

# Colorado Bach Ensemble

Messiah

2023

## Soloists

### **Awet Andemicael**

Joy is the hallmark of soprano Awet Andemicael's artistry. She has been acclaimed for her "sparkling solo verses" (Opera News), "vivid musical personality" (Boston Globe), "honeyed tone" (San Francisco Classical Voice), "fine comic interplay and [...] superb singing" (Washington Times).

Awet has performed with ensembles like the Boston Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Knights at the Tanglewood and BRIC Festivals, the Sebastians Chamber Ensemble, and in concert halls including Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center, and festivals including the Tanglewood, Ravinia, Lyrique-en-mer (France), and Aldeburgh (UK) Festivals.

Although she enjoys a wide range of repertoire, Awet is associated especially with Christian sacred music. Her affinity for eighteenth-century sacred works has been featured in concerts with the Bach Collegium Japan and the Handel and Haydn Society; with symphony orchestras across North America, including Charleston, Pittsburgh, and Orlando; and in festivals, churches, and other performance venues in North America, Europe, and Africa. She has also premiered works of spiritual and religious significance, including Bernard Gilmore's *Journey to Freedom* and *Two Songs from Torah*.

This season, Awet is delighted to return to Colorado to sing *Messiah* with the Colorado Bach Ensemble, after which she takes on the title role in Giovanni Lorenzo Lulier's *Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi* with New York's Academy of Sacred Drama. She is the featured soloist on the world-premiere recording of Robert Kyr's *Earth Vigil* with Grammy-winning conductor Craig Hella Johnson and the *Conspirare* ensemble, scheduled for release in April 2024.

A writer and theologian as well as a musician, Awet holds degrees from Harvard, UC Irvine, Notre Dame, and Yale. She currently serves as Associate Dean for Marquand Chapel and Lecturer in Theology at Yale Divinity School and the Institute of Sacred Music.

### **Abigail Nims**

Mezzo-soprano Abigail Nims is regarded as a musician of integrity and versatility for her performances of repertoire spanning from Monteverdi, Bach, and Mozart to Crumb, Ligeti and premieres of new works. She has performed as soloist with the San Francisco Symphony, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, São Paulo Symphony, Boston Baroque, Detroit Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Colorado Symphony, Teatro Municipal (Chile), Portland Baroque Orchestra, Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de Mexico, the Louisiana Philharmonic, Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi, Indianapolis Symphony, Colorado Music Festival, Colorado Springs Philharmonic, Virginia Symphony, the Phoenix Symphony, the Colorado Bach Ensemble, and the Bach Festival Society of Winter Park among others. On the operatic stage, she has performed leading roles with opera companies including Wexford Festival Opera, New York City Opera, Atlanta Opera, Palm Beach Opera, Opera Omaha, Florentine Opera,

Virginia Opera, Opera Grand Rapids, and Opera New Jersey. Ms. Nims has collaborated with renowned conductors including Michael Tilson Thomas, Leonard Slatkin, Roberto Abbado, John Butt, Gary Wedow, Martin Pearlman, Carlos Miguel Prieto, Thomas Zehetmair, Jun Märkl, Giuseppe Grazioli, and JoAnn Falletta. Her recordings include Boston Baroque's Grammy nominated recording of Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* (Linn Records), Mazzoli and Vavrek's *Proving Up* with the International Contemporary Ensemble (Pentatone), Peter Ash's *The Golden Ticket* with Atlanta Opera (Albany Records), and Martin Bresnick's song cycle "Falling" with pianist Wei-Yi Yang on the album *Every Thing Must Go* (Albany Records). She holds degrees from Yale School of Music, Westminster Choir College, and Ohio Wesleyan University. Ms. Nims resides in Colorado with her husband and two sons and is a member of the voice faculty at the University of Colorado-Boulder.

### **Kyle Stegall**

Kyle Stegall's flexible and stylish artistry has been a powerful presence on concert and opera stages around the world. Celebrated for the astonishing diversity of his repertoire, he lends the same penetratingly emotive artistry to music spanning Bach evangelists, leading tenor roles in the works of Mozart and the masters of the Bel Canto Era, and operatic world-premieres. His reputation as "an outstanding communicator" (Gramophone) combined with his "clear-toned voice" (Klassiek Centraal-Belgium), have led to exciting collaborations with many of the classical world's most highly-acclaimed conductors including Manfred Honeck, Thomas Wilkins, Stephen Stubbs, Matilda Hofman, William Christie, Masaaki Suzuki, and Joseph Flummerfelt.

Celebrated as a "lively and empathetic evangelist" (San Francisco Classical Voice) and tenor soloist in the cantatas and passions of J.S. Bach, Kyle is in high demand as a concert and oratorio soloist across the nation. His performances are characterized by an unfailing attention to style and detail, and a penetrating directness of communication.

Committed to the communicative potential of the art song genre, Mr. Stegall makes room for recitals each season, and holds a long-standing relationship with the Valley of the Moon Music Festival, where he has performed a wide-range of underrepresented Romantic chamber repertoire with historical instruments. His forthcoming solo album with pianist Bomi Kim for Centaur Records features commercial premieres of song sets for tenor and piano by Adolphus Hailstork, B.E. Boykin, Harry Sdraulig, Rosephanye Powell, and Anne Cawrse.

This season, he sings Dvořák with Bach Festival Winter Park, Handel with The Royal Melbourne Philharmonic, Mozart with Philharmonie Austin, and Bach with Houston Bach, San Francisco Bach Choir, and Cantata Collective. Mr. Stegall is a proud alumnus of the Aldeburgh Festival's Britten-Pears Institute, as well as the universities of Missouri, Michigan, and Yale, and has been closely mentored by Caroline Helton, James Taylor, Martin Katz, Ian Bostridge, Christoph Prégardien, Ted Taylor, and Ann Harrell.

### **Mischa Bouvier**

Mischa has been praised for his "soothing, cavernous baritone that can soar to heights of lyric beauty" (*Opera News*), his "extraordinary and varied background" and "rare vocal and interpretive gifts" (*San Francisco Classical Voice*), and his "rich timbre" and "fine sense of line" (*The New York Times*).

Mischa made his Lincoln Center debut at Alice Tully Hall in a performance of Jocelyn Hagen's *amass* with *Musica Sacra*, and his Carnegie Hall debut at Weill Recital Hall in recital with pianist Yegor Shevtsov.

He's sung Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with Iván Fischer and the Orchestra of St. Luke's; Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Carousel* (Jigger Craigin) with Keith Lockhart and the Boston Pops at Symphony Hall in Boston; Arvo Pärt's *Passio* (Evangelisti) for the "collected stories" series, curated by David Lang; Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* (Jesus) at the Festival Casals de Puerto Rico, conducted by Helmuth Rilling; Handel's *Messiah* at Grace Cathedral and the Mondavi Center with the American Bach Soloists; Gordon Getty's *Plump Jack* (Bardolph and Chief Justice) at the Ángela Peralta Theater in Mazatlán; Mohammed Fairouz's *Sumeida's Song* (Alwan) at Zankel Hall; Handel's *Messiah* with the Orquesta Sinfónica de Puerto Rico in San Juan; Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* (Plutone) with Apollo's Fire; and the world premiere of *El Mesías* with Bach Collegium San Diego in Tijuana.

As a recitalist, Mischa has appeared for the Macon Concert Series, Clemson University's Utsey Chamber Music Series, Baldwin-Wallace Art Song Festival, Trinity Church's Concerts at One, Rockport Chamber Music Festival, Abbey Church Events at St. Martin's University, Barbès Brooklyn, Lincoln Center at Fort Collins, Lakewood Cultural Center, SongFusion, New York Festival of Song, Five Boroughs Music Festival, Metropolis Ensemble, Mirror Visions Ensemble, Manhattan School of Music, University of Toronto, Soochow University (Taiwan), Shih Chien University (Taipei), Yongfoo Elite (Shanghai), and elsewhere.  
[www.mischabouvier.com](http://www.mischabouvier.com)

# Händel: Messiah

## Program Notes

by

Rev. Dr. Knut M. Heim

**George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)**

### **Background to *Messiah***

The first reference to *Messiah* predates its composition. In a letter to his friend Charles Holdsworth dated July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1741, the librettist Charles Jennens (who had previously provided Handel with the libretto for *Saul*) wrote:

“Handel says he will do nothing next winter, but I hope to persuade him to set another Scripture collection I have made for him... I hope he will lay out his whole genius and skill upon it, that the composition may excel all his former compositions, as the subject excels all other subjects. The subject is *Messiah*.”

At around the same time, Handel himself received an invitation from the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, William Cavendish, to contribute to a series of concerts in Dublin from December 1741 to June 1742, to be performed for the benefit of various charitable causes. This incentive prompted Handel to begin work on *Messiah* on August 22<sup>nd</sup>. He famously completed the composition in just over three weeks, on September 12<sup>th</sup>. (Astonishingly, Handel also completed the composition of *Samson* by the end of October in that same year, even though work on that piece would not have begun until after *Messiah* had been concluded. Handel's phenomenal speed of composition would also be on display in 1749, when he composed *Solomon*, from start to finish, in only 20 days.)

The first performance of *Messiah*, in Dublin on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1742, was a great success. According to a review in the *Dublin Journal*, "Words are wanting to express the exquisite delight it afforded to the admiring crowded audience." Its first London performance followed in March 1743.

Handel's *Messiah* has remained a permanent favorite with performers and audiences ever since, with many annual performances by famous orchestras around the world, usually before Christmas or Easter.

## The Libretto

Charles Jennens (1700–1773) deserves much credit for the extraordinary power of *Messiah*. The persuasive artistic power—aided by its overall structure and coherence—owes as much to the creativity of the librettist as for the composer. Letters to his friends suggest that Jennens has begun work on the libretto by the end of December 1739, and he delivered the finished text to Handel eighteen months later, in July 1741.

The entire text of *Messiah* is derived from the Bible. This was intentional: Jennens was himself a believer, who devoted much of his life to the dissemination of the Christian faith in general and of the Bible in particular. Naturally, he used the Authorized Version, the *King James Bible*, even though he occasionally adapted it slightly in ways that always remained faithful to its sense.

Remarkably, the text of the libretto contains significantly more biblical poetry than biblical prose, and significantly more materials from the Old Testament than from the New Testament. As a consequence, the libretto is an artistic composition of the highest caliber that succeeds in telling the story of *Messiah* with great persuasive force. This is especially remarkable considering that there is an almost complete absence of texts from the Gospels, the four narratives of the life of Jesus in the New Testament. The story of Jesus unfolds in ways that capture the imagination, even though the name of Jesus occurs only once in the entire script. In fact, most of the other central characters in the Bible are not named at all, and so the drama of *Messiah* unfolds without the cast ever quite taking center stage.

# PART ONE

PROPHECY OF THE MESSIAH  
AND ITS FULFILLMENT

What makes *Messiah* such an extraordinary work that unfailingly leaves such lasting impressions on its audiences? On the one hand, it is Handel's genius for combining uplifting choral settings with rousing orchestration. On the other hand, it is his ability to express the sense of the words in musical form, such that the sentiments that the words seek to evoke are captured in timeless fashion that speaks through the centuries. His artistic sensibility is already on display in the opening bars of the "Sinfonia," which sets a gently joyful tone for all of Part One of *Messiah*. Here, the coming of the Messiah is first prophesied (*Comfort ye*"), and his birth ("*Glory to God*") and ministry ("*Come unto Him*," with the following chorus, the only texts in the work based on words of Christ) are then celebrated.

Part One also includes the only other instrumental piece, the brief "Pastoral Symphony." Even so, it is in transferring the sense and sentiment of text into the medium of music that Handel's artistic talent truly shines, shaping *Messiah* into the semi-operatic work that has captured the imagination of audiences ever since. Throughout, the musical interpretation explains, enlivens, and reinforces the words of the text, and helps audiences to imagine themselves among those who first experienced the events and emotions that are narrated in the musical performance. In the sound of a bass voice to sing of "darkness," for example, or the sound of strings to convey the thrill of interruption during the shepherds' peaceful night watch as the strings mimic the angelic host's quivering excitement when they announce the arrival of the Messiah.

Even though Jennens vehemently criticized Handel's work ("[Handel...] did all [he] could to murder the words"), and despite the occasional mismatch of tempo and text (for example in Part Two: "*Surely he hath borne our Grievs*" and "*All we like Sheep*"), Handel's music is the servant of the Word. His theatrical skill is demonstrated in his instruction that in the chorus "*Glory to God*," the trumpet is to sound "in the wings." In this fashion, the trumpet's location off stage signals that with the birth of the Messiah, the glory of God breaks into this world from another realm, from beyond the confines of the ordinary.

#### PROPHECY OF GOD'S SALVATION OF HUMANKIND

### 1. Sinfonia (Overture)

### 2. Accompagnato

*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.

*(Isaiah 40: 1-3)*

### 3. Air

*Tenor*

Ev'ry valley shall be exalted, and ev'ry moutain and hill made low; the crooked straight and the rough places plain.

*(Isaiah 40: 4)*

#### **4. 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.

*(Isaiah 40: 5)*

PROPHECY OF MESSIAH'S COMING  
AND CONSEQUENT JUDGMENT

#### **5. Accompagnato**

*Bass*

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.

*(Haggai 2: 6-7)*

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.

*(Malachi 3: 1)*

#### **6. Air**

*Alto or soprano*

But who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire.

*(Malachi 3: 2)*

#### **7. Chorus**

And He shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

*(Malachi 3: 3)*

PROPHECY OF MESSIAH'S INCARNATION  
AND REVELATION TO HUMANKIND

## 8. Recitative

*Alto*

Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Emmanuel, God with us.

*(Isaiah 7: 14; Matthew 1: 23)*

## 9. Air and Chorus

*Alto*

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 40: 9)*

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

*(Isaiah 60: 1)*

*Chorus*

O thou that tellest. . . etc.

## 10. Accompagnato

*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 kings to the brightness of thy rising.

*(Isaiah 60: 2-3)*

## 11. 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.

*(Isaiah 9: 2)*

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

*(Isaiah 9: 6)*

ANNOUNCEMENT OF  
MESSIAH'S NATIVITY

### **13. Pifa ("Pastoral Symphony")**

#### **14a. Recitative**

*Soprano*

There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.

*(Luke 2: 8)*

#### **14b. Accompagnato**

*Soprano*

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.

*(Luke 2: 9)*

#### **15. Recitative**

*Soprano*

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."

*(Luke 2: 10-11)*

#### **16. Accompagnato**

*Soprano*

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

*(Luke 2: 13)*

#### **17. Chorus**



"Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men."

*(Luke 2: 14)*

#### MESSIAH'S HEALING MINISTRY

### 18. 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.  
Rejoice greatly. . . *da capo*

*(Zechariah 9: 9-10)*

### 19. Recitative

*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.

*(Isaiah 35: 5-6)*

### 20. Air (or Duet)

*(Alto &) soprano*

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.

*(Isaiah 40: 11)*

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.

*(Matthew 11: 28-29)*

### 21. Chorus

His yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

*(Matthew 11: 30)*

INTERVAL

# PART TWO

## FROM PASSION TO TRIUMPH

Part Two somehow manages to tell the story of Holy Week without explicit reference to the crucifixion. It tells the good news of Easter without direct mention of the resurrection. And it celebrates the Ascension and Pentecost without explicit reference to the Holy Spirit. It somehow succeeds to tell of the rejection of the Christian faith by the world and the persecution of the Messiah's followers without explicit reference to the church. It is this strategy of indirection that enables *Messiah* to leave such deep impressions on audiences. The power of *Messiah* lies in this allusive quality of the text and music, where the text of the libretto touches only tangentially on the main events of the biblical narrative, and yet reveals at a deeper level what is of ultimate concern. This poetic finesse sets *Messiah* apart from Handel's other biblical oratorios, and also makes it quite different from Bach's great Passions.

Early in Part Two, Handel evokes the depth of Christ's sorrows, the scorn of his accusers, and the helpless woe of his friends, who recognize their Savior in him. Mournful strings and woodwind instruments are prominent. Yet from the beginning of the aria "*But though didst no leave his soul in hell,*" through to "*Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron,*" there is a swelling and developing sense of triumph and celebration, an inescapable movement that builds and builds, until it finally breaks like a wave in the climax of the "*Hallelujah*" chorus.

At the end of Part Two, the trumpets sound again—but this time in the body of the orchestra. The glory of God is no longer hidden, or only beginning to reach this world. Now God's glory covers the earth as the waters cover the sea.

## MESSIAH'S PASSION

### 22. Chorus

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

*(John 1: 29)*

### 23. Air

*Alto*

He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

*(Isaiah 53: 3)*

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.  
He was despised. . . *da capo* (Isaiah 50: 6)

## **24. Chorus**

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.

(Isaiah 53: 4-5)

## **25. Chorus**

And with His stripes we are healed.

(Isaiah 53: 5)

## **26. 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.

(Isaiah 53: 6)

## **27. Accompagnato**

*Tenor*

All they that see Him laugh Him to scorn; they shoot out their lips, and  
shake their heads, saying:

(Psalm 22: 7)

## **28. Chorus**

"He trusted in God that He would deliver Him; let Him deliver Him, if He  
delight in Him."

(Psalm 22: 8)

## **29. Accompagnato**

*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.

(Psalm 69: 20)

### **30. Arioso**

*Tenor*

Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow.

*(Lamentations 1: 12)*

CRUCIFIXION, DESCENT INTO  
HELL, AND RESURRECTION

### **31. Accompagnato**

*Soprano or tenor*

He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgressions of Thy people was He stricken.

*(Isaiah 53: 8)*

### **32. Air**

*Soprano or tenor*

But Thou didst not leave His soul in hell; nor didst Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption.

*(Psalm 16: 10)*

### **33. 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 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.

*(Psalm 24: 7-10)*

### **34. Recitative**

*Tenor*

Unto which of the angels said He at any time: "Thou art My Son, this day  
have I begotten Thee?"

*(Hebrews 1: 5)*

### **35. Chorus**

Let all the angels of God worship Him.

*(Hebrews 1: 6)*

### **36. Air**

*Alto or soprano*

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.

*(Psalm 68: 18)*

WHITSUN, PREACHING OF  
THE GOSPEL TO THE WORLD

### **37. Chorus**

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

*(Psalm 68: 11)*

### **38. Air (or « duet and Chorus »)**

*Soprano or alto (or soprano, alto and Chorus)*

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

*(Isaiah 52: 7; Romans 10: 15)*

### **39. Chorus (or air for tenor)**

Their sound is gone out into all lands,  
and their words unto the ends of the world.

*(Romans 10: 18; Psalm 19: 4)*

WORLD'S REJECTION OF CHRISTIANITY

### **40. Air (or « Air and Recitative »)**

*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.

*(Psalm 2: 1-2)*

#### **41. Chorus**

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

*(Psalm 2: 3)*

DIVINE DESTRUCTION OF ENEMIES OF RELIGION;  
CHRISTIANITY'S ETERNAL TRIUMPH

#### **42. Recitative**

*Tenor*

He that dwelleth in Heav'n shall laugh them to scorn; The Lord shall have them in derision.

*(Psalm 2: 4)*

#### **43. Air**

*Tenor*

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

*(Psalm 2: 9)*

#### **44. Chorus**

Hallelujah: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.

*(Revelation 19: 6)*

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 11: 15)*

King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

*(Revelation 19: 16)*

**Hallelujah!**

The custom of audiences of *Messiah* to rise to their feet during the performance of the Hallelujah Chorus probably dates back to the London premiere of *Messiah* in 1743. The performance was attended by the British monarch, King George II (1683–1760), who was one of Handel's patrons. (He was also the last British king to appear on the battlefield with his soldiers, in the Battle of Dettingen, in 1743.) There is credible testimony that George II rose to his feet during the

Hallelujah Chorus, which—following royal protocol—obliged everyone else to stand also. If this is correct, then George II acknowledged Christ also as *his* king and sovereign, perhaps moved by the words of the chorus, which acclaim Christ as “*King of kings, and Lord of Lords.*”



# PART THREE

## MESSIAH'S ROLE IN LIFE AFTER DEATH

The last and shortest part of *Messiah* explores the consummation of God's salvation in the general resurrection and the re-creation of all things. This part draws heavily on texts from St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 15.

Again the trumpet plays a significant symbolic role in heralding the work of God, transforming corruption into incorruptibility. The change of *tempo* contrasting death with resurrection and Adam with Christ, in the chorus "*Since by Man*" is especially powerful and moving. The final victory of the Messiah is in the defeat of death, and this victory is followed by the worship of the Lamb, a symbolic representation of the crucified and risen Christ.

In the final chorus, Handel produced a conclusion worthy of the whole: The drums drive home the resounding finale. It is a *tour de force*: The single word "*Amen*" is repeated again and again in mounting cadences for a full four and a half minutes. Even so, it never becomes repetitive because every single iteration is performed in ever different and new ways.

The trumpets are again prominent, announcing in glorious triumph that the glory of the Lord is finally and fully revealed. There is nothing else to be said; nothing different to be heard, as all creation joins in the glorious acclamation of the Messiah, who is worthy of all blessing, and honor, and glory.

## FAITH IN PERSONAL RESURRECTION AND REDEMPTION

### 45. Air

*Soprano*

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.

*(Job 19: 25-26)*

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

*(1 Corinthians 15: 20)*

### 46. Chorus

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.

*(1 Corinthians 15: 21-22)*

GENERAL RESURRECTION

**47. Accompagnato**

*Bass*

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.

*(1 Corinthians 15: 51-52)*

**48. Air**

*Bass*

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.

The trumpet. . . *da capo*

*(1 Corinthians 15: 52-53)*

DEATH AND SIN SUPERCEDED;  
MESSIAH'S INTERCESSION  
AT LAST JUDGMENT

**49. Recitative**

*Alto*

Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

*(1 Corinthians 15: 54)*

**50. Duet**

*Alto & tenor*

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.

*(1 Corinthians 15: 55-56)*

**51. Chorus**

But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

*(1 Corinthians 15: 57)*

## **52. Air**

*Soprano alto*

If God be for us, who can be against us?

*(Romans 8: 31)*

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.

*(Romans 8: 33-34)*

ADORATION OF MESSIAH BY  
BLESSED IN HEAVEN

## **53. 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 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.

*(Revelation 5: 12-14)*

The performance of *Messiah* ends with the declaration that adoration should be given to God (= unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb) “for ever and ever.” These four words are then repeated eight times, the repetition suggesting the unlimited temporal extension of praise.

And this leads into the climax of the performance, where all choral and solo voices come together and combine with the sounds of the assembled musical instruments to unite all of the performers as they embody all beings in heaven and on earth who now join the adoration through their universal affirmation—in the single word “Amen,” repeated more than sixty times in ever new variations of sound and tempo—that God indeed deserves blessing and honor, and glory and power—for ever.

The subheadings IN SMALL CAPITALS are based on a structure provided by Jennens for the London performance of *Messiah* in 1743, with headings not just for each of the three main parts of the oratorio, but also for each new section.

Program notes have been written by The Rev. Dr. Knut M. Heim, Professor of Old Testament at Denver Seminary, building on program notes by The Rev. Dr. Pete Wilcox for a performance of *Messiah* at the Symphony Hall in Birmingham, UK, on December 10 and 14 in 2004.