

The Broadway Symphony and the George Shangrow Chorale
George Shangrow, conductor

PRESENT

Georg Frideric Handel

MESSIAH

December 15 & 18, 1989

Kane Hall, UW

soloists

Catherine Haight, soprano
Sara Hedgpeth, mezzo soprano
Stephen P. Wall, tenor
Brian Box, baritone

There will be two fifteen minute intermissions.

This concert is sponsored by Western Planos & Organs

PERFORMANCE NOTES

by George Shangrow

In performing *Messiah* one must deal with the fact that Handel left very little information on how he wanted things done musically in this huge work. This fact presents conductors with a dichotomy in that a) it's great to be left virtually complete freedom of interpretation, but b) it would be nice to have just a few more indications as to "composer's intent."

Experience with a particular composer as well as with a particular work helps the conductor to extrapolate the composer's intentions even from rather sketchy markings. For my interpretation of *Messiah*, in addition to consulting the many various performance editions by other Handel conductors and scholars, I have relied heavily on a facsimile of Handel's own conducting score for the work. In this score there may be found many pencil scratchings: dynamic changes, names of soloists, deletions, additions, etc.

With this tool in hand and my experience with Handel oratorios at my side, I set off "working" at how to do *Messiah*. First of all one must consider the story and its inherent drama. Jacobi in his book on *Messiah* has stated that the Bach Passions reflect the facts of the story whereas Handel's *Messiah* is the poetic version. While Bach certainly has the artistic elements of great poetry in his composition, I basically agree with Jacobi as to the stylistic differences: Bach was writing for God and the Church, Handel was writing for the public audience and God (in that order, I think.)

Handelian drama finds its expression in the tone painting: the use of melodic, textural, and harmonic devices to evoke the description, character, or feeling of a particular text. The best example of tone painting in Handel for me is probably the "Flies" chorus from *Israel in Egypt* in which he has both the first and second violins playing horribly fast 32nd note scales in contrary motion thus painting the sound of the flies buzzing all around. In *Messiah* we get examples of this type of writing in movements like "For behold, darkness shall cover the earth" and the ensuing aria. Also watch for the wagging of the sixteenth notes in the orchestra when in number 25 ("All they that see him") the tenor sings "and shake their heads." There are many more examples and it can be a very enjoyable listening session trying to hear all of them.

In the texture area Handel brings some great excitement to the text. Listen to the burning texture during "for he is like a refiner's fire" or the dissonance in "Surely he hath borne our griefs" or the disjunct lines with accents in "Let us break their bonds." Dynamic contrast is just as important. The crescendo and accent help to bring out these dramatic devices. By using subito (sudden) fortes and pianos in the orchestral accompaniment important parts of the text may be underlined — note "Why do the nations."

One device which seems in vogue today regarding the authentic performance of Baroque music is double-dotting. This process reflects taking two notes (found in a sequence of such two-note groups) and changing them from having a ratio of 3 to 1 in length to 7 to 1 in length. This is a Baroque practice written about by a number of the contemporary theorists and

composers in both text and example. What many modern performers seem to miss is the direction as to how and when this double-dotting is to be used. The rule for the French Overture style (which is what the opening *Sinfonia* to *Messiah* is) states that only the smallest value dotted note should be double-dotted. So in the *Sinfonia* we would still have the grandness of the opening rhythm (dotted quarters followed by eighths) and we would have the rhythmic excitement of the double-dotting of the smallest value notes (the dotted eighth/sixteenth) starting with the inner parts in the 8th bar.

This practice of double-dotting is sometimes extended to other parts of the work as well. For instance in the bass recitative "Thus saith the Lord" Handel very specifically writes a nondotted rhythm. I say very specifically because only two bars later he writes a dotted rhythm. It seems to me that even in his haste in composing *Messiah* he was able to notate those note values he wished used. Another chorus in which the rhythm is often tampered with is "Surely he hath borne our griefs." Here I find myself nothing short of irritated when the strength of the rhythm of two long notes before the short one is changed to the much weaker rhythm of short long short long. Once again the justification may be found in the fact that Handel notated the rhythm a few times in this chorus in the latter way — so one knows he used it when he wanted it.

With regards to tempo, I have heard it said that Handel goes fast. I certainly do not dispute that the fast sections in Handel go fast, but to take all the choruses fast just to get them over with or to show the virtuosity of the choir misses the point altogether. Once again, the main consideration is the text. One of the most difficult choruses for me with regards to tempo is the very first one. After many performances (almost all of which I have taken a different tempo) I have finally come to the rather stately minuet tempo which seems to me to best bespeak the "Glory of the Lord."

The virtuoso choruses of "He shall purify", "For unto us", "His yoke is easy", etc. demand a careful treatment to keep the florid writing clear. These are fast Handel choruses and need quick tempi. The Lenten choruses need a more leisurely treatment filled with pathos: "Behold the Lamb of God" and "And with his stripes". All of the choruses have a particular feeling for me, but the only other one I would like to mention is the "Amen." I take this chorus at a very slow tempo. The reasoning for this is two-fold: 1) the sonic aspects of the music support a slow tempo and 2) I don't think that a quick, flippant Amen would be Handel's style in ending a three-hour work. If one can get over what one is used to for this final chorus, I think that the rewards are great.

There is much more to say and the editor says no more space. I think that my basic ideas are here encapsulated for the listener, but I would be very happy to discuss them in greater detail with any other "Messiah-addicts." I hope everyone enjoys tonight's performance of the English-speaking world's favorite oratorio!

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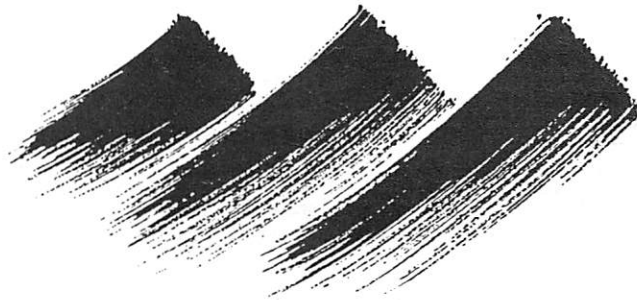
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Soprano **Catherine Haight** is a graduate of Seattle Pacific University and has a busy vocal studio on the east side. This is her second appearance as soloist in the BS/SCS presentation of *Messiah*, and has also been featured in their performances of Haydn's oratorio *The Seasons*, and Bach's cantata for soprano solo, *Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen*. In addition to her many appearances with the Broadway Symphony and Seattle Chamber Singers, Ms. Haight has also sung solos with the Bellevue Chamber Chorus, Pacific Northwest Ballet, and the Skagit Valley Bach Choir.

Sara Hedgpeth, mezzo soprano, has performed as soloist with the Broadway Symphony and Seattle Chamber Singers on numerous occasions, including this past fall's *Abendmusik* concerts and in the 20th Anniversary Gala presentation of Handel's *Israel in Egypt*. Ms. Hedgpeth's other solo appearances include many stints as a vocalist for Pacific Northwest Ballet, the most recent of which was as a featured soloist in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; she has also been heard with the Seattle Choral Company and in productions of Northwest Opera in Schools, etc.

Tenor **Stephen P. Wall** has appeared many times with the BS/SCS. He was the tenor soloist in last season's opening concert, Beethoven's *Symphony #9* as well as appearing in the title role in *The Return of Ulysses*. His credits with Seattle Opera include *Tannhauser* and *Die Meistersinger*. Mr. Wall has been a featured soloist with the Seattle, Spokane, Vancouver (B.C.) and Sapporo (Japan) Symphonies, and this year will make his first appearance with the Everett Symphony. He is currently a member of the voice faculty at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma.

Baritone **Brian Box** is a native of Washington and received his Master of Music degree in vocal performance from Western Washington University. Mr. Box has appeared frequently with the BS/SCS as a soloist in cantatas and oratorios and with the Broadway Symphony in Mahler's *Songs of a Wayfarer*. Among his credits are performances of Brahms' *Four Last Songs* with the Western Washington University Orchestra and the leading role in Dominic Argento's opera *Postcard from Morocco* at the University of British Columbia. Mr. Box has also performed with Northwest Opera in Schools, Etc. and the Seattle Opera's education program, singing children's opera throughout the state.



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George Frederick Handel's MESSIAH

Libretto by Charles Jennens, 1742

PART I.

1. Overture

2. Recitative

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.

3. Air

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

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.

5. Recitative

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.

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.

6. Air

But who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth?

For He is like a refiner's fire.

7. Chorus

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

8. Recitative

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

9. Air

O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

10. Recitative

For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

11. Air

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.

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.

13. Pastoral Symphony

14. Recitative

There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks 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.

15. Recitative

And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

16. Recitative

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

17. Chorus

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

18. Air

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee.

He is the righteous Savior, and He shall speak peace unto the heathen.

19. Recitative

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.

20. Air

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.

Air

Come unto Him, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and He shall 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.

21. Chorus

His yoke is easy and His burthen is light.

—INTERMISSION—

PART II.

22. Chorus

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

23. Air

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

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.

He was despised. . . .

24. 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.

25. Chorus

And with His stripes we are healed.

26. 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.

27. Recitative

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

28. Chorus

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

29. Recitative

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.

30. Air

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

31. Air

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

32. Air

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

33. 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 the 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 the King of glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of glory.

34. Recitative

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

35. Chorus

Let all the angels of God worship Him.

36. Air

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.

37. Chorus

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

38. Air

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

39. Chorus

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

40. Air

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.

41. Chorus

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

42. Recitative

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

43. Air

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

44. Chorus

Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ: and He shall reign for ever and ever.

King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, Hallelujah!

—INTERMISSION—

PART III.

45. Air

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.

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

46. 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.

47. Recitative

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep; but we shall all be changed in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

48. Air

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.

The trumpet shall sound. . . .

49. Recitative

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

50. Duet

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.

51. Chorus

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

52. Air

If God be for us, who can be against us? who shall lay any thing 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.

53. 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 honor, and glory, and blessing. Blessing and honor, glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.

Amen.

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