

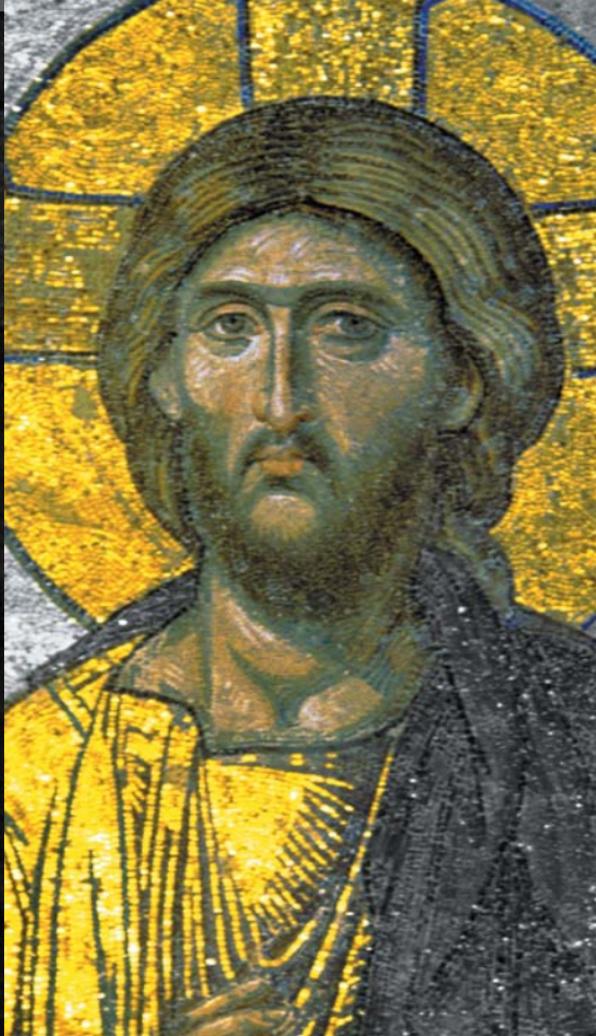
G F HANDEL
MESSIAH
HIGHLIGHTS

The Cambridge Singers

Royal Philharmonic
Orchestra

JOHN RUTTER

Collegium
RECORDS



M E S S I A H.

A N

O R A T O R I O.

As it is Perform'd at the

T H E A T R E - R O Y A L

I N

C O V E N T - G A R D E N.

Set to Mufick by Mr. H A N D E L.

M A J O R A C A N A M U S.

And without Controversy, great is the Mystery of Godliness: God was manifested in the Flesh, justified by the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the World, received up in Glory. In whom are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge.

L O N D O N:

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[Price One Shilling.]

Title page of a *Messiah* word-book of 1749
(by courtesy of the Royal College of Music, London)

M E S S I A H

H I G H L I G H T S

G. F. H A N D E L (1685–1759)

Joanne Lunn (*soprano*)

Melanie Marshall (*mezzo-soprano*)

James Gilchrist (*tenor*)

Christopher Purves (*bass-baritone*)

The Cambridge Singers

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Leader: Marcia Crayford

Robert Quinney (*organ continuo*)

Benjamin Bayl (*harpsichord continuo*)

Tim Gill (*cello continuo*)

John Rutter (*conductor*)

Part One

- [1] Sinfonia (3' 10")
- [2] Comfort ye, my people (*tenor*) (3' 01")
- [3] Ev'ry valley shall be exalted (*tenor*) (3' 12")
- [4] And the glory of the Lord (*chorus*) (2' 31")
- [5] Behold, a virgin shall conceive (*alto*) (0' 23")
- [6] O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion (*alto and chorus*) (5' 01")
- [7] For behold, darkness shall cover the earth (*bass*) (2' 16")
- [8] The people that walked in darkness (*bass*) (2' 55")
- [9] For unto us a child is born (*chorus*) (3' 57")
- [10] Pifa (Pastoral Symphony) (0' 54")
- [11] There were shepherds abiding in the field (*soprano*) (1' 19")
 And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them
 And the angel said unto them
 And suddenly there was with the angel
- [12] Glory to God (*chorus*) (1' 57")
- [13] Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion (*soprano*) (4' 13")
- [14] Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened (*alto*) (0' 23")
- [15] He shall feed his flock (*alto*) (4' 59")
 Come unto him (*soprano*)
- [16] His yoke is easy (*chorus*) (2' 24")

Part Two

- [17] Surely he hath borne our griefs (*chorus*) (2' 08")
- [18] And with his stripes we are healed (*chorus*) (1' 57")

-
- [19] All we like sheep are gone astray (*chorus*) (3' 48")
 - [20] Thy rebuke hath broken his heart (*tenor*) (1' 54")
 - [21] Behold, and see if there be any sorrow (*tenor*) (1' 24")
 - [22] He was cut off out of the land of the living (*tenor*) (0' 23")
 - [23] But thou didst not leave his soul in hell (*tenor*) (2' 16")
 - [24] Hallelujah (*chorus*) (3' 54")

Part Three

- [25] I know that my Redeemer liveth (*soprano*) (5' 30")
- [26] Since by man came death (*chorus*) (2' 13")
- [27] Behold, I tell you a mystery (*bass*) (0' 33")
- [28] The trumpet shall sound (*bass*) (3' 54")
 Trumpet solo: Brian Thomson
- [29] Worthy is the Lamb that was slain (*chorus*) (3' 46")
- [30] Amen (*chorus*) (3' 38")

The Cambridge Singers

- Sopranos:** Isabelle Adams, Elenor Bowers-Jolley, Katy Cooper, Julia Doyle, Juliet Fraser, Kirsty Hopkins, Louise Kateck, Charlotte Mobbs, Elizabeth Weisberg
- Altos:** David Bates, Christopher Field, Clara Green, Frances Jellard, Ruth Massey, Clare Wilkinson
- Tenors:** Jon English, John Harte, Tom Herford, Tom Raskin, William Unwin, Simon Wall
- Basses:** Matthew Baker, Richard Bannan, James Birchall, Benjamin Davies, Sam Evans, Richard Latham, Jonathan Saunders, Reuben Thomas

Harpichord and chamber organ by Robin Jennings

The History of *Messiah*

It has been calculated that Handel committed more notes to paper than any other composer before or since. But even by his phenomenal standards of productivity, he composed *Messiah* at white heat. In the six days beginning 23 August 1741 he drafted 100 sides of ten-stave paper; he wrote the whole oratorio in three weeks.

Yet even as he forged ahead Handel was, very unusually for him, uncertain about when and where he would perform this new work. He had probably already received his invitation to give concerts in Dublin, and it may be for that reason that he wrote *Messiah* for a sparse orchestra of strings, trumpets and drums only, with none of the usual woodwind with which he so liked to colour his solo numbers: he did not know what orchestral forces might be available (he added woodwind parts later, when he began performing *Messiah* in England). He also wrote for a combination of soloists – soprano, alto, tenor and bass – which is normal now, but which he had never used in his previous oratorios, and may have been a way of spreading the recruitment risk. Yet he seems not to have been definite about the Dublin trip, for with hardly a break after finishing *Messiah* he began his massive oratorio *Samson*, with much larger forces and surely intended for England.

Handel left us frustratingly little correspondence or paper trails other than his music, and it is from facts like these that we have to glean his intentions. With hindsight it is clear that *Messiah* was a turning point in his career.

He had come to England thirty years before, fresh from youthful grounding in counterpoint in Germany and melody in Italy, to make his mark as a composer of powerful music for church and state occasions and as a master of the new and fashionable Italian opera. It was as an opera composer that he became famous and busily employed throughout the 1720s. But the 1730s were difficult for him, prompting him to great creative developments. In this decade he began to be his own concert promoter, finance director, fixer and conductor as well as composer: the first completely independent major composer in history. As such, he was always looking for ways to please public taste that would also satisfy his urge to experiment in music.

Competition from new rival Italian opera companies, and a growing demand for identifiably English music, with English words and English singers, led him to accept librettos from

friends and acquaintances for English oratorios: unacted, unstaged works for soloists, chorus and orchestra, given as concert performances in a theatre. He had already written oratorios about the Messiah in Italy (*La resurrezione*, 1708) and for Germany (the *Brockes* Passion, 1716) when Charles Jennens offered him the libretto of *Messiah*. He did not feel the moment was right for it, but put it on the shelf for nearly three years. His turn from Italian opera to English oratorio was gradual and unplanned; for several years he put on mixed seasons of both types of works, and although he had given his last Italian opera performance a few months before he began *Messiah*, he himself did not know this or intend it to be the case.

Without *Messiah*, Charles Jennens would be unknown today. But without Charles Jennens, there would be no *Messiah*. The idea was his, and he compiled the libretto before offering it to Handel. It was not their first collaboration. Fifteen years Handel's junior, shy, touchy, cultivated, the Oxford-educated son of a Midlands landowner enriched by the family iron business, Jennens was a good amateur musician and a devotee of Handel's music. He had copies made for himself of every note that Handel wrote, he made the long journey to London each season to hear Handel's latest compositions, and he fostered Handel's career by giving him English texts to set to music.

In January 1739 Handel successfully produced his oratorio *Saul*, to a libretto by Jennens based on scripture. On 29 December that year, writing to his fellow Handel enthusiast James Harris about their plan to compile a libretto for Handel based on Milton's poems *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, Jennens commented:

I have been preparing a collection for him from Scripture, which is more to my own tast & (by his own confession) to his too; but I believe he will not set it this year, being anxious to please the Town with something of a gayer turn.

The 'collection from Scripture' is the first known mention of *Messiah*.

Handel's enthusiasm for the Milton project gave Jennens time to do justice to his chosen theme. By 10 July 1741 he was able to write to his friend Edward Holdsworth:

Handel says he will do nothing next Winter, but I hope I shall perswade him to set another Scripture Collection I have made for him, & perform it for his own Benefit [taking the bulk of the box office] in Passion Week. I hope he will

lay out his whole genius & Skill upon it, that the Composition may excell all his former Compositions, as the Subject excells every other Subject. The Subject is Messiah.

The phrase ‘another Scripture Collection’ is a clue that Jennens was also the compiler of the libretto for Handel’s only previous oratorio with words taken directly from the Bible, *Israel in Egypt*. Jennens was a devout adherent of the Protestant church, believing in the fundamental truths and divine inspiration of the Bible. Like many sincere Christians of his time, he was disturbed by the increase of Enlightenment freethinking. Respect for scientific proof, rationalist criticism of sacred texts, the disruption of old social orders as London became Europe’s finance capital – all contributed to weaken the authority of Christian revelation, and in response, dozens of clergymen and concerned laymen published hundreds of sermons, tracts, and multi-volume folios defending the doctrine that Jesus was the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament through whom God offered salvation to mankind. *Messiah* is the most lasting of these declarations of faith, because Jennens had the unique idea of communicating the essentials of Christian doctrine through Handel’s music.

At this point in his career Handel was finding the English public hard to please and was considering a return to Germany. Jennens hoped that, as the climax of a London season, the new oratorio would revive the composer’s popularity and income. But Handel did not fulfil Jennens’ plan to introduce *Messiah* to a theatre audience in London during Holy Week. Taking the new score to Ireland, he carefully waited to perform such a novel work until he had won Dublin hearts with two highly successful subscription series of some of his other oratorios, odes, and serenatas, and then he produced *Messiah* not in a theatre, but in the New Music Hall, Fishamble St, on 13 April 1742. Along with his principal performers, he gave his services free for the benefit of three Dublin charities – a fact much commended in the local press.

No composer could have wished for a more enthusiastic reception of a new work. The capacity audience was deeply appreciative, the Bishop of Elphin reporting that even ‘great numbers’ of the ‘young and gay’ listened with serious attention. Not only was it sold out, the reviews were universally positive:

Words are wanting to describe the exquisite delight it afforded to the admiring crouded Audience. The Sublime, the Grand, and the Tender,

adapted to the most elevated, majestick and moving words, conspired to transport and charm the ravished Heart and Ear. [*The Dublin Journal*]

But it was a different story when Handel premiered *Messiah* in London next year, as part of a season of English-language works in his usual venue, a theatre. The papers printed objections to the utterance of the sacred word of God in a place associated with low-life actors and scurrilous plays, and Handel suffered something akin to a nervous breakdown. He was not helped by Jennens’ outspoken disappointment with *Messiah*. Seeing the score now for the first time, Jennens initially felt that Handel had not always done justice to himself as a composer or to the word of God as divine truth. The collaborators, both strong-willed and intransigent, had a rift. It was Handel who made the first conciliatory move, and his mollifying letter (now on show in his house in London’s Brook Street) testifies to his respect for Jennens, as a librettist and as a musician: ‘Be pleased to point out those passages in the Messiah which You think require altering.’

Messiah did not become an established favourite in England until the 1750s, when Handel began to perform it for charity, as he had done in Dublin. Benevolent and wealthy London society flocked to hear *Messiah* in Captain Coram’s new Foundling Hospital ‘for the education and maintenance of exposed and deserted young children’, and Handel later bequeathed to the charity a manuscript score and a set of parts that can still be seen there.

The association of *Messiah* with the Foundling Hospital must have had a special resonance for Handel, since the city of his birth, Halle, was (and is) home to a similar foundation: the Franckesche Stiftung, a large-scale orphanage for the rescue and training of foundlings, and still a major educational charity, was established in 1698 by the Pietist philanthropist August-Hermann Francke, who was also professor of Oriental languages at Halle University when Handel attended it. Handel would have recognised the Foundling Hospital as a kindred charity.

By 1784 the music historian Charles Burney could write of *Messiah* that ‘this great work has been heard in all parts of the kingdom with increasing reverence and delight’. It reached Berlin two years later, and Mozart performed it in Vienna in 1789, adding or rewriting the parts for woodwind, brass and timpani. Both were anticipated by the William Tuckey, retired choirmaster of Trinity Church, New York, who on 16 January 1770 made extracts from *Messiah* the second part of a concert in George Burns’ Music Room in the City Tavern

on Broadway. The advertisement showed real understanding of *Messiah*: ‘A Sacred Oratorio, on the Prophecies concerning Christ, and his coming’. Further New York performances of extracts followed, and within the next decade *Messiah* reached Boston and Philadelphia. The first complete *Messiah* in North America was in Boston in 1818, at Boylston Hall, establishing a tradition of annual performances there.

It was Handel’s normal practice to revise his works for each season in which he revived them, to suit the soloists he had assembled in his company. This means that there is seldom a definitive version of a Handel opera or oratorio. *Messiah* is no exception; for example, when for the 1749–50 season Handel acquired the brilliant young alto castrato Gaetano Guadagni (later to be the creator of Gluck’s *Orfeo*), he composed for him new settings of ‘But who may abide the day of his coming’ (originally for bass, then for tenor), and ‘Thou art gone up on high’ (originally for bass, then for soprano). There is no ‘principal’ version of *Messiah*; the original Dublin performance cannot be reconstructed with certainty. The present recording follows what have become the most widely accepted choices in performance.

RUTH SMITH

Note: Texts are given as set by Handel. They differ in places from the King James Bible.

PART ONE

[1] 1. **Sinfonia**

[2] 2. **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.

(Isaiah 40, vv.1–3)

[3] 3. **Air** (tenor)

Ev’ry valley shall be exalted, and ev’ry mountain and hill made low: the crooked straight and the rough places plain:

(Isaiah 40, v.4)

[4] 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.

(Isaiah 40, v.5)

[5] 8. **Recitative** (mezzo-soprano)

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

(Isaiah 7, v.14; Matthew 1, v.23)

[6] 9. **Air** (mezzo-soprano) and **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!

(Isaiah 40, v.9)

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

(Isaiah 60, v.1)

[7] 10. **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, vv.2–3)

[8] 11. **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, v.2)

[9] 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.

(Isaiah 9, v.6)

[10] 13. Pifa (Sinfonia pastorale)

[11] 14a. Recitative (soprano)

There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

(Luke 2, v.8)

14b. Accompagnato (soprano)

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.

(Luke 2, v.9)

15. Recitative (soprano)

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.

(Luke 2, 10–11)

16. Accompagnato (soprano)

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

(Luke 2, v.13)

[12] 17. Chorus

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

(Luke 2, v.14)

[13] 18. 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, vv.9–10)

[14] 19. Recitative (mezzo-soprano)

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.

(Isaiah 35, vv.5–6)

[15] 20. Duet (mezzo-soprano/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.

(Isaiah 40, v.11)

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.

(Matthew 11, vv.28–29)

[16] 21. Chorus

His yoke is easy, and his burthen is light.

(Matthew 11, v.30)

PART TWO

[17] 24. 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;

(Isaiah 53, vv.4–5)

[18] 25. Chorus

And with his stripes we are healed.

(Isaiah 53, v.5)

[19] 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.

(Isaiah 53, v.6)

[20] 29. 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.

(Psalm 69, v.20)

[21] 30. Arioso (tenor)

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

(Lamentations 1, v.12)

[22] 31. Accompagnato (tenor)

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

(Isaiah 53, v.8)

[23] 32. Air (tenor)

But thou didst not leave his soul in hell; nor didst thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.

(Psalm 16, v.10)

[24] 44. Chorus

Hallelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

(Revelation 19, v.6)

The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

(Revelation 11, v.15)

King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

(Revelation 19, v.16)

Hallelujah!

PART THREE

[25] 45. 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.

(Job 19, vv.25–26)

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

(I Corinthians 15, v.20)

[26] 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.

(I Corinthians 15, vv.21–22)

27 47. **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:

(I Corinthians 15, vv.51–52)

28 48. **Air** (bass)

The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

(I Corinthians 15, v.52)

JOANNE LUNN (*soprano*)

Joanne Lunn studied at the Royal College of Music in London, where she was awarded the prestigious Tagore Gold medal. She performs around the world as a soloist with many of the leading early music groups. She has appeared as a soloist on Sir John Eliot Gardiner's celebrated Monteverdi Choir Bach Cantatas pilgrimage.

JAMES GILCHRIST (*tenor*)

James Gilchrist began his working life as a doctor, turning to a full-time music career in 1996. One of the leading baroque tenors of his generation, he is also a keen exponent of contemporary music, and has released a number of critically-acclaimed recordings of English music.

29 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 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.

30 Amen.

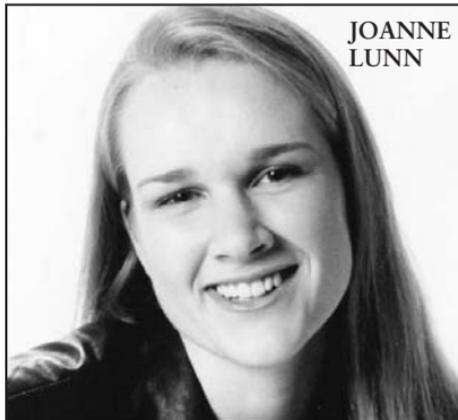
(Revelation 5, vv.12–14)

MELANIE MARSHALL (*mezzo-soprano*)

Melanie Marshall studied at the Royal College of Music. She is frequently hailed as one of Britain's most versatile vocal artists, with a style encompassing jazz, opera, oratorio, musical theatre and cabaret, and she has performed and recorded in Britain and abroad with many leading conductors and orchestras.

CHRISTOPHER PURVES (*bass-baritone*)

Christopher Purves studied English at King's College, Cambridge, before spending five years as a member of the rock and roll group Harvey and the Wallbangers. He was also one of the original members of the Cambridge Singers. He is now much in demand all over the world as a concert and operatic soloist.



JOANNE
LUNN



MELANIE
MARSHALL



JAMES
GILCHRIST



CHRISTOPHER
PURVES



Collegium
RECORDS

CSCD 519

STEREO DDD

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Recorded 5–8 March 2007
in All Hallows Church, Gospel Oak, London
Producer: Eric Wyse
Sound engineer: Simon Eadon, assisted by David Hinit
Sound consultant: David Schober

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soloists' own. Grateful acknowledgment is made to Novello & Co. Ltd
for the use, by the choir, of their Watkins Shaw edition vocal scores.

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