

NAXOS

HANDEL

Messiah

(1751 version)

Henry Jenkinson, Otta Jones,
Robert Brooks, Trebles

Iestyn Davies, Countertenor

Toby Spence, Tenor

Eamonn Dougan, Bass

Academy of
Ancient Music

Choir of
New College Oxford

Edward Higginbottom



George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

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CD1

Part One

1	Sinfonia	3:04
2	Accompanied recitative: <i>Comfort ye, my people</i> (Tenor)	3:16
3	Aria: <i>Every valley shall be exalted</i> (Tenor)	3:19
4	Chorus: <i>And the glory of the Lord</i>	2:32
5	Accompanied recitative: <i>Thus saith the Lord of Hosts</i> (Bass)	1:27
6	Aria: <i>But who may abide the day of His coming</i> (Countertenor)	4:31
7	Chorus: <i>And He shall purify</i>	2:32
8	Recitative: <i>Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son</i> (Countertenor)	0:24
9	Aria (Countertenor) and Chorus: <i>O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion</i>	5:41
10	Accompanied recitative: <i>For behold, darkness shall cover the earth</i> (Bass)	2:11
11	Aria: <i>The people that walked in darkness</i> (Bass)	3:34
12	Chorus: <i>For unto us a Child is born</i>	3:52
13	Pifa	2:14
14	Accompanied recitative: <i>There were shepherds abiding in the field</i> (Trebles: Henry Jenkinson and Robert Brooks)	1:28
15	Chorus: <i>Glory to God in the highest</i>	2:15
16	Aria: <i>Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion</i> (Tenor)	4:06
17	Recitative: <i>Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened</i> (Countertenor)	0:24
18	Aria: <i>He shall feed His flock like a shepherd</i> (Countertenor; Treble: Otta Jones)	4:54
19	Chorus: <i>His yoke is easy, His burthen is light</i>	2:14

Part Two

20	Chorus: <i>Behold, the Lamb of God</i>	2:55
21	Aria: <i>He was despised and rejected of men</i> (Countertenor)	12:21

CD2

73:05

Part Two cont.

1	Chorus: <i>Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows</i>	2:03
2	Chorus: <i>And with His stripes we are healed</i>	1:55
3	Chorus: <i>All we like sheep have gone astray</i>	3:34
4	Accompanied recitative: <i>All they that see Him, laugh Him to scorn</i> (Tenor)	0:42
5	Chorus: <i>He trusted in God that He would deliver Him</i>	2:20
6	Accompanied recitative: <i>Thy rebuke hath broken His heart</i> (Tenor)	1:47
7	Aria: <i>Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow</i> (Tenor)	1:33
8	Accompanied recitative: <i>He was cut off out of the land of the living</i> (Treble: Henry Jenkinson)	0:18
9	Aria: <i>But thou didst not leave His soul in hell</i> (Treble: Henry Jenkinson)	1:59
10	Chorus: <i>Lift up your heads, O ye gates</i>	3:09
11	Recitative: <i>Unto which of the angels said He at any time</i> (Tenor)	0:19
12	Chorus: <i>Let all the angels of God worship Him</i>	1:40
13	Aria: <i>Thou art gone up on high</i> (Countertenor)	3:10
14	Chorus: <i>The Lord gave the word</i>	1:12
15	Aria: <i>How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace</i> (Treble: Otta Jones)	2:18
16	Chorus: <i>Their sound is gone out into all lands</i>	1:32
17	Aria: <i>Why do the nations so furiously rage together</i> (Bass)	2:49
18	Chorus: <i>Let us break their bonds asunder</i>	1:53
19	Recitative: <i>He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn</i> (Tenor)	0:10
20	Aria: <i>Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron</i> (Tenor)	2:17
21	Chorus: <i>Hallelujah</i>	3:58

Part Three

22	Aria: <i>I know that my redeemer liveth</i> (Treble: Henry Jenkinson)	5:49
23	Chorus: <i>Since by man came death</i>	2:04
24	Accompanied recitative: <i>Behold, I tell you a mystery</i> (Bass)	0:38
25	Aria: <i>The trumpet shall sound</i> (Bass) (Trumpet: David Blackadder)	8:38
26	Recitative: <i>Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written</i> (Countertenor)	0:16
27	Duet: <i>O death, where is thy sting</i> (Countertenor and Tenor)	1:06
28	Chorus: <i>But thanks be to God</i>	2:11
29	Aria: <i>If God is for us, who can be against us</i> (Countertenor)	4:52
30	Chorus: <i>Worthy is the Lamb that was slain</i>	3:18
31	Chorus: <i>Amen</i>	3:35

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759): Messiah

'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 out his whole Genius and Skill upon it, that the Composition may excell all his former Compositions, as the Subject excells every other Subject. The Subject is Messiah...'

Charles Jennens (10th July 1741)

Handel wrote *Messiah* in anticipation of a visit to Dublin in 1741. At the invitation of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland he organized two series of concerts at the New Music Hall, Fishamble Street, during the winter season of 1741-42. He saved *Messiah* till last, performing it for the first time on 13th April 1742 to rapturous applause. *Messiah* fared less well, however, in London the following year. Audiences seem to have preferred his other new oratorio, *Samson*, and many people profoundly disapproved of biblical words being sung in a common theatre, which was where Handel performed most of his oratorios. Even Handel's librettist, Charles Jennens, was less than enthusiastic: 'His *Messiah* has disappointed me, being set in great hast[e], tho' he said he would be a year about it, & make it the best of all his Compositions. I shall put no more Sacred Words into his hands, to be thus abus'd'.

Although Handel made a number of attempts to revive *Messiah* in 1745 and 1749, it was not until 1750 that he began to perform it annually at the end of his Lenten oratorio season at Covent Garden, repeating it a month or so later in the chapel of the Foundling Hospital, an orphanage of which he was a governor. From this time on 'a change of sentiment in the public began to manifest', wrote Sir John Hawkins, and '*Messiah* was received with universal applause'. The earliest provincial performance of *Messiah* was given at Oxford in April 1749 under the direction of William Hayes, the Professor of Music, and it was rapidly taken up by music societies in Salisbury, Bath, Bristol, Gloucester and Worcester. Soon, the popularity of *Messiah* began to eclipse that of Handel's other oratorios, and during the nineteenth century it became almost a national institution, increasingly performed by gargantuan forces – choirs of 4000 were not unheard of

– providing a convenient mouthpiece for the Victorian doctrines of progress and social amelioration.

Although Handel famously completed the first draft of *Messiah* in a mere 24 days, he never really stopped working on it, constantly amending and updating the score to suit the singers available and the circumstances of each new performance he gave. This means that there is no one definitive version of the work for us to follow today. The present recording takes its lead from Handel's performances of 18th April and 16th May 1751, which he gave at Covent Garden Theatre and the chapel of the Foundling Hospital. Inspired by the abilities of his alto soloist, the Italian castrato Gaetano Guadagni, in 1750 Handel had written brand new settings of the arias '*But who may abide*' and '*Thou art gone up on high*', both of which he retained, along with Guadagni, in 1751. The other notable feature of Handel's Foundling Hospital performance followed here is the use of boy trebles for both the top line of the chorus and for the soprano arias, including the much-loved '*I know that my redeemer liveth*' but excluding '*Rejoice, greatly*', allocated by Handel to the tenor. Handel and his contemporaries – like William Hayes in Oxford – often substituted outstanding choristers for their soprano soloist at certain key moments in the work, like the Nativity sequence beginning '*There were shepherds abiding in the field*'. The link with a choral foundation was consolidated in Handel's tenor and bass soloists, John Beard and Robert Wass, both of whom had close connections with the Chapel Royal, just as the tenor and bass soloists in this recording have close links with an Oxford foundation.

Charles Jennens's libretto for *Messiah* is very different from the texts of Handel's other oratorios. Instead of telling a dramatic story as in *Samson*, with

soloists and chorus representing particular characters, the text of *Messiah* is almost exclusively concerned with prophecy and meditation. The words are drawn entirely from the Authorised Version of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. Nevertheless, Jennens's biblical compilation was judicious and his overall design very strong. By skilfully combining Old and New Testament texts he was able to illustrate the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah in the events related in the Gospels. He divided the oratorio into three parts. Part I embraces the prophecies of Christ's coming, the Annunciation and the Nativity. Part II is concerned with Christ's Passion, Resurrection and Ascension, the dissemination of the Gospels, and a final ecstatic view of the kingdom of God. Part III (based on the Anglican Burial Service) celebrates Christ's Resurrection and the immortality of the Christian soul made possible through Christ's Redemption.

Notwithstanding its subject and text, *Messiah* is not, in the accepted sense, a sacred work. Jennens himself called it simply 'a fine Entertainment', and Handel only ever performed it in a consecrated building when he mounted his annual charity concerts in the

chapel of the Foundling Hospital. This, however, did not prevent its ultimate sanctification by an adoring public convinced that by attending a performance of the work they were themselves participating in an act of worship. In Bristol in 1758 the young John Wesley heard *Messiah* on one of the rare occasions when it was performed in church and commented ironically that he doubted 'if that congregation was ever so serious at a sermon as they were during this performance'. Yet there is absolutely no evidence at all that Handel himself ever intended an evangelical purpose. If anything, he intended a charitable one, having performed *Messiah* regularly throughout this career for the benefit of the poor and needy. Ultimately, Handel's purpose was to delight and charm his listeners; as a writer in the *Dublin Journal* wrote after the first performance: "Words are wanting to express the exquisite Delight it afforded to the admiring crowded audience. The Sublime, the Grand, and the Tender, adapted to the most elevated, majestick and moving Words, conspired to transport and charm the ravished Heart and Ear."

Simon Heighes

Conductor's note

A new recording of *Messiah*? With a fine choir, a fine orchestra and fine soloists, perhaps no excuse or explanation is needed. But for those who seek particular reasons, here they are: our version provides the only modern account of Handel's unique London performances in April and May 1751, when he used treble voices for choruses and arias. We don't know why. But clearly the Chapel Royal had a treble or two who could step up to the plate, and Handel was pleased to employ them on this exceptional occasion. So we have selected three of our own boys to do the same. Secondly, just as Handel drew upon a chapel resource (the Chapel Royal) for his tenor and bass soloists (Beard and Wass), so have we: both Toby Spence and Eamonn Dougan are former clerks of New College Choir. The use of a castrato for the alto arias was neither a part of this tradition nor an option for our own time. Together these attributes give the Choir of New College, Oxford/Academy of Ancient Music's *Messiah* a unique status and a unique coherence. It is both a celebration of the chapel choir tradition and window onto a particular time and place in the history of Handel's own performances of his masterpiece.



Trebles

Henry Jenkinson, Otta Jones and Robert Brooks were respectively 11, 12 and 13 when they made this recording. They have all had extensive experience of singing solos, though their primary work, as choristers at New College, is in consort and ensemble singing. During their time at New College, which lasts five years, they are taught singing by Bronwen Mills. Each of them plays two instruments. Robert is a fine poet, Otta a superb pianist, and Henry a very promising composer.

Iestyn Davies

Iestyn Davies emerged as one of the country's leading countertenors following his prize in the London Handel Singing Competition in 2004, only shortly after completing his studies at St John's College, Cambridge as a choral scholar. He was immediately identified as an exciting operatic prospect, and his rôles soon included Ottone in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (Zurich Opera with Harnoncourt), Corrado in Vivaldi's *Griselda* (Ensemble Matheus with Spinosi), and Hamor in Handel's *Jephtha* (Welsh National Opera). Engagements quickly extended to appearances with the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra at Zellerbach Auditorium in Berkeley, rôles in Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* for Welsh National Opera, and the part of Apollo in Britten's *Death in Venice* for English National Opera. He is equally active on the concert platform, appearing with many of the leading British ensembles, including the Academy of Ancient Music, Polyphony, and the Monteverdi Choir. He made his solo recording début in Vivaldi's *Griselda* with Ensemble Matheus for Naïve.



Photo: Mitch Jenkins

Toby Spence

An honours graduate and choral scholar from New College, Oxford, Toby Spence studied at the Opera School of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. While still a student, he made his Wigmore Hall recital début in the Schubertiade series and appeared at the Cheltenham and Brighton Festivals. On the concert platform, he has sung with the Cleveland Orchestra under von Dohnányi, the Bournemouth Symphony under Hickox, the Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra under Eliot Gardiner, the San Francisco Symphony under Tilson Thomas, the Rotterdam Philharmonic under Gergiev, Les Musiciens du Louvre under Minkowski, the London Symphony Orchestra under Rattle and the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century under Frans Brüggen. He has appeared in concert at the Salzburg and Edinburgh Festivals with Norrington and Mackerras. He has recorded for Deutsche Grammophon, Decca, BMG, Philips, Collins, Hyperion and EMI. Since his opera début as Idamantes in *Idomeneo* for Welsh National Opera, he has been in heavy demand throughout the operatic world, (Brussels, Salzburg Festival, Netherlands Opera, Bavarian State Opera, Châtelet, the Ruhr Triennale, San Francisco, the Teatro Real in Madrid, Aix-en-Provence, Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Edinburgh Festival). He has established strong links with both English National Opera and the Paris Opéra, and is now reckoned to be one of the world's most accomplished operatic tenors. This is his first recording of music by Handel.

Eamonn Dougan

Eamonn Dougan read Music at New College, Oxford, where he was a choral scholar, before studying at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. As a consort and ensemble singer, he has appeared on disc and on concert platforms throughout the world with many of the leading British ensembles (The Sixteen, I Fagiolini, Gabrieli Consort, Ex Cathedra, The Cardinal's Musick and The Monteverdi Choir). As a soloist he has sung with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the Hanover Band, the Parley of Instruments and the Academy of Ancient Music. He has an established reputation on the operatic stage where his many rôles include Papageno (*Magic Flute*), Masetto (*Don Giovanni*), Marullo (*Rigoletto*) and Mr. Gedge (*Albert Herring*) at Longborough; Jupiter (*Peleus & Thetis*), Lion (*Pyramus & Thisbe*) and Gozanes (*Teraminta*) for Opera Restor'd. He has performed with Graham Johnson's Young Songmakers Almanac, and has given numerous solo recitals; of special interest is his reading of Schubert's *Die Winterreise* with fortepianist Gary Cooper. He has already appeared on the Naxos label in New College's performance of Bach's *St John Passion* (Naxos 8.557296-97).



New College Choir

The Choir of New College Oxford is one of Britain's leading ensembles, enjoying a world-wide reputation for the range of its work and the originality of its recording projects. In recent years it has contributed a number of important releases to the record catalogue, giving new insights into familiar repertoire, and frequently presenting first recorded performances. The choir has travelled extensively in Europe, as far afield as Australia, Brazil and Japan; it is also active in Britain, having a number of BBC Promenade concerts to its credit as well other London appearances. Its work in Oxford focuses on the sung liturgy of New College's fourteenth-century chapel, where, during the University terms, it sings daily services. A detailed discography of over eighty recordings is to be found on www.newcollegechoir.com.

Trebles

Robert Brooks
Matthew Clarke
Sebastian Cox
William Ford
Nathaniel Hess
William Hewstone
Henry Jenkinson
Otta Jones
Jake Mitson
Jonathan Moloney
Lewis Spring
James Swash

Oscar Talbot

Humphrey Thompson
Richard Whittington

Countertenors

Hugh Brunt
Julian Gale
Timothy Jackson
Dana Marsh
Stephen Taylor
Matthew Venner

Tenors

Benedict Linton
Adrian Lowe
Benjamin Noble
Nicholas Ovenden
Alastair Putt

Basses

Christopher Borrett
George Coltart
Tom Edwards
Jonathan Howard
David Newsholme
Thomas Osborne
Duncan Saunderson

Academy of Ancient Music

The Academy of Ancient Music (AAM) is one of the world's first and foremost period-instrument orchestras, with concerts across six continents and over 250 recordings since its formation by Christopher Hogwood in 1973. The orchestra takes its name from a London concert society which was established in 1726 for the purpose of studying and performing 'old' music, defined initially as music composed at least a century earlier, but soon to include more contemporary composers such as Handel. The present-day Academy of Ancient Music is especially well known for its pioneering recordings under Christopher Hogwood. In addition to numerous recordings of baroque repertoire, especially Handel, the orchestra was the first to record all of Mozart's symphonies on period instruments and has since recorded the complete piano concertos and symphonies of Beethoven. It is also involved in recording the Mozart piano concertos with fortepianist Robert Levin and the complete Haydn symphonies. At the start of the 2006-07 season Richard Egarr became Music Director and Christopher Hogwood assumed the title of Emeritus Director. Egarr continues the AAM's strong recording tradition with a series of Handel releases while Hogwood conducts Handel operas in concert each year leading up to the Handel anniversary in 2009. As well as Associate Conductor Paul Goodwin, the AAM performs under the direction of a number of guest conductors and instrumental directors, including Pavlo Beznosniuk, Giuliano Carmignola and Masaaki Suzuki. The orchestra works regularly with Edward Higinbottom and the Choir of New College, Oxford, with concerts throughout Europe and recordings of Handel, Purcell, Boyce and Pergolesi. Information about the AAM's touring schedule can be found at www.aam.co.uk.

Violin 1

Pauline Nobes (leader)
Pierre Joubert
Persephone Gibbs
Andrea Morris
Marianna Szucs
Liz MacCarthy

Violin 2

Rodolfo Richter
William Thorp
Joanna Lawrence
Pauline Smith

Viola

Trevor Jones
Marina Ascherson

Cello

Joseph Crouch (continuo)
Imogen Seth Smith
Catherine Jones

Double bass

Judith Evans

Oboe

Frank de Bruine
Lars Henriksson

Bassoon

Alastair Mitchell

Trumpet

David Blackadder
Phillip Bainbridge

Timpani

Benedict Hoffnung

Harpsichord/organ

Alastair Ross

Organ

Nicholas Wearne

Edward Higinbottom

Edward Higinbottom has directed New College Choir since 1976, through many generations of choristers and clerks. His work with the choir has brought him widespread recognition as a conductor and choir trainer, and he has directed a number of Europe's leading ensembles, including the Academy of Ancient Music and the European Union Baroque Orchestra. He is also Lecturer in the Faculty of Music at Oxford, his musicological interests playing a major rôle in many of the choir's projects. For his contribution to French musical culture he has been decorated Commandeur de l'ordre des arts et des lettres.



Georg Friedrich Händel (1685–1759): Der Messias

Händel sagt, dass er kommenden Winter nichts thun wolle; allein ich hoffe ihn zu überreden, dass er eine weitere Kollektion nach der Schrift vertone, die für ihn angefertigt habe... Hoffentlich wird er sein ganzes Genie und Vermögen anwenden, dass diese Compositio alle frühern Compositiones übertreffe, wie auch der Gegenstand jeden andern Gegenstand übertrifft. Der Gegenstand ist der Messias...

Charles Jennens, 10. Juli 1741

Händel schrieb den *Messias* im Jahre 1741 im Vorfeld seiner Reise nach Dublin. Auf Einladung des Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (Vizekönig) veranstaltete er während der Winterspielzeit 1741/42 zwei Konzertreihen, die in der dortigen New Music Hall in der Fishamble Street stattfanden. Den *Messias* sparte er bis zuletzt auf, um ihn schließlich unter hingerissenem Beifall am 13. April 1742 aus der Taufe zu heben. Weniger gut kam der *Messias* im nächsten Jahr in London an. Dem Publikum schien Händels *Samson*, das zweite neue Oratorium, besser zu gefallen, und vielen Menschen widerstrebte es zutiefst, dass Worte der Heiligen Schrift in einem normalen Theater erklangen, wo Händel ja die meisten seiner Oratorien aufzuführen pflegte. Selbst Händels Librettist Charles Jennens war überhaupt nicht begeistert: *Sein Messias hat mich enttäuscht, maßen in großer Hast gesetzt ist, wo er doch gesagt hatte, dass er ein Jahr daran arbeiten & ihn zum besten seiner Werke machen wollte. Ich werde ihm keine Heiligen Worte mehr in die Hand geben, dass er sie also missbrauche.*

1745 und 1749 hatte Händel mehrfach versucht, seinem *Messias* neues Leben einzuhauchen. Doch erst seit 1750 brachte er das Werk dann alljährlich am Ende seiner Oratorien-Saison – mithin während der Fastenzeit – an Covent Garden zur Aufführung. Rund einen Monat später kam es dann jeweils zu einer Wiederholung in der Kapelle des Foundling Hospital (Hospitals für den Unterhalt und die Erziehung von gefährdeten und verlassenen Kindern), zu dessen Prinzipalen er gehörte. Um diese Zeit sah man allmählich das Empfinden des Publikums sich wandeln, schrieb Sir John Hawkins, und der *Messias* ward mit allgemeinem Applauso empfangen. Im April 1749 kam das Werk erstmals in die Provinz, als es nämlich in

Oxford unter der Leitung des Musikprofessors William Hayes aufgeführt wurde. Bald darauf folgten die musikalischen Vereinigungen von Salisbury, Bath, Bristol, Gloucester und Worcester, und es dauerte nicht mehr lange, bis der *Messias* an Beliebtheit alle anderen Händel-Oratorien übertraf. Während des 19. Jahrhunderts wurde das Stück beinahe zu einer nationalen Institution. Die ausführenden Ensembles wurden immer gewaltiger – man sprach von 4000-köpfigen Chören –, und der *Messias* wurde zu einem geeigneten Sprachrohr für die viktorianische Doktrin von Fortschritt und gesellschaftlicher Verbesserung.

Händel fertigte zwar den ersten Entwurf des *Messias* bekanntermaßen in nur 24 Tagen, doch hat er nie wirklich aufgehört, an dem Werk zu arbeiten. Ständig veränderte und modernisierte er die Partitur, um sie den jeweils verfügbaren Sängern und Aufführungsumständen anzupassen. Somit gibt es also keine verbindliche Fassung des Werkes, der wir heute folgen könnten. Die vorliegende Aufnahme orientiert sich an den Aufführungen, die Händel am 18. April und 16. Mai 1751 an Covent Garden bzw. in der Kapelle des Foundling Hospital leitete. Angeregt durch die stimmlichen Fertigkeiten seines Altisolisten, des italienischen Kastraten Gaetano Guadagni, hatte Händel 1750 zwei brandneue Fassungen der Arien *But who may abide* und *Thou art gone up on high* geschrieben, die er 1751 auch von Guadagni singen ließ. Bemerkenswert ist ferner eine weitere Aufführungsgewohnheit des Foundling Hospital, der wir hier folgen, und zwar der Einsatz von Knabensopranen sowohl in der Oberstimme des Chores wie auch für verschiedene Soli – unter anderem in dem äußerst beliebten *I know that my redeemer liveth* –, ausgenommen *Rejoice*, greatly, das Händel dem Tenor zu-

gedacht hat. Händel und seine Zeitgenossen – William Hayes in Oxford zum Beispiel – ließen bestimmte, dramaturgisch wesentliche Sopransoli von herausragenden Choristen singen, so etwa in der Geburtssequenz, die mit den Worten *There were shepherds abiding in the fields* beginnt. Die Beziehung zu einer Chorvereinigung befestigten seinerzeit schon John Beard und Robert Wass, die Händel für seine Tenor- bzw. Bass-Soli einsetzte: Beide Sänger unterhielten ebenso enge Kontakte zur Chapel Royal wie unser Tenor und Bass zu einer entsprechenden Oxfordier Institution.

Charles Jennens' *Messias*-Libretto unterscheidet sich deutlich von den Texten der anderen Händel-Oratorien. Anders als etwa in *Samson*, der eine dramatische Geschichte erzählt, während Solisten und Chöre bestimmte Charaktere darstellen, befasst sich der Text des *Messias* fast ausschließlich mit Prophezeiung und Kontemplation. Die Worte entstammen durchweg der offiziellen englischen Bibelausgabe und dem Book of Common Prayer.

Dabei verfuhr Jennens bei seiner Zusammenstellung sehr überlegt, und es gelang ihm eine äußerst kraftvolle Gesamtkonzeption. Durch die geschickte Kombination alt- und neuteamentlicher Texte konnte er illustrieren, wie sich die messianische Prophezeiung des Alten Testaments in den Ereignissen erfüllte, von denen die Evangelien berichteten. Jennens gliederte das Oratorium in drei Teile. Teil I behandelt die Prophezeiung, Verkündigung und Geburt Christi. Teil II befasst sich mit der Leidensgeschichte, der Auferstehung und der Himmelfahrt Christi sowie mit der Verbreitung des Evangeliums und endlich dem ekstatischen Ausblick auf das Reich Gottes. In Teil III, der auf dem anglikanischen Begräbnisgottesdienst beruht, geht es um die Auferstehung Christi und die Seele

des Christen, die durch das Erlösungswerk des Heilands Unsterblichkeit erlangt hat.

Ungeachtet seines Themas und seines Textes ist der *Messias* kein geistliches Werk im eigentlichen Sinne. Jennens selbst nannte ihn schlicht *a fine Entertainment*, und Händel führte ihn ohnehin nur dann in einem geweihten Gebäude auf, wenn er in der Kapelle des Foundling Hospital seine alljährlichen Wohltätigkeitskonzerte veranstaltete. Das verhinderte aber nicht die spätere Weihe des Werkes durch das verehrungsvolle Publikum, das durch den Besuch einer Aufführung an einer heiligen Handlung teilzunehmen glaubte. Nachdem der junge John Wesley den *Messias* 1758 in Bristol bei einer der wenigen kirchlichen Darbietungen gehört hatte, meinte er ironisch, er wisse nicht, ob diese Gemeinde bei einer Predigt je so ernst wie bei dieser Aufführung gewesen sei. Es gibt allerdings absolut keinen Hinweis darauf, dass Händel mit dem Werk einen Verkündigungszweck verfolgt hätte. Wenn überhaupt, verfolgte er einen karitativen Zweck, denn regelmäßig während seiner gesamten Laufbahn führte er den *Messias* zugunsten der Armen und Bedürftigen auf. Letztlich wollte Händel seine Zuhörer jedoch erfreuen und bezaubern. Ein Kritiker schrieb nach der ersten Aufführung im *Dublin Journal*: *Es fehlen die Worte, um die außergewöhnliche Freude zu beschreiben, die das Werk dem hingerissenen Publikum bereitete. Das Erhabene, Großartige und Empfindsame, passend zu den pathetischsten, erhabensten und bewegendsten Worten, kam zusammen, um das entzückte Herz und Ohr zu überwältigen und zu bezaubern.*

Simon Heighes

Deutsche Fassung: Cris Possalc

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Messiah (1751 version)

CD1: Part One

1 *Sinfonia*

2 *Accompanied recitative (Tenor)*

Comfort ye, 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 40.1-3)

3 *Aria (Tenor)*

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and
hill made low, the crooked straight, and the rough places
plain.

(Isaiah 40.4)

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 40.5)

5 *Accompanied recitative (Bass)*

Thus saith the Lord of Hosts: Yet once, a little while,
and I will shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and
the dry land, and I will shake all nations, and the desire
of all nations shall come.

(Haggai 2.6-7)

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.

(Malachi 3.1)

6 *Aria (Countertenor)*

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 3.2)

7 *Chorus*

And He shall purify the sons of Levi that they may offer
unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

(Malachi 3.3)

8 *Recitative (Countertenor)*

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

(Isaiah 7.14; Matthew 1.23)

9 *Aria (Countertenor) 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! O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, arise,
shine for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is
risen upon thee.

(Isaiah 40.9, 60.1)

10 *Accompanied recitative (Bass)*

For behold, 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 60.2-3)

11 *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 9.2)

12 *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 9.6)

13 *Pifa*

14 *Recitative (Treble)*

There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

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. 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. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying:

(Luke 2.8-13)

15 *Chorus*

Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men!

(Luke 2.14)

16 *Aria (Tenor)*

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 9.9-10)

17 *Recitative (Countertenor)*

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 35.5-6)

18 *Aria (Countertenor, Treble)*

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.

(Isaiah 40-11)

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.

(Matthew 11.28-9)

19 *Chorus*

His yoke is easy, His burthen is light.

(Matthew 11.30)

Part Two

20 *Chorus*

Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.

(John 1.29)

21 *Aria (Countertenor)*

He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.

(Isaiah 53.3)

He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: He hid not His face from shame and spitting.

(Isaiah 50.6)

CD1: Part Two cont.

1 *Chorus*

Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him.

(Isaiah 53.4-5)

2 *Chorus*

And with His stripes we are healed.

(Isaiah 53.5)

3 *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 53.6)

[4] *Accompanied recitative (Tenor)*

All they that see Him, laugh Him to scorn: they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying:

(Psalm 22.8)

[5] *Chorus*

He trusted in God that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, if He delight in Him.

(Psalm 22.7)

[6] *Accompanied recitative (Tenor)*

Thy rebuke hath broken His heart; He is full of heaviness; He looked for some to have pity on Him, but there was no man, neither found He any to comfort Him.

(Psalm 69.21)

[7] *Aria (Tenor)*

Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow!

(Lamentations 1.12)

[8] *Accompanied recitative (Treble)*

He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of Thy people was He stricken.

(Isaiah 53.8)

[9] *Aria (Treble)*

But Thou didst not leave his soul in hell; nor didst Thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.

(Psalm 16.10)

[10] *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 King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. 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 King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, he is the King of Glory.

(Psalm 24.7-10)

[11] *Recitative (Tenor)*

Unto which of the angels said He at any time: Thou art My son, this day have I begotten Thee?

(Hebrews 1.5)

[12] *Chorus*

Let all the angels of God worship Him.

(Hebrew 1.6)

[13] *Aria (Countertenor)*

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 68.18)

[14] *Chorus*

The Lord gave the word: Great was the company of the preachers.

(Psalm 68.11)

[15] *Aria (Treble)*

How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.

(Romans 10.15)

[16] *Chorus*

Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words unto the end of the world.

(Romans 10.18)

[17] *Aria (Bass)*

Why do the nations so furiously rage together, and why do the people imagine a vain thing; the kings of the earth rise up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed.

(Psalm 2.1-2)

[18] *Chorus*

Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their yokes from us.

(Psalm 2.3)

19 *Recitative (Tenor)*

He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn;
the Lord shall have them in derision.

(Psalm 2.4)

20 *Aria (Tenor)*

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt
dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

(Psalm 2.9)

21 *Chorus*

Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth,
Hallelujah! The Kingdom of this world is become the
Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall
reign for ever and ever, Hallelujah! King of Kings, and
Lord of Lords, and He shall reign for ever and ever,
Hallelujah!

(Revelations 19.6, 11.5, 19.6)

Part Three

22 *Aria (Treble)*

I know that my redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand
at the latter day upon the earth.

And Though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh
shall I see God.

(Job 19.25-6)

For now is Christ risen from the dead, the first fruits of
them that sleep.

(1 Corinthians 15.20)

23 *Chorus*

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 15.21-2)

24 *Recitative (Bass)*

Behold, I tell 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.

(1 Corinthians 15.51-2)

25 *Aria (Bass)*

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 15.52-3)

26 *Recitative (Countertenor)*

Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written,
Death is swallowed up in victory.

(1 Corinthians 15.52-3)

27 *Duet (Countertenor, Tenor)*

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.

(1 Corinthians 15.55-6)

28 *Chorus*

But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through
our Lord Jesus Christ.

(1 Corinthians 15.57)

29 *Aria (Countertenor)*

If God is 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 at the right
hand of God, who makes intercession for us.

(Romans 8.31, 33-4)

30 *Chorus*

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed
us to God by His 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.

(Revelations 5.12-14)

31 *Chorus*

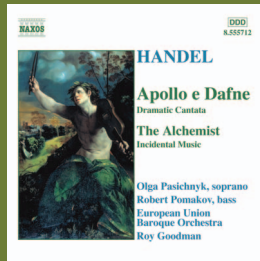
Amen.



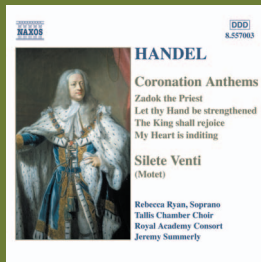
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 Playing Time
 2:22:19


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Handel's most popular and joyous oratorio, a work of unfailing melodic invention and dramatic expressiveness, has become almost a British national institution, regularly performed by all manner of choirs and orchestras. This new recording provides the only modern re-construction of Handel's unique London performances in 1751, when he used boy treble voices not only for the choruses but for the arias as well. It is both a celebration of the British chapel choir tradition and a window onto a particular time and place in the history of Handel's own performances of his masterpiece.

George Frideric HANDEL

(1685-1759)

Messiah (1751 Version)

CD1

69:14

1-19 Part I

53:58

20-21 Part II

15:16

CD2

73:05

1-21 Part II cont.

40:38

22-31 Part III

32:27

Henry Jenkinson, Otta Jones, Robert Brooks, Trebles
 Iestyn Davies, Countertenor • Toby Spence, Tenor • Eamonn Dougan, Bass

Academy of Ancient Music
 Choir of New College Oxford • Edward Higginbottom

A complete tracklist can be found on pages 2 and 3 of the booklet

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