

Nantwich Choral Society

NANTWICH SINFONIA
(leader: Ralph Chadwick)

MESSIAH

G. F. HANDEL

Catrin Ley, soprano
Marjorie Seddon, contralto
James Watson, tenor
Benjamin Odom, bass

Joy Roberts, harpsichord

conducted by
Stephen Buckman

SATURDAY 3rd DECEMBER
— 1988 —

The Parish Church of St. Mary, Nantwich
at 7.00 p.m.

*All proceeds from this concert are to be donated to the
Multiple Sclerosis Society*

MESSIAH

G. F. Handel (1685 - 1759)

Sinfonia

Comfort me 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 (contralto)
And he shall purify (chorus)
Behold, a virgin shall conceive (contralto)
O thou that tellest (contralto & chorus)
For behold, darkness shall cover the earth (bass)
For unto us a child is born (chorus)
Pifa
There were shepherds (soprano)
And lo, the angel of the Lord (soprano)
And the angel said unto them (soprano)
And suddenly there was with the angel (soprano)
Glory to God (chorus)
Rejoice greatly (soprano)
Then shall the eyes of the blind (contralto)
He shall feed his flock (contralto and soprano)
His yoke is easy (chorus)

INTERVAL

Behold the Lamb of God (chorus)
He was despised (contralto)
Surely he hath borne our griefs (chorus)
And with his stripes (chorus)
All we like sheep (chorus)
All they that see him (tenor)
He trusted in God (chorus)
Thy rebuke has broken his heart (tenor)
Behold, and see if there be any sorrow (tenor)
He was cut off (soprano)
But thou didst not leave (soprano)
Lift up your heads (chorus)
Unto which of the angels (tenor)
Let all the angels of God (chorus)
Thou art gone up on high (contralto)
The Lord gave the word (chorus)
How beautiful are the feet (soprano)
Their sound is gone out (chorus)

Why do the nations (bass)

Let us break their bonds asunder (chorus)
He that dwelleth in heaven (tenor)
Thou shalt break them (tenor)
Hallelujah (chorus)

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)
Then shall be brought to pass (contralto)
O death, where is thy sting (contralto and tenor)
But thanks be to God (chorus)
If God be for us (soprano)
Worthy is the Lamb (chorus)

The history of the Messiah has been one of constant re-writing. Handel was a very practical musician. If necessary he would revise his compositions to suit any given performance. Because of the composer's flexibility in these matters there is no definitive version of Messiah. Indeed, it is possible to state with certainty that the work was never performed by Handel exactly as he composed it. Changes had to be made, to suit local conditions, for the first performance in Dublin, in 1741.

As well as the uncertainty over the allocation of solo movements, the whole nature of the work has been changed in the 250 years since its composition. In 1784, the Westminster Abbey Commemoration launched the tradition of performances by massed choirs and large-scale orchestras. Through the re-scoring of the Messiah by Mozart, even greater heights of excess have been reached. Based on the assumption that Handel would have approved, musicians have continued to augment the forces they have employed in performances to a truly amazing extent. In 1859, the Great Handel Commemoration Festival used a choir of 2765 and an orchestra of 460. By 1883 Sir George Grove was pleading for "an orchestra as Handel had it".

It has only been since the end of the Second World War that any attempt has been made to recapture the original flavour of Messiah. The forces used in performance have been greatly reduced, thereby restoring the original balance between chorus and orchestra, and within the orchestra itself. Furthermore, any parts not written by Handel have been discarded.

This evening's performance is based on a set of parts given to the Foundling Hospital by Handel. These parts probably date from the year 1754.

Handel composed Messiah with the intention, and hope, of making money. He found it was most profitable when, as at its first performance, it was used for charitable purposes. Thank you for helping Nantwich Choral Society to help the Multiple Sclerosis Society.