

FORTHCOMING CONCERTS

Saturday 21st December 1985
Nantwich Parish Church

CAROLS FOR CHOIR AND AUDIENCE

Saturday 22nd March 1986
Nantwich Parish Church

Bach: B MINOR MASS

Saturday 28th June 1986
Brine Leas School

Orff: CARMINA BURANA

NANTWICH CHORAL SOCIETY IS SUPPORTED BY
NORTH WEST ARTS,
THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF MUSIC SOCIETIES AND
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Cameo Printing of Nantwich

Nantwich Choral Society

MESSIAH

G. F. HANDEL

NANTWICH SINFONIA
leader RALPH CHADWICK

CATRIN LEY, soprano

DEREK ACOCK, alto

JAMES WATSON, tenor

DAVID GARNER, bass

JOY ROBERTS, continuo

conducted by
STEPHEN BUCKMAN



"Messiah" – a sacred oratorio

George Frederick Handel
(1685 – 1759)

"Messiah" consists of three parts, in accordance with the traditional practice of its time. The first of these parts is concerned with Advent and Christmas, the second with the Passion, and the third with the future of Christianity. Underlying the basic gospel story Handel lays great stress on the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies relating to the coming of the Lord.

"Messiah" was designed as much for an audience nurtured on the operatic conventions of the mid 18th century as for those who would listen in hushed reverence. It was written with white-hot fervour, in less than three weeks, by a man whose operas had just failed to win popular acclaim, but whose oratorios – basically, unstaged operas on a religious theme – restored his popularity and made him a highly fashionable figure until his death in 1759.

Over the centuries additions to the orchestration and changes in the allocation of solo numbers have amended and disfigured the original work to such a degree that the "Messiah" which most of us have grown to know and love – from performances by massed choirs with full symphonic "backing" – bears only a faint resemblance to what Handel himself wrote.

"Messiah" was written for a small professional chorus, and it is certain that Handel never envisaged the use of even a moderately sized choir, such as the Nantwich Choral Society, in its performance. However, some justification for this deviation from authenticity can be found in a larger choir's ability to lend proper weight when necessary while – if they sing with precision and agility – not blurring the clarity of the coloratura.

The depth of emotion as well as the sheer exuberance in "Messiah" have survived the centuries. Tastes change, but, whatever happens, "Messiah" will surely always be regarded as the masterpiece it undoubtedly is.

PART ONE

Sinfonia

Comfort ye my people (tenor)

Every valley shall be exalted (tenor)

And the glory of the Lord (chorus)

Thus saith the Lord (bass)

But who may abide the day of his coming? (alto)

And he shall purify (chorus)

Behold a virgin shall conceive (alto)

O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion (alto)

For behold, darkness shall cover the earth (bass)

The people that walked in darkness (bass)

For unto us a child is born (chorus)

Pifa

a) There were shepherds abiding in the field (soprano)

b) And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them (soprano)

And the angel said unto them (soprano)

PART ONE - continued

And suddenly there was with the angel (soprano)

Glory to God (chorus)

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion (soprano)

Then shall the eyes of the blind (alto)

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd (alto & soprano)

His yoke is easy, and his burthen is light (chorus)

PART TWO

Behold the Lamb of God (chorus)

He was despised (alto)

Surely he hath borne our griefs (chorus)

And with his stripes we are healed (chorus)

All we like sheep have gone astray (chorus)

All that see him laugh him to scorn (tenor)

He trusted in God (chorus)

Thy rebuke hath broken his heart (tenor)

Behold, and see if there be any sorrow (tenor)

He was cut off out of the land of the living (tenor)

But thou didst not leave his soul in hell (tenor)

Lift up your heads, O ye gates (chorus)

Thou art gone up on high (alto)

The Lord gave the word (chorus)

How beautiful are the feet (soprano)

Why do the nations so furiously rage together? (bass)

Let us break their bonds asunder (chorus)

He that dwelleth in heaven (tenor)

Thou shalt break them (tenor)

Hallelujah (chorus)

PART THREE

I know that my Redeemer liveth (soprano)

Since by man came death (chorus)

Behold, I tell you a mystery (bass)

The trumpet shall sound (bass)

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain (chorus)

There will be an interval between Parts One and Two