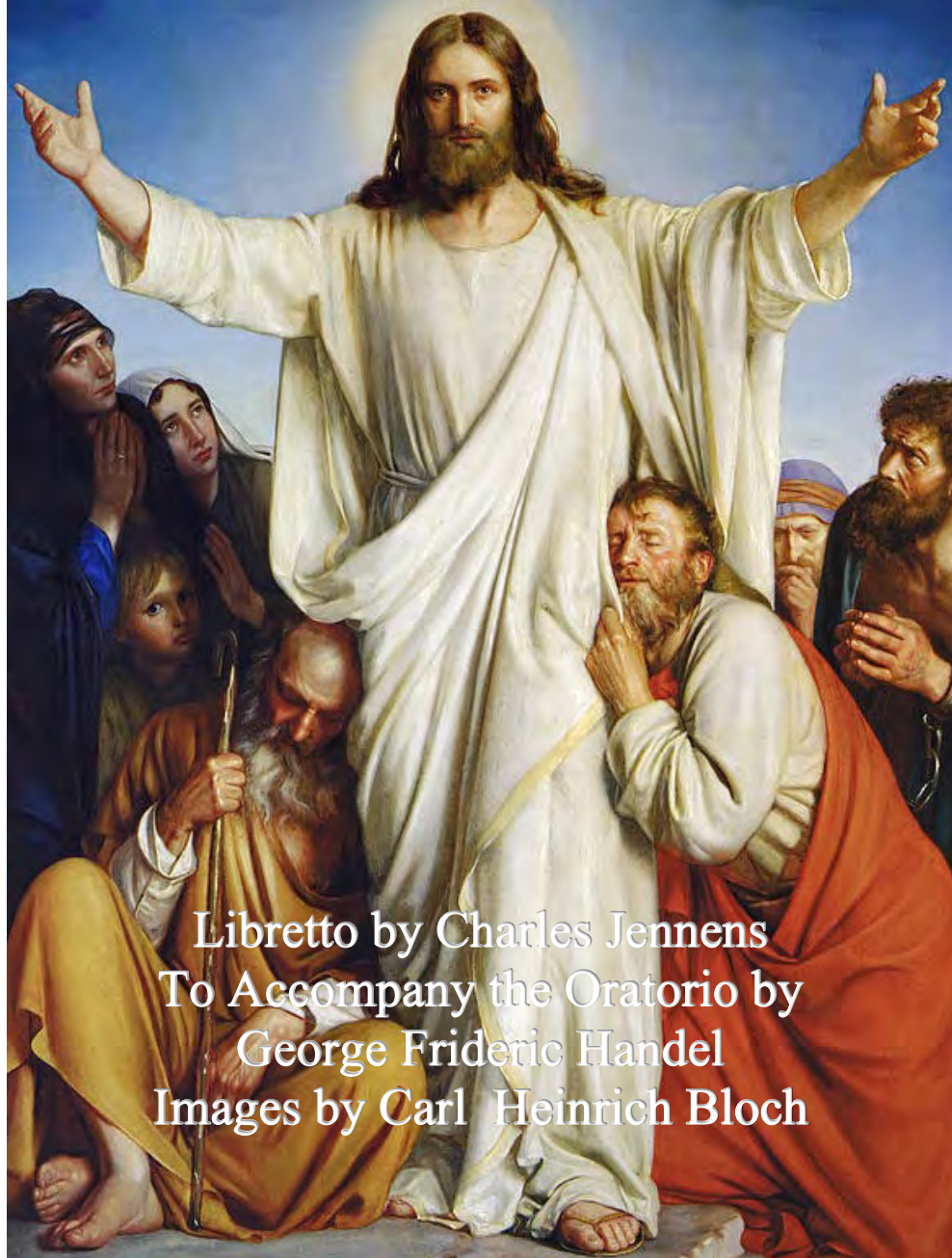


MESSIAH



Libretto by Charles Jennens
To Accompany the Oratorio by
George Frideric Handel
Images by Carl Heinrich Bloch

Messiah

an Oratorio

Messiah is the greatest oratorio ever written. Huge in scale, sublime in concept, unfaltering in its eloquence, it remains one of man's most grandiose conceptions. Only an inspired man could have produced it, let alone in the incredibly short period of twenty-four days.

Detailed accounts of its writing reveal that Handel was an inspired man. From the moment he started working on *Messiah* he was under an uninterrupted spell, in a kind of trance. He did not leave his house; he allowed no visitors to disturb him. He also did without sleep. When his domestics tried to get him to rest or eat he would answer them ill-tempered and sometimes even with incoherent retorts—his eyes blazing with a wild fury—so that they sometimes thought he was losing his mind. “Day and night he kept hard at his task, living wholly in the realm where rhythm and tone reigned supreme. As the work neared an end, he was increasingly inspired, increasingly tortured by the fury of inspiration.”

Never a religious man in the same sense as Bach, Handel became a God-intoxicated man while writing *Messiah*. When he completed the “Hallelujah Chorus” he exclaimed to his servant, “I did think I did see all Heaven before me, and the great God himself.” Again and again his servants found him in tears as he put to paper an awesome phrase or a devout passage. And then, after the last monumental “Amen” had been written, he confided simply to a physician, “I think God has visited me.” The exaltation with which *Messiah* was created is found on every page of the score.

Messiah is in three parts. The first contains the prophecy of the coming of the Messiah. This is followed by the sufferings and death of Christ. The concluding section deals with the resurrection. To the text provided by his friend Charles Jennens, adapted from the Scriptures, Handel wrote 50 musical numbers. Recitatives, arias, and chorales concerned themselves with the emotion rather than the dramatic implications of the words, providing such a variety of feeling—from compassion and pathos to serenity, spirituality, and ecstatic joy—that there is never a faltering of pace or lack of contrast.

Tides of Fortune, by Stefan Zweig, New York: The Viking Press, Inc. 1936. Encyclopedia of The Great Composers & Their Music, Vol. 1, pp. 337-341



PART ONE

1. Sinfonia (Overture)

2. Accompagnato: Tenor (Isaiah 40: 1-3) 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,

3. Air: Tenor (Isaiah 40: 4) Ev'ry valley shall be exalted, and ev'ry mountain and hill made low; the crooked straight and the rough places plain.

4. Chorus (Isaiah 40: 5) 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.

5. Accompagnato: Bass (Haggai 2: 6-7) Thus saith the Lord, 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.

(Malachi 3: 1) The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the Covenant, whom you delight in; behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

6. Air: Alto or soprano (Malachi 3: 2) But who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire.





7. Chorus (Malachi 3: 3) And He shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

8. Recitative: Alto (Isaiah 7: 14; Matthew 1: 23) Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Emmanuel, God with us.

9. Air and Chorus: Alto (Isaiah 40: 9) 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!

(Isaiah 60: 1) Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

11. Air: Bass (Isaiah 9: 2)

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.

12. Chorus (Isaiah 9: 6)

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, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

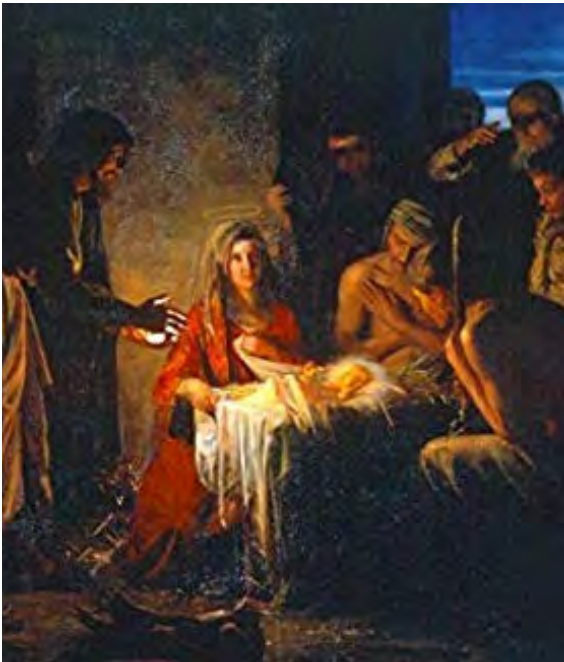


13. Pifa (“Pastoral Symphony”)

14a. Recitative: Soprano (Luke 2: 8) There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.

14b. Accompagnato: Soprano (Luke 2: 9) 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.

15. Recitative: Soprano (Luke 2: 10-11) 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.

16. Accompagnato: Soprano (Luke 2: 13)

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

17. Chorus (Luke 2: 14) “Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men.



20. Air: Soprano (Isaiah 40: 11) 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.



18. Air: Soprano (Zechariah 9: 9-10) 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.

19. Recitative: Alto (Isaiah 35: 5-6) 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.



(Matthew 11: 28-29) Come unto Him, all ye that labour, come unto Him that are heavy laden, and He will 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.

21. Chorus (Matthew 11: 30) His yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

PART TWO

22. Chorus (John 1: 29) Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.

23. Air: Alto (Isaiah 53: 3) He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

(Isaiah 53: 6) He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off His hair: He hid not His face from shame and spitting.

24. Chorus (Isaiah 53: 4-5)

Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows! He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.

25. Chorus (Isaiah 53: 5) And with His stripes we are healed.

26. Chorus (Isaiah 53: 6) 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.



27. Accompagnato: Tenor (Psalm 22: 7) All they that see Him laugh Him to scorn; they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying:

28. Chorus (Psalm 22: 8) “He trusted in God that He would deliver Him; let Him deliver Him, if He delight in Him.”

29. Accompagnato: Tenor (Psalm 69: 20) 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.

30. Arioso: Tenor (Lamentations 1: 12) Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow.

31. Accompagnato: Soprano or Tenor (Isaiah 53: 8) He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgressions of Thy people was He stricken.

32. Air: Soprano or Tenor (Psalm 16: 10) But Thou didst not leave His soul in hell; nor didst Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption.

33. Chorus (Psalm 24: 7-10) 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 this 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 this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.

34. Recitative: Tenor (Hebrews 1: 5) Unto which of the angels said He at any time: “Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee?”

35. Chorus: (Hebrews 1: 6) Let all the angels of God worship Him.

36. Air: Alto or soprano (Psalm 68: 18) Thou art gone up on high; Thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts for men; yea, even from Thine enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among them.

37. Chorus: (Psalm 68: 11)

The Lord gave the word; great was the company of the preachers.



**38. Air (or « duet and Chorus »)
(Isaiah 52: 7; Romans 10: 15)**

How beautiful are the feet of them
that preach the gospel of peace, and
bring glad tidings of good things.

**39. Chorus (or air for tenor)
(Romans 10: 18; Psalm 19: 4)**

Their sound is gone out into all
lands,

and their words unto the ends of the
world.

**40. Air (or « Air and Recitative »):
Bass (Psalm 2: 1-2)** 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.

41. Chorus (Psalm 2: 3)

Let us break their bonds
asunder, and cast away
their yokes from us.

**42. Recitative: Tenor
(Psalm 2: 4)** He that
dwelleth in Heav'n shall
laugh them to scorn; The
Lord shall have them in
derision.

**43. Air: Tenor (Psalm 2:
9)** Thou shalt break them
with a rod of iron; thou
shalt dash them in pieces
like a potter's vessel.



44. Chorus (Revelation 19: 6) Hallelujah: for the Lord God Omnipotent
reigneth.

(Revelation 11: 15) The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom
of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.

(Revelation 19: 16) King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. Hallelujah!

PART THREE

45. Air: Soprano (Job 19: 25-26) I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.

And though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.

(I Corinthians 15: 20) For now is Christ risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep.

46. Chorus (I Corinthians 15: 21-22) Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.



For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

47. Accompagnato: Bass (I Corinthians 15: 51-52) Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

48. Air: Bass (I Corinthians 15: 52-53) The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption and

this mortal must put on immortality.

49. Recitative: Alto (I Corinthians 15: 54) Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

50. Duet: Alto & tenor (I Corinthians 15: 55-56) O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

51. Chorus (I Corinthians 15: 57) But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

52. Air: Soprano alto (Romans 8: 31) If God be for us, who can be against us?

(Romans 8: 33-34) Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is at the right hand of God, who makes intercession for us.

53. Chorus (Revelation 5: 12-14) 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 honour, and glory, and blessing.

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

Amen.



Charles Jennens (1700 – 20 November 1773) was an English landowner and patron of the arts. As a friend of Handel, he helped author the libretti of several of his oratorios, most notably *Messiah*. Jennens was brought up in Leicestershire [England]. A devout Christian, he devoted himself to the arts, both as a collector of fine art (his collection was one of the best in Britain at the time) and a music patron. George Frideric Handel's compositions were very much to his musical taste and they became close friends. The most famous collaboration is Jennens' libretto for *Messiah*, drawn entirely from the Bible, about 60 per cent from the Old Testament (with occasional small alterations). Musicologist Watkins Shaw describes it as “a meditation of our Lord as Messiah in Christian thought and belief”, and which “amounts to little short of a work of genius.”
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Jennens.

George Frideric Handel (23 February 1685 – 14 April 1759). Born the same year as Johann Sebastian Bach and Domenico Scarlatti, Handel is regarded as one of the greatest composers of the Baroque era. Handel [was born and] received important training in Halle [Prussia] and worked as a composer in Hamburg and Italy before settling in London in 1712; he became a naturalized British subject in 1727. Within fifteen years, Handel had started three

commercial opera companies to supply the English nobility with Italian opera. Musicologist Winton Dean writes that his operas show that “Handel was not only a great composer; he was a dramatic genius of the first order.” One of his four coronation anthems, *Zadok the Priest* (1727), composed for the coronation of George II, has been performed at every subsequent British coronation.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Frideric_Handel

Carl Heinrich Bloch (23 May 1834 – 22 February 1890) was a Danish painter. He was born in Copenhagen, Denmark and studied at the Royal Danish Academy of Art. He went to Italy to study art, passing through the Netherlands, where he became acquainted with the work of Rembrandt, which became a major influence on him. Bloch was commissioned to produce 23 painted scenes from the life of Christ [19 of which are reproduced here], between 1865 and 1879. The originals are at Frederiksborg Palace, Hillerød, Denmark. A prominent Danish art critic, Karl Madsen, stated that Carl Bloch reached higher toward the great heaven of art than all other Danish art up to that date.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Bloch