

ORCHESTRA SEATTLE ■ SEATTLE CHAMBER SINGERS
GEORGE SHANGROW, MUSIC DIRECTOR
2007-2008 SEASON

Elijah

Sunday, October 7, 2007 ■ 3:00 PM
First Free Methodist Church

Sara Hedgpeth, *soprano*
Melissa Plagemann, *mezzo-soprano*
Stephen Wall, *tenor*
Michael Delos, *Elijah*

Ben Flohr, *boy soprano*
Andrew Danilchik, *baritone*

Orchestra Seattle
Seattle Chamber Singers
George Shangrow, *conductor*

FELIX MENDELSSOHN *Elijah*, Op. 70
1809-1847

Part I

INTERMISSION

Part II

Please disconnect signal watches, pagers and cellular telephones. Thank you.
The use of cameras and recording equipment is not permitted in the concert hall.

PROGRAM NOTES

FELIX MENDELSSOHN

Elijah, Op. 70

Mendelssohn was born February 3, 1809, in Hamburg, Germany, and died November 4, 1847, in Leipzig. *Elijah* was composed during the spring and summer of 1846 and premiered on August 26 of that year at Birmingham Town Hall, with the composer conducting. In addition to vocal soloists and chorus, the work is scored for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, ophicleide (or tuba), timpani, organ and strings.

The second London performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* is described in the journals of Edgar Alfred Bowring, a prominent Londoner:

April 23rd [1847]: "Went to Exeter Hall and heard Mendelssohn's new opera of *Elijah* performed. He himself conducted the performance. He is a tall, thin man, under 40 years of age, and very intellectual looking. The Queen and Prince Albert were there, and almost every body being in full dress, the effect was very fine. The National Anthem was beautifully sung. The oratorio itself is a most splendid composition. The pieces encored were the themes of "Baal we cry to thee", the trio of "Lift thine eyes to the mountains", beautifully sung by Misses Kirkham, Duvall, and Dolby, and "O rest in the Lord" by Miss Dolby. Many other pieces would have been encored, had it not been for respect to the Queen. The other solo singers were Philips, Miss Birch, Novello, and Lockey. The oratorio is quite worthy of Handel. Mendelssohn was tremendously cheered. The performances were over at 1/2 past 10 o'clock. I was in the Area Reserved Seats, very near the Queen. I should have been very sorry not to have her present."

Prolific as well as extremely precocious, Felix Mendelssohn's fabulous gifts as a composer, conductor and pianist made him the most successful musician of the 19th century. He experienced few of the personal tragedies, career vagaries, financial difficulties, and physical ailments that beset most composers. It may well be, however, that his ceaseless efforts to meet the musical demands of his public contributed to his early death. His music displays the influences of Bach (fugal technique), Handel (rhythms and harmonic progressions), Mozart (dramatic characterization, forms, and musical textures), and Beethoven (instrumental technique). He wrote exquisite melodies, and made skillful use of orchestral color and of extra-musical elements having literary, artistic, historical, geographical, or emotional associations. His dramatic talents are evident in his oratorios. He combined these romantic elements with the economy of means, emotional restraint, refinement, sensitivity, and clear formal structures of the classical period to produce a highly engaging personal style of music writing that still captivates audiences today.

Jakob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (the family converted from Judaism to Christianity in 1816 and took the additional surname, "Bartholdy") was born in Hamburg on February 3, 1809, into a distinguished intellectual and artistic family. Felix's grandfather was the significant Jewish philosopher, Moses Mendelssohn; his father Abraham was a wealthy banker (after Felix became famous, Abraham would sometimes say in jest, "I used to be known as the son of my father; now I am known as the father of my son!"); and his mother was an amateur musician who contributed to her astonishingly gifted son's artistic development. The boy grew up in Berlin amid a privileged and cultured circle of family and friends.

A musical prodigy whose natural talent probably surpassed even Mozart's, Mendelssohn studied violin and piano while a very young child, painted, and demonstrated significant linguistic gifts as

well. He made his public debut as a pianist in 1818 at the age of nine, and wrote his first piece of music at age eleven. At seventeen, he composed an enduring masterpiece, the overture to Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. In 1826, he entered the University of Berlin, where he studied for three years, and in 1829, at the age of 20, he made the first of ten appearances in London, conducting his Symphony No. 1 in C Minor. That same year, he also conducted the first performance of Johann Sebastian Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* given since Bach's death, thus initiating the revival of Bach's music that continues to this day. As a highly sought-after conductor and music organizer in Leipzig, Mendelssohn founded and directed the city's conservatory of music, and conducted the famed Gewandhaus Orchestra with great success, popularizing the works of many undeservedly neglected composers.

As the most prominent musician of his day in the German states, England, and Austria, Mendelssohn toured, guest conducted, organized music festivals, and composed constantly, producing a wealth of dramatic, vocal, choral, orchestral, chamber, piano, and other music. In 1837, he took on the additional responsibilities of family life when he married Cécile Jeanrenaud, the daughter of a pastor, with whom he had three sons and two daughters. "A conscientious chronicle of Mendelssohn's next few years [after 1835] would merely weary the reader," wrote the late George Marek. "It would link work with more work, string success after success, place tribute next to tribute, and enumerate an ever larger register of acquaintances and friends."

In 1841, Mendelssohn became director of the Music Section of the Academy of Arts in Berlin, a new cultural venture of King Frederick of Prussia. He was required not only to supervise and conduct a large variety of programs, but also to compose upon royal demand. By the end of 1844, unhappiness and exhaustion began to affect his health, and he retired from all official duties. By September 1845, however, Mendelssohn had recuperated sufficiently to return to Leipzig, where he plunged again into a maelstrom of conducting, composing, piano and composition teaching at the conservatory, editing, and performing on the piano and organ.

When his beloved older sister, Fanny, also an excellent pianist and composer, and always his closest friend and confidante, died suddenly on May 14, 1847, Mendelssohn's own heart and health broke also. Hoping to recover from his grief and illness, he traveled to Switzerland, where, as a talented painter and draftsman, he produced watercolors and drawings of the Swiss landscape. On September 7, he returned to Leipzig, and then went to Berlin to supervise an upcoming performance of *Elijah*. It is said that while in Berlin he was taken to "the room where his sister was attacked by the fit of which she died. One of his Walpurgisnacht Choruses still remained at the piano open at the page she had been playing. Nothing had been moved since her death, either in this room or the one where she died. They showed him both. He was excessively agitated, his grief burst out afresh, or more even than before. He told the King that it was impossible for him to superintend *Elijah*, and he returned to Leipzig." On November 4, 1847, at the age of 38, Mendelssohn succumbed to a stroke.

Mendelssohn talked about composing an opera throughout his life, but never did so. Instead, he wrote two oratorios that draw musical inspiration from Bach and Handel: *St. Paul*, premiered in 1836, and *Elijah*, which ranked for many years just below Handel's *Messiah* as the world's most popular religious choral work. In the year of *St. Paul*'s first performance, Mendelssohn began to contemplate a subject for a new oratorio, finding especially congenial the life of the volcanic Old Testament prophet, Elijah, described in I Kings 17-19 (which tells of the disastrous results of

the breaking by the people of Israel of their covenant with Yahweh, the one true God, through their worship of false gods, Baal chief among them). In 1838 he asked his old friend, the theologian, pastor, and librettist for *St. Paul*, Julius Schubring, to help in drafting a libretto. He wrote to Schubring, ". . . the dramatic element should predominate. The personages should act and speak as if they were living beings." Perhaps relating the passionate old testament champion to his own hope for a modern political leader, the relatively mild-mannered Mendelssohn wrote further: "I imagined Elijah as a real prophet through and through, of the kind we could really do with today: Strong, zealous and yes, even bad-tempered, angry and brooding—in contrast to the riff-raff, whether of the court or of the people, and indeed at odds with almost the whole world—and yet borne aloft as if on angels' wings." But Schubring dissented, believing that the oratorio should be a sermon in music that emphasized the moral aspects of the Old Testament texts and related them to Christ in the New Testament, with any dramatic realism being inappropriate in a sacred work, and as a result of these disagreements the project was abandoned.

In 1845, however, the Birmingham Festival committee asked Mendelssohn him if he would compose a new oratorio for the following year's Festival. The composer had attended previous Festivals in 1837 and in 1840, when his works had met with great success, and he accepted the new commission, writing: "Since some time I have begun an oratorio and hope I shall be able to bring it out for the first time at your Festival; but it is still a mere beginning and I cannot yet give you any promise as to my finishing it in time." He therefore began to work with great alacrity on *Elijah*, this time compiling the libretto himself from Martin Luther's German translation of the texts (the first performances were sung in the English of the King James Bible in the translation prepared by William Bartholomew).

The oratorio, conducted by the composer himself, was first performed on August 26, 1846, at the summer music festival in Birmingham, England, by a chorus of 271 singers accompanied by an orchestra of 125 players. The Town Hall Auditorium, which seated three thousand, was filled to overflowing with a nearly hysterically enthusiastic audience that forced the repetition of four choruses and four arias by their "shouts of exultation." Mendelssohn wrote to his brother: "No work of mine went so admirably the first time of execution, or was received with such enthusiasm by both the musicians and the audience." "The last note of *Elijah* was drowned in a long-continued unanimous volley of plaudits, vociferous, and deafening," gushed the *London Time's* music correspondent in describing the crowning achievement of Mendelssohn's incredibly successful career. "Mendelssohn . . . descended from his position on the conductor's rostrum; but he was compelled to appear again, amidst renewed cheers and huzzas. Never was there a more complete triumph; never a more thorough and speedy recognition of a great work of art."

Elijah received innumerable performances in the years following its premiere, and its gigantic popularity continued throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth—the work was performed at the famous Three Choirs Festival every year from 1847 to 1930. The post-war period, however, saw a substantial reaction against Mendelssohn's music, perhaps, in part, because of the German anti-Semitism of the 1930s and 1940s, but perhaps also because some critics considered Mendelssohn's life too comfortable, and therefore his music, not born of struggle, stress, and strife, decidedly facile and inferior. Because of these factors, a decline in the esteem in which the oratorio as a musical genre was held, and the work's over-familiarity, *Elijah* nearly vanished for a time from the ranks of the regularly-performed choral literature; recently, however, Mendelssohn's music has come to be viewed in a more even light, and performers and audiences alike have

rediscovered the enduring treasures of this magnificent oratorio: the creative and colorful orchestration, the freshness and forcefulness of the counterpoint, the variety of the dramatic recitatives, the pure loveliness of the best-beloved arias and choruses, and above all, the power of the story told through Mendelssohn's gripping and dynamic depiction of Elijah himself.

The unusual and highly dramatic opening of *Elijah* consists not of the usual overture but of a brief prologue introduced by the grave declamation by trombones of four ominous chords (this repeated-note motif is associated with the presence of God throughout the oratorio); the wild and fiery prophet Elijah proclaims the curse of a prolonged drought. An overture now follows, climbing from the depths of the lower strings into the upper reaches of the higher strings and winds, introducing music associated with the curse of the drought that reappears in the chorus, "Yet doth the Lord see it not," and displaying the musical symbolism typical of the oratorio as a whole. The overture leads directly into a contrapuntal chorus, after which a soprano-alto duet with a chant-like choral accompaniment, a recitative and a tenor aria (the well-known and very popular "If with all your hearts ye truly seek me"), and a second chorus express the people's increasing alarm and despair over the deadly drought and famine. The agitation of these events is contrasted with the subdued musical portrait of the isolated prophet, who is now directed by an angel to a wilderness-dwelling widow who will provide for his needs during the drought. In a lush double chorus, Elijah is assured that angels will protect him. Elijah restores life to the widow's dead son, and in the glorious chorus that follows, "Blessed are the men who fear Him," Mendelssohn sets the rising of light through darkness to ascending triads.

The dramatic climax of the oratorio's first part occurs on Mt. Carmel. The leading role in the drama is actually played by the chorus, which embodies the people, as it does in Handel's oratorios. Elijah returns to Israel to accost King Ahab, and there ensues a climactic confrontation between Elijah, the true prophet of the one God, and the priests of the false god Baal. Baal's worshippers become more and more frantic, desperate for an answer to their cries, and the music becomes increasingly frenzied. The strength of purpose in Elijah's bass aria is contrasted with the despairing—and unanswered—cries of the chorus, "Hear and answer, Baal." Following the famous chorus of comfort, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord," God sends, in response to his prophet's prayers, a flood of flames to earth to consume Elijah's offering, the people acknowledge God as the one Lord, and the prophets of Baal are slain. Once the people have asked for forgiveness of their sins of idolatry, God ends the drought with a downpour. The first part of the oratorio concludes with the joyful chorus of praise, "Thanks be to God!" as the waters gather and rush through the orchestra and over the thirteenth land.

In the second part of the oratorio, dealing with the indictment, escape, and ascension to heaven of Elijah, the story unfolds equally powerfully. The plaintive soprano aria with which this part begins leads to a contrastingly strong chorus, after which Elijah castigates King Ahab for his apostasy, the wicked Queen Jezebel inflames the crowd against Elijah, and the prophet is advised to flee from the murderous wrath of the people. Elijah, alone in the wilderness, sings in his despair the finest and best-known aria in the oratorio, "It is enough." He is consoled by angels in two of the work's most-loved and most-often-performed pieces, the women's trio, "Lift thine eyes," and the beautifully-flowing chorus, "He watching over Israel," and then, summoned by an angel, he makes his way to Mount Horeb to wait for the Lord to reveal His presence. Mendelssohn initially wished to omit the comforting alto aria that follows, thinking it "too sweet," but "O

rest in the Lord" has achieved great popularity with the public and leads to a relatively austere chorus that provides welcome contrast.

At last God the Lord passes by Elijah on the mountain, accompanied by some of the oratorio's most vividly descriptive music that paints in sound the fury of wind, earthquake, and fire. Mendelssohn contrasts this turbulence with a starkly simple setting of the text, "and in that still voice, onward came the Lord." The refreshed and strengthened Elijah is sent back to the ever-unfaithful people of Israel to the music of an expansive laudatory hymn for women's quartet and chorus, "Holy is God the Lord;" the chorus sings of the vengeance the prophet takes in the Lord's name; and after a brief choral recitative, the mighty prophet, in a fiery chariot, is caught up to heaven in the midst of an orchestral whirlwind. The librettist Schubring's final textual interpolations are a choral acclamation of Christ as the "new Elijah" who will come at the end of time, and an invitation, offered by the quartet of soloists, to come to Him, the Living Water. The oratorio closes with a three-section choral hymn of praise to the Lord, the Creator, in which a fugue appears between two generally chordal sections, and as God fills the heavens with glory, Mendelssohn fills his listeners' ears and hearts with his glorious music!

There appears to be no general agreement among scholars on the reason for Mendelssohn's choice of the prophet, Elijah, as the subject of what is probably his greatest work. Perhaps he wanted to balance his "New Testament" oratorio (*St. Paul*) with an Old Testament work (as an admirer of Handel's oratorios, he probably wanted, like Handel, to base a work on a prominent Old

Testament figure, and found that Elijah was one of the only great Old Testament heroes about whom Handel had *not* already composed an oratorio!). Perhaps Mendelssohn was drawn to Elijah's tempestuous and dynamic character and story precisely because they would lend themselves particularly well to treatment in a "Handelian" oratorio. Maybe *Elijah* reflects the conflicts the composer experienced during his stormy years (1841-44) in Berlin, much as *St. Paul* can be seen as an allegory of Mendelssohn's own family history. It might be that Elijah's courage, strength, and perseverance despite suffering persecution, loneliness, and despair were noble qualities that the composer admired and desired. Queen Victoria and her consort, Prince Albert, were great friends of Mendelssohn's, and were also present at the performance described by Edgar Alfred Bowring; was the Prince grasping something at the core of Mendelssohn's relationship with the fierce Old Testament prophet when he wrote the following note in Mendelssohn's copy of the oratorio's libretto?

"To the Noble Artist who, surrounded by the Baal-worship of debased art, has been able, by his genius and science, to preserve faithfully, like another Elijah, the worship of true art, and once more to accustom our ear, amid the whirl of empty, frivolous sounds, to the pure tones of sympathetic feeling and legitimate harmony: to the Great Master, who makes us conscious of the unity of his conception, through the whole of his creation, from the soft whispering to the mighty raging of the elements. Inscribed in grateful remembrance by Albert."

SOLO ARTISTS

Soprano Sara Hedgpeth currently makes her home in Augsburg, Germany. Originally from California, Ms. Hedgpeth received her musical training at the University of Washington. Her long affiliation with OS/SCS stems back to 1977; first as a member of the chorus and later as soloist in such works as Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's *Bm Mass* and numerous cantatas. In February 2005 she appeared with Orchestra Seattle singing Wagner's *Immolation Scene*. Throughout the 80's Ms. Hedgpeth appeared as soloist with many Northwest musical ensembles. She sang with the Seattle Opera Chorus for four years and made her solo debut there in the 1992 production of *The Ballad of Baby Doe*. Ms. Hedgpeth made her New York debut as Sieglinde in *Die Walküre* and in 1998 relocated to Augsburg, Germany. She has performed roles in Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelungen* in Augsburg, Stuttgart, Mannheim and Nürnberg and recently added to her repertoire the role of Leonore in Beethoven's *Fidelio*. Ms. Hedgpeth also performs regularly with Theater Augsburg; her recent outings there include roles in *Jenfa*, *Macbeth*, *Maria Stuarda* and *Der Zigeunerbaron*. In addition to her operatic outings, Ms. Hedgpeth is a frequent performer in Augsburg's recital, concert and church music scene, performing repertoire varying from C.P.E. Bach to Bruckner to spirituals.

Tenor Stephen Wall has appeared frequently with Orchestra Seattle and the Seattle Chamber Singers since 1985. He has been featured in leading and supporting roles with Seattle Opera, Portland Opera, Utah Festival Opera, and Tacoma Opera, and has soloed with the symphonies of Seattle, Vancouver, Spokane, Everett, Bellevue, Yakima, Pendleton, Great Falls and Sapporo (Japan). Mr. Wall appears on the OSSCS recording of Handel's *Messiah* and sang the role of Joe in Seattle Opera's heralded production of *La Fanciulla del West*.

Melissa Plagemann, mezzo-soprano, performs frequently throughout the Pacific Northwest, and has appeared with some of the area's finest ensembles, including the Seattle Symphony, Tacoma Opera, Orchestra Seattle, Seattle Opera Guild, Skagit Opera, the Seattle Choral

Company, Kitsap Opera, and NOISE, among others. Recent opera roles for Ms. Plagemann include Hänsel in Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*, Carmen in semi-staged scenes with the Seattle Symphony, Dorabella in *Così fan Tutte*, Rosina in Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, and Nicklausse in Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. Equally at home on the concert stage, she has performed in several recent productions of Mozart's *Requiem*, as well as Copland's *In the Beginning*, and Saint-Saëns' *Christmas Oratorio*, among others. Ms. Plagemann has a special interest in music of the Baroque era, and has performed several masterpieces of J.S. Bach, including both Passions, the B Minor Mass, and Magnificat in D, as well as several of his Cantatas. She has also been featured at Seattle's annual Town Hall Bach Marathon in Seattle, singing Bach's Cantata #18 and J.C. Bach's solo cantata, *Ach, dass ich Wassers gnug*. Other Baroque oratorio repertoire includes Vivaldi's *Gloria* and *Magnificat*, and, of course, Handel's *Messiah* which she will sing with OSSCS this December.

With a repertoire of over 40 operatic roles, bass-baritone Michael Delos has appeared with the New York City Opera, L'Opera de Monte Carlo, Chicago Opera Theater, Seattle Opera, Portland Opera, Hawaii Opera and Vancouver (B. C.) Opera, among many others. Much in demand as a concert performer, Mr. Delos has sung with the Detroit Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Oregon Symphony, Calgary Symphony as well as the Toyko Nihon Shinsei Symphony and the Osaka Symphony. He also has been a featured soloist with the Peter Britt Festival and the prestigious Carmel Bach Festival. His wide repertoire includes Stravinsky's *Les Noces*, Handel's *Saul*, *Judas Maccabeus* and *Messiah*, the Bach Passions and the Beethoven Ninth Symphony and *Missa Solemnis*. Mr. Delos serves on the voice faculty of the Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle and the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, and is the Bass soloist with Temple Beth Am in Seattle. He also is active in the recording industry, where his voice can be heard on the soundtracks of 'The Celestine Prophecy', 'Pirates of the Caribbean 3', and 'Ghost Rider', in addition to video games -- most recently in 'Halo 3'.

LIBRETTO

PART I

Introduction – *Elijah*

As God the Lord of Israel liveth, before whom I stand: There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

Overture

Chorus – *The People*

Help, Lord! Wilt Thou quite destroy us!

The harvest now is over, the summer days are gone, and yet no power cometh to help us! Will then the Lord be no more God in Zion?

The deep affords no water! And the rivers are exhausted! The suckling's tongue now cleaveth for thirst to his mouth! The infant children ask for bread! And there is no one breaketh it to feed them!

Duet with Chorus

The People

Lord, bow Thine ear to our prayer

Two Women

Zion spreadeth her hands for aid, and there is neither help nor comfort.

Recitative – *Obadiah*

Ye people, rend your hearts and not your garments for your transgressions: the prophet Elijah hath sealed the heavens through the word of God. I therefore say to ye: forsake your idols, return to God; for He is slow to anger, and merciful, and kind, and gracious, and repenteth Him of the evil.

Aria – *Obadiah*

"If with all your hearts ye truly seek Me, ye shall ever surely find Me." Thus saith our God. Oh! that I knew where I might find Him, that I might even come before His presence!

Chorus – *The People*

Yet doth the Lord see it not, He mocketh at us; His curse hath fallen down upon us, His wrath will pursue us till He destroy us.

For He, the Lord our God, He is a jealous God, and He visiteth all the fathers' sins on the children to the third and the fourth generation of them that hate Him.

His mercies on thousands fall, on all them that love him and keep his commandments.

Recitative – *An Angel*

Elijah! Get thee hence, Elijah! Depart and turn thee eastward: thither hide thee by Cherith's brook. There shalt thou drink its waters; and the Lord thy God hath commanded the ravens to feed thee there: so do according unto His word.

Chorus – *Angels*

For He shall give His angels charge over thee, that they shall protect thee in all the ways thou goest, that their hands shall uphold and guide thee, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Recitative – *An Angel*

Now Cherith's brook is dried up, Elijah, arise and depart, and get thee to Zarephath, thither abide: for the Lord hath commanded a widow there to sustain thee. And the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruise of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.

Duet

The Widow

What have I to do with thee, O man of God? Art thou come to me, to call my sin unto remembrance? To slay my son art thou come hither? Help me, man of God! My man is sick, and his sickness is so sore, that there is no breath left in him. I go mourning all the day long, I lie down and weep at night. See mine affliction! Be thou the orphan's helper! Help my son! There is no breath left in him!

Elijah

Give me thy son! Turn unto her, O Lord, my God; turn unto her! Oh turn in mercy! In mercy help this widow's son! For Thou art gracious, and full of compassion, and plenteous in mercy and truth. Lord, my God, let the spirit of this child return, that he again may live!

The Widow

Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? There is no breath in him!

Elijah

Lord, my God, let the spirit of this child return, that he again may live!

The Widow

Shall the dead arise and praise thee?

Elijah

Lord, my God, let the spirit of this child return, that he again may live!

The Widow

The Lord hath heard thy prayer, the soul of my son reviveth; my son reviveth!

Elijah

Now behold, thy son liveth!

The Widow

Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that His word in thy mouth is the truth. What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits for me?

Elijah

Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, love him with all thine heart...

The Widow

...and with all my soul and with all my might. Oh blessed are they who fear Him!

Elijah

...and with all thy soul and with all thy might. Oh blessed are they who fear Him!

Chorus

Blessed are the men who fear Him, they ever walk in the way of peace. Through darkness riseth light, light to the upright. He is gracious, compassionate; He is righteous.

Recitative & Chorus

Elijah

As God the Lord of Sabaoth liveth, before whom I stand, three years this day fulfilled, I will shew myself unto Ahab; and the Lord will then send rain again upon the earth.

Ahab

Art thou Elijah! Art thou he that troubleth Israel?

The People

Thou art Elijah, thou he that troubleth Israel!

Elijah

I never troubled Israel's peace: it is thou, Ahab, and all thy father's house. Ye have forsaken God's commands, and thou hast follow'd Baalim. Now send, and gather to me the whole of Israel unto Mount Carmel; there summon the prophets of Baal, and also the prophets of the groves who are feasted at Jezebel's table. Then we shall see whose God is the Lord.

The People

And then we shall see whose God is the Lord.

Elijah

Rise then, ye priests of Baal; select and slay a bullock, and put no fire under it; uplift your voices and call the god ye worship; and I then will call upon the Lord Jehovah; and the god who by fire shall answer, let him be God.

The People

Yea, and the God who by fire shall answer, let him be God.

Elijah

Call first upon your god, your numbers are many. I, even I only, remain one prophet of the Lord. Invoke your forest gods, and mountain deities.

Chorus – *Prophets of Baal*

Baal, we cry to thee, hear and answer us! Heed the sacrifice we offer! Hear us, Baal! Hear, mighty god! Baal, oh answer us! Baal, let thy flames fall and extirpate the foe!

Recitative & Chorus

Elijah

Call him louder, for he is a god! He talketh, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey; or, peradventure, he sleepeth: so awaken him! Call him louder, call him louder!

Prophets of Baal

Hear our cry, O Baal, now arise! Wherefore slumber?

Recitative & Chorus

Elijah

Call him louder! He heareth not. With knives and lancets cut yourselves after your manner. Leap upon the altar ye have made, call him and prophesy! Not a voice will answer you: none will listen, none heed you.

Prophets of Baal

Baal! Baal! Hear and answer, Baal! Mark how the scorner derideth us!

Elijah

Draw near, all ye people, come to me!

Aria – *Elijah*

Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, this day let it be known that Thou art God, and that I am Thy servant! Lord God of Abraham! Oh shew to all this people that I have done these things according to Thy word. Oh hear me, Lord, and answer me! Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, oh hear me and answer me, and shew this people that Thou art Lord God. And let their hearts again be turned!

Quartet – *Angels*

Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee. He never will suffer the righteous to fall: He is at thy right hand. Thy mercy, Lord, is great, and far above the heavens. Let none be made ashamed, that wait upon Thee!

Recitative & Chorus

Elijah

O Thou, who makest Thine angels spirits; Thou, whose ministers are flaming fires: let them now descend!

The People

The fire descends from heaven! The flames consume his offering! Before Him upon your faces fall! The Lord is God, the Lord is God! O Israel hear! Our God is one Lord, and we will have no other gods before the Lord.

Elijah

Take all the prophets of Baal, and let not one of them escape you. Bring them down to Kishon's brook, and there let them be slain.

The People

Take all the prophets of Baal and let not one of them escape us: bring all and slay them!

Aria – *Elijah*

Is not His word like a fire, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock into pieces? For God is angry with the wicked every day. And if the wicked turn not, the Lord will whet His sword; and He hath bent His bow, and made it ready.

Arioso – *alto*

Woe, woe unto them who forsake Him! Destruction shall fall upon them, for they have transgressed against Him. Though they are by Him redeemed, yet they have spoken falsely against Him. Though they are by Him redeemed, even from Him have they fled. Woe unto them! Woe unto them!

Recitative & Chorus

Obadiah

O man of God, help thy people! Among the idols of the Gentiles, are there any that can command the rain, or cause the heavens to give their showers? The Lord our God alone can do these things.

Elijah

O Lord, Thou hast overthrown Thine enemies and destroyed them. Look down on us from heaven, O Lord; regard the distress of Thy people. Open the heavens and send us relief. Help, help Thy servant now, O God!

The People

Open the heavens and send us relief. Help, help Thy servant now, O God!

Elijah

Go up now, child, and look toward the sea. Hath my prayer been heard by the Lord?

The Child

There is nothing. The heavens are as brass, they are as brass above me.

Elijah

When the heavens are closed up because they have sinned against Thee: yet if they pray and confess Thy name, and turn away from their sins when Thou dost afflict them: then hear from heaven, and forgive the sin. Help, send Thy servant help, O God!

The People

Then hear from heaven, and forgive the sin. Help, send Thy servant help, O God!

Elijah

Go up again, and still look towards the sea.

The Child

There is nothing. The earth is as iron under me.

Elijah

Hearst thou no sound of rain? Seest thou nothing arise from the deep?

The Child

No: there is nothing.

Elijah

Have respect to the prayer of Thy servant, O Lord, my God! Unto Thee will I cry, Lord, my rock, be not silent to me! And Thy great mercies remember, Lord.

The Child

Behold, a little cloud ariseth now from the waters; it is like a man's hand! The heavens are black with cloud and with wind; the storm rusheth louder and louder!

The People

Thanks be to God for all His mercies.

Elijah

Thanks be to God! For He is gracious; and His mercy endureth for evermore!

Chorus - The People

Thanks be to God! He laveth the thirsty land. The waters gather, they rush along, they are lifting their voices. The stormy billows are high, their fury is mighty. But the Lord is above them and almighty.

PART II

Aria - soprano

Hear ye, Israel, hear what the Lord speaketh: "Oh, hadst thou heeded my commandments!" Who hath believed our report? To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One to him oppressed by tyrants, thus saith the Lord:

"I am He that comforteth. Be not afraid, for I am thy God! I will strengthen thee! Say, who art thou, that thou art afraid of a man that shall die; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, who hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the earth's foundations? Say, who art thou?"

Chorus

"Be not afraid," saith God the Lord, "be not afraid, thy help is near!" God, the Lord, thy God, saith unto thee: "Be not afraid!" Though thousands languish and fall beside thee, and tens of thousands around thee perish, yet still it shall not come nigh thee.

Recitative & Chorus

Elijah

The Lord hath exalted thee from among the people: and o'er His people Israel hath made thee king. But thou, Ahab, hast done evil to provoke Him to anger above all that were before thee as if it had been a light thing for thee to walk in the sins of Jeroboam. Thou hast made a grove and altar to Baal, and served him and worshipped him. Thou hast killed the righteous, and also taken possession. And the Lord shall smite all Israel, as a reed is shaken in water. And he shall give Israel up, and thou shalt know He is Lord.

The Queen

Have ye not heard he hath prophesied against all Israel?

The People

We heard it with our ears.

The Queen

Hath he not prophesied also against the king of Israel?

The People

We heard it with our ears.

The Queen

And why hath he spoken in the name of the Lord? Doth Ahab govern the kingdom of Israel, while Elijah's power is greater than the king's? The gods do so to me, and more, if, by tomorrow about this time, I make not his life as the life of one whom he hath sacrificed at the brook of Kishon.

The People

He shall perish!

The Queen

Hath he not destroyed Baal's prophets?

The People

He shall perish!

The Queen

Yes, by sword he destroyed them all!

The People

He destroyed them all!

The Queen

He also closed the heavens!

The People

He also closed the heavens!

The Queen

And called down a famine upon the land.

The People

And called down a famine upon the land.

The Queen

So go ye forth, and seize Elijah, for he is worthy to die. Slaughter him, do unto him as he hath done!

Chorus - The People

Woe to him! He shall perish, for he closed the heavens. And why hath he spoken in the name of the Lord? Let the guilty prophet perish! He hath spoken falsely against our land and us, as we have heard with our ears. So go ye forth: seize on him! He shall die!

Recitative

Obadiah

Man of God, now let my words be precious in thy sight. Thus saith Jezebel; "Elijah is worthy to die." So the mighty gather against thee, and they have prepared a net for thy steps; that they may seize thee, that they may slay thee. Arise then, and hasten for thy life; to the wilderness journey. The Lord thy God doth go with thee: He will not fail thee, He will not forsake thee. Now begone and bless me also!

Elijah

Though stricken, they have not grieved. Tarry here my servant: the Lord be with thee. I journey hence to the wilderness.

Aria - Elijah

It is enough! O Lord, now take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers! I desire to live no longer: now let me die, for my days are but vanity. I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, for the children of Israel have broken Thy covenant, and thrown down Thine altars, and slain all Thy prophets, slain them with the sword. And I, even I only am left: and they seek my life to take it away! It is enough! O Lord, now take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers! Now let me die, Lord, take away my life!

Aria - tenor

See, now he sleepeth beneath a juniper tree in the wilderness, but the angels of the Lord encamp round about all them that fear Him.

Trio - Angels

Lift thine eyes to the mountains, whence cometh help. Thy help cometh from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He hath said, thy foot shall not be moved, thy Keeper will never slumber.

Chorus

He, watching over Israel, slumbers not, nor sleeps. Shouldst thou, walking in grief, languish, He will quicken thee.

Recitative

An Angel

Arise, Elijah, for thou hast a long journey before thee. Forty days and forty nights shalt thou go, to Horeb, the mount of God.

Elijah

O Lord, I have labored in vain! Yea, I have spent my strength for naught! Oh, that Thou wouldst rend the heavens, that Thou wouldst come down! That the mountains would flow down at thy presence, to make Thy name known to Thine adversaries through the wonders of Thy works! O Lord, why hast Thou made them to err from Thy ways? And hardened their hearts, that they do not fear Thee? Oh, that I now might die!

Aria - An Angel

O rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him, and He shall give thee thy heart's desires. Commit thy way unto Him, and trust in Him, and fret not thyself because of evildoers.

Chorus

He that shall endure to the end, shall be saved.

Recitative

Elijah

Night falleth round me, O Lord! Be Thou not far from me! Hide not Thy face, O Lord, from me, my soul is thirsting for Thee, as a thirsty land.

An Angel

Arise now, get thee without, stand on the mount before the Lord: for there His glory will appear, and shine on thee! Thy face must be veiled, for He draweth near.

Chorus

Behold, God the Lord passed by! And a mighty wind rent the mountains around, brake in pieces the rocks, brake them before the Lord. But yet the Lord was not in the tempest. Behold, God the Lord passed by! And the sea was upheaved, and the earth was shaken. But yet the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there came a fire. But yet the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there came a still small voice. And in that still voice onward came the Lord.

Recitative & Chorus*alto*

Above Him stood the Seraphim, and one cried to another:

Seraphim

Holy, holy, holy is God the Lord, the Lord Sabaoth! Now His glory hath filled all the earth.

Chorus & Recitative*Chorus*

Go, return upon thy way! For the Lord yet hath left Him seven thousand in Israel, knees which have not bowed to Baal. Go, return upon thy way! Thus the Lord commandeth.

Elijah

I go on my way in the strength of the Lord. For Thou art my Lord; and I will suffer for Thy sake. My heart is therefore glad, my glory rejoiceth; and my flesh shall also rest in hope.

Arioso – Elijah

For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but Thy kindness shall not depart from me; neither shall the covenant of Thy peace be removed.

Chorus

Then did Elijah the prophet break forth like a fire; his words appeared like burning torches. Mighty kings by him were overthrown. He stood on the mount of Sinai and heard the judgments of the future, and in Horeb its vengeance. And when the Lord would take him away to heaven, lo! There came a fiery chariot with fiery horses, and he went by a whirlwind to heaven.

Aria – tenor

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in their heavenly Father's realm. Joy on their head shall be for everlasting, and all sorrow and mourning shall flee away for ever.

Recitative – soprano

Behold, God hath sent Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children unto their fathers; lest the Lord shall come and smite the earth with a curse.

Chorus

But the Lord from the north hath raised one, who from the rising of the sun shall call upon His Name, and come on princes. Behold, my servant and mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth! On him the spirit of God shall rest: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of might and of counsel, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord: "I have raised one from the north whom from the rising on my name shall call."

Quartet

O come, everyone that thirsteth, O come to the waters, O come unto Him! O hear, and your souls shall live for ever.

Chorus

And then shall your light break forth as the light of morning breaketh: and your health shall speedily spring forth then: and the glory of the Lord ever shall reward you.

Lord, our Creator, how excellent Thy Name is in all the nations! Thou fillest heaven with glory.

Amen.

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