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featuring Brian Trevor
as the Evangelist
Westminster Chapel, Bellevue
March 11, 1983  7:00 pm
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Handel's Messiah
The Seattle Chamber Singers and The Broadway Chamber Symphony
George Sthaumaur, conductor
December 17 and 18, 1983  8:00 p.m.
Blessed Sacrament Church, Seattle
Program Notes
by Gary Fladmoe

Simplicistically described, an oratorio is an opera without the staging. As the form revealed in its beginning stages, the description is accurate. The earliest examples of oratorio consisted largely of arias (mainly of the da capo variety) and recitatives, the standard forms of the opéra. They were performed without sets, acting, or costumes.

The oratorio seemed to have evolved for very practical reasons. In Italy, where opera was immensely popular, the Roman Catholic church frowned upon operatic performance during times of penitence. There were even times when opera was totally banned. Composers found that they could circumvent the church and its rulings by writing works which avoided the objections of church leaders while still utilizing the popular elements of opera. The result was the oratorio.

Early oratorio style featured the selection of a biblical story (usually from the Old Testament), setting it to poetic verse, and composing operatic numbers which in turn set the poetry to music.

It was within this atmosphere that George Frederick Handel lived and worked. During a sojourn in Italy, Handel produced an example of the Italian oratorio, completing La Resurrezione in 1708. It was, except for its text, typical of all the conventions of Italian opera.

Late in 1710 Handel arrived in England to begin a position in the employ of the Elector of Hanover. He was to remain in England for more than thirty years, during which time he would "invent" what we would come to know as the English oratorio.

Handel pursued a career as an opera composer. However, opera never achieved the status in England that it had in the continent. Handel discovered that if he was to continue to write opera, he would need to find a vehicle for increased earnings to support his unprofitable operatic writing. By reworking the oratorio conventions he had learned in Italy with the great English choral tradition, Handel found his answer, the English oratorio.

In 1728 Handel composed a work based on the Old Testament book of Esther which he called The Oratorium. It retained the conventions of Italian opera but also incorporated a number of choruses. There are no records of any performances of the work for the first fourteen years following its writing. But it was produced with apparent success in February, 1732. Handel revised it, retitled it Esther, and performed it to financial success in May, 1732.

The success of Esther provided Handel with the means of supporting his operatic writing habit in the face of continuing financial difficulties with that medium. Between 1732 and 1741 he would compose another forty successful oratorios, among them Deborah, Athalia, Saul, and Jezebel in Egypt. 1741 witnessed the debut of Italian opera in England. When that occurred, oratorios spread throughout Europe that Handel would soon leave behind. During the summer of that year, Handel was invited to Ireland. Before leaving there he would compose what has become probably the most familiar and popular oratorio ever written, Messiah.

The music of Messiah is itself so well known and easily recognized that it would probably add little to the listener's appreciation to further examine the musical content of the oratorio. There are, however, fascinating historical considerations associated with the work and its performances.

The text for Messiah was written by a man named Charles Jennens. It was composed in late October, 1741, and completed on November 14, an astonishing 24 days. He immediately set to work composing another of his great oratorios, Samson, completing it on October 29, just 68 days after beginning Messiah. Shortly after completing these two works, Handel left for Ireland. While in Dublin he produced two concert series which ran from late December until early April. Interestingly, neither Messiah nor Samson was performed during these concerts, although both were completed.

Messiah received its first performance on April 12, 1742, as a benefit program for prisoners in Dublin's jail for Mercer's Hospital in Stephen's Street, and for the Charitable Infirmary in the Quays. The philanthropic motivation remained with Handel. In May, 1754, he offered the work to the Foundling Hospital in London to use for fund-raising, and willed a set of parts to that institution so that Messiah might continue to be used to raise funds.

Messiah was an immediate hit in Ireland; but, upon returning to England, Handel encountered ecclesiastical resistance and public lack of enthusiasm. The clerical and civic criticism of the staging of the work in theatrical settings and having Holy Scripture uttered by the likes of musicians was so strong, that, on few occasions Messiah was performed, it was titled A New Sacred Oratorio, and later simply A Sacred Oratorio. Handel withdrew the work from performance from 1745 until 1749. Those few intervening years witnessed a transformation in public sentiment. From the time it was again performed in 1749, under the original title Messiah, public acceptance and acclaim were assured.

The libretto itself represented a significant departure from the tradition which Handel had established. As was indicated above, traditional oratorio style was to set religious stories to original poetry. In the case of Messiah, the words were drawn entirely from Scripture, lending credence to the theory that the work was never intended to convey a dramatic element. It seems natural that the text would appeal to both a middle class who were not steeped in the operatic tradition, and to those of higher status who were. Both elements of society found the Bible a source of joy and inspiration. Messiah became a natural vehicle for enhancing the spiritual life of the people.

CONTINUED P. 6

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

Soprano
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Kyla DeRenzis
Kathryn Hammond
Ellen Iriion
Rachel Katz
Mary Koch
Stephanie Lathrop
Katen Nordyke
Margaret Penne
Liesel Rombouts
Nancy Shaefer
Heather Smith
Kristina Sullivan
Susanna Walsh

Tenors
Altos
Tim Braun
Laila Hammond
Catherine Martinello
Janet Ellen Reed
Jane Seidman-Vokat
Katherine Segura
Nedra Sloan
Margaret Smith
Claire Thomas
Kay Verelius

Basses
Tenors
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Susanna Walsh

Violin I
Fritz Klein, concertmaster
Beth Schmidt
Amor Maletsky
Eileen Linus
Kenna Smith
Donna Welker
Violin II
Maryann Michael
Sandra Sinner
Marcia McElvan
Jane Neigel
Phillis Rowe
Ellen Ziontz
Karen Beemster

Cello
Kara Hunnicutt
Letonen Root
Joyce Barnum
Maryann Tapio
Rebecca Beyer
Rosemary Berner

Viola
Sam Williams
Beatrice Dolf
Katherine McWilliams
Carol Paternoster
Stephanie Read
Shari Peterson

Viole
Harpsichord
Robert Kechley
Organ
James Dennen
Oboe
Susan Scott
Huntley Beyer
Bassoon
Franice Pettenon
Daniel Henshman
Trumpet
David Hensler
Gary Fladmoe
Timpani
Ian Alverez

Acknowledgements
Cox Music Service of Seattle has been very generous in providing the Allen Digital Computer Organ System for tonight's performance. Without their participation, the use of an organ would not have been possible.

Kate Allen and Storybird, Inc.: Foster and program cover art
Blessed Sacrament Church: Use of the sanctuary and intermission refreshments
University Unitarian Church: Rehearsal space and use of the Sperhake harpsichord
Choir of the Sound, Robert Metger, conductor: Use of their channel platform extensions
Bellevue School District: Use of their acoustical shell and risers
Kristina Newman: Tuning and maintenance of the Sperhake harpsichord
PART III.

45. Air — Polly Detels
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 — Peter Kechley
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 trump.

48. Air — Peter Kechley
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. . . .

THE END

49. Recitative — Kathryn Weld-Jezierinac
Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory.

50. Duet — Kathryn Weld-Jezierinac and Jerry Sams
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 — Polly Detels
If God be for us, who can be against us? who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? Is it 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 hast 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.

MESSIAH
by
George Frederick Handel

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

Polly Detels
Soprano
Kathryn Weld-Jezierinac
Mezzo-Soprano
Jerry Sams
Tenor
Peter Kechley
Baritone
Fritz Klein
Concertmaster
Robert Kechley
Harpischord
David Hensler
Trumpet Solo

PROGRAM NOTES, CONTINUED

The scoring of Messiah has also been a source of much speculation and debate. It would probably not be inaccurate to say that every performance during Handel’s time was scored differently. Scholars and modern-day performers have sought to construct authentic performances, but the difficulty lies in the fact that each performance was structured by the singers and instrumentalists available at the time. Handel changed the orchestration and keys of the numbers frequently to suit his performance situation. Some of the voice assignments for the solos were even changed so that favored singers could perform them. At least fifteen of the 53 numbers in the oratorio have multiple versions dating from Handel’s time. We modern “purists” attempt to amass the forces to give an “authentic” performance. We might better expend our energies in fitting the performance to our resources. In doing so we might more ideally approach “authenticity.”

Handel himself perhaps paid this great oratorio its finest tribute. When addressing Lord Kimball on the occasion of the first London performance of Messiah in March, 1743, he said, “I should be sorry, my Lord, if I have only succeeded in entertaining them; I wished to make them better.”

We leave Messiah to stand on its own to lift the spirit and meaning of this holiday season to all who hear it.
George Frederick Handel's MESSIAH
Libretto by Charles Jennens, 1742

PART I.
1. Overture
2. Recitative — Jerry Sams
   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 — Jerry Sams
   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 — Peter Keckley
   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 — Peter Keckley
   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 — Kathryn Weld-Jezebrac
   Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Emmanuel. God with us.
9. Air — Kathryn Weld-Jezebrac
   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 — Peter Keckley
    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.

—INTERMISSION—

11. Air — Peter Keckley
   The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; and they that dwelt 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 — Polly Detels
   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 — Polly Detels
   And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.
16. Air — Polly Detels
   For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.
17. Recitative — Polly Detels
   And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying:
18. Chorus
   Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men.
19. Air — Polly Detels
   Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king cometh unto thee. He is the righteous Saviour, and He shall speak peace unto the heathen.
20. Recitative — Kathryn Weld-Jezebrac
   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.
21. Air — Kathryn Weld-Jezebrac
   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.
22. Chorus
   Come unto Him, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and He shall give you rest.

—INTERMISSION—

23. Air — Polly Detels
   Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

PART II.
22. Chorus
   Behold — Kathryn Weld-Jezebrac
   He was despised and rejected of men: a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. He was despised . . .
24. Chorus
   Sunda, 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 — Jerry Sams
   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 — Jerry Sams
   Thy rebuke hath broken His heart; He is full of heaviness. He looked for some to have pity on Him, but there was no one; neither found He any to comfort Him.
30. Air — Jerry Sams
   Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow.
31. Air — Jerry Sams
   He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of Thy people was He stricken.
32. Air — Jerry Sams
   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.

34. Recitative — Jerry Sams
   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 — Peter Keckley
   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 world great was the company of the preservers.
38. Air — Polly Detels
   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 — Peter Keckley
   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 — Jerry Sams
   He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn; the Lord shall have them in derision.
43. Air — Jerry Sams
   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!
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PART I.

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

8. Recitative — Kathyrn Weld-jejeierinac
   Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Emmanuel. God with us.

9. Air — Kathyrn Weld-jejeierinac und Son
   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 — Peter Keeliey
    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.

INTERMISSION

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21. Air — Polly Detels
   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 meek and lowly of heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

22. Chorus
   Behold — Kathyrn Weld-jejeierinac
   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.

23. Air — Jerry Sams
   He was despised....

24. Chorus
   Sunday 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.

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   And with His stripes we are healed.

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INTERMISSION

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

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   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

4

5
PART III.

45. Air — Polly Detels
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For now is Christ risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep.

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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.

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Amen.

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Trumpet Solo
Program Notes
by Gary Fladmoee

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Kathryn Hammond
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Rachel Katz
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Stephanie Lathrop
Ksenia Nordyke
Margaret Penne
Lisae Romboote
Nancy Shasteen
Heather Smith
Kristina Sullivan
Sussana Walsh

Violin I
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Eileen Lark
Kenna Smith
Donna Weller
Sofie Sukup
Jaqueline Cedarholm

Violin II
Maryann Michael
Sandra Sinner
Marcia McElvain
Jane Crotger
Phillip Rowe
Ellen Ziont
Karen Beemster

Soprano
Alto
Baritone
Tenor
Bass

Violin
Viola
Cello
Viola da Gamba

Harpischord
Robert Kechley
Organ
James Denman
Oboe
Susan Scott
Huntley Beyer

Bassoon
Francesco Principe
Daniel Hershman
Trumpet
David Hensler
Gary Fladmoee

Timpani
Ian Alvarez

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

The music of Messiah is itself so well known and easily recognized that it would probably add little to the listener's appreciation to further amplify the musical content of the oratorio. There are, however, fascinating historical considerations associated with the work and its performances. Exploring some of these considerations might help to reveal the musical significance of Messiah.

Prior to his departure for Ireland, Handel received from his friends and librettist Charles Jennens the libretto to a new oratorio, Messiah. The libretto and overall concept of the oratorio obviously inspired Handel. He began composing on August 22, 1741, and completed it on October 14, an astonishing 24 days. He immediately set to work composing another of his great oratorios, Samson, completing it on October 29, just 68 days after beginning Messiah. Shortly after completing these two works, Handel left for Ireland. While in Dublin he produced two concert series which ran from late December until early April. Interestingly, neither Messiah nor Samson was performed during these concerts, although both were completed.

Messiah received its first performance on April 12, 1742, as a benefit program for professors in Dublin's jail for Mercer's Hospital in Stephen's Street, and for the Charitable Infirmary in the Quays. The philanthropic motivations remained with Handel. In May, 1752, he offered the work to the Foundling Hospital in London to be used for fund-raising, and within a year or two that institution so Messiah might continue to be used to raise funds.

Messiah was an immediate hit in Ireland; but, upon returning to England, Handel encountered ecclesiastical resistance and public lack of enthusiasm. The clerical criticism of the staging of the oratorio in theatrical settings and having Holy Scripture uttered by the likes of musicians was so strong that, on four occasions Messiah was performed, it was titled A New Sacred Oratorio, and later simply A Sacred Oratorio. Handel withdrew the work from performance from 1745 until 1749. Those few intervening years witnessed a transformation in public sentiment. From the time it was again performed in 1749, under the original title Messiah, public acceptance and acclaim were assured.

The libretto itself represented a significant departure from the tradition which Handel had established. As was indicated above, traditional oratorio style was to set religious stories to original poetry. In the case of Messiah, the words were drawn entirely from Scripture, lending credence to the theory that the work was never intended to convey a dramatic element. It seems natural that the text would appeal to both a middle class who were not steeped in the operatic tradition, and to those of higher station who were. Both elements of British society found the Bible a source of joy and inspiration. Messiah became a natural vehicle for enhancing the spiritual life of the people.

Acknowledgements

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Kate Allen and Storyboard, Inc.: Foster and program cover art
Blessed Sacrament Church: Use of the sanctuary and intermission refreshments
University Unitarian Church: Rehearsal space and use of the Sperhake harpsichord
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Handel's Messiah
The Seattle Chamber Singers and The Broadway Chamber Symphony
George Suggs, conductor
December 17 and 18, 1982 8:00 pm
Blessed Sacrament Church, Seattle