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CHORAL UNION SERIES.

1892-1893.

FOURTH SEASON. (No. XX, COMPLETE SERIES.)

SECOND CONCERT.

UNIVERSITY HALL, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1892,

AT EIGHT P. M.

THE MESSIAH.

THE CHORAL UNION.

270 VOICES.

ASSISTED BY

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AND A FULL ORCHESTRA.

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Synopsis.



THE "MESSIAH" represents the ripened product of Händel's genius, and reflects the noblest aspirations and most exalted devotion of mankind. Among all his oratorios it retains its original freshness, vigor, and beauty in the highest degree, in that it appeals to the loftiest sentiment and to universal religious devotion.

The oratorio is divided into three parts. The first illustrates the longing of the world for the Messiah, prophesies his coming, and announces his birth; the second part is devoted to the sufferings, death, and exaltation of Christ, and develops the spread and ultimate triumph of the Gospel; while the third is occupied with the declaration of the highest truths of doctrine,—faith in the existence of God, the surety of immortal life, the resurrection, and the attainment of an eternity of happiness.

The first part opens with an overture of majestic chords, leading to a short fugue, developed with severe simplicity and preparing the way for the accompanied recitative, "Comfort ye My People," and the aria for tenor, "Every Valley shall be exalted," which in turn leads to the full, strong chorus, "And the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed." The prophecy is announced in the great aria for bass, ("But who may abide the Day of His Coming"), written in the Sicilian pastoral style. Once more the prophet announces, "Behold, a Virgin shall conceive," followed by the alto solo, "O Thou that tellest," which preludes a chorus in the same tempo. The next aria, ("The People that walked in Darkness"), with its curious but characteristic modulations, leads to one of the most graphic fugued choruses in the whole work ("For unto us a Child is born"), elegantly interwoven with the violin parts, and emphasized with sublime announcements of the names of the Messiah in full harmony and with the strongest choral power. The grand burst of sound dies away, there is a significant pause, then follows a short but exquisite Pastoral Symphony for the strings, which, with the four succeeding bits of recitative, tells the message of the Angels to the Shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem. Suddenly follow the chorus of the heavenly hosts ("Glory to God"), which is remarkably expressive, and affords sharp contrasts in the successive clear responses to the fugue, the difficult but very brilliant aria for soprano, "Rejoice greatly," and the lovely aria, "He shall feed His Flock."

The second part begins with a majestic and solemn chorus, ("Behold the Lamb of God"), which is followed by the aria for alto, "He was despised,"—one of the most pathetic and deeply expressive songs ever written. This leads to the spirited and thoroughly interesting chorus, "All we like Sheep have gone astray," closing with an adagio of great beauty ("And the Lord hath laid on Him the Iniquity of us all"). This is followed by the recitative, ("Thy Rebuke hath broken His Heart"), for tenor, ("Behold and see if there be any Sorrow"), all of which are remarkable instances of the musical expression of sorrow and pity. These numbers lead to a triumphal shout in the chorus and semi-choruses, "Lift up your Heads, O ye Gates," which is followed by the aria, "Thou shalt break them," leading directly to the great Hallelujah Chorus, which is the triumph of the work and its real climax. It opens with exultant shouts of "Hallelujah." Then ensue three simple phrases, the middle one in plain counterpoint, which form the groundwork for the "Hallelujah." These phrases, seemingly growing out of each other, and reiterated with constantly increasing power, interweaving with and sustaining the "Hallelujah" with wonderful harmonic effects, make up a chorus that has never been excelled, not only in musical skill, but also in grandeur and sublimity. This number closes the second part.

The third part opens with that sublime confession of faith, "I know that my Redeemer liveth,"—an aria which will never be lost. It is followed by two quartets with choral responses, "Since by Man came Death," and "For as in Adam all die," in which the effects of contrast are very forcibly brought out. The last important aria in the work ("The Trumpet shall sound"), for bass with trumpet obligato, will always be admired for its beauty and stirring effect. The oratorio closes with three choruses, all in the same key and of the same general sentiment,—"Worthy is the Lamb," a piece of smooth, flowing harmony; "Blessing and Honor," and the final "Amen" chorus.

Other oratorios may be compared one with another; the "Messiah" stands alone, a majestic monument to the memory of the composer, an imperishable record of the noblest sentiments of human nature and the highest aspirations of man.—GEORGE P. UPTON.

The Messiah.

Oratorio by G. F. Händel.

PART THE FIRST.

OVERTURE.

RECIT.—(Tenor.) Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God ; Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem ; and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness :—Prepare ye the way of the Lord ; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

AIR.—(Tenor.) Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low, the crooked straight and the rough places plain.

CHORUS. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together ; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

RECIT.—(Bass.) Thus saith the Lord of Hosts :—Yet once a little while and I will shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land ; and I will shake all nations ; and the desire of all nations shall come.

The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in ; Behold He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.

AIR.—(Bass.) But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?

For he is like a refiner's fire.

RECIT.—(Alto.) Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name EMMANUEL, God with us.

AIR.—(Alto and Chorus.) O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain. O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

RECIT.—(Bass.) For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee, and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and the kings to the brightness of thy rising.

AIR.—(Bass.) The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; and they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

CHORUS. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

PASTORAL SYMPHONY.

RECIT.—(Soprano.) There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.

And lo! the Angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.

And the Angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day in the City of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.

And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying:

CHORUS. Glory to God in the Highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men.

AIR.—(Soprano.) Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! behold, thy king cometh unto thee.

He is the righteous Saviour, and He shall speak peace unto the heathen.

RECIT.—(Alto.) Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.

AIR.—(Alto.) He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; and He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.

AIR.—(Soprano) Come unto Him, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and He shall give you rest. Take his yoke upon you, and learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

PART THE SECOND.

CHORUS. Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

AIR.—(Alto) He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

CHORUS. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.

And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

RECIT.—(Tenor.) Thy rebuke hath broken his heart; He is full of heaviness. He looked for some to have pity on Him, but there was no man, neither found He any to comfort Him.

AIR.—(Tenor.) Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow.

RECIT.—(Tenor.) He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of Thy people was he stricken.

CHORUS. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.

Who is the King of Glory?

The Lord, strong and mighty; the Lord, mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.

Who is the King of Glory?

The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.

AIR.—(Bass.) Why do the nations so furiously rage together, and why do the people imagine a vain thing ?

The kings of the earth rise up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His Anointed.

RECIT.—(Tenor.) He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn ; the Lord shall have them in derision.

AIR.—(Tenor.) Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron ; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

CHORUS. HALLELUJAH : for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.

The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.

KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. HALLELULAH !

PART THE THIRD.

AIR.—(Soprano.) I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth ; and though worms destroy the body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.

For now is Christ risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep.

QUARTET AND CHORUS. Since by man came death.

By man came the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die.

Even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

RECIT.—(Bass.) Behold ! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep ; but we shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

AIR.—(Bass.) The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

CHORUS. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by His blood, to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength and honor, and glory and blessing.

Blessing and honor, glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen.

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