is set to a different note</i>
<i>Alla Breve</i>	<i>Literally 'on the breve' - a section in 2/2 or 4/2 time where the music is counted in breves</i>
<i>Contrary Motion</i>	<i>Where two or more parts move melodically in opposite directions, either towards or away from one another</i>
<i>Diminished Chord</i>	<i>A chord made up of two interlocking tritones, or minor-third intervals between the parts, historically often used by composers across many nationalities to generate tension or fear, or to intimidate</i>
<i>Antiphony / Antiphonal</i>	<i>Where two or more parts appear to be having a musical conversation or dialogue, taking it in turns to speak</i>
<i>Stretto</i>	<i>A textural device where individual parts enter very quickly, one at a time</i>
<i>Obbligato</i>	<i>A prominent solo instrument, or instruments, in a vocal aria or chorus usually accompanied by strings and/or continuo</i>

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685-1759)

According to a contemporary account by Sir John Hawkins (1719-1789), London magistrate, amateur musician, patron of the arts and a personal friend of Handel, given in his book 'A General History of the Science and Practice of Music' ...



[Handel was] "...in his person a very large made and portly man. His gait, which was ever sauntering, was rather ungraceful, as it had in it something of that rocking motion, which distinguishes those whose legs are bowed. His features were finely marked, and the general cast of his countenance placid, bespeaking dignity tempered with benevolence, and every quality of the heart that has a tendency to beget confidence and insure esteem. He was impetuous, rough and peremptory in his manners and conversation, but totally devoid of ill-nature or malevolence; indeed there was an original humour and pleasantry in his most lively sallies of anger or impatience, which, with his broken English and heavy Germanic accent, were extremely risible. His general look was somewhat heavy and sour, but when he did smile it was like the sun bursting out of a black cloud."

Handel's stature and position as one of the greatest Baroque composers of operatic, choral, ceremonial and instrumental music has long been recognised, and his eclectic and catholic style drew readily on direct influences from the music of Germany, Italy and England. As well as having been a brilliant composer, Handel is also regarded as having been a great dramatist, bringing the texts of his operas, oratorios and anthems vividly off the page with all manner of musical devices. His surviving compositions include 42 operas, 29 oratorios, more than 120 cantatas, numerous trios, duets and arias, much chamber music including many instrumental sonatas and *concerti grossi*, a large volume of keyboard music, odes and serenatas, dance suites, coronation anthems written for the British monarchy, and sixteen organ concerti. Handel spent the majority of his professional and productive life in London and, informed and influenced by earlier time spent in Germany and Italy, he introduced previously uncommon musical instruments into Britain through his works. These included the viola d'amore, the lute, the trombone, small and high-pitched cornetts, the theorbo, the French horn, the double bassoon, the viola da gamba, the carillon, the positive organ, and the harp.

THE YOUNG HANDEL

George Frideric Handel was born in Halle, in the southern part of the German state of Saxony-Anhalt, on February 23rd 1685. His father, an eminent barber and surgeon, denied the young Handel access to a musical instrument, and in fact did everything he could to oppose an interest in music, despite his son's early passion for it, wishing for a more pecuniary rewarding career in law or commerce. There are various romantic stories about Handel managing to conceal a harpsichord in the attic of the family home, to which he went to practise in the dead of night, but these are by no means definitive. However, somehow he managed to acquire some skill at the keyboard because, on a family visit to the Court of Saxe-Weißenfels, where his father was employed as Court Surgeon and where his brother was *Valet de Chambre*, Handel's impromptu organ-playing in the court chapel attracted the Duke's attention, and Handel's father was persuaded by his employer, presumably largely due to the Duke's status and gravitas, to allow the boy organ lessons. Lessons on the violin, oboe and harpsichord soon followed and rapid progress was apparently made. Handel took lessons in harmony, counterpoint and composition and copied existing German and Italian manuscripts extensively. In 1702, Handel matriculated at the recently-founded University of Halle, studying both law (to appease his father) and music. Later that year, although a devout Lutheran, he was appointed as organist of the Calvinist cathedral. A year later, and without waiting to graduate, Handel left Halle for Hamburg where he held appointments as a first violinist and occasional harpsichordist at the opera house. In 1703, Handel made a visit to Lübeck with a view to succeeding the great German organist and composer Dietrich

Buxtehude (1637-1707) as organist of the *Marienkirche*. However, since one of the rather unconventional conditions of the appointment was that the successful candidate should be obliged to marry Buxtehude's only daughter, who was by no means in the first flush of youth, Handel, like J.S. Bach two years later, declined. The period in Hamburg was not a prolific one in terms of composition. Apart from one early opera, *Alcina* (which, bizarrely, is set partly in Italian and partly in German) and some rudimentary instrumental sonatas, there is nothing else from this period which survives.

OFF TO ITALY

A visit to Florence in 1706, where his first truly Italian opera, *Rodrigo*, was produced, brought Handel some valuable recognition and a significant amount of money, as well as the romantic favours of the local *prima donna*, Vittoria Tarquini, with whom he was later to have a further and somewhat scandalous liaison in Venice. By 1707, Handel was in Rome, playing the organ of the church of St John Lateran, and employed as a household musician in the Court of Marquis Ruspoli. Here he supplied sacred cantatas for the chapel, secular cantatas for parties, weddings and civic events, and a couple of early oratorios which were conducted at their premieres by Corelli (1653-1713). The motets *Dixit Dominus* and *Laudate Pueri* also date from this time. Between 1707 and 1711 there are records of Handel conducting his music in other Italian cities, including Siena, Venice and Naples. These formative years in Italy were decisive in Handel's career; Italy was the European home of opera, oratorio, the secular cantata, and the instrumental forms of the sonata and concerto. During this time Handel also had professional collaborations and friendships with Corelli, Caldara (1670-1736), Pasquini (1637-1710), Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725), Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757), Lotti (1667-1740), Albinoni (1671-1751) and Gasparini (1661-1727). During this Italian period he composed over one hundred cantatas (most of which are now lost), two oratorios (*Il Trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno* and *Oratorio per la Resurrezione di Nostro Signor*) and a formidable body of miscellaneous instrumental music. The musicologist Winton Dean, writing in Grove, says: "[Handel] arrived in Italy as a young man learning his trade, his music sometimes fumbling and with a certain crudeness and lack of form, and he left it a polished and fully equipped artist with a mastery of form under his belt." The fact that he composed only two Italian operas (*Nero* and *Agrippina*) whilst in Rome can be attributed largely to a papal decree which was in force at this time and which forbade the performance of opera.

BACK TO GERMANY AND THEN TO LONDON

Whilst in Italy Handel made a number of useful contacts, specifically in Venice. These included Prince Ernst of Hanover (brother of the Elector of Hanover and the nominated future King George I of Great Britain), and Baron Kielmansegg (*Master of the Horse* to the Elector). These friendships were to shape Handel's future as, in June 1711, he left Rome for Hanover and was appointed *Kapellmeister* to the Elector at the substantial annual salary of 1,000 Thalers. One of the conditions of his employment was that he should have an immediate leave of absence of twelve months in order to visit London. (No doubt his employer, the imminent heir to the British throne, was aware that he was merely transferring Handel from one pocket to another – so to speak – and, by exposing Handel to the British musical establishment, was cautiously paving the way for the inevitable establishment of his own musical court in London.) In September 1711 Handel left Hanover and travelled to London via the Netherlands. This first visit to London lasted for eight months.

Handel arrived in London at a time when the music of the Stuart dynasty was uttering its last gasps. (The Stuart dynasty was founded in Scotland in 1371 with the accession of Robert II, and in Great Britain in 1603 with the accession of James VI of Scotland, King of Scots (1567-1625) and, as James I, King of Great Britain (1603-1625). It ended with the death of Queen Anne in 1714.) A service of thanksgiving, held in 1707 in the newly consecrated St Paul's Cathedral, and attended by Queen Anne to commemorate the parliamentary Acts of the Union of England and Scotland under one crown and one flag, inadvertently saw the end of a great musical tradition, namely, music composed for the very last time for such an occasion by composers and singers from the Royal Household – by which I mean the Chapel Royal. This included composers such as William Croft (1678-1727) and Jeremiah Clarke (1674-1707) who had been somewhat left behind by the great raft of composers of the late Reformation, trying in vain to fill the vast shoes of Henry Purcell who had died in 1695. The newly-unified Great Britain was ready and waiting for a new musical voice and, at the start of the eighteenth-century, London was, by some way, the wealthiest city in Western Europe. (This represents a staggering rise of fortune given both the bubonic plague and

the great fire of London which had ravaged and destroyed the city a mere decade or two before Handel's birth.) The new wealth led to a cosmopolitan explosion of new opportunities and extravagant taste amongst the ruling classes, chief amongst these being a predilection for the newly-imported and exciting genre of Italian opera which was becoming very fashionable very quickly. (This is somewhat ironic given that in Rome at the time the performance of opera was still prohibited.)

Whilst on sabbatical in London, Handel gave concerts at the Royal Court of Queen Anne (1665-1714), where his "...writing for trumpets made a great sensation". He also ingratiated himself at the opera house: the newly opened Queen's Theatre on the Haymarket (the very same theatre known today as Her Majesty's Theatre, and where Andrew Lloyd-Webber's *Phantom of the Opera* has been running continuously since 1986). Aaron Hill, Director of the theatre at the time, gave Handel a libretto from which emerged the opera *Rinaldo*. This was the first truly Italian opera composed especially for performance in London. Handel completed the piece in a fortnight, much of the music being adapted and parodied from his earlier secular cantatas written in Rome. It was given over twenty performances and was a sensational success. Hill went to a great deal of trouble to make this production a spectacle, with elaborate scenery, impressive machinery to move it about, and, amongst other things, a fresh flock of live sparrows released into the theatre at a specific moment during every performance. The cast was led by three alto *castrati*, including the very well-known and popular singer at the time, Nicolini, in the title role. The plot, set in and around Jerusalem during the First Crusade, provided Handel with the perfect opportunity to display to the wealthy and the culture-hungry his talents as a composer, harpsichordist and conductor.

Following this success, Handel was recalled by his employer and left London in 1712 returning to Hanover where, for the next eighteen months, he was obliged to spend time producing chamber and orchestral music – there being no opera house in Hanover. The so-called Hanoverian duets, written for Princess Caroline (later Queen Caroline of Great Britain) with *continuo* accompaniment, also date from this time. A letter of 1713 from Handel to his mother shows that it was his intention – or maybe that of his employer – to return to London. By now Handel was studying English, and had struck up a friendship with the English poet John Hughes (1677-1720), whose short text on the subject of *Venus and Adonis* Handel turned into a secular cantata. This was Handel's first attempt at setting English words to music. In the autumn of 1713, he gained the Elector's permission to make a second visit to London, this time residing as a house guest of Lord Burlington in Burlington House on Piccadilly – the impressive building which today is home to the Royal Academy of Arts. Here he settled into a comfortable routine of composing during the day and playing at concerts by night. Burlington was wealthy and a prominent patron of the arts, and he made Handel very welcome. Four more operas date from this period (*Il pastor fido*, *Teseo*, *Amadigi di Gaula* and *Radamisto*). Later that year, Handel was given a pension of £200 p.a. by Queen Anne, in return for which he was obliged to divide his attention between composing Italian opera and providing English church and ceremonial music for the British royal establishment. On the back of this pension he moved from Burlington House to a stylish new townhouse in Mayfair. (Today the building is marked by an English Heritage blue plaque.) It appears that the Elector was happy enough for Handel to remain both in his employment, but also in London, as there is no evidence of his having recalled Handel to Hanover.

On August 1st 1714 Queen Anne died without having produced any children who survived past childhood. Parliament had ruled out a Catholic successor, both then and for ever, and so the Elector of Hanover (great-grandson of James VI and I) duly moved to London, ascended to the throne as King George I, and immediately made Handel a full time member of the royal staff, raising his annual salary to £600, half of which was paid by the court in Hanover. Despite his tangible genius, his proximity to the monarchy, and his growing popularity, Handel was never appointed to the prestigious and coveted post of Master of the King's Music – the musical equivalent to the position of Poet Laureate. During all of his time in London this position was held firstly by John Eccles (1668-1735) – the longest ever incumbent of the post with thirty-five years' service, and, on his death, by Maurice Greene (1696-1755), the organist of St Paul's Cathedral. Handel's eminence, talent and popularity as a composer trumped both of these gentlemen, but seemingly did not outweigh his German nationality; the Hanoverian kings always playing safe by selecting lesser composers, but ones with unimpeachable native breeding.

The final of a series of treaties, known collectively as the Treaty of Utrecht was signed in 1714, leading Handel to compose the *Utrecht Te Deum*, the first performance of which he gave in St Paul's Cathedral playing the newly installed Father Smith organ (about which he was rather disparaging). Rehearsals for this were so popular that they were held before a paying public. During this time he was also responsible for the musical education of the daughters of Queen Caroline. As far as we know, these were Handel's only pupils during his entire lifetime –

something which sets him apart from nearly all of his contemporaries and immediate successors. The newly-ascended King George was knowledgeable about music and had refined taste and, as King of Great Britain, he could afford to indulge it. In 1717 the king and assembled guests set off down the Thames on a lavish barge. Adjacent to the royal barge was a second barge with fifty musicians under Handel's direction. This was the first performance of two dance suites which we now know as the *Water Music*. The king was so enthralled by the music that, when the performance was over, he immediately commanded two further performances before allowing the vessels to return to the shore.

The Jacobite unrest in 1716 delayed the start of the London opera season when Handel's new opera, *Amadigi di Gaula*, written a little earlier, was premiered at the (now called) King's Theatre. (The theatre, previously known as the Queen's Theatre, has traditionally changed its name over the centuries to match the gender of the reigning monarch.) Further concertos, ceremonial music, and instrumental music followed, as did the *Brockes Passion* – Handel's only complete surviving work entirely in his native language of German, and his only attempt at setting the Passion story. (The text is not biblical as in the Passions of Bach, but written in literary verse.) It was written for a trip to Germany to visit his ailing mother in 1719. Whilst in Germany he met an old friend from his university days in Halle, Johann Christoph Schmidt. He persuaded Schmidt to enter his service as a copyist, amanuensis and secretary. Schmidt returned to London with Handel, anglicised his name to John Christopher Smith and remained in service for the rest of Handel's life. J.S. Bach was *Kapellmeister* at Cöthen at this time – a mere twenty miles from Halle. On learning of Handel's proximity, Bach is reported to have dropped everything and immediately set off by the first available stagecoach to meet him, arriving in Halle a matter of two hours after Handel had left to return to London. This was the closest that these two eminent German Baroque giants ever came to meeting.

Between 1717 and 1719 Handel entered the service of the Earl of Carnarvon (James Brydges, 1st Duke of Chandos and prominent patron of the arts) as a composer in residence. This position was held concurrently with his royal duties and does not seem to have been too onerous. The only works which we can attribute directly to this employment are the twelve *Chandos Anthems*, written and premiered at Cannons, a large house in Middlesex, and the ancestral seat of James Brydges. The Duke, a flautist, had a private orchestra consisting of 24 instrumentalists. Fellow native German, and composer of the famous *Beggar's Opera*, Johann Pepusch (1667-1752) was the Master of Music at Cannons from 1716. He saw the size of the musical establishment at first expand, and then decline in the 1720s in response to Brydges' pecuniary losses in the South Sea Bubble – a financial crash which took place in 1720.

HANDEL, ITALIAN OPERA IN LONDON: FAME, FORTUNE AND DECLINE

During the winter of 1718-1719, the leading members of the London nobility, under the patronage of the king, started a movement to establish Italian opera in London on a long-term basis. The enterprise was known as the Royal Academy of Music and Handel was appointed as its Musical Director. The finest singers in Europe were to be engaged and, in 1719, Handel set off on a whistle-stop European tour to audition, cajole and engage these singers. The Academy opened formally in 1720 with performances of Handel's opera *Radamisto*. There followed eight years of unqualified success. London became the operatic capital of Europe, easily attracting the best singers, orchestral players, librettists, directors and scenery designers. The 'catchy' melodies of the arias by Handel and his colleagues quickly became fashionable, universally popular and well-known. This music was soon being published in all manner of unauthorised arrangements on cheap sheet music for use in the home. Handel was at the top and centre of this musical revolution, revered by the London public, and the favoured musician of the Royal household. He was truly the equivalent of a modern celebrity – with wealth, fame and influence, but also with talent! (One can perhaps draw a more contemporary parallel between this and the general common popularity that the melodies of songs by groups such as *The Beatles* and *Abba* enjoy today, in terms of how much they might be regarded as a type of musical common currency, instantly familiar to many corners of the social demographic.)

The next six years saw Handel at the summit of his achievement as an opera composer and dramatist, producing the operas *Guilio Cesare*, *Alessandro*, *Floridante*, *Tamerlano*, *Scipione* (from which comes the regimental march *The British Grenadiers*), *Ottone*, and *Rodelinda*. It is somewhat ironic that the man giving the newly-constituted Great Britain its fresh musical voice was a native German, writing operas in Italian. In total Handel composed over forty Italian operas in thirty years. *Tamerlano* saw the first visit to London of the greatest Italian tenor of the day, Francesco Borosini, who was engaged for a single season for a fee of £2,000 - a staggering amount of money at the

time (and roughly equivalent to £1m in today's money). In *Alessandro*, two famous *prima donnas* were engaged at a cost of £1,600 each (note the gender pay gap!). The world famous *castrato*, Farinelli, was similarly tempted to London by a huge fee, although one might argue that, with prepubescent castration leading to abnormally long limbs, and a voice of serene but childish purity, he had already paid a personal price for his fame. (Are we witnessing here a kind of eighteenth-century equivalent of today's English football Premier League, with international superstars from overseas being sensationally attracted and imported at huge personal gain, but with what must surely become ultimately unsustainable costs?)

Not surprisingly, this recklessness and largesse meant that the Academy began to suffer financial difficulties. This, coupled with the fact that, after a decade of immense popularity, Italian opera was gradually becoming regarded as somewhat *passé*, meant that the 1727-8 season was the Academy's last. Generous and wealthy patrons were simply not willing to subsidise such inflated fees for a genre which was losing popularity. There was the inevitable and ugly disharmony and squabbling amongst the directors, claims and counter-claims of financial corruption; in 1728 the Academy folded.

Not to be deterred, Handel persuaded the Academy directors to let him have the King's Theatre on a five-year lease. He re-launched the Italian opera productions as a subscription series with the tickets priced at 15 guineas per season. The season opened in December 1730 with a production of *Lotario*, which was not a success. Neither was *Partenope* in February 1731. Desperate to succeed, Handel fell back on revivals of earlier successful productions such as *Giulio Cesare*, but the public's heart was no longer in Italian opera, support was patchy and the popularity and passion of the previous decade seemingly could not be rekindled.

Alongside all of this Handel continued his duties for the royal household. Anthems were written for the safe return of King George I from a trip to Hanover. Anthems were also produced for the Chapel Royal, and, following the death of King George I, four substantial anthems were written for the coronation of King George II in 1727: *Let Thy Hand be Strengthened*, *My Heart is Inditing*, *The King Shall Rejoice* and *Zadok the Priest*. (*Zadok* has been performed at the coronation of every British monarch since – traditionally during the anointing of the monarch.) For this occasion, in the Collegiate Church of St Peter at Westminster, the building we know better these days as Westminster Abbey, Handel had the services of a choir of almost 200 and an orchestra of 160 players. This building, under the stewardship of the Hanoverian kings, as well as being the centre of regal worship and the royal church, was also becoming London's grandest concert hall. There are also reports in British provincial newspapers dating from the late 1720s of performances of Handel's music outside of London, in particular in the cathedrals and theatres in Bristol, Gloucester, Birmingham and Liverpool. In October 1727, Handel applied for British naturalisation and this was granted within a week by an Act of Parliament. The texts of the coronation anthems were drawn and adapted by Handel from the two greatest literary achievements of the English Protestant Reformation: the *Book of Common Prayer* (prepared by Thomas Cranmer in 1533 and enacted by the First Act of Uniformity of Edward VI in 1549) and the *King James Bible*, begun in 1604 and published in 1611. (The selection of texts from these two important sources was quite possibly a conscious and essential nod of acknowledgement to the British establishment, from a German immigrant composer, on behalf of a German immigrant king. The establishment had, after all, deliberately rejected the possibility of an English Catholic monarch in favour of a distantly related, but crucially Protestant, foreign Elector as its new Head of State and Head of the Church.) The coronation anthems were one of the most significant building blocks in finding and establishing a new musical voice for Great Britain. Handel addressed, head on, an issue which had been stifling the sacred music of the English Protestant Reformation, by now almost two centuries old, namely the grandiose and revolutionary concept of combining instruments and voices in sacred music in a new and exciting (some thought vulgar) way. Handel simply brought on the trumpets and the drums, and consequently everything was notched up a few gears and the public loved it. (This was an issue which the rebellious Venetians, kicking against the dry polyphony of Rome and the Sistine Chapel, had addressed over a century earlier in St Mark's Basilica, with the rich and extravagant polychoral music of Giovanni Gabrielli and Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643).)

THE RELUCTANT SHIFT FROM OPERA TO ORATORIO

In 1732 an event took place which was to transform Handel's life. Bernard Gates, Master of Children's Music at the Chapel Royal, gave a private performance of Handel's oratorio *Esther* at, of all places, the Crown and Anchor tavern, a public house in The Strand. This performance was so popular that two further ones were hastily

convened. These are thought to have been the first ever performances of oratorio in Britain. Throughout the rest of 1732-3, Handel staged not opera but oratorio at the King's Theatre, producing the new works *Acis and Galatea* and *Deborah*. These were largely parodies of earlier Italian operas with new and sacred words, in English, and produced not with scenery, movement, costumes and staging, but as concert performances. The biblical stories appealed to the religiosity of an important and emerging new audience. I refer here not to the immoral cosmopolitan aristocracy, who had been the great patrons of Handel's operatic career (partly in order to satisfy their own desires) but to the evermore prosperous, numerous and politically powerful middle class, which grew and thrived in the sustained economic boom that was Georgian Britain. Oratorio became the soundtrack to the emergence of this movement. In 1734 Handel travelled to Oxford where he gave five performances of oratorio in the Sheldonian Theatre, and also concerts of anthems and instrumental music in Christ Church Hall. He was offered an honorary doctorate by the university but declined it on the grounds that he was "...too busy to attend the awarding ceremony". Handel's contract for the subscription series at the King's Theatre still had one year to run, and he filled this with a sequence of *pasticcios* (pieces assembled with music by more than one composer), and revivals of earlier successful operas and oratorios. He did inaugurate a new practice during this period of performing especially written organ concertos during the intervals of performances, and most of the organ concertos which remain date from this short period.

Audience attendance remained thin, however, and Handel's company closed in 1735 in financial ruin. Handel's obstinate reluctance to abandon Italian opera when the writing had been on the wall had cost him both financially and in terms of his reputation, and the change to writing oratorio in English was unplanned and not entirely welcome. Furthermore, his physical ability to perform was suddenly somewhat reduced by the symptoms of a stroke, which he suffered in 1737, and which severely limited the use of his right arm. In September 1738 he went, with Smith, to Aachen on the German/French border (Aix-la Chapelle), to take the warm sulphur baths. Within six weeks they appeared to have effected a remarkable recovery, and in November he returned to London and began working simultaneously on two new oratorios, *Saul* and *Israel in Egypt*, in an attempt to clear his debts. For the performances of these works Handel hired the King's Theatre for twelve nights and gave six performances of each. For *Saul* (libretto by Charles Jennens) Handel assembled huge orchestral forces including three trombones, a carillon (a huge type of keyed glockenspiel), organ, and the huge double bass kettle drums of the Royal Artillery, which were borrowed from the Tower of London. *Israel in Egypt*, originally entitled *Exodus*, had words not written by Jennens, but compiled by him from the Old Testament biblical books of *Exodus* and *Psalms*. *Israel in Egypt* was particularly badly received, the exclusively scriptural words being an unwelcome novelty in a secular theatre; and the imbalance between the many dense double choruses, combined with a notable paucity of tuneful and poignant arias and duets, was also unpopular. In short, there were simply not enough arias enabling the divas to show off.

Other works from the late 1730s are the anthem *The Ways of Zion do Mourn*, written for the funeral of Queen Caroline in Westminster Abbey in 1738, and the *Ode for St Cecilia's Day* of 1739. The original part one of *Israel in Egypt*, later dropped, was a parody from the funeral anthem – possibly a further reason for its poor reception.

FAME IN THE PROVINCES AND LONDON

Meanwhile, Handel's popularity in the provinces continued to spread. The formation of the Three Choirs Festival in 1729 (a collaboration between the cathedral foundations of Hereford, Worcester and Gloucester), led to requests for Handel's music. (This Festival has continued unbroken to this day making it the longest running music festival in the world.) There are also records of a musical society in Edinburgh paying Handel for copies and orchestral parts of the oratorios *Deborah* and *Esther*. Handel's move to Dublin at this point in his career is documented earlier in these notes.

By 1743 Handel was back in London and made an agreement with a newly-opened Georgian theatre in Covent Garden (the building we know today as the Royal Opera House) to produce a new oratorio: *Samson*. This was very well received, although Handel was dividing Londoners both politically and morally, there being a significant faction of the more prosperous middle classes who were by now predisposed to Evangelicalism, or the new Methodism, regarding anything hedonistic in art as suspicious. Indeed these people regarded the theatre as "...a haunt of sin and moral laxitude, liable to contaminate anyone or anything with which it comes into contact". In April 1744, Handel suffered a second stroke, although the effects of this were more marginal than before. Later that year, he

took the theatre at Covent Garden again for a subscription series opening with two newly written oratorios *Semele* and *Joseph*, moving on to revivals of *Saul* and *Samson*. In 1745, this time for the King's Theatre, Handel composed two of his most ambitious oratorios to date, *Hercules* and *Belshazzar*, both with *libretti* by Jennens. He announced yet another subscription series with twenty-four performances planned. However, this went so badly, with audience numbers painfully low, that he gave only sixteen performances and was obliged to return money from ticket sales to some patrons. Miss Elizabeth Carter (1717-1806), a prominent London diarist and letter writer, wrote that "... *Handel, once so crowded, plays now to empty walls in that opera house where there used to be a constant audience*". Following the collapse of this subscription series Handel never conducted oratorios again except during Lent and by invitation from Covent Garden.

In the spring of 1746, Handel visited the Earl of Gainsborough in Rutland for "*quiet and retirement*". Further visits and extended stays are recorded to the Earl of Shaftesbury in Dorset, and the country seats of other aristocratic families in Bath, Cheltenham and Tunbridge Wells, whose favour Handel had previously found during his prosperous times in London. In April 1746, victory at the Battle of Culloden by the Hanoverian side over the Jacobites inspired Handel to write the oratorio *Judas Maccabeus* (from which comes the rousing chorus *Thine be the Glory, Risen Conquering Son*). From 1747, and seemingly at least partially out of retirement, Handel gave twelve oratorio performances per year during Lent at Covent Garden, invited by the theatre as a kind of composer/conductor *emeritus*. These were a mixture of revivals of earlier works, but also, with apparent renewed creative energy, a stream of new oratorios ensued: *Alexander Balus* (1748), *Joshua* (1748), *Solomon* (1749 – from which comes the well-known *Arrival of the Queen of Sheba*), *Susanna* (1749), *Theodora* (1750) and *Jephtha* (1752).

Other significant works from this time include the *Music for the Royal Fireworks*. This was commissioned for a vast outdoor fireworks party to commemorate, after eight years, the end of the war of Austrian succession. The signing of the peace treaty (the Treaty of Aix-le-Chapelle of 1748) had divided the nation and was unpopular with many since the British had agreed to surrender a substantial number of the colonial gains which they had won from the French. The monarch wanted grand martial music and had requested music for "...*as many musicians as possible, but no fiddles*". Handel responded by scoring an extended dance suite for three sets of kettle drums, nine trumpets, nine German hunting horns, twenty-four oboes, and twelve bassoons. Handel himself described it as "*a grand overture of war-like proportions*". This was another key building block in the new British musical voice – music which revelled in a love of brass, pomp, ceremony and all things military. The performance was given in the Vauxhall pleasure gardens, a place where contemporary wealthy Londoners liked to be seen 'taking the air'. This music literally stopped the traffic and a three-hour coach jam was recorded on London Bridge as twelve-thousand people flocked into the capital to witness the occasion. At the time this was almost certainly the largest single audience to have listened to a piece of music anywhere in Europe and possibly the world.

By 1750, and as a result of this string of oratorios, Handel had restored his financial position to the point where he was able to purchase several paintings, including, at a cost of £8,000, a Rembrandt. Around this time he also began to lose his sight. This was initially the result of an injury to his eyes sustained in a carriage accident in poor weather. The eyes were operated on but in all likelihood this possibly made the symptoms worse and he became completely blind by 1752. With time on his hands he became very involved with the Foundling Hospital, a charitable institution established in London between 1739 and 1742 by the philanthropist and sea captain, Thomas Coram, "...*for the reception, maintenance, proper instruction and employment of exposed and deserted young children*". Both Handel and the artist William Hogarth (1697-1764) were to become elected Governors of the hospital in due course. Handel inaugurated a new pipe organ in 1753, which he had presented to the recently-completed Foundling Hospital Chapel, with a performance of *Messiah*, which was very well received; and performances of this still happen annually to mark this occasion. In September 1758 Handel was again in Tunbridge Wells. By now, in addition to his blindness, his general health was also failing quickly.

On April 11th 1759 Handel dictated his last will and testament. He left behind a total of around £20,000, making generous provision for Smith, Jennens and various other colleagues, friends and musicians who had been loyal to him, as well as a surviving niece in Germany. He also dictated a request to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey that he be "...*buried in the Abbey in a private manner*". His request was partly granted in so far that he was buried in the Abbey, on April 20th, some nine days later, but not at all privately, and with full state honours in front of around 3,000 people. Handel owned an art collection that was auctioned in 1760. The auction catalogue listed approximately seventy paintings (including several Rembrandts) and ten prints. His organ, harpsichord and manuscripts he left to Smith. The organ was destroyed by fire. The manuscripts were given by Smith to King

George III in return for an annual pension of £200. The harpsichord and all of the manuscripts are now held in the British Museum where they represent the largest collection of any composer's work, held in a single place, anywhere in the world.

THE ORATORIO AS A FORM

An oratorio, by definition, is an extended musical setting of a sacred text (usually a non-scriptural re-telling of a bible story) made up of dramatic, narrative and contemplative elements, those three features being expressed by chorus, recitative and aria respectively. The genre is very similar to opera but with a sacred rather than a secular or mythological text, and the absence of scenery, costumes, choreography and movement. Oratorios are performed statically in the manner of a concert (often in an ecclesiastical building) and were at the height of their popularity in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, and in Britain from the 1730s, directly because of Handel. An eighteenth century description of oratorio states that it is '*a musical drama whose subject must be scriptural, and in which the solemnity of church music is agreeably united with the most pleasing Aires for the stage*'.

Their roots can be traced back to the musical settings of sacred text found in the medieval mystery and miracle plays. Spurred on by the reforming spirit of the twenty-five sessions of the counter-Reformation body known as the Council of Trent, held in Italy and presided over by various Popes between 1545 and 1563, early musical orations (*L'Oratio Musicale*), or the telling of sacred stories with music, emerged in Florence and Rome. Of particular importance for the history of the oratorio was the performance, in 1600, at the Oratory of the *Chiesa Nuova* (New Church) of Cavalieri's sacred opera *Rappresentazione di Anima et di Corpo* (Representation of the Soul and Body). This is the earliest known performance of a sacred text in which portions for a solo voice are set to music in a monadic (single-line) way. By the 1640s these orations had turned into dialogues in which more than one solo voice was used to represent more than one different character – the voices singing not simultaneously, but alternately. By 1659 two distinct types had emerged: the *Oratorio Latino*, and the *Oratorio Volgare*, using Latin and Italian texts respectively. The Latin texts were usually straight passages of biblical scripture, whereas the Italian texts were poetic stanzas re-telling Old Testament bible stories in the vernacular. Both were usually divided into two sections, known as the *prima parte* and the *seconda parte*, and often a sermon was preached in between them. The Italian composer Carissimi (1605-1674) was the first to introduce a chorus into his oratorios in order to add dramatic context to the stories. By the 1670s, orations (or oratorios such as this) were a firmly established form throughout Italy, and by the 1690s this had spread across the Alps to Germany, Austria and France, where the genre was also referred to variously as *cantata musicale*, *componimento sacro*, and *dramma sacro*.

Through the early eighteenth century, as well as being performed in churches and oratories, oratorios were also being performed in the private palaces and theatres of noblemen, and in other secular spaces. With the exception of the passion story, the vast majority of story content was drawn from the Old Testament. From about 1700 most oratorios required between three and six solo voices to deliver the text, with four being by far the most popular number, plus a chorus. Recitative was the vehicle for conversation and dialogue, and to move the events of the plot along, whilst arias (and sometimes duets) were for reflection on the events of the plot and for religious contemplation. Choruses added dramatic context. As the Baroque period progressed, and the size and range of the orchestra grew, composers began to illustrate some of the drama with orchestral colour and instrumental texture. The many cantatas of J.S. Bach, written weekly from 1723 when he arrived in Leipzig to provide music and structure to Sunday morning worship at the *Thomaskirche*, can be regarded as mini-oratorios, having all of the musical elements of oratorio at the time, albeit with a condensed structure, plus the Lutheran addition of congregational chorales, or hymns.

The oratorio largely fell out of favour in the classical and early romantic period, opera – especially comic opera, being much preferred. A revival was begun by Elgar, in part to satisfy a growing demand generated by the rising popularity of Victorian provincial choral societies, with large-scale oratorios such as *The Dream of Gerontius*, *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*. In the twentieth century, Benjamin Britten flirted with the genre with his Parody Cantatas *Rejoice in the Lamb*, *Cantata Misericordium* and *St Nicholas*. Other notable twentieth-century examples include *Belshazzar's Feast* by William Walton, *A Child of Our Time* by Sir Michael Tippett, *Sancta Civitas* by Vaughan Williams and *La Transfiguration* by Messiaen. Other less popular and less prominent examples exist by Hindemith, Stravinsky, Debussy and Prokofiev.

MUSICAL DIRECTOR – PETER PARFITT

Peter Parfitt was educated at Bristol Cathedral School, where he received his early musical training as a chorister in the Cathedral Choir. At the age of sixteen he won a scholarship to the University of Durham, where he read Music and Latin and sang in the Cathedral Choir as a Choral Scholar, graduating from the Music Faculty with an honours degree. In 1987 he obtained his MMus. Following this, he spent 8 years as a Lay Clerk in the Choir of Winchester Cathedral. During this time, he appeared with the choir as a soloist on Radio 3. He also toured with the choir to Brazil, Australia and the USA and gave concerts in Paris, on London's south bank, and at the Barbican, as well as on television and radio.

Peter held teaching posts at the Chorister School in Winchester, and positions as Director of Music in schools in Hampshire, London and East Sussex before taking up the post of Director of Music at St Margaret's School for Girls in Aberdeen. Peter has directed a number of choral societies and operatic societies and appeared with many others as a soloist. He is an external examiner at A Level for the Oxford and Cambridge examinations board and also for the Scottish Qualifications Authority. He is also convenor of the Music Committee and the Scholarship Awarding Committee for the North East of Scotland Music School (NESMS).

Peter served for twelve years with Royal Naval Reserves, where he specialised in submarine data communications. Other interests include playing the organ, reading, gardening and cooking.



SOPRANO – JUDITH HOWARTH

One of the most sought-after sopranos in Europe, Judith Howarth has consolidated a strong public following and critical appraisal for her work. She first came to public attention when she joined the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, as a Principal. During nine seasons there she sang many roles including Oscar, Un Ballo in Maschera; Masetta, La Bohème; Liu, Turandot; Gilda, Rigoletto; Morgana, Alcina; Norina, Don Pasquale; Cressida, Troilus and Cressida; and Marguerite, Les Huguenots. Subsequent engagements world-wide include title roles in the major opera houses of Cincinnati, Toulouse, Washington, Minnesota, English National Opera, Glyndebourne and Berlin. Recent engagements include Madama Butterfly in Helsinki, Philip Glass' 1000 Airplanes on the Roof with Rednote Ensemble,

Elgar's Caractacus at the Three Choirs Festival with Sir Andrew Davis, Glagolitic Mass and Dvorak's Te Deum with CBSO at Symphony Hall, Birmingham and Verdi's Requiem at the Royal Albert Hall.

On the concert platform, Judith has toured with Plácido Domingo to Seattle, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, Brussels and Amsterdam, and has performed Strauss's Four Last Songs in Vienna with Sir Simon Rattle. Her festival appearances include Aix-en-Provence, The Proms, Tanglewood, Edinburgh and Salzburg. She has worked with many distinguished conductors including Georges Prêtre, Bernard Haitink, Sir Colin Davis, Sir Georg Solti, Giuseppe Sinopoli, Claudio Abbado, Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Daniel Barenboim, Sir Charles Mackerras, and Seiji Ozawa.

Judith has appeared on television all over the world, and has a discography of more than 30 recordings including Troilus and Cressida, conducted by Richard Hickox, which won Gramophone Magazine's Opera of the Year. More recently she has sung Gilda for ENO, Brahms' Ein deutsches Requiem in Florence (Stefan Anton Reck), a repeat of her critically acclaimed Madame Mao, Nixon in China for Greek National Opera, Britten's War Requiem and Mahler's 8th Symphony at the Three Choirs Festival, Parasha in Stravinsky's Mavra in Athens and Mendelssohn's Lobgesang with the Bergen Philharmonic. Other appearances have included Vaughan Williams' Sea Symphony in Gloucester Cathedral. Judith also made a return to Finnish National Opera for Elisabetta, Don Carlo, further performances of Madama Butterfly for Welsh National Opera, Desdemona, Otello (Act 3) in a Verdi Concert at Bridgewater Hall with the Hallé Orchestra (Mark Elder), Shakespeare in Concert with Vlaamse Opera (Dmitri Jurowski) including excerpts from Verdi's Otello, a series of bel canto concerts based on the works of Sir Walter Scott for Scottish Opera, Elgar's Spirit of England in Chester Cathedral and 1st Soprano (Magna Peccatrix) in Mahler's 8th Symphony with the Philharmonia at the Royal Festival Hall (Salonen). Further engagements include Mrs Julian, Owen Wingrave for Opéra National de Lorraine; Nancy, The Glagolitic Mass with Bergen Philharmonic (Gardner); Ellen Orford in the Icelandic premiere of Peter Grimes at the Reykjavik Arts Festival with the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra and also for the Deutsche Oper, Berlin (Runnicles) and for ENO (Gardner); Elijah with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (Petrenko), Brahms' Requiem in Aberdeen, Katerina The Greek Passion for Graz Opera, 1st Soprano Mahler 8th Symphony with the London Philharmonic Orchestra (Vladimir Jurowski) at the Royal Festival Hall and the title role in Madama Butterfly for Welsh National Opera.

Recent and future engagements include Rosalinde, Die Fledermaus for Welsh National Opera, Opera Gala at the Great Hall, Swansea, Mahler's 8th Symphony at Ely Cathedral, Elgar's King Olaf with Sir Andrew Davis at the Three Choirs Festival, and concerts in China, Vancouver and elsewhere in Europe. Judith returns to ENO to sing Venus in their new production of Orpheus in the Underworld, and in Mahler's Symphony No. 2 (Resurrection) at Salisbury Cathedral. She is also booked to do masterclasses in China.

COUNTER-TENOR – NICHOLAS SPANOS

Nicholas Spanos studied with Aris Christofellis in Greece. In 2000, he continued his studies at the University of Maryland School of Music Opera Studio (USA) with teachers Linda Mabbs and Leon Major, as a scholar of the 'Friends of Music' society of Athens; he also held an assistantship from the University. He graduated in 2002 with a Master's Degree in Voice/Opera Performance. Further studies included a postgraduate course in Lied & Oratorio with Charles Spencer in the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Vienna.

He has participated actively in many vocal masterclasses taught by prominent teachers, such as Kurt Equiluz, Delores Ziegler, Anna Tomowa-Sintow and Michael Chance. He has been acclaimed for his appearance in opera, oratorio and recital worldwide. Both Greek and international press have always commented on his vocal and stage presence very favourably. He has collaborated with the Vienna State Opera, National Opera of Greece, Opera Lorraine, Opera of Egypt, Denmark Radio Symphony Orchestra, Camerata Stuttgart, Venice Baroque Orchestra, Les Talens Lyriques, Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, Orchester 1756 Salzburg, Athens State Orchestra, Thessaloniki State Orchestra, National Theatre of Greece, Orchestra of Colours, Armonia Atenea and Ensemble Alraune.



His appearances include venues such as the Queen Elizabeth Hall (London), Palais des Beaux-Arts (Brussels), Theatre des Champs-Élysées (Paris), Musikverein (Vienna), Cuvillies Theater (Munich), Sydney Recital Hall, Melbourne Recital Hall, Mozarteum (Salzburg), Karlskirche (Vienna), Taichung Concert Hall (Taiwan), Athens and Thessaloniki Megaron Concert Halls and others. For several years, he has been a regular collaborator of the 'Ex Silentio', 'Latinitas nostra' and 'Pandolfis Consort Wien' early music Ensembles.

In November 2002, he was awarded the 'Best Young Artist of the Year' award by the Association of Theatre and Music Critics of Greece. In the autumn of 2006, he was awarded first prize at the 'TECHNI' National Competition for Opera Singers, held in Thessaloniki. He has participated in the CD recording of Handel's *Oreste* (2004) and *Tamerlano* (2006) for the German label MDG, as well as a CD based on Metastasio's *Olimpiade* with the Venice Baroque Orchestra (2011) for NAÏVE Records. His latest recordings include CDs by Gramola Wien entitled *Adoration* (2016) and *Moving Telemann* (2019), both with Pandolfis Consort Wien. He lives in Vienna, Austria.



TENOR – NICHOLAS MULROY

Born in Liverpool, Nicholas studied Modern Languages at Cambridge and completed postgraduate vocal studies at the Royal Academy of Music.

Recent engagements have included Monteverdi's *Vespers* in New York's Carnegie Hall and at the Salzburg Festival, Bach's *Weihnachts-Oratorium* in the Sydney Opera House, Britten's *Serenade* in Shanghai, Bach's *Johannes-Passion* in Boston, and *Matthäus-Passion* in Bach's Thomaskirche, and Rameau at the Opéra de Paris.

He has enjoyed prolonged collaborations with some of the leading conductors of the day, including Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Jordi Savall, Lars-Ulrik Mortensen, John Butt and Paul McCreech. Recital work has included many performances at the Wigmore Hall (complete Britten *Canticles*; Schubert and Purcell songs), and at St Magnus, Bath, Edinburgh, Oxford Lieder and Glyndebourne festivals.

Recordings include a Gramophone award-winning *Messiah*, Bach cantatas for SDG and Piazzolla's amazing *María de Buenos Aires* for Delphian. Future projects include concerts with Concerto Copenhagen, Phantasm, Antwerp Symphony Orchestra, the Britten Sinfonia, and Les Violons du Roy in Canada.

He was recently elected an ARAM, in 2014 was Distinguished Artist in Residence at the Australian National University, Canberra, and is currently a Musician in Residence of Girton College, Cambridge.

BASS – DOMINIC BARBERI

Dominic Barberi graduated from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland with MMus Perf (Distinction) under Stephen Robertson.

A member of the Berlin Staatsoper Unter den Linden Opera Studio through the Liz Mohn Foundation between 2015-18, his roles there included Pietro, *Simon Boccanegra* and Barone Douphol, *La Traviata* (under the baton of Daniel Barenboim); Tom, *Un Ballo in Maschera*; Sarastro, *Die Zauberflöte*; and Colline, *La Bohème*.

He was invited to participate in the 2019 Operalia Competition in Prague and reached the semi-finals of the Wigmore Hall Song Competition. In 2017, Dominic represented England in the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition and was a finalist in the Hertogenbosch International Vocal Competition, receiving the Handel Award.



Highlights include: his American debut as Titirel in a new production of *Parsifal* to celebrate Indiana University's bicentennial year; Sarastro, *Die Zauberflöte*; a recital at the Berlin Staatsoper; and successful role debuts as Alvisè Badoero, Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* (Tiroler Landestheater, Innsbruck), Publio, Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito*, and Zuniga, Bizet's *Carmen* (Staatstheater Braunschweig). In September 2018, he joined the ensemble of National Theatre Mannheim with roles including Alidoro *La Cenerentola*, Titirel, *Parsifal*, Angelotti, *Tosca*, and his debut as Bottom in a new production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Montpellier, directed by Ted Huffman.

Dominic has appeared as a guest soloist throughout Europe in, amongst others: Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's *John Passion* and *Matthew Passion*, Haydn's *Die Schöpfung*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Dvořák's *Stabat Mater*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, a world premiere of Luther Oratorio at the Berlin Philharmonic and, most recently, with the Dunedin Consort at the Edinburgh Festival.

Upcoming highlights include the title role in *Le Nozze di Figaro* in Mannheim and his debut at La Scala in a new production of *Salome* conducted by Riccardo Chailly.



ABERDEEN CHORAL SOCIETY CONDUCTOR – ALISTAIR MACDONALD

For over fifty years, Alistair Macdonald has led an active career in music education, performance and pedagogy in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. For over twenty years, he was principal teacher of music at Peterhead Academy where he developed the music department orchestra, choir and countless other groups giving musical experiences that otherwise would not have been available.

He directed the North Aberdeenshire Youth Orchestra and latterly the Aberdeenshire Youth Orchestra and oversaw the instrumental teaching service for the whole of Aberdeenshire providing tuition to many hundreds of children in the north east of Scotland.

He was Musical Director of Peterhead Choral Society for over forty years and, for thirty years, has been Musical Director of Aberdeen Choral Society performing Handel's *Messiah* annually in the City's Music Hall. He has also been a chorister, occasional Assistant Musical Director and teacher of choral singing at the City's St Andrew's Episcopal Cathedral for over sixty years.

REHEARSAL PIANISTS

JEREMY COLEMAN – ABERDEEN BACH CHOIR

Jeremy Coleman was educated at Aberdeen Grammar School, Clare College Cambridge and King's College London, where he received a PhD in Musicology. He currently works as a Teaching Fellow in Music at the University of Aberdeen. He has accompanied rehearsals of the Aberdeen Bach Choir since 2015.

HARRY WILLIAMSON – ABERDEEN CHORAL SOCIETY

Harry has been organist and choirmaster at Craigiebuckler church since 2005 and for the last eight years has also been musical director of the 'Acclamations' choir which give concerts for local charities. Harry enjoys playing piano accompaniments for singers and instrumentalists at concerts, musical competitions, exams and music lessons. In recent years he has been rehearsal pianist for the Aberdeen Bach Choir and currently for the Aberdeen Choral Society and Skene Singers.

THE COMBINED VOICES OF ABERDEEN BACH CHOIR AND ABERDEEN CHORAL SOCIETY

Soprano 1	Soprano 2	Alto 1	Alto 2	Tenor 1	Tenor 2	Bass 1	Bass 2
Sheena Anderson	Gill Bishop	Kate Anderson	Kari Rist Aasen	Derek Bain	Michael Brooks	George Cameron	Tom Batey
Lucy Bailey	Jane Cameron	Ailsa Cantlay	Libby Brand	Paul Davison	Richard Coleman	David Coleman	Dave Benson
Jill Binns	Clare Carden	Kathleen Christie	Fiona Carter	Charles Giulianotti	James Millar	Nigel Crabb	Stephen Cohen
Eilidh Bisset	Niamh Ellison	Yvonne Cohen	Sandra Gates	Angus Hogg	Leofric Studd	Ian Downie	Mark Edwards
Pauline Buchan	Caroline Erni	Isabella Cook	Gill Geddes	Bruce Irvine	Jack Taylor	George Evans	Chris Erni
Helen Chisholm	Rita Esson	Daphne Cowking	Helen Goodyear	David Stevenson		Mike Harding	Jim Hardy
Isla Chisholm	Amy Gooder	Barbara Crane	Freda Imrie	Peter Tait		Stefan Horsman	Roger Hessing
Angela Clark	Kate Graham	Pat Cruickshank	Sarah Kearns			Jim Hunter	Andrew Keay
Ros Coleman	Anne Henderson	Althea Dickens	Muriel Knox			Otto Itgenshorst*	Mike Longhurst
Yvonne Gray	Lorna Herbert	Becky Docea	Helen Macdonald			George Lawrence	John Owen
Cathy Guthrie	Nan Hepburn	Rosemary Feilden	Sybil McAleese			Christopher Milburn	Mark Rodgers
Kathleen Haw	Angela Hewitt	Isobel Ford	Glennis McDonald			Graham Mountford	Brian Wilkins
Alison Henderson	Janet Hoper	Alison Gathercole	Lucy Meziani			Kenneth Petrie	Robert Wilson
Pamela Hoy	Ruth Howarth	Ellen Henke	Rachel Morland			Mike Radcliffe	
Kerstin Kröger	Jan Jeffrey	Tina Hutchinson	Louise Page			John Smith	
Margaret Macaulay	Jane Jones	Janet MacDonald	Joyce Plenderleith			Graham Stanley	
Sandra Massey	Galiana Lo	Gillian McLaughlin	Tilly Potter			David Way	
Emma Morison	Margaret McHattie	Jo McPherson	Jane Rodger			Fraser Westwood	
Margaret Nicholson	Edith Power	Esther Milne	Camille Simpson			Conrad Wiedermann	
Janet Ollason	Alison Purvis	Frances Milne	Kristin Tallo			John Woodhead	
Emily Owen	June Rhind	Lindsey Mountford	Val Thomas				
Izabela Ratusinska	Anne Scott	Lesley Mowat					
Lesley Robertson	Angela Slater	Sara Nicol					
Alice Ronsberg	Dawn Smith	Delyth Parkinson					
Karin Stuart	June Smith	Adele Perry					
Jenny Tait	Karen Smith	Margaret Spence					
Marta Visocchi	Jennifer Watkiss	Moira Skingley					
Hazel Wilkins	Janet Wendes	Mary Taylor					
		Karen Tucker					
		Anne Watson					
		Clare Wilkie					
		Lyudmyla Wilson					

*Winner of the 2019-20
James Lobban Conducting
Scholarship

ABERDEEN SINFONIETTA

Violins:	Bryan Dargie (leader)	Cellos:	Alison MacDonald
	Teresa Boag		Hilary Cromar
	Sarah Beattie		Mary Dargie
	Richard Clark		Bill Linklater
	Valerie Cronshaw		Ken McLeod
	Jean Fletcher		Ignasi Solé
	Alexandria Grant		
	Ruth Kalitski	Double	
	Andy Leadbetter	Basses:	Ray Leonard
	Rachel Mackison		Callum Young
	Jenna Main		
	Guera Maunder	Oboes:	Geoffrey Bridge
	Nataliia Naismith		Fiona Gordon
	Janet Ogilvie		
	Susan Simpson	Bassoon:	Kate Friday
	Coralie Usmani		
		Trumpets:	Alan Haggart
Violas:	Sandra Thomson		Gerry Dawson
	Ewa Bartmann		
	Megan Cormack	Timpani:	Isabel John
	Laurie Rominger		
	Vanessa Turner		
	Michael Wilson		

Aberdeen Sinfonietta was formed in 1987, originally as a small ensemble of strings and harpsichord which played regularly in Aberdeen and also toured throughout Scotland. Since then it has substantially increased its membership in order to extend its musical repertoire and to give many of the area's professional and outstanding amateur musicians the opportunity to perform in its concerts. Aberdeen Sinfonietta is now established as one of the foremost contributors to music-making in the North East of Scotland. In recent years it has had its own annual series of concerts in Aberdeen's Music Hall.

Bryan Dargie graduated in Music from Aberdeen University and continued his studies at the Royal Academy of Music with Frederick Grinke and Sidney Griller. After a number of years of playing with leading London orchestras, including the Royal Philharmonic and the London Mozart Players, he returned to Aberdeen, where he established himself as an influential violinist and violin teacher, with wide experience of solo playing, of leading orchestras, in particular Aberdeen Sinfonietta, and of chamber music playing.

NEXT CONCERTS

Aberdeen Choral Society will perform Haydn's Creation on 17 March 2020 at 7.30pm in Mannofield Church.

Come and join the Aberdeen Bach Choir and the Aberdeen Sinfonietta on April 26th 2020 at the earlier than usual time of 5:00 p.m. in St Machar's Cathedral for a performance of Bach's St Matthew Passion (expected finish time 8:45 p.m.). This monumental piece of Christian art is one of the immense cornerstones of Baroque choral repertoire and contains exciting choruses, moving arias and chorales and fast paced recitative. In all but name it is a vivid opera, portraying the dramatic events of the last week of Christ's mortal life on Earth. Nathan Vale will take the role of Evangelist and Sam Evans will be Christus. The other soloists will be Judith Howarth (Soprano), Nicholas Spanos (Counter Tenor), Andrew Tortise (Tenor) and Alex Ashworth (Bass).

The Bach Choir will be joined by the Chamber Choir from St Margaret's School for Girls.



THE ABERDEEN BACH CHOIR SUPPORTS
MUSICAL EDUCATION IN ABERDEEN
THROUGH THE:
ELLIE PIRIE SCHOLARSHIP,
JAMES LOBBAN CONDUCTING SCHOLARSHIP,
AND JAMES LOBBAN PRIZE FOR MUSICOLOGY



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