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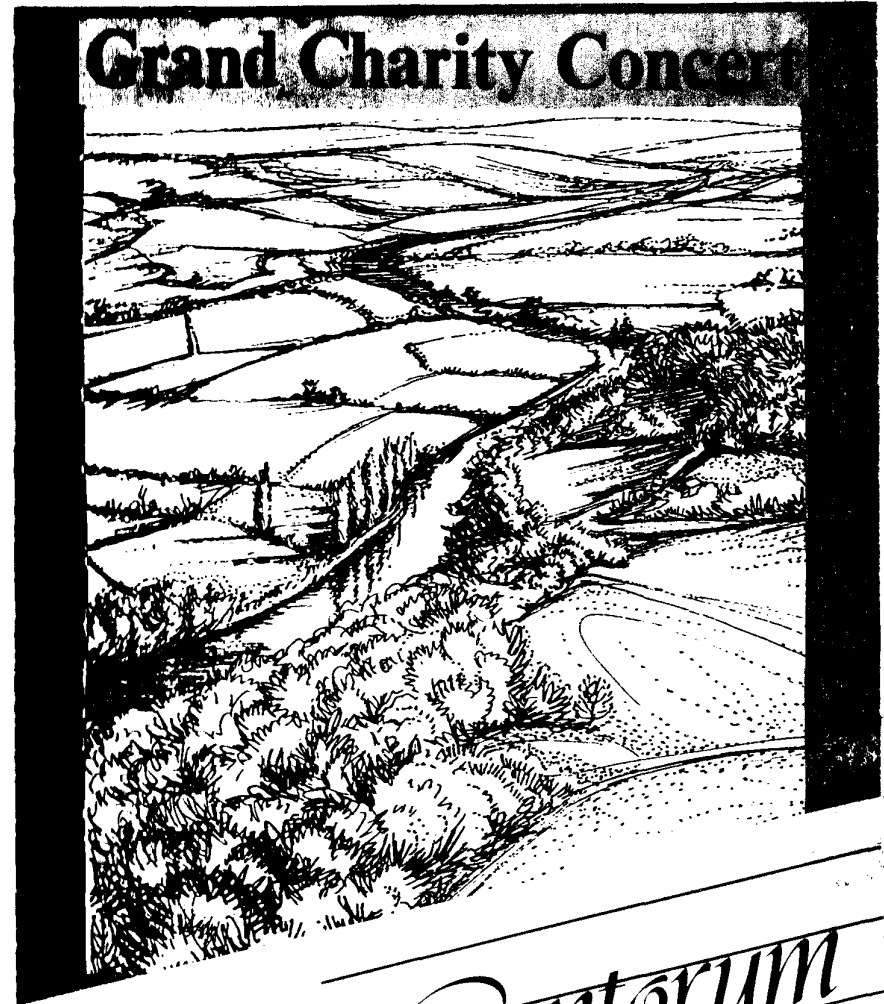


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A CONCERT BY THE CANTORUM CHOIR

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Appeal - a sketch of this lovely landscape is
featured on the programme cover.

Presented at St Edmund Campion Church, Maidenhead

Saturday, 18th November 1989

at 8.00 p.m.

HANDEL MESSIAH - A POINT OF VIEW

Handel's Messiah is undoubtedly one of the most popular pieces in the choral repertory, and is easily the most well known oratorio. But such popularity has brought with it misunderstandings, built up largely over the past three-quarters of a century, which have only relatively recently been unravelled by musicologists.

The most fundamental of these is that the Messiah is a sacred work. It is not. Like the vast majority of Handel's oratoric output, Messiah was written for the theatre - for entertainment. Admittedly, the text is biblical, and this does bring certain stylistic influence into the writing. It is this aspect that has been amplified in the philosophy of the interpretations over the past fifty or more years, when the work became the staple diet of almost all choral societies whose membership exceeded 50 singers. This presented no problem in itself, but with it came an approach which rendered the work almost ethereal; it had to command the grandest forces, and had to engender the most opulent interpretation, which included milking the most emotionally charged passages for all they were worth. And indeed it worked. It was a very popular style, created in response to demand, and as such was not to be decried.

But, I would suggest, it was not what Handel had envisaged. The most recent research, undertaken in 1987 by Dr Donald Burrows, reveals that the work's first thirty or so performances all took place in theatres, the artistic forces of which differed radically. Certainly there were performances with large orchestras, but these were in the minority, catering for especially large auditoria, or even the open air. The vast majority of theatre performances used quite small forces; twenty-four singers were not uncommon, as was a twenty piece orchestra. The soloist group varied dramatically as well - influenced by the forces available to Handel at the time. The 1752 performance at Covent Garden Theatre, London, used soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass (S.A.T.B. - on which this performance is based), but others used SA, ACTBB, TATB, SSCTB, and so on. To say that the approach to Messiah is set in stone would be completely misleading. It was not predestined,

mysterious, or "ethereal"; it was, just like most works of that time, wholly practical, flexible, down-to-earth entertainment.

But the most revealing differences in approach are not evident in the visual forces (including the lack of a conductor). They are to be found in the background to the individual movements, which profoundly influence their characteristics and interpretation. Much of the origin of the themes in Messiah owe their existence to Italian folk tunes which Handel heard in his extensive travels. Typical of this is the somewhat loftily named "Pastoral Symphony". It is not a "pastoral symphony" at all - it is a "Pifa", an Italian bagpipe dance, and Handel uses it twice, the other instance being the duet "Come unto Him". There are various other examples in the score of which this one is very symbolic of the differences in thinking and interpretation of Messiah which have developed over recent years.

So what of tonight's performance of Messiah Part I? The prime object, in my view, to repeat history, is to entertain. In order to do that I feel I have loosened a few ties and inhibitions, and blown away one or two misunderstandings and adapted as necessary - something I am sure Handel would have done. Only you as the listener can decide if it is enjoyable, and, hopefully, not quite so predictable as you might have expected.

Jonathan Miall.

CANTORUM CHOIR

CANTORUM CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

Leader: Penelope Gee

DIRECTED BY JONATHAN MIALL

ANTONIO VIVALDI (1678-1741)

MAGNIFICAT

Sopranos: Valerie Perrett
Marianne Stork
Contralto: Vivienne Mitchell

Tenor: Malcolm Stork
Bass: David Food

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Magnificat | Chorus |
| 2. Et. Exultavit | Sop, Alto, Tenor, Chorus |
| 3. Et. Misericordia | Chorus |
| 4. Fecit Potentiam | Chorus |
| 5. Deposuit Potentes | Chorus |
| 6. Esurientes Implevit | Two sopranos |
| 7. Suscepit Israel | Chorus |
| 8. Siant Locutus | Soprano, Alto, Bass |
| 9. Gloria Patri | Chorus |

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791) CLARINET QUINTET IN A

Clarinet: Andrew Spurling

The Astor String Quartet

I N T E R V A L O F 1 5 M I N U T E S

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685-1759)

MESSIAH (PART 1)

Soprano: Valerie Snapes Contraltos: Eleanor Griffiths
Mary Jefferies
Tenor: Robert Goode Bass: David Food

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 1. Sinfonie | |
| 2. Comfort ye my people | Recit. |
| 3. Ev'ry valley shall be exalted | Air |
| 4. And the glory of the Lord | Chorus |
| 5. Thus saith the Lord | Recit. |
| 6. But who may abide the day of his coming? | Air |
| 7. And he shall purify | Chorus |
| 8. Behold, a virgin shall conceive | Recit. |
| 9. O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion | Air and chorus |
| 10. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth | Recit. |
| 11. The people that walked in darkness | Air |
| 12. For unto us a child is born | Chorus |
| 13. Pifa | |
| 14. (a) There were shepherds abiding in the field | Recit. |
| (b) And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them | Recit. |
| 15. And the angel said unto them | Recit. |
| 16. And suddenly there was with the angel | Recit. |
| 17. Glory to God | Chorus |
| 18. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion | Air |
| 19. Then shall the eyes of the blind | Recit. |
| 20. He shall feed his flock | Duet |
| 21. His yoke is easy, and his burden is light. | Chorus |

VIVALDI: MAGNIFICAT

Antonio Vivaldi was born in Venice in 1678. Although he was ordained as a priest, he was a very prolific composer of secular music, and is probably best known for his concertos, which include the Four Seasons. Vivaldi wrote about fifty operas, and his sacred music, which includes a large number of psalm settings, motets and Mass movements (such as the famous Gloria) is clearly influenced by the Venetian opera style. His Magnificat is undoubtedly influenced by his secular compositions, with operatic idioms in the vocal writing and the strong orchestration of the concerto style. Like all his finest works, the Magnificat bears the unmistakable stamp of his strong musical personality.

MOZART: CLARINET QUINTET

Mozart's Clarinet Quintet in A major was written in September 1789, and so is just over 200 years old. Mozart, despite some personal difficulties, was in his prime; the last few years of his life saw the completion of Così fan tutte, the last symphonies and some of his most mature and lyrical chamber music. The Clarinet Quintet is a fine example of this style, gracefully balancing the instruments and creating beautifully varied textures. This work was followed in 1791 by his Clarinet Concerto, the last orchestral piece Mozart ever completed. His affection for the clarinet and understanding of its particular timbre is evident in both these exquisite works.

THE ASTOR STRING QUARTET

The Astor String Quartet, now in its fifth year, brings together youthful talent from the London music colleges.

The quartet perform a wide range of repertoire on varied occasions - from city functions to wedding receptions, charity balls to chamber concerts - but throughout combining visual charm with consummate musicianship.

ANDREW SPARLING

Andrew Sparling was born in Twyford in 1961. He first studied the clarinet with Robert Reade, and then with Angela Fussell and Thea King as a Junior Exhibitioner at the Royal College of Music. While he was a pupil at Desborough School he was awarded a Scholarship and Choral Exhibition to read Music at Clare College, Cambridge, where he studied the clarinet with David Campbell. After his graduation he spent a year with Antony Pay at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where he won the Orchestral Woodwind Prize. A scholarship from the Countess of Munster Musical Trust enabled him to continue his studies for a further year with John McCaw and Stephen Trier.

In 1985 he won the Wind Prize at the International Young Concert Artists' Competition of Royal Tunbridge Wells, which has led to concerto performances both in this country and abroad, in addition to the prizewinners' recital at the Wigmore Hall. He has also given a recital at the Purcell Room as part of the Maisie Lewis Young Artists series, sponsored by the Worshipful Company of Musicians.

He has a strong interest in contemporary music, and has given solo performances at the Almedia International Festival and the York Spring Festival of Contemporary Music. He is a member of the clarinet quartet "No Strings Attached", which gave a broadcast recital on BBC Radio 3 in 1989, and he has played with the ensembles Lontano, Lysis, Spectrum and the Grosvenor Group at many of the major British music festivals. As a member of the trio 'Tapestry' (soprano, clarinet and piano) he has given many recitals throughout the British Isles, including a highly successful South Bank debut at the Purcell Room in September 1989. 'Tapestry' was recently awarded a place on the Fina South East Arts Young Musicians' Platform, resulting in a season of concerts in Kent, Surrey and East Sussex in addition to a Wigmore Hall recital in 1991.

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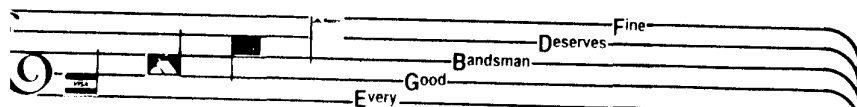


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CANTORUM CHOIR

The Cantorum Choir was formed in 1981 and since then has made well over 50 appearances in the Thames Valley area and further afield. From a modest 14 singers it has grown to its present size of 28, but will not, according to its conductor Jonathan Miall, get any larger. In the past eight years the Choir has accumulated a broad repertoire ranging from Palestrina, Monteverdi and the baroque composers through the 18th and 19th centuries to contemporary works, some of which have been written especially for it. Apart from the ever-popular Carol Concert, the Choir usually makes three or four appearances during the year both in the concert hall and also at Cathedrals, singing services. In addition to concert commitments the Choir has appeared on film and television.

Future repertoire includes concerts of part songs and madrigals, Kodaly's Missa Brevis, Leighton's Crucifixus Pro Nobis, Stravinsky's choral works, the music of Bruckner and the choral songs of Mendelssohn. It is envisaged that the Choir will be presenting Part II of Messiah sometime in the near future, with the ultimate aim of a complete performance, using authentic instruments.

There are occasional vacancies for singers in all parts, and if you are interested do please contact Jonathan Miall or one of the choir members to arrange an informal audition.

FUTURE DATES

Saturday, 16th December, 1989:
Christmas Carol Concert
Cookham Dean Church at 8.00 p.m.

Saturday, 5th May 1990
A concert of Part Songs and Madrigals
Little Marlow Church.