

UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY

CHARLES A. SINK, PRESIDENT

EARL V. MOORE, MUSICAL DIRECTOR

Second Concert

1938-1939

Complete Series 2585

Faculty Concert Series

Elijah

An Oratorio in Two Parts

FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY

Soloists:

THELMA LEWIS, *Soprano* ARTHUR HACKETT, *Tenor*
ARTHUR D. MOORE, JR., *Soprano* HARDIN VAN DEURSEN, *Baritone*
HOPE BAUER EDDY, *Contralto*

UNIVERSITY CHORAL UNION
UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
TOM KINKEAD, *Organist*
EARL V. MOORE, *Conductor*

TUESDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 13, 1938, AT 8:30
HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

PROGRAM

PART I

INTRODUCTION. *As God the Lord.*
OVERTURE.
CHORUS. *Help, Lord!*
{DUET. *Zion spreadeth her hand.*
{WITH CHORUS. *Lord, bow Thine ear.*
RECITATIVE AND AIR. *If with all your hearts.*
CHORUS. *Yet doth the Lord see it not.*
RECITATIVE. *Elijah! get thee hence!*
RECITATIVE. *Now Cherith's brook,*
RECITATIVE, AIR, AND DUET. *Help me, man of God!*
CHORUS. *Blessed are the men.*
RECITATIVE AND CHORUS. *As God the Lord.*
CHORUS. *Baal, we cry to thee!*
RECITATIVE. *Call Him louder!*
CHORUS. *Hear our cry!*
RECITATIVE AND CHORUS. *Hear and answer!*
AIR. *Lord God of Abraham!*
QUARTET. *Cast thy burden upon the Lord.*

RECITATIVE AND CHORUS. *The fire descends!*
AIR. *Is not His word like a fire?*
RECITATIVE. *Man of God.*
RECITATIVE, AIR, AND CHORUS. *Look down upon us from heaven, O Lord!*
CHORUS. *Thanks be to God!*

PART II

AIR. *Hear ye, Israel!*
CHORUS. *Be not afraid.*
RECITATIVE. *Man of God.*
AIR. *It is enough.*
RECITATIVE AND TRIO. *Lift thine eyes.*
CHORUS. *He, watching over Israel.*
RECITATIVE AND AIR. *O rest in the Lord.*
RECITATIVE AND CHORUS. *Behold! God the Lord passed by.*
RECITATIVE. *I go on my way.*
CHORUS. *Then did Elijah.*
AIR. *Then shall the righteous shine.*
CHORUS. *And then shall your light.*

The audience is respectfully requested to refrain from applause except at the close of Parts I and II.

The Steinway Piano and the Skinner Organ are the official concert instruments of the University Musical Society

A R S L O N G A V I T A B R E V I S

ORATORIO—"Elijah" Mendelssohn-Bartholdy

Jacob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy was born February 3, 1809, at Hamburg; died November 4, 1847, at Leipzig.

PART I

No composer since Handel and Bach has so thoroughly satisfied the demands made upon creative genius by the oratorio as Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy.

Although Mendelssohn in his early life was captivated by the stage, although he wrote several works replete with charm in the operatic form, yet the peculiar gifts of dramatic expression he undoubtedly possessed were more adapted for the oratorio. We may see in this fact an illustration of a phenomenon that cannot have escaped the notice of the careful student of the history of music, namely, that no composer, however great his genius, has succeeded in identifying himself with both forms. The Handel of the opera has been forgotten; we know only the composer of the *Messiah*, *Israel in Egypt*, and *Samson*. From Bach, whose *Passion Music According to St. Matthew* is only approached by the great *Pope Marcellus* Masses of Palestrina, who, like the great Leipzig Cantor, was entirely uninfluenced by the dramatic idea as applied in the opera, down through scores of lesser composers to Gounod and Brahms, we find this phenomenon. *Faust* will outlive the *Mors et Vita* and the *Redemption*, while the *German Requiem*, monumental in its grandeur, was written by a man who neither cared nor sought for success in the opera. Mendelssohn could hardly escape the growing feeling for dramatic expression so much in evidence in the first half of his century, and as a consequence of this influence we find both of his great oratorios instinct with dramatic fervor.

Elijah was first performed at the Birmingham (England) Festival, August 26, 1846. Mendelssohn had devoted several years to the composition of this work, which contains more of the elements of popularity than its predecessor, *St. Paul*. From the date of its initial performance, *Elijah* has taken a place in the literature of the oratorio next to the greatest works of Bach and Handel.

The work opens with somber chords by the trombones, which introduce a recitative in which Elijah proclaims *There shall be neither dew nor rain these years, but according to my word*. Then begins the overture with a most suggestive phrase given out by the 'celli, *pianissimo*, which is developed with the admirable clearness so characteristic of the composer. His significant grasp of the *technique* of polyphonic writing and his mastery of the orchestra, coupled with the reserve always evident in the work of a master, are displayed long before the magnificent *crescendo* leading into the opening chorus, *Help Lord*, in which his power as a choral writer is no less in evidence. This chorus leads through choral recitatives to a duet, for soprano and contralto, with chorus, *Lord, bow Thine ear*. This is founded on an old traditional Hebrew melody. It will be noticed that the music has proceeded without any interruption up to this point.

The unity thus secured is most admirable and establishes a mood that heightens the effect of the following recitative and aria, *If with all your*

hearts, and gives added force to the succeeding "Chorus of the People," which, beginning with cries of despair, *He mocketh at us*, ends with a solemn choral, *For He, the Lord our God, is a jealous God*.

All this, as well as the inspiring scene in which Elijah brings comfort to the sorrowing widow by the restoration of her son to life, and the chorus, *Blessed are the men who fear Him*—full of musical beauty and dramatic fervor as they are—is but preliminary to the wonderful episodes beginning with the recitative and chorus, *As God the Lord of Sabaoth liveth*, and ending with the chorus, *Thanks be to God*. This whole section is so instinct with life, so full of dramatic intensity, that were it necessary to substantiate Mendelssohn's claim to greatness, no other proof were needed. A composer of less power, or lacking in discrimination, would have so exhausted his resources earlier in this episode that an anticlimax would have been inevitable. Not so Mendelssohn. By happy contrasts the interest is maintained, and the hearer is led on gradually but surely by the force of the ever-expanding dramatic suggestion.

When, in response to the appeals of the worshipers, *Hear and answer, Baal*, no answer comes; when Elijah, after that sublime prayer, *Lord God of Abraham*, and the quartet, *Cast thy burden on the Lord*, calls aloud on the Almighty, *Thou who makest Thine angels spirits, Thou, whose ministers are flaming fires, Let them now descend!* what could be more intense than the chorus, *The fire descends from heav'n; the flames consume his offering?* Note the effect of the choral which, beginning *pianissimo*, gradually gains in fervor until, at the words, *And we will have no other gods before the Lord*, nothing could be more convincing. Where in the whole literature of the oratorio is there a more beautiful effect than that produced by the dominant seventh (on A) at the word *gods*? We have no space to comment on the solos leading up to the prayer of the people, when, kneeling, they ask the Lord to *Open the heavens and send us relief*, for now comes the real climax. The Youth, who has been sent to look towards the sea, after gazing long in vain, finally cries, *Behold, a little cloud ariseth from the waters; it is like a man's hand! The heav'ns are black with clouds and with wind. The storm rusheth louder and louder!* Then comes the final chorus, *Thanks be to God*, a pæan of thanksgiving than which no greater has ever been written, with the possible exception of the *Hallelujah Chorus*.

PART II

This part begins with a noble soprano solo, *Hear ye, Israel*, the concluding sentence of which, *Be not afraid*, forms the basis of the strong and dignified chorus into which the solo merges. When the people, forgetting all they owe to the prophet, turn again to the worship of Baal, and, stirred up by the Queen, seek his life, comes that pathetic aria, *It is enough*, from a purely musical point of view the most beautiful in the whole oratorio. Then, as he sleeps under the juniper tree, the "Angels' Trio," *Lift thine eyes*, and the chorus, *He watching over Israel slumbers not nor sleeps*, speaks assurances of comfort: as waking, he cries, *O that I might die*, the

angel sings, *O rest in the Lord*. The prevailing sentiment is not disturbed by the succeeding chorus, *Behold, God the Lord passed by*, for, after the exhibitions of power—the wind—the earthquake—the fire—comes a “still, small voice,” and “in that still, small voice onward came the Lord.” Now comes the real climax of the work, the “Whirlwind Chorus,” to the text: *Then did Elijah the prophet break forth like a fire; his words appeared like burning torches. Mighty kings were by him overthrown* (note the imposing theme first stated by the basses!) *he stood on the mount of Sinai, and heard the judgments of the future, and in Horeb its vengeance*—“*And when the Lord would take him away to heaven, Lo! there came a fiery chariot, with fiery horses; and he went by a whirlwind to Heaven.*” Here the work ends, were we to consider it from the point of view of dramatic fitness alone.

All that follows is reflective. The tenor solo, *Then shall the righteous shine*; the quartet (omitted), *O come, every one that thirsteth*, and the concluding chorus, *And then shall your light break forth*, combine in the establishment of a mood so at variance with the feelings underlying the expressions given voice in the beginning of the First Part that thereby a contrast is secured, such as must exist in a great unified work.*

*This excellent analysis by Dr. A. A. Stanley was published in the May Festival Libretto, 1920-21.



Coming Musical Events

HILL AUDITORIUM

Choral Union Concerts

8:30 P.M.

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| JOSEF HOFMANN, Pianist | Tuesday, January 10 |
| BUDAPEST UNIVERSITY CHORUS
Viktor Vaszy, Conductor | Wednesday, January 25 |
| YEHUDI MENUHIN, Violinist | Wednesday, February 15 |
| GREGOR PIATIGORSKY, Violoncellist | Monday, February 27 |
| ROTH STRING QUARTET OF BUDAPEST
Feri Roth, First Violinist
Jeno Antal, Second Violinist | Thursday, March 9
Ferenc Molnar, Viola
Janos Scholz, Violoncellist |
| FORTY-SIXTH ANNUAL MAY FESTIVAL | May 10, 11, 12, 13, 1939 |