

MESSIAH

Saturday 9 December 7.30pm, Federation Concert Hall, nipaluna/Hobart

Brett Weymark conductor
Jacqueline Porter soprano
Cassandra Seidemann alto
Paul McMahon tenor
Jeremy Kleeman bass-baritone
Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra
TSO Chorus

HANDEL *Messiah*: An oratorio (HWV 56)

PART ONE Prophecy of Christ's appearance on Earth; the Nativity.

INTERVAL (20')

PART TWO The Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ; the spreading of the Gospel.

PART THREE Victory over Death.

A beloved Christmas tradition in anglophone countries, Handel's *Messiah* is enduringly popular, regularly ranking in the top 10 in ABC Classic's annual voting competitions. It was premiered in April 1742, and for many years was programmed around Easter, before the beguiling combination of audience enthusiasm and December spending habits convinced artistic executives to cement its place in the end of year calendar. After the open rehearsal before the premiere, the Dublin News-Letter reported "in the opinion of the best judges [it] far surpasses anything of that Nature, which has been performed in this or any other Kingdom." Produced as a charity concert, tickets sold rapidly, and ladies were advised to come without hoop skirts and gentlemen without their swords to make additional room in the hall.

The idea for the *Messiah* was proposed to Handel by Charles Jennens, a wealthy gentleman and scholar who also assembled the libretto from selected biblical texts. He wrote to a friend "I hope [Handel] will lay out his whole Genius & Skill upon it, that the Composition may excell all his former Compositions, as the Subject excells every other subject." With no named characters or direct dialog between singers, the goal of the libretto was not so much to dramatize the story of Jesus, but to glorify it through music, or as musicologist Watkins Shaw described it, to create "a meditation of our Lord as Messiah in Christian thought and belief." The biblical text excerpts are rearranged into three sections, corresponding with prophecies and the Nativity, Christ's life and death, and finally his resurrection. (The division of the piece into three parts, while aligning pleasingly with the Christian trinity, does create a conundrum as to where interval should occur in modern concert settings.)

Handel composed the *Messiah* in a period of 24 days, a quick, but not unprecedented achievement. Finding himself in a period of financial instability, writing an oratorio appealed to Handel, as the reductions in costs and drama from eliminating the need for staging and hiring Italian divas were considerable. Within the three parts, the music is organised into 16 scenes and a total of 53 numbers of varying lengths. The orchestration is in general restrained, enhancing the effect of the full orchestra and chorus in numbers such as the Hallelujah. Incidentally, the custom of standing up for the Hallelujah chorus, long explained by the story of King George II standing at that moment and the audience rising in respect, appears to be apocryphal, so stretch your legs in joy, or rejoice while remaining seated as you wish! Various Baroque forms appear throughout the oratorio, including French Overture for the opening Sinfony, and a number of fugal passages sit alongside more typical arias and recitatives. Handel completed his manuscript with the letters "SDG" (Soli Deo Gloria); to God alone the glory.

Eloise Fisher, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, © 2023



CELEBRATING
75 YEARS



MESSIAH

PART ONE

1. Sinfony
2. Comfort ye (tenor)
3. Ev'ry valley shall be exalted (tenor)
4. And the glory of the Lord (chorus)
5. Thus saith the Lord (bass)
6. But who may abide the day of His coming? (alto)
7. And he shall purify the sons of Levi (chorus)
8. Behold, a virgin shall conceive (alto)
9. O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion (alto and chorus)
10. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth (bass)
11. The people that walked in darkness (bass)
12. For unto us a child is born (chorus)
13. Pifa
- 14a. There were shepherds abiding in the field (soprano)
- 14b. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them (soprano)
15. And the angel said unto them (soprano)
16. And suddenly there was with the angel (soprano)
17. Glory to God (chorus)
18. Rejoice greatly (soprano)
19. Then shall the eyes of the blind be open'd (alto)
20. He shall feed his flock (alto and soprano)
21. His yoke is easy (chorus)

INTERVAL

PART TWO

22. Behold the Lamb of God (chorus)
23. He was despised (alto)
24. Surely He hath borne our griefs (chorus)
25. And with His stripes we are healed (chorus)

26. All we, like sheep have gone astray (chorus)
27. All they that see Him laugh Him to scorn (tenor)
28. He trusted in God (chorus)
29. Thy rebuke hath broken His heart (tenor)
30. Behold, and see, if there be any sorrow (tenor)
31. He was cut off out of the land of the living (tenor)
32. But Thou didst not leave His soul in hell (tenor)
33. Lift up your heads (chorus)
34. Unto which of the angels (tenor)
35. Let all the angels of God worship Him (chorus)
36. Thou art gone up on high (bass)
37. The Lord gave the word (chorus)
38. How beautiful are the feet (soprano)
39. Their sound is gone out (chorus)
40. Why do the nations so furiously rage together (bass)
41. Let us break their bonds asunder (chorus)
42. He that dwelleth in heaven (tenor)
43. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron (tenor)
44. Hallelujah (chorus)

PART THREE

45. I know that my redeemer liveth (soprano)
46. Since by man came death (chorus)
47. Behold, I tell you a mystery (bass)
48. The trumpet shall sound (bass)
49. Then shall be brought to pass (alto)
50. Oh death, where is thy sting (alto and tenor)
51. But thanks be to God (chorus)
52. If God be for us (soprano)
53. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain (chorus)
54. Amen (chorus)

TASMANIAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Violin

Ji Won Kim *Concertmaster*
Susanna Low *Associate Concertmaster*
Jennifer Owen *Principal Second*
Miranda Carson *Principal First*
Yue-Hong Cha
Frances Davies
Edwina George
Michael Johnston
Elinor Lea
Christopher Nicholas
Rohana O'Malley
Hayato Simpson

Viola

Caleb Wright*
Douglas Coghill
Anna Larsen Roach
William Newbery

Cello

Jonathan Békés*
Ivan James
Martin Penicka

Double Bass

Stuart Thomson*
Aurora Henrich

Oboe

Sarah Young#
Dinah Woods *Cor Anglais*

Bassoon

Tahnee van Herk*

Trumpet

Timothy Francis#
Mark Bain

Timpani

Matthew Goddard*

Harpsichord

Nathan Cox#

Organ

David Drury#

* principal player

guest principal

TSO CHORUS

Chorus Master: June Tyzack

Répétiteur: Jennifer Marten-Smith

Soprano

Christine Boyce
Emma Bunzli
Christine Coombe
Ruth Croser
Yuliana Halim
Kasia Kozłowska
Bernadette Large
Loretta Lohberger
Ashlyn Mackenzie
Sophia Mitchell
Schuya Murray
Shaunagh O'Neill
Louise Robinson
Chantal Roddy
Yasmin Shooobridge
Joy Tattam
Salome Tobin
Lesley Wickham

Alto

Nadeena Beck
Claire Blichfeldt
Sally Brown
Carmelita Coen
Beth Coombe
Elizabeth Eden
Ann Godber
Ruby Lyons-Reid
Mary McArthur
Caroline Miller
Rosemary Rayfuse
Amy Richardson
Caroline Sharpen
Georgie Stilwell
Meg Tait
Gill von Bertouch
Beth Warren

Tenor

Helen Chick
Phillip Clutterbuck
Michael Kregor
Bill MacDonald
Tony Marshall
Simon Milton
Dianne O'Toole
David Pitt
James Powell-Davies
Peter Tattam

Bass

Geoffrey Attwater
John Ballard
Tim Begbie
Peter Cretan
Jack Delaney
Liam Filby
Greg Foot
Peter Hepburn
Reg Marron
Liam McGuinness
Michael Muldoon
Tony Parker
Grant Taylor