

**Mendelssohn**



**Autumn Concert**

**Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society**

Musical Director and Conductor: Derek Watmough

**Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society**

**Orchestra**

Leader: Rita French

# Notes

## ELIJAH

Elijah is not an opera, but it might well be. It is a dramatic story, full of incident, with a vivid score. Elijah, the fierce Old Testament prophet, is in conflict both with the secular power and the priests of the competing religion of Baal.

**Part 1** opens with Elijah forecasting years of drought in Israel. The Israelites pray to the Lord for help and Obadiah, the King's Chamberlain, adds his own appeal. An angel urges Elijah to flee the people's anger and promises comfort and protection. He takes refuge at Zarephath with a widow, who resents him as her son is dying. But Elijah prays for the boy and he is restored to life.

After 3 years of drought Elijah returns to King Ahab's court to promise rain. He is reviled as "he that troubleth Israel" but Elijah charges the court with idolatry - this has caused God's wrath and the drought and famine. He challenges the priests of Baal to a contest on Mount Carmel to see which God will bring fire and should therefore be worshipped as the Lord.

In three great choruses which progress from confidence to desperation, interspersed by taunts from Elijah, the people call on Baal to make fire fall on the sacrificial altar. In vain. Elijah then prays to the God of Abraham that He will prove Himself God. To everyone's excitement and wonder flames do indeed descend and the people prostrate themselves in submission to the Lord. Elijah rouses them to kill the false prophets.

Obadiah reminds Elijah that they still need rain and Elijah leads a fervent supplication to the Lord. He sends a young servant to watch the skies, and in due course the youth sees a small cloud approach. This turns into a great storm, and in a mighty final chorus "the waters gather and rush along" as the Israelites give praise and thanks to God.

**Part 2** opens quietly as an Angel encourages Elijah to face a new ordeal at the royal court. At court Elijah charges the King with idolatry and slaughter of the Lord's prophets. Queen Jezebel in turn blames him for the death of Baal's prophets and for the drought and famine. Obadiah warns him to escape.

## Notes

In the wilderness Elijah is filled with self-pity and asks the Lord to let him die. Several consoling and supportive movements prepare him to see God's glory on Mount Horeb in a vision in which the Lord passes by in a mighty wind, broken rocks, earthquake and fire. The Lord himself is revealed not in these but as a still, small voice. All sing His praise in the great double chorus *Holy, Holy, Holy*.

Thus strengthened Elijah obeys the call to return to help the true believers in Israel. Among his many and various works he overthrows wicked kings and hears the judgments of the future and finally a whirlwind lifts him up to heaven in a fiery chariot.

His life is celebrated in the tenor aria *Then shall the righteous shine forth* and a great final chorus of eulogy and of praise to the universal Creator.

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**Felix Mendelssohn** (1809-1847) was a composer of grace and invention, whose many varied works are melodious, fresh and elegant - and as in *Elijah* not lacking in power and drama. His oratorios owe much to Bach (whose *St Matthew Passion* he rediscovered) and to Handel. *Elijah* was written in English for the 1846 Birmingham Festival and has been a regular favourite of Choral Societies ever since.

## Our Soloists

### **Jeremy Huw Williams**

Jeremy studied at St John's College, Cambridge, the National Opera Studio and with April Cantelo. He has sung with the London Philharmonic, City of Birmingham and Halle Orchestras and has performed the title role in *Don Giovanni*. He appeared as a soloist in Yehudi Menuhin's 80th birthday concert at Buckingham Palace and was an award winner under the NFMS/Esso Young Artists Award Scheme. He last sang with the Society in Brahms' *Requiem* in 1996.

# Our Soloists

## Helen Meyerhoff

Helen studied with the distinguished contralto Norma Procter and at the Royal Northern College of Music. She has performed with several ensembles and orchestras and took the leading role in Nicola leFanu's chamber opera *The Story of Mary O'Neill*. This summer, Helen was awarded an English Speaking Union Scholarship to take part in International Masterclasses at the Britten-Pears School and appeared as Papagena in a production of *Die Zauberflöte* at the Snape Proms.

## Richard Braebrook

Richard Braebrook was born in Huddersfield and now lives in Tunbridge Wells. He studied at the Royal College of Music and is currently studying with Keith Bonnington, a member of the English National Opera, with whom Richard sang for many years. He was first prizewinner in the World International Singing Festival, Rio de Janeiro in 1983 and has performed the principal roles of Rodolfo (*La Boheme*), Tamino (*The Magic Flute*) and Anfinomous (*Return of Ulysses*). Richard was the Evangelist in the Society's performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* in 1996.

## Johanna Byrne

Johanna studied at the Royal Northern College of Music as a Peter Moores Scholar and won the prestigious Elizabeth Harwood Award. She was the Sony Prizewinner in the 1995 Veronica Dunne Singing Competition in Ireland, where she has appeared on national radio and television. From 1990-1993 she was principal mezzo soprano in the recital group Fioritura. Her opera and oratorio experience has so far been mainly in seventeenth and eighteenth century works and this will be her first *Elijah*.

## Edward Jones

The part of the boy treble will be sung by Edward Jones, pupil of Yardley Court School.

## Girls Choir

The Girls Choir is from Bennett Memorial School.

## **Elijah Part 1**

Introduction

Overture and Chorus

Recit and Chorus

Recit

Air

Chorus

Recit

Double Quartet

Recit

Recit, Air and Duet

Chorus

Recit and Chorus

Double Chorus

Recit

Chorus

Recit

Chorus

Air

Quartet

Recit

Chorus

Air

Air

Recit

Recit and Chorus

Chorus

### **Part 2**

Air

Chorus

Recit and Chorus

Chorus

Recit

Air

Recit

Trio

Chorus

Recit

Air

Chorus

Recit

Chorus

Recit, Quartet and Chorus

Chorus and recit

Chorus

Air

Chorus

As God the Lord of Israel liveth

Help Lord!

Lord bow Thine ear to our prayer

Ye people rend your hearts

If with all your hearts

Yet doth the Lord see it not

Elijah get thee hence

For He shall give His angels

Now Cherith's brook is dried up

What have I to do with thee?

Blessed are the men who fear Him

As God the Lord of Sabaoth liveth

Baal, we cry to thee

Call him louder

Hear our cry O Baal

Call him louder

Baal hear and answer

Lord God of Abraham

Cast thy burden upon the Lord

O Thou who makest Thine angels spirits

The fire descends from Heaven

Is not His word like a fire?

Woe unto them who forsake Him!

O man of God, help thy people

O Lord, Thou has overthrown Thine enemies

Thanks be to God

Hear Ye Israel

Be not afraid

The Lord hath exalted thee

Woe to him

Man of God

It is enough

See, now he sleepeth

Lift thine eyes

He watching over Israel

Arise, Elijah

O rest in the Lord

He that shall endure to the end

Night falleth round me

Behold, God the Lord passed by

Holy, Holy, Holy

Go return upon thy way

Then did Elijah

Then shall the righteous shine forth

And then shall your light break forth

# Forthcoming Events

AT

**Sunday 14th December 1997**

St. Mary's Church, Goudhurst, 6.30pm.

**Concert of Christmas Music**

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**Sunday 29th March 1998**

Assembly Hall, Tunbridge Wells, 3pm.

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**Verdi Requiem**

**Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society**

President

Roy Douglas

Honorary Life President

John H Johnson

Musical Director and

Principal Conductor

Derek Watmough

Honorary Life Members

A Smith-Masters

Len Lee

**Patrons**

Bailey Wighton Ltd

The Music Centre

Miss B Benson

Mrs G Stewart

Mrs D Benson

Mr and Mrs G Stredder

Miss D Goodwin

Mr M H P Webb

Mrs E Jackson

Mr W Yates

Mr R W Page

If you would like to become a Patron and support the Society, please contact the Treasurer, Roy Dunstall, on 01580 211814. The choir also obtains financial support from **The Royal Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.**

The Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society is a member of **The National Federation of Music Societies** and is a registered charity, no. 273310.