

MENDELSSOHN

(1809-1847)

ELIJAH

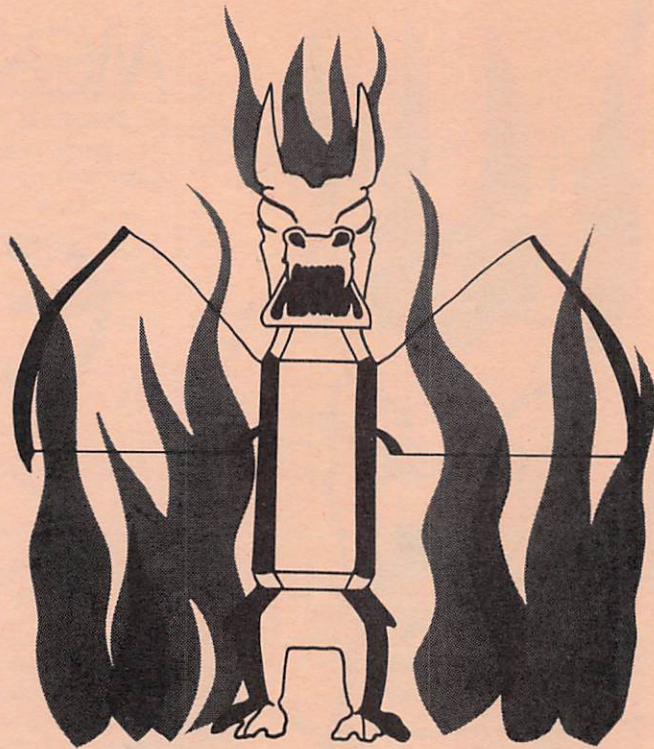


Seattle Chamber Singers
and the
Broadway Chamber Symphony
George Shangrow, conductor

March 19, 1982

8:00 PM

First Presbyterian Church



Steven Tachell
Elijah

Jacalyn Schneider
soprano solos

Stephanie Field
mezzo-soprano solos

Paul Benningfield
tenor solos

Incidental Characters:
Ann Erickson-Duncan — the widow
Paula Bridges — the youth

SEATTLE CHAMBER SINGERS
assisted by members of the Choir of the Sound
and
THE BROADWAY CHAMBER SYMPHONY



GEORGE SHANGROW
Conductor and musical director



MENDELSSOHN

(1809-1847)

ELIJAH

PART I

- INTRODUCTION. As God the Lord (*Baritone*)
OVERTURE
1. CHORUS. Help, Lord!
 2. DUET (*Soprano and Contralto*) WITH CHORUS. Lord, bow thine ear
 3. RECITATIVE (*Tenor*). Ye people, rend your hearts
 4. ARIA (*Tenor*). If with all your hearts
 5. CHORUS. Yet doth the Lord
 6. RECITATIVE (*Contralto*). Elijah, get thee hence
 7. DOUBLE QUARTET (OR CHORUS). For He shall give His angels
 - 7A. RECITATIVE (*Contralto*). Now Cherith's brook
 8. { RECITATIVE (*Soprano*). What have I do to with thee
RECITATIVE (*Bass*). Give me thy son
 9. CHORUS. Blessed are the men who fear Him
 10. RECITATIVE (*Baritone*) WITH CHORUS. As God the Lord of Sabaoth
 11. CHORUS. Baal, we cry to thee
 12. { RECITATIVE (*Baritone*). Call him louder!
CHORUS. Hear our cry, O Baal!
 13. { RECITATIVE (*Baritone*). Call him louder!
CHORUS. Baal! Baal!
 14. RECITATIVE AND AIR (*Baritone*). Draw near, all ye people
 15. CHORUS. Cast thy burden upon the Lord (CHORALE)
 16. { RECITATIVE (*Baritone*). O Thou, who makest thine angels spirits
CHORUS. The fire descends
 17. ARIA (*Baritone*). Is not His word like a fire?
 18. ARIOSO (*Contralto*). Woe unto them who forsake Him!
 19. RECITATIVE (*Tenor*). O man of God, help thy people!
 - 19A. RECITATIVE (*Baritone*) WITH CHORUS. O Lord, Thou has overthrown thine enemies
 20. CHORUS. Thanks be to God!

PART II

21. ARIA (*Soprano*). Hear ye, Israel!
22. CHORUS. Be not afraid
23. RECITATIVE (*Baritone*). WITH CHORUS The Lord hath exalted thee
24. CHORUS. Woe to him!
25. RECITATIVE (*Tenor and Baritone*). Man of God
26. ARIA (*Baritone*). It is enough
27. RECITATIVE (*Tenor*). See, now he sleepeth
28. TRIO (OR CHORUS). Lift thine eyes
29. CHORUS. He, watching over Israel
30. { RECITATIVE (*Contralto*). Arise, Elijah
RECITATIVE (*Baritone*). O Lord, I have labored in vain
31. ARIA (*Contralto*). O rest in the Lord
32. CHORUS. He that shall endure
33. { RECITATIVE (*Baritone*). Night falleth round me
RECITATIVE (*Soprano*). Arise, now!
34. CHORUS. Behold, God the Lord
35. RECITATIVE (*Contralto*), QUARTET AND CHORUS. Holy is God the Lord
36. { CHORUS. Go, return upon thy way
RECITATIVE (*Baritone*). I go on my way
37. ARIOSO (*Baritone*). For the mountains shall depart
38. CHORUS. Then did Elijah
39. ARIA (*Tenor*). Then shall the righteous shine forth
40. RECITATIVE (*Soprano*). Behold, God hath sent Elijah
41. CHORUS. But the Lord from the north
42. QUARTET (OR CHORUS). O come, every one that thirsteth
43. CHORUS. And then shall your light break forth

ELIJAH

The libretto for *Elijah*, originally in German, was compiled by Schubring from the Lutheran bible (the sources are noted below). It was translated into English by William Bartholomew ('the translator *par excellence*,' Mendelssohn called him), who took immense pains to keep to the Scriptural version as far as possible.

FIRST PART

Introduction: Recitative—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.

(*I Kings XVII 1*)

Overture

1. 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?

(*Jeremiah VIII 19, 20*)

Recitative Chorus

The deeps afford 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!

(*I Kings XVII 7 Lamentations IV 4*)

2. Duet with Chorus—The People

Lord! bow Thine ear to our prayer!

Duet (Soprano, Contralto)

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

(*Psalms LXXXVI 1. Lamentations I 17*)

3. 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.

(*Joel II 12, 13*)

4. Air—Tenor

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.

(*Deut. IV 29. Job XXIII 3*)

5. 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—fall on all them that love Him, and keep His commandments.

(*Deut. XXVIII 22. Exodus XX 5, 6*)

6. Recitative—An Angel (Contralto)

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.

(*I Kings XVII 3, 4*)

7. Semi-Chorus—Angels

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

(*Psalms XCI 11, 12*)

Recitative—An Angel (Contralto)

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

(*I Kings XVII 7, 9, 14*)

8. Recitative, Air and Duet—The Widow (Soprano)

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 thither? Help me, man of God! my son 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, O 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 show 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, O 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!

—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 to me?

—Both

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, love him with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. O blessed are they who fear him!

(*I Kings XVII 17-19, 21-4. Job X 15. Psalms XXXVIII 6; VI 6; X 14; LXXXVI 15, 16; LXXXVIII 10; CXVI 12. Deut. VI 5. Psalm CXXVIII 1*)

9. Chorus

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

(*Psalms CXXVIII 1; CXII 1, 4*)

10. Recitative—Elijah, Ahab, and Chorus

—Elijah

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

—Ahab

Art thou Elijah? are thou he that troubleth Israel?

—Chorus

Thou art Elijah, 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 command: and thou hast followed 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.

Chorus

And then we shall see whose God is God 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 on the Lord Jehovah: and the God who by fire shall answer, let him be God.

—Chorus

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.

(*I Kings XVIII 1, 15, 17-19, 22-5*)

11. Chorus—Priests of Baal

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

12. Recitative—Elijah

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

Chorus—Priests of Baal

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

13. Recitative—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.

Chorus—Priests of Baal

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

(*I Kings XVIII 26-9*)

14. *Recitative and Air*—Elijah

Draw near, all ye people: come to me!
Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel! this day let it be known that
Thou art God; and I am Thy servant! O show to all this people that
I have done these things according to Thy word! O hear me Lord, and
answer me; and show this people that Thou art Lord God; and let their
hearts again be turned!

(*I Kings XVIII 30, 36, 37*)

15. *Chorus*—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.

(*Psalms LV 22; XVI 8; CVIII 4; XXV 3*)

16. *Recitative*—Elijah

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

(*Psalms CIV 4*)

Chorus—The People

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

(*I Kings XVIII 38, 39. Deut. V 7; VI 4*)

Recitative—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.

Chorus—The People

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

(*I Kings XVIII 40*)

17. *Air*—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.

(*Jeremiah XXIII 29. Psalm VII 11, 12*)

18. *Arioso* (Contralto)

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

(*Hosea VII 13*)

19. *Recitative with 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 towards the sea. Hath my prayer been heard
by the Lord?

—The Youth

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 from their sin when
Thou didst 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 Lord!

—Elijah

Go up again, and still look toward the sea.

—The Youth

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 Youth

No; there is nothing.

—Elijah

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

—The Youth

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

—The People

20. 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!

(*Jeremiah XIV 22. II Chronicles VI 19, 26, 27. Deut. XXVIII 23. Psalms XXVIII 1
CVI 1; I Kings XVIII 43-5. Psalm XCIII 3-4*)

INTERMISSION

SECOND PART

21. *Air* (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 whom
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? Be not afraid, for I, thy God, will strengthen thee.'

(*Isaiah XLVIII 1, 18; LIII 1; XLIX 7; XLI 10; LI 12, 13*)

22. *Chorus*

Be not afraid, saith God the Lord. Be not afraid! thy help is near. God,
the Lord thy God, sayeth 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.

(*Isaiah XLI 10. Psalm XCI 7*)

23. *Recitative*—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 an 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 the water; and He shall give Israel up,
and thou shalt know He is the Lord.

(*I Kings XIV 7, 9, 15; XVI 30-3*)

Recitative with Chorus—The Queen

Have ye not heard he hath prophesied against all Israel?

—Chorus

We heard it with our ears.

—The Queen

Hath he not prophesied also against the king of Israel?

—Chorus

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 of them whom he hath sacrificed at the brook
of Kishon!

—Chorus

He shall perish!

—The Queen

Hath he not destroyed Baal's prophets?

—Chorus

He shall perish!

—The Queen

Yea, by the sword he destroyed them all!

—Chorus

He destroyed them all!

—The Queen

He also closed the heavens!

—Chorus

He also closed the heavens!

—The Queen

And called down a famine upon the land.

—Chorus

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

24. Woe to him, he shall perish; 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!

(*Jeremiah XXXVI 9, 11. I Kings XVIII 10; XXI 7. Ecclesiasticus XLVIII 2, 3*)

25. *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.

(*II Kings I 1, 3. Jeremiah V 3; XXVI 11. Psalm LIX 3. I Kings XIX 3, 4. Deut. XXXI 6. Exodus XII 32. I Samuel XVII 37*)

26. *Air*—Elijah

It is enough; O Lord, now take 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.

(*Job VII 16. I Kings XIX 4, 10*)

27. *Recitative* (Tenor)

See, now he sleepeth beneath a juniper tree in the wilderness: and there be angels of the Lord encamped round about all them that fear Him.

(*I Kings XIX 5. Psalm XXXIV 7*)

28. *Three-part Boys' Choir*—The 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.

(*Psalm CXXI 1-3*)

29. *Chorus*—Angels

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

(*Psalm CXXI 4; CXXXVIII 7*)

30. *Recitative*—The Angel (Contralto)

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

(*I Kings XIX 7, 8*)

—Elijah

O Lord, I have laboured in vain; yea, I have spent my strength for nought! O 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? O that I now might die!

(*Isaiah XLIX 4; LXIV 1, 2; LXIII 17. I Kings XIX 4*)

31. *Air*—The Angel (Contralto)

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

(*Psalm XXXVII 1, 4, 7*)

32. *Chorus*

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

(*St. Matthew XXIV 13*)

33. *Recitative*—Elijah

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

—The Angel (Soprano)

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.

(*Psalm CXLIII 6, 7. I Kings XIX 11, 13*)

34. *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.

(*I Kings XIX 11, 12*)

35. *Recitative*—*Semi-chorus and Chorus*

Above Him stood the Seraphim, and one cried to another: Holy, holy, holy is God the Lord—the Lord Sabaoth! Now His glory hath filled all the earth.

(*Isaiah VI 2, 3*)

36. *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.

(*I Kings XIX 15, 18*)

Recitative—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.

(*Psalm LXXI 16; XVI 9*)

37. *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.

(*Isaiah LIV 10*)

38. *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 judgements of the future; and in Horeb, his 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.

(*Ecclesiasticus XLVIII 1, 6, 7. II Kings II 1, 11*)

39. *Air* (Tenor)

Thou shalt 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.

(*St. Matthew XIII 43. Isaiah LI 11*)

40. *Recitative* (Soprano)

Behold, God hath sent Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Then 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.

(*Malachi IV 5, 6*)

41. *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, who from the rising, on My Name shall call."

(*Isaiah XLI 25; XLII 1; XI 2*)

41a. *Quartet*

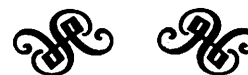
O come everyone that thirsteth, O come to the waters: O come unto Him. O hear, and your souls shall live for ever.

(*Isaiah LV 1, 3*)

42. *Chorus*

And then shall your light break forth as the light of the 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 Thy glory. Amen.

(*Isaiah LVIII 8. Psalm VIII 1*)



Elijah, an oratorio, by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy

Notes by Gary Fladmoe

As music history entered the Romantic era, the musical world witnessed a decline in interest in and quality of the form known as the oratorio. Having been raised to the heights in *The Seasons*, and *The Creation* of Josef Haydn, the form seemed to have run its course, although a few Romantic composers, most notably, Berlioz, Franck, and Liszt did produce some oratorios of significance. It was left for Mendelssohn to restore the oratorio to its once lofty place in the development of music.

Mendelssohn's father considered much of his son's music (which the world now views as masterpieces of the art) too light and imaginative to be considered as a serious effort. He continually suggested that his son might overcome this image of triviality by writing a work of substance, namely an oratorio. Thus, in 1836, *St. Paul* was completed and performed with much success, launching Mendelssohn into an added direction to his compositional career.

St. Paul was performed in Birmingham, England, in 1837, and the English public which had cherished the oratorio since the triumphs there of Handel, received Mendelssohn with open arms. Mendelssohn became equally enchanted with the English and began to contemplate a new oratorio. He corresponded with an old friend, Pastor Julius Schubring, who with Mendelssohn's aid compiled the libretto for a work about Elijah, possibly the greatest of pre-Christian holy men of Israel. Written for the Birmingham Festival, *Elijah* received its premiere under Mendelssohn's direction on August 26, 1846. The first performance met with such audience approval that eight of the selections in the work were encored.

Elijah seemed an ideal character for an oratorio subject. Biblical scholars have viewed Elijah as the Lord's most favored individual. He is supposedly the only personality prior to Christ to have seen God face to face, and the events of his life and holy work are replete with the highest drama. This aspect of his chosen character was not lost on Mendelssohn. While the oratorio is often described as an opera without staging, the musical expression of many oratorios does not always capture the dramatic elements which they intend to portray. Mendelssohn, however, consciously sought to highlight the dramatic impact of *Elijah*. In writing of his work, the composer said, "In such a character as that of Elijah, it seems to me that the dramatic should predominate — the personages should be introduced as acting and speaking with fervor."

The "story" of the oratorio deals with basic human conflicts set into Elijah's unshakable faith in his God, the Lord of Israel. The work begins with Elijah's prophecy of the coming drought in Israel which would punish the people of Israel for forsaking their God. Then, to verify his authority as a prophet of the Lord, Elijah performs a series of miracles and humiliates the priests of the false god, Baal, whom the Israelites had come to worship in place of the Lord. The repudiation of Baal is not without consequence for Elijah. His enemies rise up against him and he suffers great persecution, particularly at the hands of the vengeful Jezebel. The Lord is with Elijah and sends a chariot of fire to earth to take Elijah to heaven. For those familiar with the events depicted, it is not difficult to envision the possibilities for musical imagery.

The text is drawn from a broad base of Biblical history, compiled by Schubring from the Lutheran Bible and translated by William Bartholomew. The books from which material is extracted include I Kings, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Psalms, Joel, Deuteronomy, Job, Exodus, II Chronicles, Isaiah, Ecclesiastes, I Samuel, Matthew, and Malachi. Bartholomew approached the project with the idea of keeping the Scriptures as nearly as intact as possible. Mendelssohn apparently appreciated the success of that effort when he termed Bartholomew the "translator *par excellence*."

The music divides the events into two episodes, the first treating the prophecy of Elijah and the events which confirm the prophecy, and the second dealing with Elijah's tribulation at the hands of Jezebel and his triumphant ascension to heaven in the chariot of fire.

The work opens with a recitative in which Elijah predicts the drought that will strike Israel. The orchestral overture follows, depicting the coming of the drought. Then in a choral recitative followed by a duet with chorus, the people of Israel cry to the Lord for help. Obadiah reminds them of Elijah's prophecy and tells them they must forsake their false gods and worship only the Lord. A tenor aria reveals the beginnings of a search for the Lord. In the chorus that follows the people echo the recognition of God's omnipotence while at the same time feeling helpless in their plight brought on by the drought.

An angel then appears to Elijah and orders him to Cherith's brook where he will have water and be fed by ravens. A chorus of angels assure Elijah of the Lord's protection through them. When the waters of Cherith dry up, the angel reappears and orders Elijah to Zarepath where he will be cared for by a widow until the Lord again allows rain to fall on the earth.

The widow calls upon Elijah to intercede with the Lord on her behalf and bring her young son back to life. Elijah calls on the Lord to let the child live. The prayer is answered, and Elijah tells the widow that all the Lord expects in return is that she love Him with all her heart.

Elijah then prophesies that three years from that day he will come out of hiding, show himself to Ahab, and bear witness to the power of the Lord who will again bring rain to the earth. When Ahab encounters Elijah he asks if he is the one who troubles Israel. Elijah responds that it is the people of Israel through Ahab who bring trouble on themselves through forsaking the Lord and worshipping Baal. Elijah asks that all of Israel gather at Mount Carmel where Elijah will challenge the priest of Baal to prove the identity of the true God.

Then follows a series of numbers which depict the story of the attempts of the priests of Baal to get their idol to send fire to consume a bullock. Repeated attempts fail. Finally Elijah calls upon the Lord to do the same, and the fire comes and consumes the offering. Elijah orders the priest of Baal killed and commands the people to return to the Lord. Obadiah asks Elijah to ask the Lord for rain. Elijah responds. He prays for rain and sends a youth to search the horizon for signs of clouds. When nothing appears, he again reminds the people of their need to repent and give full allegiance to the Lord. A second search of the skies reveals nothing, and Elijah prays again. This time a small cloud appears and grows into a rain storm. Elijah and the people thank the Lord and rejoice.

As the second part opens, the people are reminded of how the Lord responds to their needs when they worship Him and only Him as the one true God. The memory of the people is short, however, and they allow Jezebel to incite them against Elijah. She convinces them that Elijah had really cried out against Israel and should be held responsible for all that the people had suffered. He should be brought to death.

Obadiah warns Elijah who then flees to the wilderness. Life in the wilderness is difficult, and Elijah suffers depression, calling upon the Lord to end his life. An angel again appears and tells Elijah that he has a long journey to Mount Horeb. Elijah despairs that the Lord seems to have let the people stray from His will. The angel assures him that the Lord is with him. Elijah goes to Mount Horeb. There the Lord comes, after tempest, earthquake, and fire, in a still small voice. Elijah is taken to heaven in a chariot of fire which rises in a whirlwind. The people witness the event and recognize that Elijah was truly a man chosen of God who spoke the truth to them. The oratorio closes in a final chorus of praise.

The score stands as a model in combining sublime lyricism with strong dramatic effects. It rises to the heights of eloquence in the realism of the Biblical events, and the arias represent some of the best lyric writing in all oratorio music. One cannot miss the greatness Mendelssohn attained in this work. *Elijah* personifies the pinnacle of the 19th century oratorio.

SEATTLE CHAMBER SINGERS

Sopranos

Paula Bridges
Ingrid Crozier
Miriam Espeseth
Theresa Labrador
Stephanie Lathrop
Victoria Leslie
Margaret Penne
Joan Penney
Liesel Rombouts
Heather Smith
Susanna Walsh
Lynn Wege

Altos

Ann Beller
Stephanie Field
Laila Hammond
Darden Hanson
Georgia Rohrbaugh
Nedra Slauson
Margaret Smith
Kay Verelius

Tenors

John Addison
John Baker
David Call
Ronald Carson
Morris Jellison
Jerry Sams
Peter Schindler
Dean Suess

Basses

Jay Beemster
Gary Jankowski
Jim Ploger
Bob Schilperoort
Sandy Thornton

assisted by member of the
Choir of the Sound
Robert Metzger, conductor

BROADWAY CHAMBER SYMPHONY

Violin I

Michael Scott, concertmaster
Beth Schmidt
Rebecca Soukup
Eileen Lusk
Fritz Klein
Phyllis Rowe
Avron Maletzky
Sandra Sinner

Violin II

Pamela Carson, principal
Donna Weller
Dean Drescher
Jacqueline Cedarholm
Ellen Ziontz
Jane Crigler
Marcia McElvain
Karen Kofoed

Viola

Sam Williams, principal
Beatrice Dolf
Suzanne Ruff
Robert Shangrow
Katherine McWilliams
Shari Peterson
Stephanie Read

Cello

Kara Hunnicutt, principal
Ron Welch
Connie Radke
Joyce Barnum
Rebecca Beyer
Rosemary Berner

String Bass

Christine Howell, principal
Keith Lowe
Walter Barnum

Flute

Janeen Shigley, principal
Carol Wollenberg

Oboe

Lisa Faulkner, principal
Huntley Beyer

Clarinet

Gary Oules, principal
Lawrence Wilkinson

Bassoon

Dan Kerlee, principal
Dave Stangland, guest princ.
Sharon Murphy

French Horn

Maurice Cary, principal
Anita Stokes
Brent Allen
Warren Shaeffer

Trumpet

Gary Fladmoe, principal
Douglas Bergt

Trombone

James Hattori
Phil Heft
Greg James, bass trombone

Tuba

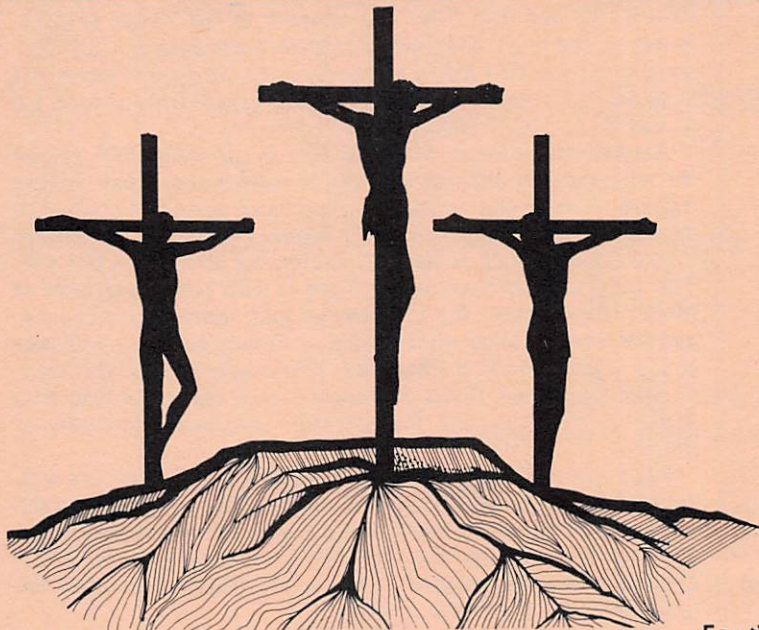
Forrest Newton

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