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Cantorum Choir

Eton College Chapel
OCTOBER 26, 1991

COMMENCING AT 5.15 P.M.

HANDEL MESSIAH

(Complete, 1743 version)

Charity Performance on behalf of
WEXHAM PARK HOSPITAL
CT SCANNER APPEAL



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CANTORUM CHOIR

The Cantorum Choir was formed in 1981, specifically to provide an alternative to the choral society, which exist in abundance in this area. The Choir has a maximum of 30 singers, with a core of 26, calling on extras when the musical requirements dictate. It meets only for a three week period before each concert (and this one is no exception) during which there is an intensive schedule of rehearsals. The formula certainly seems to have found success, as the Choir has undertaken well over 50 concerts and other musical engagements, and has built up a substantial mailing list and concert-going following, together with an enviable musical reputation.

Commitments have included small and large-scale concerts; weekends at the Cathedrals of Guildford and Winchester and St. George's Chapel Windsor; participation in a recording of carols with the Westminster Cathedral Choir; television appearances in "Inspector Morse" and "At Home with Wendy Craig"; and most recently a recording contract with Silva Screen Records for the chorus numbers in an album recording of a new musical "Wuthering Heights" with Lesley Garrett, Bonnie Langford and Dave Willetts, accompanied by the Philharmonia Orchestra.

The Choir's repertoire experience is very broad but tends to specialise in twentieth century choral works. Its annual speciality is the Carol Concert, at which at least six new carols are performed every time.

Future works planned include the Bruckner E Minor Mass, a repeat performance of the Rutter Gloria, the Faure Requiem and Kodaly's Missa Brevis.

There are occasional vacancies for experienced young singers, and if you would like to audition, please contact any member of the Choir, or the conductor, Jonathan Miall.

*Cantorum
Choir*

The Cantorum Choir is sponsored by Pike Smith & Kemp, Estate Agents.

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HANDEL MESSIAH • CANTORUM CHOIR ETON COLLEGE CHAPEL • OCTOBER 26TH 1991

This complete performance of Messiah is the culmination of a series of concerts through which the Choir has prepared and performed Parts 1 and 2. In so doing, I have had the chance to study Messiah in some detail, and to formulate our approach to this great work. This will heavily influence the type of performance that we will present, and hopefully will cast Messiah in a slightly different light to the norm.

First and foremost, during Handel's administration of the Messiah "seasons", which ran from 1742 to 1754, the score was rarely performed under the same conditions. This was influenced by the availability of soloists (which by all accounts was decidedly precarious) the venue, and the number of orchestral musicians he had to draw upon. Never did there appear to be a problem with financing, unlike today.

Secondly, in the past I believe the work has been misunderstood because of its biblical text. This aspect 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. And indeed it worked. It was a very popular style, created in response to demand, and as such is not to be derided.

But, I suggest, it was not what Handel had necessarily envisaged. Handel himself ensured that, whilst he was involved, Messiah was not predestined, mysterious, or "ethereal".

This performance will attempt to reflect what I believe was Handel's real intention - within the context of a biblical text, and a sacred work, he wanted to entertain as well as to provide a statement on the glory of God. Just because it was a sacred work, it should not be restricted in its portrayal of drama and provision of entertainment.

Thirdly, a major influence on the composition of Messiah was Handel's frequent travels to Italy, and with it the collection of Italian folk and dance tunes. This frequently arises in the score, but in my view has not been given enough prominence in performance. For example, the loftily named "Pastoral Symphony" is in fact a copy of a "Pifa" - an Italian bagpipe tune. The same tune turns up in "Come unto Him". Another good example of a folk tune is the chorus "Lift up ye heads", which takes on a different emphasis when considering its roots were in dance.

So what is different about this performance of Messiah? Well, quite a lot. It is most likely that virtually everyone who has listened to a complete Messiah will have heard the 1753 version, cast for Soprano, Contralto, Tenor and Bass (SCTB). This performance is going to be as faithful a production as possible of the 1743 version - that of the first London season. The parts are cast for two Sopranos, Contralto, two Tenors and Bass, reflecting availabilities in 1743. The performances were due to take place in the Covent Garden Theatre, which implied that the forces were small - approximately 30 singers and 20 orchestra. Catering for unique circumstances was one of Handel's specialities, because he re-drafted various movements to suit his soloists. In this performance, therefore, you will find that the Bass is singing items which you thought the Contralto was due to sing, and that some of the recitatives are rearranged as "accompagnato" movements. The most significant change is the replacement of two movements in the 1743 (and 1753) version with a completely different sequence of duet, quartet, and then chorus, written as one complete movement. Predictably a lot of the favourites remain, but I hope presented to you in a distinctive and refreshing performance.

Messiah is certainly a sacred work, but its prime objective was one of entertainment - it is through that objective that Handel wanted to convey his thoughts and philosophy. I hope that we can amplify that in our performance in the fabulous setting of Eton College Chapel.

JONATHAN MIALL

Programme

17.15 - 18.15 • Part the First
18.15 - 19.30 • Supper Interval
19.30 - 20.30 • Part the Second
20.30 - 21.15 • Second Interval
21.15 - 22.05 • Part the Third

CANTORUM CHOIR • HANDEL MESSIAH

CANTORUM CHAMBER ENSEMBLE (complete, 1743 version)

Leader Ronald Colyer

Conducted by *JONATHAN MIALL*

Soprano I	Valerie Snapes
Soprano II	Valerie Perrett
Contralto	Vivienne Mitchell
Contralto	Eleanor Griffiths
Contralto	Mary Jefferies
Tenor I	Malcolm Stork
Tenor II	Robert Goode
Bass	David Ashman

"STANDARD
VERSION"

HANDEL MESSIAH • PART THE FIRST

		1743	1753
Sinfony			
Comfort ye my people	Accompagnato	Tenor 1	
Ev'ry valley shall be exalted	Aria	Tenor 1	
And the glory of the Lord	Chorus		
Thus saith the Lord	Accompagnato	Bass	
But who may abide	Aria	Bass	Contralto <i>alt. version</i>
And he shall purify	Chorus		
Behold a virgin shall conceive	Recitative	Contralto	
O thou that tellest good tidings	Aria	Contralto	
O thou that tellest good tidings	Chorus		
For behold, darkness			
shall cover the earth	Accompagnato	Bass	
People that walked in darkness	Aria	Bass	
For unto us a child is born	Chorus		
Pifa			Extended
There were shepherds	Recitative	Soprano 1	
And lo the angel of the Lord	Arioso	Soprano 1	Accom.
And the angel said unto them	Recitative	Soprano 1	
And suddenly there was	Accompagnato	Soprano 1	
Glory to God	Chorus		
Rejoice greatly	Aria	Soprano 1	Setting in 4/4
Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened	Recitative	Contralto	Soprano
He shall feed His flock	Aria	Contralto	
		/Soprano 2	Soprano
His yoke is easy	Chorus		

HANDEL MESSIAH • PART THE SECOND

"STANDARD
VERSION"

		1743	1753
Behold the Lamb of God	Chorus		
He was despised and rejected	Aria	Contralto	
Surely he hath borne our griefs	Chorus		
And with His stripes we are healed	Chorus		
All we like Sheep	Chorus		
All they that see him	Accompagnato	Tenor 1	
He trusted in God	Chorus		
Thy rebuke hath broken His heart	Accompagnato	Soprano 1	Tenor
Behold and see if there be any sorrow	Aria	Soprano 1	Tenor
He was cut off out of the land of the living	Accompagnato	Tenor 2	Soprano
But thou didst not leave his soul in hell	Aria	Tenor 2	Soprano
Lift up your heads, O ye gates	Chorus		
Unto which of the angels	Recitative	Tenor 1	
Let us the angels of God worship Him	Chorus		
Thou art gone up on high	Aria	Soprano 2	Contralto <i>alt. version</i>
The Lord gave the word	Chorus		
How beautiful are the feet of them	Duet and Chorus	Soprano 1	Soprano aria
		Contralto 1	
		Contralto 2	
		Contralto 3	
Their sound is gone out	Aria	Tenor	Chorus
Why do the nations so furiously rage	Aria	Bass	Extended
Let us break their bonds asunder	Chorus		
He that dwelleth in heaven	Recitative	Tenor	
Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron	Aria	Tenor	
Hallelujah	Chorus		

HANDEL MESSIAH • PART THE THIRD

I know that my redeemer liveth	Aria	Soprano 1	
Since by man came death	Chorus		
Behold, I tell you a mystery	Accompagnato	Bass	
The trumpet shall sound	Aria	Bass	
Then shall be brought to pass	Recitative	Contralto	
O death, where is thy sting	Duet	Contralto & Tenor 2	
But thanks be to God	Chorus		
If God is for us	Aria	Contralto	Soprano
Worthy is the Lamb that was slain	Chorus		
Amen	Chorus		

JONATHAN MIALL

Jonathan Miall places much weight on his early training in music as a choirboy from the age of 5 onwards at his parish church, All Saints' in Maidenhead. His first conducting experience was ten years later with the Maidenhead Schools Orchestra, in a performance of a Stamitz flute concerto. This led to other ensemble work, and significantly, repetitive work in school choir rehearsals, which kindled a strong interest in choral conducting.

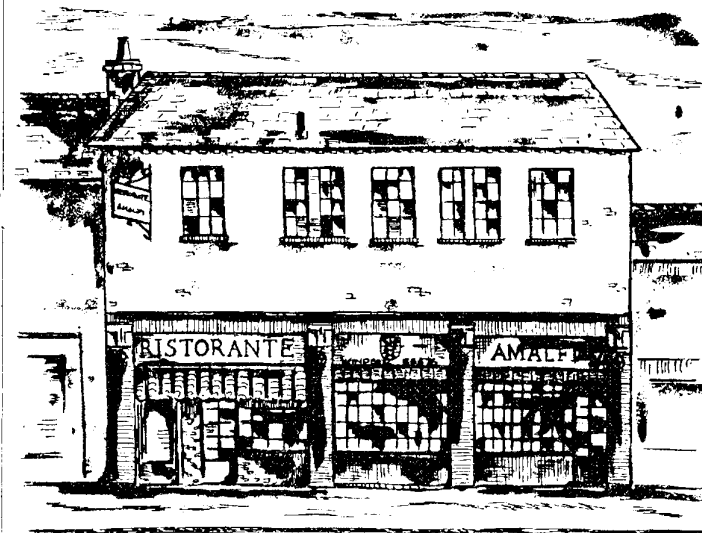
In addition to a degree in Economics at Manchester University, he studied singing with John Grierson and was appointed conductor of the Hulme and Ashbourne college choir. After University he continued his singing studies with Arthur Reckless at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

His next major conducting commitments were away from the classical music scene - as musical director and arranger for a number of stage shows, which included 6 years as musical director for the Grimm Players, and several shows with the Desborough School Dramatic Society and involvement with the Maidenhead Operatic Society. Titles have included Oliver, Hansel and Gretel, Pirates of Penzance, Joseph, Oh! What a Lovely War, and more recently the Melvyn Bragg/Howard Goodall musical, The Hired Man.

But it is his work with the Cantorum Choir, formed in 1981, which has provided the backbone of his conducting activity over the past ten years. Church music remains a strong influence in his choice of concert programmes, and regular visits to cathedrals have been a feature of the Choir's development. In addition to the regular concerts which have charted the Choir's growth in stature and quality, Jonathan has overseen two recording projects, a film contract and a major television appearance which has put the Choir firmly on the map.

Jonathan is currently very busy with his new son, Seth, together with the rest of his family, who, he thinks fortunately, take an active interest in his musical activities. His two daughters sing in Cantorum Too, his wife sings in the Choir, and they and his other son Hugh all love the stage. He is therefore less certain about the future than he used to be, but still envisages cherished projects, such as West Side Story, some opera, and some larger scale choral works taking place some time in the future.

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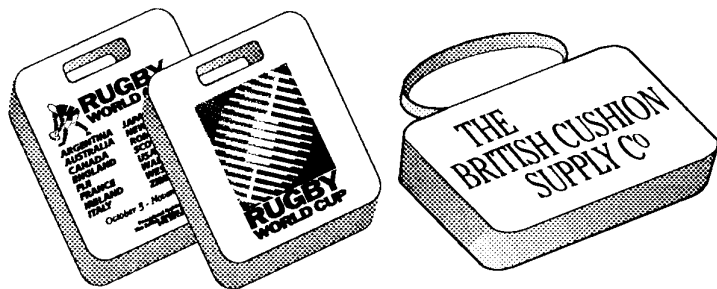
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ETON COLLEGE CHAPEL

The Trustees of the Wexham Park Scanner Appeal Trust are most grateful to Eton College for generously allowing the Chapel to act as venue for this evening's performance by the Cantorum Choir.

It is difficult to imagine a more impressive setting for tonight's production of the complete 1743 version of Handel Messiah - the Chapel itself predating Handel by nearly three centuries.

Today, the Chapel services retain their important position in the life of the College: boys attend once on Sundays and there is a variety of voluntary services throughout the week.

WALL PAINTINGS

The wall paintings in the Chapel are the most considerable work of art in the College. They are the work of at least four master painters who, with their assistants, took eight years to complete them (1479 - 87). In the Flemish style, they decorate the stone sides of the Chapel. On the north side the paintings depict miracles of the Virgin Mary (to whom the Chapel is dedicated), while those on the south side tell a popular medieval story about a mythical Empress.

The paintings have an interesting life history. They were whitewashed over by the College barber in 1560 as a result of an order from the new Protestant church authorities, banning pictures of fictitious miracles. They remained obscured and forgotten for the best part of 300 years before rediscovery in 1847; it was not until 1923 that they were revealed by the removal of stall canopies and the paintings were subsequently cleaned and restored.

CHAPEL WINDOWS

A bomb that fell on Upper School in 1940 shattered all the Chapel glass except that in the window above the organ. The east window was inserted in 1952 and is the work of Miss Evie Hone of Dublin. With its deep colours, the Crucifixion in the centre and the Last Supper below, it is considered by many to be one of the masterpieces of modern stained-glass art. The designs for the windows flanking it, four on each side, are by John Piper and were executed in glass by Patrick Reyntiens. The subjects are divided into four miracles on the north side and four parables on the south. The miracles are: The Miraculous Draft of Fishes, the Feeding of the Five Thousand, the Stilling of the Waters, and the Raising of Lazarus. The parables are: The Light under a Bushel, the House built on the Rock, the Lost Sheep, and the Sower.

THE ROOF

At first sight the roof appears to be late medieval fan-vaulting, but it was in fact completed in 1959, superseding the old wooden roof which had become unsafe owing to damage caused by rot and death-watch beetle. The new roof, carrying out the Founder's original intention for a stone vault, is of stone-faced concrete hung from steel trusses. An interesting comparison can be made with the exquisite fan-vault of Lupton's Chapel, finished in 1515.