

Tafelmusik

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

Messiah

Libretto by Charles Jennens

DECEMBER 15-18, 2010

Christine Brandes *soprano*

Daniel Taylor *countertenor*

Rufus Müller *tenor*

Brett Polegato *baritone*

TAFELMUSIK CHAMBER CHOIR

TAFELMUSIK BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

Directed by **Ivars Taurins**

PART THE FIRST

Sinfonia

Accompagnato (Tenor)

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.

Air (Tenor)

Ev'ry valley shall be exalted, and ev'ry mountain and hill made low; the crooked straight and the rough places plain.

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. *(Isaiah 40:1-5)*

Accompagnato (Bass)

Thus saith the Lord, 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. *(Haggai 2:6-7)*

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.

Air (Alto)

But who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire.

Chorus

And He shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. *(Malachi 3:1-3)*

Recitative (Alto)

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

(Isaiah 7:14/St. Matthew 1:23)

Air (Alto) & Chorus

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. *(Isaiah 40:9/60:1)*

Accompagnato (Bass)

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

(Isaiah 60: 2-3)

Air (Bass)

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. *(Isaiah 9:2)*

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. *(Isaiah 9:6)*

Pifa**Recitative/Accompagnato (Soprano)**

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. 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 Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying:

Chorus

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

(St. Luke 2:8-14)

Air (Soprano)

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. *(Zechariah 9:9-10)*

Recitative (Alto)

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.

Duet (Alto/Soprano)

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.

Come unto Him, all ye that labour, come unto Him that are heavy laden, and He will 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.

(Isaiah 40:11/St. Matthew 11:28-29)

Chorus

His yoke is easy, and His burthen is light.

(St. Matthew 11:30)

INTERMISSION**PART THE SECOND****Chorus**

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

(St. John 1:29)

Air (Alto)

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. *(Isaiah 53:3/50:6)*

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.

And with His stripes we are healed.

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. *(Isaiah 53:4-6)*

Accompagnato (Tenor)

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

Chorus

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

(Psalm 22:7-8)

Accompagnato (Tenor)

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.

Arioso (Tenor)

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

(Lamentations 1:12)

Accompagnato (Soprano)

He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgressions of Thy people was He stricken.

(Isaiah 53:8)

Air (Soprano)

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

(Psalm 16:10)

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 this 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 this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory. *(Psalm 24:7-10)*

Recitative (Tenor)

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

Chorus

Let all the angels of God worship Him. *(Hebrews 1:5-6)*

Air (Bass)

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.

Chorus

The Lord gave the word; great was the company of the preachers. *(Psalm 68:11)*

Air (Alto)

How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things. *(Isaiah 52:7/Romans 10:15)*

Chorus

Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world. *(Romans 10:18/Psalm 19:4)*

Air (Bass)

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.

Chorus

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

Recitative (Tenor)

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

Air (Tenor)

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. *(Psalm 2:1-4/9)*

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! *(Revelation 19:6, 16/11:15)*

There will be a very brief interval between Parts II and III.

Please remain in the hall.

PART THE THIRD

Air (Soprano)

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.

(Job 19:25-26/I Corinthians 15:20)

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.

Accompagnato (Bass)

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

Air (Bass)

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.

Recitative (Alto)

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

Duet (Alto/Tenor)

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.

Chorus

But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. *(I Corinthians 15:21-22, 51-57)*

Air (Soprano)

If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall lay anything 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. *(Romans 8:31-34)*

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 honour, and glory, and blessing.

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

Amen.

(Revelation 5:12-14)

PROGRAMME NOTES

Handel says he will do nothing next Winter, but I hope I shall persuade him to set out another Scripture collection I have made for him, and perform it for his own Benefit in Passion week. I hope he will lay out his whole Genius and Skill upon it, that the Composition may excel every other Subject. The Subject is Messiah.

Charles Jennens to Edward Holdsworth, July 10, 1741

And so in August 1741 Jennens sent the libretto of *Messiah* to Handel to be set to music. It did not, however, keep Handel busy that winter, as he completed the entire score in just three weeks. He had been invited to Dublin that November to present a series of oratorio concerts and it was there that *Messiah* was first performed. The Dublin performance was very well received, but the first London performance in 1743 had a more mixed reception – controversy raged over the suitability of a theatre as a place to perform a sacred oratorio, particularly when the subject was to be the Messiah. It was not until 1750, when Handel turned to it for benefit performances for the Foundling Hospital and thus stilled the controversy, that *Messiah* was fully accepted and applauded by London audiences. By the time of Handel's death in 1759, it had become the most frequently performed of all his oratorios, a position it has never relinquished.

During his lifetime Handel made frequent revisions to the score of *Messiah*, sometimes for artistic reasons and sometimes to suit new singers or conditions of performance. In fact, the oratorio was never performed exactly as it had been written in those weeks of 1741. By using similar instrumental and vocal forces and by researching Handel's various revisions, we hope to revive the content, sound, style and spirit of his own performances.