

YORK COUNTY CHORAL SOCIETY

DAVID LOWRY, CONDUCTOR



York County Choral Society

28th Season – 2008-2009

Sunday, November 23, 2008 – 4:00 p.m.
Oakland Baptist Church, Rock Hill, South Carolina

DAVID LOWRY, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR
SUSAN READ, ACCOMPANIST AND VOCAL COACH



*M*ESSIAH

PART I

BY

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

GUEST ARTISTS

KRISTEN WUNDERLICH, SOPRANO • ANNA PERRY GOSNELL, ALTO
WALTER CUTTINO, TENOR • JACOB WILL, BASS

Jane Hart Brendle, Tara Fensom, violin, Martha Geissler, viola
Nick Lampo, violoncello, Jeff Ferdon, double bass
Terry Maskin, Nick Swan, oboe
Chris Fensom, Tadd Hoffmann, trumpet, Michael Williams, timpani
Susan Read, organ
Jerry Curry, harpsichord

*This performance is funded in part by a grant from the
Arts Council of York County United Arts Fund.*

The text spellings, capitalizations, italics and punctuations are printed here as found in the programme of the 1742 Dublin premiere. Occasionally, Handel changes words according to revisions. Biblical references are added.

MESSIAH.

AN

ORATORIO

Compos'd by Mr. *HANDEL*

MAJORA CANAMUS

*And without Controversy, great is the Mystery of Godliness:
God was manifested in the Flesh, justified by the Spirit,
seen of Angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in
the World, received up in Glory.
In whom are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge.*

DUBLIN Printed by GEORGE FAULKNER, 1742

PART I.

SINFONY.

RECITATIVE, *accompany'd.*

Comfort ye my People, saith your Lord; speak ye Comfortably to *Jerusalem*, and cry unto her, that her Warfare is accomplish'd, that her Iniquity is pardon'd. 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 Lord.

Isaiah XL, 1-3

SONG.

Ev'ry Valley shall be exalted, and ev'ry Mountain and Hill made low: the Crooked straight, and the rough Places plain.

Isaiah XL, 4

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, 5

RECITATIVE, *accompany'd.*

Thus saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts: Yet once a little while, and I will shake the Heav'ns and the Earth, the Sea, and the dry Land, all Nations I will shake, and the Desire of all Nations shall come; 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, 6-7; Malachi III, 1

SONG.

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, 2

CHORUS.

*And he shall purify the Sons of Levi, that they may offer
unto the Lord an Offering in Righteousness.*

Malachi III, 3

RECITATIVE.

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall
call his name *Emmanuel*, GOD WITH US.

Isaiah VII, 14; Matthew I, 23

SONG and CHORUS.

*O thou that tellest good Tidings to Zion, get thee up into
the high Mountain; O thou that tellest 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, 9; LX, 1

RECITATIVE, *accompany'd.*

For behold, Darkness shall cover the Earth, and gross Dark-
ness 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, 2-3

SONG.

*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, 2

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, 6

PIFA.

RECITATIVE.

There were Shepherds, abiding in the Field, keeping Watch
over their flock by night.

Luke II, 8

RECITATIVE, *accompany'd.*

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, 9

RECITATIVE.

And the Angel said unto them, fear not; for behold, I
bring you good Tidings of great Joy, which shall be
to all People: For unto you is born this Day in the
City of *David* a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Luke II, 10-11

RECITATIVE, *accompany'd.*

And suddenly there was with the Angel a Multitude of the
Heav'nly Host praising God, and saying,

Luke II, 13

CHORUS.

*Glory to God in the Highest, and Peace on Earth, good Will
towards Men.*

Luke II, 14

SONG.

*Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Sion, shout, O Daughter of
Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee.
He is the righteous Saviour, and he shall speak Peace unto
the Heathen.*

[Da Capo.

Zechariah IX, 9-10

RECITATIVE.

Then shall the Eyes of the Blind be open'd, 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, 5-6

SONG.

*He shall feed his Flock like a Shepherd: And he shall gather the Lambs with his Arm, and carry them in his Bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.
Come unto him all ye that Labour, come unto him that are heavy laden, and he will give you rest.
Take his Yoke upon you, and learn of him; for he is meek and lowly of Heart: and ye shall find Rest unto your Souls.*

Isaiah XL, 11; Matthew XI, 28-29

CHORUS.

His Yoke is easy, and his Burthen is light.

Matthew XI, 30

End of the FIRST PART.

CHORUS.

*Hallelujah, for the Lord Omnipotent reigneth, Hallelujah.
The Kingdom of this World, is become the Kingdom of our Lord and of our Christ, and he shall Reign for ever and ever.
King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, Hallelujah.*

(From the SECOND PART)

Revelation XIX, 6; XI, 15; XIX, 16

Our Guest Soloists

KRISTEN WUNDERLICH, soprano, is in her first year as Assistant Professor of Voice at Winthrop University. She has taught previously at The Pennsylvania State University, Luther College, Waldorf College and the University of Texas at Arlington. At the University of North Texas, Denton, she received the degree Master of Music in Vocal Performance in 2001 and was awarded a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Vocal Performance with an emphasis in Vocal Pedagogy in 2008. She has appeared with the Denton Bach Society, Dallas' Orchestra of New Spain, the Texas Chamber Artists, and a performance of Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* in the Czech Republic. We welcome Dr. Wunderlich to South Carolina and to this first performance with the YCCS.

ANNA PERRY GOSNELL, alto, graduated from Winthrop University in 1985 with a Bachelor of Music degree in vocal performance. She has sung numerous solo engagements with the YCCS, the Charlotte Symphony Oratorio Singers, the Renaissance Singers, the Augusta Choral Society, and many church concerts. We welcome Anna back for her eighth solo appearance with us.

WALTER CUTTINO, tenor, is Associate Professor of Voice at the University of South Carolina. He holds his undergraduate degree from the University of SC, a graduate degree from Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, as well as the Artist Diploma in Opera from CCM. He has over 1,000 operatic performances to his credit. He is the conductor of the Palmetto Mastersingers and Director of Music at Lake Murray Presbyterian Church. This is Mr. Cuttino's first appearance with the YCCS.

JACOB WILL, bass-baritone, is Assistant Professor of Voice at the University of SC. He attended Furman University and graduated from the University of SC and the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. He participated in the Merola and Adler Fellowship Programs of the San Francisco Opera and has been a prizewinner in various international singing competitions including the Munich Competition and the Queen Elizabeth Competition of Brussels. Prior to his appointment in Columbia, he was a resident singer with the Zürich Opera. He has sung engagements as soloist in the New York City Opera, the Vienna Symphonic orchestra, and the New York Philharmonic. This is Mr. Will's fourth appearance with YCCS.

Notes on George Frideric Handel (1685-1759) and *Messiah*, HWV 56

By William D. Gudger

Incomplete scores - not unique to Handel

Bach left a relatively definitive version of his B-minor Mass while Mozart's *Requiem* is a fragment. Is there a definitive version of Handel's *Messiah* and what do we know about the types of performing forces Handel used to perform it?

Like so many composers, Handel often used the summer and early months to write music for the following season. In the summer of 1741 he wrote *Messiah* and sketched, but did not complete, *Samson*. In both cases Handel indicated the solo parts in clefs that suggest soprano, alto, tenor, and bass soloists; but unlike other operas and oratorios he had written, he seems to have no specific singers in mind. This was because he was unclear whether he would take up an offer to perform in Dublin, Ireland, in the upcoming season (something strongly suggested by the skimpy orchestration for *Messiah*: only one instrumental solo for trumpet and no special orchestral effects with flutes, oboes, and bassoons).

The Text of MESSIAH

Charles Jennens, a minor literary figure in 18th-century Britain, had collaborated with the composer Handel by providing a text for the oratorio *Saul* and by adapting and extending John Milton for the ode *L'Allegro*. On July 10, 1741, from his country estate Jennens wrote a friend "Handel says he will do nothing next winter, but I hope I shall persuade him to set another scripture collection I have made for him. I hope he will lay his whole genius and skill upon it . . . as the subject excels every other subject. The Subject is *Messiah*." Handel, at work on plans for the following season in London, did indeed intend to set to music Jennens's mosaic of words from the Bible and Book of Common Prayer Psalter. After some initial collection of musical ideas, he started writing the score on August 22 and finished the whole of *Messiah* on September 14. Twenty-four days in all; quick it would seem to us, but not at all unusual for someone who had cut his professional teeth in the opera house where the composition of a three-hour-long opera and its rehearsal and premiere had to fit into three weeks or less. Finishing *Messiah* did not leave Handel exhausted or short on ideas; he immediately embarked on the score of *Samson*.

Jennens did not know that William Cavendish, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, had invited Handel to come to Dublin to perform oratorios. In Dublin there was a big colony of English officials, who ran State and Church and who longed for music like that which could be heard in London. Handel put on a series of subscription concerts at a hall in Fishamble Street (the street still exists, but the building has vanished), using the men and boys from the Anglican Cathedrals as the basis of his choir, as he did in London, and hiring a number of vocal soloists and an orchestra of Dublin's best professional musicians. That Handel intended all along to perform *Messiah* in Dublin is seen in its simple (for him) orchestration and emphasis on the chorus over the soloists. *Messiah* ended his season of concerts in Dublin, being first performed on April 12, 1742, as a charity benefit "for the relief of the prisoners in the several gaols [jails], and for the support of Mercer's Hospital [an orphanage], . . . and of the Charitable Infirmary on the Inns of Quay" (from the newspaper advertisements).

While a great success in Dublin, *Messiah* did not immediately please when Handel introduced it in London in 1743, advertised at first as "A Sacred Oratorio" not to offend those who would find the title blasphemous. Despite his use of a choir built from the professional church musicians in London, Handel's oratorios were theatrical entertainments, put on as concerts in theaters on days (Wednesdays and Fridays of Lent in particular) when the blue laws forbade operas or plays. But *Messiah* caught on in the 1750s when performed as a benefit for the Foundling Hospital, London's large orphanage, which numbered Handel among its board of governors. These continued to the end of his life, though after 1754 direction of the music was given over to others since blindness had overtaken the composer. *Messiah* became a success at the provincial Cathedral music festivals and later at the three-hundred-musician performance before George III and a vast audience in 1784 at Westminster Abbey. It was probably at this performance that the tradition of standing during the "Hallelujah" chorus began.

Different versions by Handel of MESSIAH

In Handel's own performances at least twelve differing ways of assigning the solo music can be discerned, and these can all be reconstructed except for the 1745 performance. Only on one occasion (March, 1752) did Handel use only four soloists like the customary present-day use of soprano, contralto, tenor, and bass. He often employed five, six, or seven soloists (when available), and further he mixed up the choice of voices for the soprano part (using a female soprano and/or a boy treble) and especially for the alto part (using female altos [contraltos], male altos [countertenors], and once an alto castrato).

Thus while the music for the chorus remained relatively the same in any of Handel's performances of *Messiah*, requiring mainly a four-part choir with the sopranos dividing just once, in "Lift up your heads," the music of the soloists exists in a bewildering variety of versions and keys. Some of Handel's changes can be safely labeled emergency expedients, such as having a soprano sing "Comfort ye" and "Every valley" when the only good tenor was sick, or conversely assigning "Rejoice greatly" to a tenor (present-day sopranos would revolt about this one!).

One might ask, could *Messiah* be performed as Handel first composed it, before he was forced to make changes to due to different casts? The answer is yes, but we would find a number of unfamiliar versions: "But who may abide" originally did not have the dramatic fast section with the runs on "for he is like a refiner's fire"; "Rejoice greatly" was in a lilting 12/8 without its virtuoso sixteenth-note runs, followed by an all-soprano version of "He shall feed his flock" and "Come unto him." In fact at Handel's first performance in Dublin he was forced to do some makeshift changes, substituting simple recitatives for the arias "But who may abide" and "Thou shalt break them" because there were no soloists in the Cathedral choirs there that could manage

them. At this point he also seems to have cut out a large part of "Why do the nations," maybe never restoring the full version we hear at most modern performances.

Charles Jennens got a couple of changes out of Handel to improve the setting of English (for someone who didn't move to England until he was twenty-five, Handel's English text setting is remarkably good, but not perfect). But the main changes were the substitution of the common-time version of "Rejoice" and the writing of the operatic version of "But who may abide" in 1750 for the castrato Gaetano Guadagni. This performer worked with Handel briefly in London and went on to be Gluck's first Orfeo. The Guadagni version of "But who may abide" was later assigned to a female alto, and transposed to higher keys for different sopranos. It was never sung by a bass under Handel, though this means the recitative and aria will be sung by different voices in succession.

Other observations about Handel's choice of voices can be made. The tenor begins, much as the tenor voice was the Biblical narrator (or "Evangelist") in the German passion oratorios Handel was familiar with. This means the words of God ("Thus saith the Lord") will be sung by the lowest voice, bass; the alto becomes the voice of the Daughter of Jerusalem; and (as originally planned by Handel) the soprano does not appear until the recitative about the angels. Thus even without having "characters" (as in the Bach passions where specific singers are Jesus or Pilate), Handel uses his long experience as a theatrical composer to portray the Biblical story. This dramatic element is strongest in Part II where the chorus is the crowd ("He trusted in God") much as in the Bach passions. But overall *Messiah* begins in a narrative way and also relies on the contemplative, especially in Part III.

The closest Handel ever came to preparing a "definitive" version of *Messiah* was the set of orchestral and vocal parts he gave to Foundling Hospital, despite the fact that he could not convince Parliament to grant exclusive rights of performing the oratorio to this, his favorite charity. Actually those parts just represent what Handel was doing with the score in the early 1750s (when sopranos were singing "But who may abide").

Handel's Soloists, Choruses and Orchestra

Among the many interesting singers who performed *Messiah* with Handel, three in particular must be mentioned. Susanna Maria Arne (Mrs. Cibber) was a celebrated tragic actress who (it appears) just happened to be in Dublin when Handel was there. She performed "He was despised" with great dramatic feeling though it was agreed that her voice was hardly of operatic quality. In London no oratorio performance was complete without John Beard, an actor, former chorister of the Chapel Royal, and son-in-law of the owner of Covent Garden Theater, John Rich. Beard created all of the later great tenor roles: *Samson*, *Judas Maccabaeus*, *Jephtha*; and he often gave his services gratis for the performances that aided the Foundling Hospital. The 1743 performance of *Messiah* in London saw Handel with a large cast (which he needed because of the many characters in *Samson*, which was premiered that season), and his first Delilah, the comic actress Kitty Clive, also sang in *Messiah*. (This is something akin to casting Carol Burnett in an oratorio role.) For her, Handel composed an extended version of the nativity recitative "But lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them." It is rarely done, as it throws out of balance the perfectly proportioned little set of recitatives (with the second and fourth having orchestral accompaniments depicting the angels' wings fluttering).

Handel's chorus always borrowed singers from the professional cathedral choirs; but any female soloists, soprano and alto, were asked to sing along with the chorus, so it was truly a mixed chorus in the widest sense of the term.

Handel's orchestra was of course dominated by strings. Though not indicated in his original score, oboes and bassoons doubled the string texture (it is not known for sure whether these instruments took part in the Dublin premiere). Handel used trumpets and drums, reserving them for the Hallelujah Chorus, the final "Worthy is the Lamb," and for one previous appearance of the trumpets in "Glory to God." Handel at first marked the trumpets in this chorus to play *in disparte* (at a distance), which implies off-stage, but then changed his marking to *da lontano ed un poco piano*, ([as] from a distance and a bit soft). Always the experienced person of the stage, Handel expected the effect of distant trumpets to depict the angels appearing to the shepherds. As is typical for all Baroque music, the keyboard part of the basso continuo is not written out, since Handel himself was the primary player.

Messiah has never been long absent from the repertory of any English-speaking choir, and it spread to continental Europe where it was sung in French or German. Mozart updated the orchestration for a performance in Vienna.

Dr. William D. Gudger is Professor Emeritus of Music History and Music Theory at the College of Charleston and Organist of the Episcopal Cathedral Church of St. Luke and St. Paul, Charleston. He is a member of the Board of the American Handel Society and is a contributor to the forthcoming Cambridge Handel Encyclopedia (2009).

While *Messiah* is one of classical music's greatest treasures, frequent repetitions of the work, in some communities, become laborious. In the last 28 years, YCCS has offered portions of *Messiah* on the following dates. We sincerely hope that the spacing allows both singers and audiences the opportunity to keep the work 'fresh' in the great experience of performance.

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GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE YCCS

This is the 28th season the York County Choral Society has been providing an opportunity for citizens of York County and the surrounding area to participate in the performance and enjoyment of the highest quality of choral music.

The YCCS was founded in 1982 by David Lowry and Shirley Fishburne. Thanks to their vision and continued personal leadership and sacrifices, the group has performed over 60 major and smaller choral works. The YCCS has performed at the Piccolo Spoleto Festival and overseas in Wales, Scotland, Ireland and England. In June, 2006, the YCCS was honored to be chosen as the Choir in Residence for four days at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.

Just to give you an idea how important your support is through ticket purchases and patron contributions: it takes an average annual operational budget of over \$40,000 to mount a season of 2 concerts. We have plans for an even larger-scale production year after next, our 30th season, to produce the Verdi *Requiem*. In order to provide music of this scale, we thank you for providing us support as both Patrons and as ticket purchasers.

Thank you for helping us continue to grow and carry on with the business and art of singing. We are delighted to have you with us today. We will do our best to make your concert enjoyable and memorable.

Jane Hudson

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MUSICAL QUIZ – How many can you answer before the Overture begins?

WHO?

1. Whose idea was it for Handel move to England from Germany?
2. Who invited Handel to perform *Messiah* in Dublin instead of London?

WHAT?

3. What caused Handel to devote time to oratorio instead of opera?
4. What is the name the street in Dublin where the performance hall was?

WHEN?

5. When did Handel study in Italy?
6. When was the famous River Thames barge performance of *Water Music*?

WHERE?

7. Where was Handel's parish church in London?
8. Where is the famous monument to Handel that has the misspelled "Mesiah"?

WHY?

9. Why is his name (for works composed in England) George Frideric?
10. Why do some decide to stand for the "Hallelujah" chorus?

ANSWERS.

1. Complicated story, but involves Queen Anne's appreciation of his operas, and King George I who was previously the Elektor of Hanover. 2. William Cavendish, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. 3. London operagoers' tastes changed. 4. Fishamble Street. The street is still there and part of the foundation of the hall. YCCS stayed there in 2003. 5. 1706-1709 (age 21-25). 6. 1717. 7. St. George's Parish, Hanover Square. 8. Westminster Abbey, South Transept (Poets' Corner), but it is so far up one cannot see the word from the floor. 9. That's the way he spelled it on the parish register at Hanover Square. 10. That probably began in 1784 (25 years after Handel's death) in Westminster Abbey with a huge chorus and orchestra and in the presence of King George III. But why did the king stand? We'll never know.