

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHORAL SOCIETY

83RD SEASON

ASSEMBLY HALL, TUNBRIDGE WELLS

SUNDAY 9TH NOVEMBER 1986

3.00 P.M.

MESSIAH

By Georg Friederich Handel

TRACY BOUNDEN (SOPRANO)
MAUREEN LEFÈVRE (MEZZO CONTRALTO)

JAMES ANDERSON (TENOR)

ALASTAIR MILES (BASS)

Harpsichord played by WILMARC ELLMAN
Orchestra led by JANE PAMMENT

CONDUCTED BY
DEREK WATMOUGH

Programme 30p

MESSIAH – Handel

Messiah went down like a lead balloon when Handel first tried it out in London – at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden – in March, 1743; and it was about ten years before the work ‘caught on’ and began to occupy the position it has held ever since as the best known and most loved piece of choral music in the English-speaking world. The trouble was, the performance of a religious work in a playhouse was felt to be unsuitable, even near-blasphemous; nor did it appeal to the devotees of the Italian operas Handel had been turning out almost without interruption for the previous 30 years. The composer’s disappointment was the keener in view of the rapturous acclaim with which *Messiah* had been received in Dublin the year before; and he was further upset by the censorious comments of his friend and librettist, the clergyman Charles Jennens, who thought the music unworthy of the superb text he, Jennens, had compiled and spoke of ‘gross faults’ in the composition. It seems amazing to us today that Handel not only took seriously the opinion of this obscure reverend poetaster but actually agreed to revise some passages of which Jennens disapproved.

However, let us not be too hard on Charles Jennens. *Messiah* was, after all, his idea. He suggested it to Handel, and his book is indeed a remarkably well chosen selection of biblical texts setting out the Christian story not as a dramatic narrative but on a reflective, metaphysical plane. Particularly telling are the great ‘Suffering Servant’ texts from Isaiah 53, which inspired Handel to write what many feel to be the finest numbers in the work, for example the chorus ‘Surely He hath borne our griefs’, the air ‘He was despised’ and the recitative ‘Thy rebuke hath broken His heart’.

While it is probably true that *Messiah* is not religious music in exactly the same sense as that of, say, Palestrina or Bach, some commentators are apt to talk too glibly about it “reflecting the humanistic spirit of the age”. This hardly squares with, for example, the hushed, awe-filled unaccompanied setting of the theologically central Pauline texts ‘Since by man came death’ and ‘As in Adam all die’. Be that as it may, *Messiah* remains an astonishing masterpiece. So much of the music seems to have a kind of inevitability (not the same as obviousness). Thinking of such things as the chorus ‘And He shall purify’ or the aria ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth’, is it possible to imagine a single bar, or even a single note, being otherwise than it is? This music, we feel, must have always existed and ‘been there’. But it was Handel and nobody else who, as it were, caught hold of it and wrote it down.

K.M.

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PART ONE

1	Overture	
2	Comfort ye My people	Recit.
3	Ev'ry valley	Air
4	And the glory of the Lord	Chorus
5	Thus saith the Lord	Recit.
6	But who may abide?	Air
7	And he shall purify	Chorus
8	Behold, a virgin shall conceive	Recit.
9	O thou that tellest good tidings	Air and Chorus
10	For behold, darkness	Recit.
11	The people that walked in darkness	Air
12	For unto us a Child is born	Chorus
13	Pastoral Symphony	
14	There were shepherds	Recit.
	And lo! the angel of the Lord	Recit.
15	And the angel said unto them	Recit.
16	And suddenly	Recit.
17	Glory to God	Chorus
18	Rejoice greatly	Air
19	Then shall the eyes of the blind	Recit.
20	He shall feed His flock	Air
21	His yoke is easy	Chorus

PART TWO

22	Behold the Lamb of God	Chorus
23	He was despised	Air
24	Surely He hath borne our griefs	Chorus
25	And with His stripes	Chorus
26	All we like sheep	Chorus
27	All they that see Him	Recit.
28	He trusted in God	Chorus
29	Thy rebuke hath broken His heart	Recit.
30	Behold, and see	Air
31	He was cut off	Recit.
32	But Thou did'st not leave	Air
33	Lift up your heads	Chorus
34	How beautiful are the feet	Air
35	Why do the nations?	Air
36	Let us break their bonds asunder	Chorus
37	He that dwelleth in Heaven	Recit.
38	Thou shalt break them	Air
39	Hallelujah!	Chorus

PART THREE

40	I know that my Redeemer liveth	Air
41	Since by man came death	Chorus
42	Behold, I tell you a mystery	Recit.
43	The trumpet shall sound	Air
44	Worthy is the Lamb	Chorus

TRACY BOUNDEN (soprano) studied at Trinity College of Music, London with Elizabeth Hawes, where she was awarded the Greenhouse Allt Prize for Oratorio and Cantata; The Kennedy Scott Prize; and the Ricordi Prize for Opera.

In March 1985, she was a finalist in the Peter Pears Inter-college singing competition, and in June 1985 she was the vocal winner of the International Young Concert Artists Competition of Royal Tunbridge Wells.

She has also undertaken various other recital work for Music Societies, Churches, Schools, etc.

Her operatic roles are numerous, and range from Adele in *Die Fledermaus* to Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro*. She has also participated in an operatic workshop with Jonathan Hinden at Glyndebourne. She made her debut at the 39th Aldeburgh Festival as Miss Wordsworth in Britten's opera *Albert Herring*.

MAUREEN LEFÈVRE (mezzo-contralto) was born in Glasgow and studied at The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, where she was a student of Marjorie Blakeston.

She sang with Scottish Opera Chorus for two years, after which she moved to London and began performing as a solo artist. She has studied with Dame Eva Turner for the past seven years.

Maureen Lefèvre has sung at several Music Festivals in Great Britain including the Edinburgh Festival, the Camden Festival and the Aldeburgh Festival. She performs regularly with Abbey Opera, a London fringe company, at the Bloomsbury. She works frequently in the Oratorio field in this country and abroad. After having sung Rebecca Nuse in 'The Crucible' by Robert Ward at the Bloomsbury Theatre, in 1984, she was recommended, by Ward, to sing contralto solo in several performances of Handel's *Messiah* in Northern Carolina and made her U.S.A. debut there in November, 1984.

JAMES ANDERSON (tenor) James Anderson comes from Berwickshire in Scotland and studied at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow.

On leaving, he won a Sir James Caird Travelling Scholarship and continued his studies with Maestro Ettore Caogalliani in Mantua, Italy.

He joined Glyndebourne Festival Opera where he sang numerous roles both there and with the touring company, including "Max" in *Der Freischutz*.

His oratorio and concert career has also progressed steadily, and his ever widening repertoire and versatility have made him much in demand among leading choral and music societies.

During the past two seasons, he has been a frequent soloist with London Choirs, notably the London Orpheus Choir in their performances at the Queen Elizabeth Hall.

In July of this year he undertook a months tour of Zimbabwe, performing Beethovens 9th Symphony, with the National Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, and a series of song recitals, under the sponsorship of The British Council. The success of this has prompted a further invitation to fulfill more concerts and a season of opera in Harare in 1986.

ALASTAIR MILES (bass) was born in Harrow. He made his professional operatic debut last year singing Father Trulove in Opera 80's acclaimed production of Stravinsky's 'The Rake's Progress'. He joined Glyndebourne Festival Chorus this summer and understudied Superintendent Budd in 'Albert Herring' as well as singing with Glyndebourne Touring Opera this autumn.

Alastair won the 1986 Decca-Kathleen Ferrer Prize at the Wigmore Hall in April and is currently studying at the National Opera Studio, London.

**Forthcoming Concerts at the
Assembly Hall
at 3.00 p.m.**

1986

Sunday November 16th – The Green Room Club Concert
Sunday December 7th – Royal Tunbridge Wells Symphony Orchestra
Sunday December 14th – Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society
Carol Concert

1987

Sunday March 29 – Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society
Elgar The Kingdom

The Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society acknowledge financial assistance from South East Arts Association. Borough of Royal Tunbridge Wells also assist the Society financially.



THE ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHORAL SOCIETY 83rd SEASON

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We are most grateful for the support of Patrons and Vice-Presidents and new ones are always welcome. Please ring or write to the General Secretary, Mr L.A. Lee, 233 Greggs Wood Road, Tunbridge Wells (TW 21937).

The Choir rehearses on Monday evening from September to April. New members are always welcome. There is a simple and private audition. Please ring the General Secretary (as above) if you are interested in becoming a singing member.