

**Handel's *Messiah*:
A Historic Approach for the Church Choir**

Justin L. Addington

**Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Church Music**

November 1, 2014

**Concordia University Wisconsin
12800 N. Lake Shore Drive
Mequon, WI 53097**

Table of Contents

Title Page.....	i
Table of Contents.....	ii
List of Musical Examples.....	iv
Introduction	
• Previous Experience with <i>Messiah</i>	1
• Information about the Ensemble.....	3
• Selection Process.....	4
• Decisions Regarding the Performance.....	5
• Rehearsal Process.....	7
• Other Considerations and Ideas.....	8
Historical Information	
• The History of the Oratorio.....	12
• George Frederic Handel and the Oratorio.....	14
• The Story of <i>Messiah</i>	19
• Handel's Later Life and the Influence of <i>Messiah</i>	23
Musical Overview of the Work	
• Characteristics of the Baroque Period.....	27
• Structure and Form.....	28
• Instrumental Movements.....	29
• The Arias.....	30

• The Recitatives.....	30
• The Choruses.....	31
Detailed Analysis of the Selected Choruses	
• “And the Glory of the Lord”	33
• “O Thou that Tellest Good Tidings to Zion”	40
• “For Unto Us a Child Is Born”	47
• “Glory to God”	56
• “Hallelujah”	64
Conclusion.....	75
Bibliography.....	76
Appendix	
a) Score.....	78
b) Program.....	127
c) Musical Analysis of Part I of <i>Messiah</i>	136
d) Suggested Warm-Ups.....	138
e) Other Resources.....	140
f) Performance Reviews.....	141

List of Musical Examples

Example 1:	“For Unto Us a Child Is Born,” mm. 7-12, soprano part (Schirmer Edition).....	p. 50
Example 2:	“For Unto Us a Child Is Born,” mm.7-12, soprano part (with passing tone ornamentation).....	p. 51
Example 3:	“Glory to God,” mm. 18-19.....	p. 62
Example 4:	“Hallelujah,” m. 4, soprano part.....	p. 68
Example 5:	“Hallelujah,” mm. 12-14, soprano part and “How Brightly Shines the Morning Star,” fifth phrase, chorale melody.....	p. 69
Example 6:	“Hallelujah,” mm. 34 and 35, soprano part and “Wake, Awake for Night is Flying,” mm. 17 and 18, chorale melody.....	p. 69
Example 7:	“Hallelujah,” mm. 46-48, alto part and “Wake, Awake for Night is Flying,” mm. 23-25, chorale melody.....	p. 70

Introduction

Each candidate for the Master of Church Music Degree from Concordia University Wisconsin is required to plan and present a final recital or service prior to graduation. This serves as both an assessment of skills obtained during the course of study, and as a culmination project for the entire degree.

Previous Experience with *Messiah*

As the time approached to select music for my final project, I began to look back on music that had played an important role in my life. It was no surprise that George Frederic Handel's *Messiah* permeated my thoughts. Not only is *Messiah* closely associated with the festivals of the Christian year, it also has connections to my own experiences and memories. In addition to the many times I have heard the work, both in performance and on recordings, the presentation of *Messiah* that coincided with this document and my final project served as my eighth personal performance of the work.

I had the opportunity to sing *Messiah* twice during my undergraduate education at Limestone College in Gaffney, South Carolina: the Christmas portion during my sophomore year and the Easter portion during my senior year. I was privileged to participate as a featured soloist at both performances, and was honored further by being invited to return after graduation to perform the work again with the college choir. In my early years as a choral director, I also prepared the Easter portion of *Messiah* with my choir at Buford Street United Methodist Church, and presented the work with string quartet. That performance served as my first time conducting a work of

such magnitude, as well as my first experience with conducting orchestral instruments. This quickly instilled in me a love for *Messiah*, and a passion for conducting.

After graduation from college in 2007, I accepted the position of Director of Music Ministries at Trinity United Methodist Church in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and presented the Christmas portion of *Messiah* as my first major program there. I remained in that post for four years and enjoyed a fruitful ministry that had its beginnings in *Messiah*. That particular performance holds special significance for me in that it occurred around the time of my paternal grandmother's death. The message of the work and the timelessness of the music were sources of great comfort to my family and me.

In 2009, I had the opportunity to prepare the Christmas portion of the work for a performance with the Spartanburg Philharmonic Orchestra. I was asked by the conductor to organize a community-wide choir to sing in the orchestra's annual Christmas performance. Being a United Methodist, I organized a joint Methodist choir featuring all of the Methodist choristers in the city. This was a wonderful experience for me and proved to be a great thing for the community as well. As part of this event, I was honored to give the pre-concert lecture on Handel and *Messiah*. That research process proved helpful in preparing for this paper.

In 2010 I moved to Savannah, Georgia, to accept the position of Director of Music & Worship at Skidaway Island United Methodist Church. Upon my arrival in June, I decided to do *Messiah* as my first major presentation by performing it during the Christmas season of that year. This was unique in that the choir of this church had never

performed the work before. The performance was held on December 5, 2010, and was listed as part of the church's *Arts on Skidaway Concert Series*.

Information about the Ensemble

Skidaway Island United Methodist Church (SIUMC) is a fairly new congregation, being founded in 1983. Because of this, the music library lacks much to be desired when it comes to classical masterworks. The church is also unique in that it serves a gated resort community. The congregation is made of mostly retirees who have been very successful in their careers. With this type of clientele come many opportunities and resources for ministry, but also a very high demand for quality and perfection.

One of my first official duties in preparing for that performance was to order a full choir set of the Schirmer edition of *Messiah*. I now wish that I had ordered the Novello edition, seeing that it is more historically accurate and more commonly accepted. For the scope of my final project, however, I thought that it would be beneficial to use the Schirmer edition of *Messiah* since is the one most often found in church choral libraries.

The process of preparing that first performance of *Messiah* at SIUMC was very challenging for the choir, but ended up being a very rewarding experience. Not only did it give me a chance to expose the work to many of the singers, but the performance was well attended and provided a positive start to my ministry in Savannah.

Another unique factor about my situation at SIUMC involves the physical makeup of the choral ensemble. The choir comprises mostly senior citizens, and enjoys

a healthy attendance, bringing together people with all types of ability levels and experiences. There are several individuals in the choir who hold advanced degrees in music, and many have sung in choirs all of their lives. While this experience can be helpful, it was a challenge for me, as their new director, because many of the singers were hesitant to change the way they had previously been taught to sing *Messiah*. Not only did my more experienced choir members struggle to adapt their vocal production for the performance, but the problems inherent with the aging voice also contributed to some issues within the ensemble.

Selection Process

In June of 2011, I began my studies in the Master of Church Music Degree program at Concordia University Wisconsin. This was a very exciting time for me, and it proved to be the beginning of a wonderful new journey. Throughout my coursework, I gained a new appreciation and understanding for *Messiah* and the performance practices that surround its time period. I realized that even though my past performances of *Messiah* had been rewarding and successful, that did not necessarily mean that they had been performed in the most historically accurate way, or in the best manner for the particular ensemble involved. As I continued to grow and learn, I realized that I desired to do *Messiah* again at SIUMC and to try to improve upon the choir's previous performance.

After the success of our first performance of *Messiah* in 2010, members of the choir approached me about performing the work again. I was eager to comply and

wondered if it would be possible to do so in conjunction with my studies at CUW. After much prayer and consideration, I approached my faculty advisor about the possibility of doing *Messiah* as my final project. I shared with her my desire to perform the work anew by applying the knowledge I had gained through my studies. While my request to do a major work instead of a varied program was somewhat unusual, she agreed to let me take on the challenge. The performance date was set for December 8, 2013.

I then set out to decide how I could approach *Messiah* in a unique way. I realized that one of the most beneficial approaches would be to apply historic performance practices to the work in such a way that would make performing it more accessible to the average church choir. Taking into account the previously discussed challenges of the SIUMC choir, I thought this approach might be something that others would find helpful, and something that had never been done before under such a unique set of parameters.

Decisions Regarding the Performance

Though many choral directors feel that *Messiah* is too challenging for small or amateur ensembles, this is simply not true. Once one takes into account the events surrounding *Messiah*'s original performances and the interesting make up of its score and sources, one begins to realize that this timeless work can continue to adapt in order to be relevant to our modern society.

My approach to this performance of *Messiah* was to present the work in a fashion that was as historically accurate as possible. I worked to achieve a small, controlled, and precise sound in order to reflect that of Baroque ensemble sizes. In

doing so, I hoped to perform the work in a manner that would be closer to Handel's original intentions. I argued that this approach would not only give a historically accurate presentation, but would also demonstrate that the work could be performed well with small or limited forces.

The "chamber-like" approach to the work was a challenge for my choir in that most of the singers were used to performing *Messiah* in a more grand and romanticized manner. Another challenge was dealing with those choir members who have sung *Messiah* many times in other situations and in manners different from my interpretation of the work. Sometimes it is very hard to "unlearn" things. I personally believe that the most challenging aspect was the performance of the "Hallelujah Chorus"; this movement is performed so often that it was hard for choir members to change their way of singing it.

Since this performance was geared towards the Christmas season, I prepared the choir to sing only Part I of the work. Also, keeping in mind the structure and history of the work, I decided to omit portions that I did not feel my choir could perform effectively. While some musicians often frown upon cutting movements, this is certainly a common approach that can be used in order to present a quality performance. In the present age, it is rare to hear *Messiah* performed in its entirety, so my decision to cut certain movements is not an uncommon one for choir directors who are trying to present the best quality performance possible under their individual constraints of choir size, talent, and make up.

Since *Messiah* was composed and organized as a series of vignettes, changes can be made without destroying the storyline. For my particular performance, I omitted the chorus “And He Shall Purify” and the recitatives and aria that surround the chorus. I also omitted the chorus “His Yoke Is Easy” and its corresponding solos. This was due to my choir’s inability to perform the difficult melismatic passages contained in both choruses. The “Hallelujah Chorus” was added to the end of the performance, as is tradition.

Rehearsal Process

Once I was granted approval for my project, I set to work outlining a rehearsal plan that would meet the unique needs of my ensemble. Because many of my members go away for the summer, I made sure to start the rehearsal process prior to their departure. Immediately after the Easter season of 2013, I provided each choir member with a score and a rehearsal CD. This CD was purchased through an outside organization and was beneficial in that it highlighted only a particular vocal part. I was able to secure CDs for all four sections of the choir. This enabled choir members to become familiar with the work and to do some rehearsing on their own.

After choir members returned from their summer vacations, we immediately started rehearsing the movements of the work as part of our weekly choir rehearsals. By this time, I had already completed my own edition of the score (Appendix A). This document included the phrasing and articulation that I desired from choir members. It was my hope that by providing my singers with this score, I could save valuable time in rehearsal and make things as clear as possible to those involved.

In the month of October, the SIUMC choir enjoys an annual fall retreat. This event normally occurs off the church campus and is a time for the group to do some intense preparation for the Christmas season. There is also time for fellowship and devotion. At the 2013 retreat, I was able to divide the choir into sections for intense sectional rehearsals. This proved to be very beneficial in that it forced choir members to secure pitches and rhythms. In turn, this allowed me to do more in-depth work on choral concepts once the group was back together.

In addition to our weekly rehearsals, I immersed the Music Ministry in the preparation of *Messiah*. Not only did I share historic information with them during rehearsals, but I also shared fun facts about the history of the work and its composer. During the Advent season, the Music Ministry Sunday School Class did an entire devotional series based on the Christmas portion of the work. I was even able to locate certain movies that were beneficial to singers wanting to learn more about *Messiah* (Appendix E).

Other Considerations and Ideas

It is impossible to recreate a performance of *Messiah* just as Handel would have conducted. Handel was constantly adapting and revising his score to accommodate the voicings of his ever-changing situation.¹ Multiple editions of the score tend to cause controversy among musicians today because of the lack of notation regarding the

¹ Leonard Van Camp, *A Practical Guide for Performing, Teaching, and Singing Messiah* (Dayton, OH: Lorenz, 1993), 5.

composer's desires. Another problem tends to be the misinterpretation of Handel's intended tempi, dynamics and ornamentation. This misinterpretation is due to the fact that most things were common knowledge among musicians of the Baroque Period, and thus were not notated in the score. All we can do today is use our knowledge of performance practices to present the work in the "spirit" of the times. It is very safe to say that every performance of *Messiah* is different. For amateur ensembles today, this flexibility can create a great deal of freedom.

Messiah has also seen many editions and arrangements. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), for instance, added additional instruments (flutes and trombones, etc.) to Handel's original orchestration. Of particular interest to present-day music enthusiasts are the newer arrangements of the work that currently exist. One example would be the edition of *Messiah* scored for treble voices alone, making the work more accessible for younger voices. There are even jazz/swing arrangements of the work available, which help to bring the work into the framework of popular culture. One could definitely say that *Messiah* has stood the test of time and has adapted whenever necessary to meet the needs of the current generation. (A list of these editions and arrangements may be found in Appendix E.)

For the original performance of *Messiah*, Handel used a small, ten-piece orchestra consisting of strings, two oboes, two bassoons, two trumpets, continuo, and tympani. For my final project performance of *Messiah*, however, I performed the work with a chamber orchestra consisting of four violins, two violas, two cellos, a string bass, one trumpet, one oboe, tympani, and organ continuo. If budgetary limitations prohibit

hiring such an ensemble, a string quartet would work nicely, however, *Messiah* can be performed quite effectively with organ alone. In more recent years, technology has made it possible to perform the work with a fully orchestrated CD accompaniment. While this may be the only resort for some ensembles, I would strongly advise using live musicians in place of pre-recorded accompaniment, as live musicians allow the conductor to create a more authentic, flexible performance.

In addition to the various forms of accompaniment, there are many other options that can make *Messiah* accessible for an ensemble. Consider having some of the pianists in your church play the overture on multiple keyboard instruments. Arrangements exist for piano and organ duet, as well as for four-hand piano. You could also consider having your children's choir sing a simplified arrangement of one of the choruses or perhaps one of the more accessible solos. Handbells can also be incorporated as a means of embellishment and accompaniment. Even though it may not be the traditional way of performing the work, *Messiah* can be used as a means to showcase an entire music ministry and involve more musicians.

"Sing-a-Long" performances of *Messiah* have become increasingly popular in recent years. These less formal types of presentations allow for robust audience participation, while removing some of the pressure from the choral ensemble. Many churches or colleges will pass out scores at the door and allow the audience to be the choir. Sometimes professional instrumentalists and soloists are brought in to make the performance more special. If you are looking for a fun musical experience for the entire community, this format may be the right choice.

Of great concern for many choral directors is the problem of how to assign the solos. Some church choirs are blessed to have strong singers in every section, while others have to bring in outside help to cover such responsibilities. Choral directors should keep in mind that there is no one right way to perform *Messiah*. As mentioned earlier, Handel was constantly adapting the work to fit the circumstances of a particular performance. Arrangements of almost all of the arias exist in multiple keys for multiple voice parts. You may have to do a little research, but there is nothing that says an aria traditionally sung by soprano could not be sung by a tenor, if that were the only solo voice you had available. Other musical changes are found in multiple versions; for example, some editions of *Messiah* include the aria “Rejoice Greatly” in a 3/8 time signature. While this is not what most audiences are used to hearing, it makes the solo much more accessible to amateur singers by eliminating the difficult sixteenth-note melismas.

Handel’s *Messiah* is a work that should be enjoyed by everyone. It is my hope that the information contained within this document will provide insight on the history of the work and how a church choir director might use historic performance practices as a means to make *Messiah* more applicable to whatever their situation might be.

Historic Information

Since the beginning of time, humanity has sought ways by which the stories and traditions of its faith would live on in future generations. For many people of faith, the gift of music offered the perfect vehicle to convey these ideals. Throughout the centuries, such music developed and matured, eventually leading to George Frederic Handel and the Baroque oratorio. *The Harvard Dictionary of Music* defines the oratorio as “a narrative or dramatic work, usually sacred, employing arias, recitatives, ensembles, choruses, and orchestral music, but not intended to be staged.”²

The History of the Oratorio

The origins of the oratorio may be traced back to the Middle Ages and to Italy. The word *oratorio* comes from the Latin word for “prayer room.”³ The prayer rooms were structural additions to churches where religious dramas (early forms of the oratorio) would be performed.⁴ Among the key figures in the development of the oratorio as a musical genre were Filippo Neri (1515-1595) and Giacomo Carissimi (1605-1674). Neri was a member of the “Brotherhood of the Holy Trinity,” a group of oratorians that encouraged and developed the use of music in their dramatic

² Don Michael Randel, *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 4th ed. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 355.

³ Kurt Pahlen, *The World of the Oratorio: Oratorio, Mass, Requiem, Te Deum, Stabat Mater, and Large Cantatas* (Portland, OR: Amadeus, 1990), 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

presentations. Carissimi perfected the Latin oratorio and introduced the use of dramatic actions in his works.⁵

Early types of oratorio include the *rappresentazione* and the *historia*, which were extended works portraying biblical stories. Latin was originally the preferred language of the church, but by the time the *historia* made its way to Protestant Germany, the vernacular was accepted. Oratorios performed in Latin were considered *oratorio latino*; those performed in the vernacular language were referred to as *oratorio volgare*.⁶

Composers gradually began to add *basso continuo* to *historia*, and Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672) made the elements of Italian dramatic music, including characters and a narrator, a common feature of the genre. These additions all helped to bring the oratorio into its current form.⁷ By the time of Handel, the oratorio had long been using the aria as a means of expressing feelings. This caused the traditional narrator, or “testo,” to fall out of fashion.⁸ Also of increasing popularity was the use of the chorus. In the Baroque Period, the chorus was more frequently used as a way to express the feelings of a group of people.⁹ Even though sacred in nature, the oratorio eventually found its home on the secular stage, and had maintained a clear separation from corporate worship.

While Italians laid claim to the oratorio, Germans seemed to prefer the Passion and the Cantata. (However, some Passions, known as Passion Oratorios, were actually

⁵ Ibid., 10

⁶ Ibid., 10

⁷ Howard E. Smither, *A History of the Oratorio*, Vol. 2 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 9.

⁸ Pahlen, *The World of the Oratorio*, 10.

⁹ Ibid., 10.

written in oratorio form.) The Passion is very similar to the oratorio, but deals specifically with the events of Holy Week.¹⁰ The story of the Passion was also a common text for the oratorio's predecessor, the *historia*. The cantata is similar to the oratorio in that it is sacred in nature and uses arias, recitatives, and choruses performed by soloists, chorus and orchestra. The cantata differs from the oratorio, however, in that it is shorter, does not use characters or narration, and is most often performed as part of a worship service. Also, the cantata normally begins and ends with a chorus, whereas the oratorio uses choruses throughout.

Even though the oratorio is most closely associated with George Frederic Handel (1685-1759), many other composers composed in this genre. Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1643-1704) is known to have composed over thirty,¹¹ and Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) combined some of his cantatas to create one for the Christmas season. Other Baroque composers of oratorio include Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741), Johann Mattheson (1681-1764), Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707), Georg Phillip Telemann (1681-1757), and Carl Phillip Emanuel Bach (1714-1788).

George Frederic Handel and the Oratorio

George Frederic Handel was born in Halle, Germany, on February 23, 1685. Despite his father's resistance, Handel received musical training as a young boy and even studied with the renowned German organist Friedrich Wilhelm Zachau (1663-

¹⁰ Carl Schalk, *Key Words in Church Music: Definition essays on concepts, practices, and movements of thought in church music*, rev. edition (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004), 449.

¹¹ Homer Ulrich, *A Survey of Choral Music* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), 30.

1712). At the age of 17, he enrolled in the University of Halle to study law. When the post of organist at the Halle Cathedral became available, however, he decided to follow his true calling and become a musician.

In 1703, Handel moved to Hamburg to accept the position of violinist in the opera house orchestra. While there, he composed his first two operas and had the chance to meet the Danish organist Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707). From 1706-1710, Handel lived and worked in Italy. In 1709, his opera *Agrippina* was performed to a very receptive audience. When the performance ended, they were said to have shouted, “Viva il caro Sassone” (“long live our beloved Saxon”).¹² In 1710, Handel returned to Germany to accept the post as Kapellmeister to the Elector of Hanover (eventually King George I of England). Later that year, the Elector granted Handel permission to visit London, and he was well received by the British people.

In 1712, Handel visited London for a second time and remained there for the rest of his life. He became a nationalized English citizen in 1726, and he even changed the spelling of his name to reflect his British citizenship.¹³ Handel was said to be “the musical master of the town, the composer of forty operas, a dozen oratorios, and the very anthem to which the Hanoverian Kings of England are crowned and their royal grandchildren wedded.”¹⁴

¹² David and Peter Gordon, *Musical Visitors to Great Britain* (Wiltshire, UK: Cromwell Press, 2005), 42.

¹³ Tim Slover, *Messiah: The Little-known Story of Handel's Beloved Oratorio* (Sandy, UT: Silverleaf, 2007), 7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

While in London, Handel premiered his opera *Rinaldo*, which was a tremendous success. In addition to his talents as a composer, Handel was also a gifted organist. As an added attraction to many of his opera and oratorio performances, he would often perform organ concertos or improvise during the intermissions.¹⁵ Handel is said to have invented the form of the organ concerto.¹⁶

Handel always managed to stay one step ahead of current trends in opera until rival companies started to take away some of his business.¹⁷ After his move to England, Handel continued to compose opera in the serious Italian style, which began to contrast that of popular entertainment. The most popular example of this new style of theater was John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*. These circumstances would cause some of Handel's later operas to be miserable failures.

Handel later abandoned opera and turned his focus to church music and oratorios. Like Henry Purcell (1659-1695), Handel's church music was mainly composed for state occasions, and called for very large forces. When King George I died in 1727, Handel composed the coronation anthem *Zadok the Priest* for the coronation of George II. It has been sung at every coronation since.¹⁸

Many believe that Handel stopped composing opera and made an immediate switch to oratorio. This is not true; he composed both throughout his career. His very first oratorio, *La Resurrezione*, was written when he was in Rome. Handel composed

¹⁵ Donald Jay Grout, *A History of Western Music*, 7th ed. (New York: Norton, 2006), 465.

¹⁶ Slover, *Messiah*, 16.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁸ Marian Van Til, *George Frederic Handel: A Music Lovers Guide to His Life, His Faith, and the Development of Messiah and His other Oratorios* (Youngstown, NY: WordPower Press, 2007), 80.

opera until 1741 when he realized that opera was no longer going to be profitable. It is worth noting that all of his oratorios were heavily influenced by his style of opera composition.¹⁹

Beginning in 1732, Handel began to present his oratorios in opera houses to paying audiences. He did this during the Lenten Season when opera houses were not allowed to present secular entertainment. These were financially profitable for the composer because, unlike opera, there were very little costs (sets and costumes) involved in performing them. Handel's oratorio *Esther* was composed in 1718 and revised multiple times. A pirated version of the work premiered in 1732. Handel responded by running the following advertisement in the newspaper:

By His MAJESTY'S command
At the King's Theatre in the Hay-Market, on Tuesday the 2d Day of May, will be performed, the Sacred Story of ESTHER: an Oratorio in English. Formerly compos'd by Mr. Handel, and now revised by him with several Additions, and to be performed by the best Voices and Instruments.
N.B. There will be no Action on the Stage, but the House will be fitted up in a decent Manner, for the Audience. The Musick to be disposed after the Manner of the Coronation Service.²⁰

In 1733 he composed the oratorios *Deborah* and *Athalia*. *Athalia* demonstrated the start of Handel's changing style, which included his decreasing use of the *da capo* aria.²¹

Out of the over 24 oratorios that Handel composed, most were based on themes from the Old Testament. He also wrote seven secular oratorios, some dealing with

¹⁹ Slover, *Messiah*, 15.

²⁰ Smither, *A History of the Oratorio*, 195.

²¹ John Walter Hill, *Baroque Music: Music in Western Europe, 1580-1750* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), 469.

mythological subject matter.²² While most of the sacred oratorios were based on dramatic libretti of biblical texts, some used text directly from the Bible. Hearing these sacred words performed on the secular stage often offended church leaders, and this sometimes affected the success of Handel's oratorio performances.²³

The hallmark of the Handelian oratorio, which was normally presented in three acts, was the prominent role of the chorus and orchestra. Handel's *Israel in Egypt*, for instance, was originally composed for chorus alone. Handel later revised the work, however, to include soloists.²⁴ As in his operas, he started his oratorios with a French overture.²⁵ Overtures were known to have as many as four movements, which showcased the orchestra's new level of prominence.²⁶ In addition to an orchestra of around forty players, other forces for his performances would typically include a chorus of under thirty and a minimum of four soloists.²⁷

Following the Italian opera custom of the day, Handel composed many of his male roles for castrati, or male sopranos. This explains why some of his works are no longer performed, and why so many of these roles are now portrayed by women. Soloists for Handel's early works were opera singers, but the gradual use of less-skilled singers would become important for the development of the oratorio.²⁸ In his later works, Handel chose his soloists from whatever amateur chorus he was working with at

²² Schalk, *Key Words in Church Music*, 449.

²³ Smither, *A History of the Oratorio*, 227.

²⁴ Slover, *Messiah*, 20.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 355.

²⁶ Ulrich, *A Survey of Choral Music*, 115.

²⁷ Van Camp, *A Practical Guide*, 4-5.

²⁸ Smither, *A History of the Oratorio*, 357.

the time. Regardless of the situation, Handel always selected his singers for their ability to sight-read, learn quickly, and convey the meaning of the text.²⁹ These soloists often times would sing with the choir rather than sitting out front, as is the custom today.

Handel was a prolific composer, using themes and *ritornelli* to expand his works, but he also borrowed heavily from his own compositions, and sometimes from other composers' works. Even though Handel borrowed, he often improved the original. Only once did he borrow another composer's theme and use it in an oratorio with no changes.³⁰ Handel's friend, Charles Jennens, did not like Handel's habit of borrowing, but soon realized that musicians of the time considered it a compliment to have their musical ideas used by other composers.³¹

The secret of Handel's compositional style may very well be summed up in his unique blend of the French overture, the Italian *bel canto*, German polyphony, and the English grandeur of Henry Purcell. Beethoven once said that "he of all the composers knew best how to achieve grand effects by simple means."³²

The Story of *Messiah*

Perhaps the most well-known example of Handel's compositional style is his oratorio *Messiah*. It was composed within a span of 24 days in 1741 and was written to benefit charities in Dublin, Ireland. Despite Handel's having written some works in a

²⁹ Slover, *Messiah*, 15.

³⁰ Smither, *A History of the Oratorio*, 356.

³¹ Slover, *Messiah*, 14.

³² Van Camp, *A Practical Guide*, 212.

shorter length of time, there is mystery surrounding the events of those 24 days. It is rumored that while composing *Messiah* the composer rarely left his house on Brook Street, and some accounts state that he hardly ate at all. Folklore tells of what a spiritual experience it was for the composer and how on several accounts he was moved to tears.³³

Handel traveled to Dublin to conduct the first performance of the work and stayed from October of 1741 until August of 1742. *Messiah* premiered on April 13, 1742, at a music hall in Dublin. It was requested, due to the pre-concert popularity of the work, that women refrain from wearing hoops to the performance in order to make room for more people.³⁴ March 23, 1743, marked the first London performance of *Messiah* at the opera house in Covent Garden. The following describes what it was like to be in attendance at the London premiere:

From the harpsichord, Handel gives the downbeat and the brief overture plays. And then Beard steps forward to sing the first recitative: "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God." The audience can hardly breathe. It is as though Scripture is coming to life. Aria follows aria – tenor, soprano, contralto, bass; punctuated by choruses and connected by recitatives. There is no plot, and yet a story is being told: A man who is also God comes to earth as a frail human who suffers and is slain. And by his death violence and sorrow and sin, even death, itself, pass away, and mankind is redeemed and reconciled. And this resurrected Man of Sorrows lives still, the oratorio is saying, and will come again in glory to earth to rule and reign. Hallelujah!³⁵

The libretto for *Messiah* was compiled by Charles Jennens and showcases his talent of weaving together scriptures from all over the Bible into a seamless

³³ Patrick Kavanaugh, *The Spiritual Lives of Great Composers* (Milton Keynes, England: Word, 1992), 30.

³⁴ Smither, *A History of the Oratorio*, 249.

³⁵ Slover, *Messiah*, 65.

masterpiece.³⁶ Jennens was an amateur musician and collaborated with Handel on other works, including *Saul* and *Israel in Egypt*. Jennens was part of a group in England who were not “loyal” to the House of Hanover because they did not believe the king’s claim to the throne to be legitimate. Since they were also faithful Anglicans, however, they would not support the house of Stuart either.³⁷ Many feel that Jennens composed the libretto for *Messiah* as a means to protect Christianity from the rise of Deism.³⁸

Jennens used the following items on the title page of the work:

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” – I Timothy 3:16.

MAJORA CANAMUS – Let us sing of greater things.³⁹

Even though Jennens had told Handel which scriptures he wanted set as arias and which scriptures he wanted set as choruses, it was Handel who made the final decisions.⁴⁰ The one change Handel did make at Jennens’ request was to change “Their Sound is Gone Out” (Part II) from an aria into a chorus.⁴¹ Handel changed little in Jennens’ libretto, but he did replace the “feet” text from Isaiah 52 used in the aria “How Beautiful are the Feet” (Part II) with a text from Romans 10.⁴² Prior to the performance,

³⁶ Slover, *Messiah*, 32.

³⁷ Ibid., 10.

³⁸ Jane Schatkin Hettrick, “Review of *Messiah: Comfort for God’s People*,” *The American Organist*, 46, no. 12 (December 2012): 80.

³⁹ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 35.

⁴¹ Ibid., 67.

⁴² Ibid., 38.

Jennens did not like the way Handel had set some of his words to music; he did not feel that the music was grand enough. He changed his mind, however, after hearing it.⁴³

Messiah is the only one of Handel's works to use both Old and New Testament texts.⁴⁴ Like *Israel in Egypt*, *Messiah* is non-dramatic and tends to be more meditative than narrative. *Messiah* does not tell a story with characters and dialogue, but rather has a theme that is expressed through connected material.⁴⁵ In addition to the Bible, portions of the work were also taken from the familiar texts of the Christmas Eve service and Holy Week services of the Church of England. One should remember that people during this time had a solid knowledge of the Bible and were familiar with the story being portrayed. Because of this, they were able to fill in any "gaps" in the story, a luxury not afforded today's audiences.⁴⁶

There was great resentment toward *Messiah* even before it premiered in London. Much of this had to do with earlier situations involving Handel's previous oratorios. For example, one bishop even prevented the choristers of the Chapel Royal from singing in a production of *Esther* due to the sacred subject matter being presented on the secular stage by "questionable" performers.⁴⁷ In order to avoid further scandal, Handel often performed and advertised *Messiah* without its title.⁴⁸ There are many instances where it is referred to simply as "A New Sacred Oratorio."⁴⁹

⁴³ Ibid., 56.

⁴⁴ Schalk, *Keywords in Church Music*, 449.

⁴⁵ Slover, *Messiah*, 30.

⁴⁶ Wayne Barrett, "Messiah: Drama Theologicus," *The Choral Journal*, 53, no. 5 (December 2005): 9.

⁴⁷ Slover, *Messiah*, 58.

⁴⁸ Smither, *A History of the Oratorio*, 254.

⁴⁹ Slover, *Messiah*, 3.

As mentioned earlier, characters are not used to tell the story of *Messiah*, and the Messiah never actually appears. In fact, opportunities for the Messiah to speak are strictly avoided. An example of this practice is the change of text in the aria “Come unto Him.” The original text from the gospel of Matthew states, “Come unto *me*.” The change to “Him” allows the general theme and theology to be the primary focus of the work.⁵⁰ The overall structure of the work follows the outline of the Christian liturgical year, yet spends little time on the actual life and ministry of Christ. Again, this is because such subject matter was considered to be common knowledge during the 1700s. (To convey the themes of this work to a modern audience, choral directors should work to have have a deep knowledge of the text.⁵¹)

Handel’s Later Life and the Influence of *Messiah*

Messiah was intended for the stage, not for Christian worship, but it and its composer had a profound impact on the church music of the time. English composers such as John Stanley (1712-1786) and William Boyce (1711-1779) admired Handel’s style so much that they incorporated it into their sacred music.⁵² In 1750, *Messiah* was performed as a benefit in the chapel of the Foundling Hospital. Since this was the first time it was performed in a consecrated space, the performance strengthened the idea that Handel’s music was appropriate for church.⁵³ Performances in the hospital chapel

⁵⁰ Barrett, “*Messiah*: Drama Theologicus,” 10.

⁵¹ Ibid., 11-12.

⁵² Dickson, *The Story of Christian Music*, 114.

⁵³ Smither, *A History of the Oratorio*, 254.

became an annual tradition that continued for many years after Handel's death. One of Handel's biographers once stated that, "*Messiah* has fed the hungry, clothed the naked, fostered the orphan....more so than any other single musical production in this or any other country."⁵⁴ Another wrote, "Perhaps the work of no other composer has so largely contributed to the relief of human suffering."⁵⁵

Until 1752, Handel composed one new oratorio each year. During his life he was considered to be an "immortal genius."⁵⁶ Handel continued to write until the end of his life, even though he went blind during his final days. He conducted his last performance of *Messiah* in April of 1759, and died a week later. His doctor said that it was the composer's wish to die on Good Friday so that he might meet his Lord on the day of the Resurrection. He died just after midnight on Good Friday, April 14, 1759; this was one day after the 17th anniversary of *Messiah*'s first performance.⁵⁷

Because of his national status, Handel was denied a private burial, and instead, his funeral was attended by over 3,000 mourners. In honor of his contributions to the music of England, he was granted burial in Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey. There, a statue was erected which shows him holding the score for the aria "I Know That My Redeemer Liveth."

People often attempt to compare Handel to Bach, saying that Handel was one of the great composers of church music, but this is not true. Carl Schalk says, "He was truly

⁵⁴ Kavanaugh, *The Spiritual Lives of Great Composers*, 31.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 31.

⁵⁶ Hill, *Baroque Music*, 472.

⁵⁷ Kavanaugh, *The Spiritual Lives of Great Composers*, 32.

a secular man, born of the theatre not of the church.”⁵⁸ Unlike Bach, we cannot discern Handel’s faith music through his music. All we can do is appreciate it and use it as a means to discern our own. This does not mean, however, that Handel was not a religious man. Raised a German Lutheran, he was deeply private about his beliefs and became increasingly fervent about his times of devotion as he neared the end of his life. While living in London, he could often be seen worshiping at St. George’s in Hanover Square.⁵⁹ A close friend once wrote, “He died as he lived – a good Christian, with a true sense of his duty to God and to man, and in perfect charity with all the world.”⁶⁰

A massed choir performance of *Messiah* was staged in Westminster Abbey in 1785 to honor Handel’s life. In the years after his death, massed choir performances of the work became extremely popular. The oratorio soon became an icon of the British nation, and communities even formed choral societies so that they could perform works like *Messiah*.⁶¹

Even though the oratorio was born in the early Baroque period of music, the form of the oratorio continued to develop and thrive in the centuries that followed. Classical composers were known to have composed sacred works in this genre. Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) composed *The Creation* in 1797, and Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1827) composed *Christ on the Mount of Olives* in 1802. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) even rearranged Handel’s *Messiah* in 1789 for a larger orchestra. In

⁵⁸ Carl Schalk, *Musical Heritage of the Church: an outline* (1976), 100.

⁵⁹ Van Camp, *A Practical Guide*, 209.

⁶⁰ Kavanaugh, *The Spiritual Lives of Great Composers*, 32.

⁶¹ Dickson, *The Story of Christian Music*, 115.

the Romantic Period, Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) was known for reviving performances of *Messiah*. His works such as *St. Paul* and *Elijah* are considered some of the finest examples of oratorio from the 1800s. In France, Theodore DuBois (1837-1924) composed his *Seven Last Words of Christ* in 1867, and in England, Sir John Stainer (1840-1901) composed his beloved *The Crucifixion* in 1887. There is no question that Handel and *Messiah* profoundly impacted this genre of music.

In his “*Messiah: The Little Known Story of Handel’s Beloved Oratorio*,” Tim Slover aptly summarizes the effect that *Messiah* has had on the modern era:

In the Twenty-first century *Messiah* finds itself among that tiny, illustrious handful of works that is perpetually in performance. Though it now most often finds itself nestled among the holly and ivy of Christmastime, it is also increasingly programmed during the Easter season in which it was first performed. And it is safe to say that on any date of the calendar a portion of the work, professional or amateur, is being planned, rehearsed, or performed.⁶²

⁶² Slover, *Messiah*, 71.

Musical Overview of the Work

The next section of this document provides a general overview of *Messiah's* musical characteristics and structure. The information has been compiled with a choral director in mind, and condensed in order that it may prove easy to understand and practical for the average church musician.

Characteristics of the Baroque Period

Many different musical devices characterize the Baroque Period of music, during which *Messiah* was composed. These include *basso continuo*, ornamentation, terraced dynamics, driving rhythms, grounded tonality, homophony and polyphony.⁶³

Basso continuo is a form of accompaniment that uses a chordal instrument (keyboard or string) as well as a lower range instrument (string or wind). Continuo players often read from a figured bass score and improvise an accompaniment based on the given chord progression. During the Baroque period, musicians were often judged on how well they could improvise on or ornament (embellish) a particular melody. This is especially true of vocal soloists on the *da capo* portions of an aria. The *da capo* structure (ABA) created contrasting sections within the music. Another way that composers would show contrast was through the use of terraced dynamics. It would not be uncommon for a composer to write one statement of a theme *forte*, and then

⁶³ Donald Jay Grout, *A History of Western Music*, 300.

follow it with a softer variation on the same theme. This allowed composers to make more use out of their material and provided contrasts within a particular movement.

An additional defining characteristic of the Baroque period is the common use of driving rhythms. As will be discussed further, the dotted rhythms associated with the French overture, and the extensive use of sixteenth notes, created a sense of energy that was common in the music of this time. The final characteristic of this time period was the use of solid tonality, which differs from the modal music of the Renaissance. This was accomplished by a strong use of homophony in compositions, as well as *basso continuo*. Even though it was considered antiquated at the time, polyphony was also used heavily during this period. While it was used in choral compositions, polyphony is more commonly associated with keyboard works and the fugues of Johann Sebastian Bach.

Structure and Form

Messiah was written in three parts and includes instrumental movements, vocal arias, *accompagnato* and *secco* recitatives, and SATB choruses. Part I includes the prophecies and the birth of the Messiah, Part II deals with the Passion and Resurrection, and Part III focuses on the Christian triumph over death. Howard Smither also points out Handel's use of solo-choral "complexes" (scenes) that textually and tonally unify a recitative, aria, and chorus.⁶⁴ In the example below, you can see that a single scripture

⁶⁴ Smither, *A History of the Oratorio*, 260.

passage is divided among the three selections, and that the key of the chorus (A Major) is a relative key (E is the dominant of A) of the previous two movements.

Scene One:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------|
| 1. Recitative: "Comfort Ye" | (Isaiah 40:1-3) | Key of E |
| 2. Aria: "Every Valley" | (Isaiah 40:4) | Key of E |
| 3. Chorus: "And the Glory" | (Isaiah 40:5) | Key of A |

The Instrumental Movements

The opening instrumental movement of *Messiah* is written in the style of a French overture. This piece is in E minor and begins with a *grave* section characterized by dotted rhythms that evoke a sense of grandeur and suggest the entrance of a king. The *allegro* portion that follows is polyphonic in nature and includes a lengthy development of the main theme.

The second instrumental movement, located in Scene Four of Part I of the work, is the "Pifa" or "Pastoral Symphony." This piece sets the scene for the appearance of the angels to the shepherds. The word "pifa" comes from the name of a bagpipe-like instrument that was commonly used by shepherds. The long notes of this movement bring to mind the drones of the bagpipes.⁶⁵ Like most pastorales, this movement is in 12/8 with a tempo marking of *larghetto*, and includes the frequent use of harmonic thirds and sixths. Many editions also include an optional repeat.

⁶⁵ Calvin Stapert, *Handel's Messiah: Comfort for God's People* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2010), 101.

The Arias

Messiah's arias were composed in the *bel canto* (Italian opera term meaning "beautiful singing") style. As in an opera, arias of the Baroque Period generally conveyed feelings and emotions. Elements of the Baroque dance suite are also seen in the arias. For example, "I Know That My Redeemer" is very similar to a *siciliano* in that it uses a meter of three as well as dotted rhythms, and some versions of "Rejoice Greatly" are like a *gigue*, which is a lively dance that uses triplets.⁶⁶ The arias were always written to show off the vocal skills of the singers and to demonstrate their ability to ornament.

The Recitatives

Traditionally, the recitatives are the driving force any oratorio or opera. They usually contain dialogue and tell or "recite" the events of the story line. In *Messiah*, the recitatives tend to contain the prophecies of things that are to come. The rhythms of the recitatives have a tendency to reflect the rhythm of spoken speech patterns, and the intervals of the pitches serve as rhetorical devices, which reflect the importance of the text. Recitatives that are accompanied by continuo alone are considered *secco*, meaning "dry" and referring to the simple chords used to support the free interpretation of the soloist. Other recitatives are *accompagnato* and use other instruments in addition to the continuo; these are usually performed in strict tempo and allow little room for variation. *Messiah* incorporates both types of recitatives. While a detailed look at each recitative is not a part of this project, I will take the chance to

⁶⁶ Smither, *A History of the Oratorio*, 266.

encourage all conductors to familiarize themselves with the recitatives so that they are able to follow the soloist's interpretations in performance.

The Choruses

Handel composed his choruses in a variety of forms, including polyphonic settings, homophonic settings, and mixed forms. Variations among the polyphonic settings include strict polyphony, free polyphony, and polyphony with florid passages. Strict polyphonic movements include those that use the rules of the fugue and canonic techniques. The free polyphony movements use sections of homophony, which are especially common on the final cadences. In the movements that contain florid passages, Handel employs the use of the Baroque practice of text painting. This type of device is seen throughout his compositions and uses musical themes and ideas to reflect or symbolize the meaning of the text. The homophonic (full chordal texture) settings in *Messiah* seem to be used by Handel as a way to convey text clearly, and to relay ideas of extreme importance. Examples include portions of, "Glory to God," "Surely, He Hath Borne Our Griefs," and "Since by Man Came Death."

In the choruses that use mixed forms, Handel inserts moments of homophony among the polyphonic passages. Examples of this technique include, "O Thou That Tellest," "Glory to God," and "Hallelujah." Knowledge of this type of structuring can be beneficial to the conductor when determining the level of difficulty of a particular chorus, and whether it is an appropriate piece for his or her ensemble. This may also

help determine the best way to teach the music in a rehearsal setting.⁶⁷ Even though all choruses are scored for SATB choir (with the exception of “Lift Up Your Heads” in Part II of the work), Handel makes interesting use of choral texture by passing a theme from one section of the choir to another.

⁶⁷ Eric Schmid, *George Frideric Handel's Messiah: Introduction and Instructions for Study* (Frankfurt: C.F. Peters, 1979), 21.

Detailed Analysis of the Selected Choruses

Since a complete analysis of Part I of *Messiah* is beyond the scope of this project, I have only provided a detailed analysis of the choruses that were prepared for my 2013 performance of the work. A table showing a general musical analysis of all movements in Part I is included in Appendix C for your convenience.

“And the Glory of the Lord”

Background

“And the Glory of the Lord” is the fourth movement of the work and the closing portion of the opening scene, which tells of God’s promise through the prophecies. It follows a tenor recitative and aria and marks the first entrance of the chorus. The text is taken from 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 has spoken it.”

Dynamics

The dynamics of this movement alternate between levels of *mezzo forte* and *fortissimo*. This is naturally created by the contrast of sectional solo lines against the full chorus. In the Schirmer edition, there is a *fortissimo* marked at measure 107. This is editorial and does not necessarily reflect Baroque practices or Handel’s original score. Furthermore, this type of indication could cause unhealthy vocal production among

amateur singers and result in a forced and abrasive tone quality. Care should be given so that the higher notes, especially in the soprano line, are not over sung. The choral director could even limit the number of singers allowed to sing those notes in order to achieve the preferred sound. A dynamic level of *forte* on the sections marked *fortissimo* will produce a historically appropriate and vocally safe sound. Similarly, the *crescendo* marked at the end of the movement is editorial and is not considered to be historically accurate.⁶⁸

Instrumentation and Accompaniment

This movement uses strings, continuo and reeds (oboe) as its source of accompaniment. Note the absence of the majestic brass and tympani, which may be symbolic of the “glory” that has not yet appeared. With the exception of the introduction and interludes, the orchestral accompaniment tends to mirror and support the vocal parts.

Structure and Form

This piece begins with a ten-measure instrumental introduction and includes several instrumental interludes. The alto section has the first entrance; this is an interesting choice on behalf of the composer in that the first chorus does not begin with full choir, which is typical. The altos should take special care to enter with a full and confident sound, yet not sound as if they are pushing. This particular movement ends

⁶⁸ Van Camp, *A Practical Guide*, 35.

with a grand *adagio* and does not include an instrumental coda. This piece is also written in the style of a *galliard* – a Baroque dance marked by dotted rhythms and *hemiolas* (the feeling of two against three) at cadences.⁶⁹

Texture

This chorus includes a mix of polyphonic and homophonic textures. The composer makes use of what could be considered free polyphony, in that the piece is often imitative yet does not follow the strict rules of a fugue. The full chorus frequently emphasizes important symbolism within the text. For example, the text “shall see it together” tends to fall in the homophonic sections, symbolizing togetherness. Handel’s use of polyphony could also be considered symbolic in that it often occurs on the phrases “shall be revealed”; the intricate melodic movements could suggest the process of the glory being revealed.

Melody

This composition consists of four themes. The first theme is introduced by the altos in measure 11 and is set to the text, “And the glory of the Lord.” The ascending notes to the word “Lord” and that the word “glory” always falls on beat one. These could represent the Lord residing upward in heaven, and the primary importance of the glory that is to be revealed. The second theme, set to the text “shall be revealed,”

⁶⁹ Suzanne Lord, *Music from the Age of Shakespeare: a Cultural History* (West Point, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003), 143.

appears for the first time in the tenor line in measure 17. The melismas on the word “revealed” symbolize the implied sense of movement or action associated with the process of “revealing.” The third theme sets to music the words “and all flesh shall see it together”; this occurs for the first time in the alto line at measure 43. The downward movement on the word “flesh” brings to mind our earthly and mortal nature (“to dust ye shall return” – Genesis 3:19), and reminds us that God’s glory will come down to us from heaven. The final theme appears for the first time in both the tenor and bass parts at measure 51. This pedal tone-like motive confidently proclaims, “for the mouth of the lord hath spoken it.”⁷⁰ For a more detailed look at the individual themes, please see the Musical Analysis for this movement in my edition of the score (Appendix A).

Rhythm

This piece should be performed with a sense of *marcato*, but not *staccato*.⁷¹ As a result of the *galliard* dance form, hemiolas are used throughout. These shifts in meter may be difficult for choirs and should be a consideration for the conductor. In contrast, Handel composed longer note values at letter B.

Tonality and Harmony

This chorus is in A major with modulations occurring throughout to keys relative to the tonic. These include the sense of E major (dominant of A) around measure 22 and

⁷⁰ Stapert, *Handel's Messiah*, 92.

⁷¹ Schmid, *George Frideric Handel's Messiah*, 23.

the feeling of B major (dominant of E) around measure 68. The solid harmony is achieved through strong chord progressions built on the prominent degrees of the A major scale.

Meter and Tempo

The time signature of this movement is 3/4. The tempo is *allegro*, but there is much room for interpretation as to how fast or slow to perform this movement. Sometimes it is performed in a grand feeling of three, while other times it is performed in a faster feeling of one. Since it is based on a lively dance form, I would recommend performing this movement at a faster tempo. However, I would ultimately choose whatever tempo best showcases the abilities of the ensemble. The *adagio* at the end should not be taken literally as is common in today's performances. Handel included this to indicate a change of mood, not necessarily a drastic change in tempo. The tempo has already been slowed by Handel's use of longer note values at the end of the movement.⁷²

Conducting Considerations

According to Van Camp, there are some common problem spots that will need to be addressed with the singers. The first is the interval of a sixth for the altos in measure 27. The second is measure 66, which are the alto and tenor parts are slightly different from the other instances of those themes. The tenors will then need to be careful not

⁷² Van Camp, *A Practical Guide*, 36.

to go flat on the D-sharp in measure 82, and should notice the slight difference in their melody in measure 104. In addition to these, the conductor should really work out how to conduct the hemiolas that occur throughout the piece. They will need to be conducted clearly for the instrumental players, but yet must not be confusing to amateur singers. Working to make gestures as clear and simple as possible will produce the best outcome. I would also suggest memorizing the order of the entrances in this chorus. The more the conductor can keep his/her eyes on the singers and out of the score, the better the singers will be able to follow the conductor's direction, and thus, the better the performance will be.

Rehearsal Considerations

When teaching this chorus, I would start by introducing each of the four main themes to the choir. Once they have those in their heads, they will be able at least to sight-read through the chorus. In later rehearsals, after notes are secure, I would return to the four main themes as a means of teaching the articulation I desired. This could be done on a weekly basis by using the themes as a type of warm-up. Special consideration should be given to the text and the singers' tendencies towards bad diction. The "r" in "glory" should be flipped, and every effort should be made to encourage pure choral vowels. Singers will need to work to ensure that the melismatic phrases on "shall be revealed" are articulated slightly so as not to sound "muddy." I would also recommend spending some time going over breathing and phrasing. When done effectively, these can give new life to a piece of music.

My biggest challenge with this piece was encouraging the choir to sing with a lighter tone quality. The “controlled and intense” sound was a new venture for many on this particular chorus. A sampling of warm-ups that address these issues may be found in Appendix D.

“O Thou That Tellest”

Background

“O Thou That Tellest” is the ninth movement of the work and the third appearance of the chorus (taking into account “And He Shall Purify,” one of the movements I omitted from my 2013 performance). The chorus is a response to the preceding alto recitative and aria, the latter of which uses the same text. The text continues the light and dark theme of the scene and is taken from Isaiah 40: “O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, say unto the city of Judah, behold your God.”

Dynamics

The Schirmer edition indicates that Handel desired a *forte* dynamic level for the first soprano entrance. This would be considered appropriate, given the joyful nature of the text and the lively feel of music. The score also suggests a *fortissimo* at letter K, which is not found in Handel’s original score. I feel this is appropriate, however, in that it is a reiteration of the main theme. Directors should take care, though, to make sure that the choir does not “over sing” that section. Instead, I would be inclined to make the “behold” statements more obvious through dynamic emphasis.

Because the piece is so short, special attention should be given to dynamic contrast in order to make the piece interesting. In my own copy of the score (Appendix A), I have indications where it would be appropriate for the choir to observe softer dynamic levels; these occur at measure 117 and measure 132. These interpretations,

which can be heard on various recordings, are interpretations I find to be especially effective. In addition, dynamics can play a role in helping the primary beats to be emphasized. Controlling the dynamics will give the piece a light feeling of two and put appropriate emphasis on certain parts of the text.

Instrumentation and Accompaniment

The instrumentation for this piece consists of strings, reeds (oboe), and continuo. This chorus is different from the previous one in that the accompaniment does more than simply double the vocal parts; this may have to do with the fact that the accompaniment is based on the material that was used in the preceding aria. Of special interest are the sixteenth-note *arpeggios* and very distinct octave leaps. These leaps occur most frequently in the introduction to the aria and in the instrumental coda of the chorus. While they should not be too difficult for string players, an organist using a keyboard reduction may have to spend a little extra time working out exactly how to translate those motives to the keyboard. Throughout the chorus, the violins feature unique counter melodies and accompaniments that are based on both the main melody and the accompanying chord progressions. Also, every time the “arise” and “behold” motifs occur in the chorus, they are echoed by the orchestral accompaniment.

Structure and Form

Even though this chorus is based on only the first phrase of the alto solo that precedes it, the context makes this chorus feel as if it were the return to the A section in

a *da capo* aria. This chorus is unique in the fact that it is a continuation of the preceding aria. There is no instrumental introduction, as is common in most choruses, but rather, the composer employs the use of a direct segue, which emphasizes the dramatic text being portrayed. Interestingly, the instrumental coda is reminiscent of the introduction to the alto aria. In simplest terms, this chorus could be considered A and A' in that it consists of one verse of material that occurs twice.

Texture

The texture of this piece is considered full for this time period. Even though it is typically performed in a light style, all four parts sing throughout the chorus, and substantial instrumentation is used in the accompaniment. The piece begins with a small polyphonic section based on simple imitation, while the remainder of the piece, beginning at measure 125, is considered homophonic. One might say that the homophonic texture could symbolize the importance of the message being told to the cities of Judah.

Melody

The melodic material for this chorus is borrowed from the aria that precedes it. Notice that the upward leaps in the melody resemble those set to the text "get thee up into the high mountains." Notice also the visual references to the "mountains" and the "valleys" in the printed musical score. The placement of the musical notes on the staff

seems to create visual pictures that depict what the text is trying to convey. This type of visual symbolism in the Baroque Period was known as *Augenmusik* (Eye Music).⁷³

The melody also makes connections with other pieces in *Messiah*. For example, Stapert points out that the opening interval for this chorus is the same as those of “But Who May Abide” and “He Shall Purify.”⁷⁴ With the exception of the imitation at the beginning of the chorus, the melody tends to remain in the soprano for the duration of the movement, a result of homophonic texture. In regards to the range of the melody, the tessitura of this chorus lies in the high part of the range for all voices.

Rhythm

Singers should work to accent strong beats (eighth note beats one and four) in order to give the piece the correct emphasis. There are rhythms in this movement that refer to other choruses. The rhythm of “say unto the cities” is the same as “and all flesh shall see it together” from “And the Glory of the Lord.” Special consideration should be given to performing the motif on “arise” and “behold” as written, rather than as sixteenth note triplets (See the Musical Analysis for this movement in the score found in Appendix A).⁷⁵ Singers should work to sing *legato* (smooth), and the Peters edition suggests that the “behold” sections be sung *marcato* (strongly accented).⁷⁶

⁷³ Randel, *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 62.

⁷⁴ Stapert, *Handel's Messiah*, 98.

⁷⁵ Schmid, *George Frideric Handel's Messiah*, 28.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

Tonality and Harmony

The tonality of this piece is D major. However, there are temporary modulations to A major (dominant of D) in measures 119-124.

Meter and Tempo

The time signature for this piece is 6/8 and the tempo indication is *andante* (walking tempo). This chorus should be performed at the same tempo as the aria that precedes it. The Schirmer score suggests a tempo of eighth note equals 144 beats per minute. I will be conducting this piece in a tempo of between 168 and 172 beats per minute in order to make it easier for the singers to sing. In order to convey the emotions of the “good tidings,” however, this piece should be felt with two large pulses per measure, and there should be no *ritardando* (slowing down) at the end.⁷⁷ The soprano entrance at the beginning of the chorus should occur in rhythm with the aria that precedes it, and there should be no break between the solo and the chorus. The same should be true of the orchestral coda at the end.

Conducting Considerations

This piece should be conducted in a pulse of two in order to achieve the desired accents mentioned above. When teaching this chorus to an ensemble, certain trouble spots should be pointed out to the singers. These include the repeated bass notes in

⁷⁷ Ibid., 28.

measure 109, which are different from the first instance of the main theme; the bass pickup to measure 116, which is different from the previous measure; the basses' first note in measure 125, which contains an interval that is different from that of the main theme; the altos' G natural in measure 127, which is important in establishing the new key center; the odd interval of the tenors' pick up to measure 130; the basses' G-sharp in measure 132, which is the third in the chord; and the tenor and soprano pickups to measure 135, which tend to not be accurate.

Another concern should be the accurate performance of the rhythmic motive on the words "behold" and "arise." Most amateur singers will not be able to notice the difference between what is written and a sixteenth note triplet. (As a choral director, I try my very best to have the singers do it correctly, but I do not belabor the point if I think it to be beyond their ability.) In order for this chorus to be effective, great care should be given to diction and articulation. Not only will this help to make the words easier to understand, it will also help the choir to sound more unified. Ending consonants on words such as "arise" and "behold" should be crisp and precise.

Rehearsal Considerations

This movement is one of the easier choruses and would be ideal to use as a warm-up for a rehearsal. In order to achieve the desired emphasis, I would ask the choir to speak their parts in rhythm. This will not only work towards accomplishing a feeling of two, but will also be an opportunity to address diction and articulation. In my rehearsals of this movement, I have noticed that the alto motive in measure 122 that corresponds

to the word “Lord” tends to be both “muddy” and ahead of the beat. I would suggest asking a few of the altos to sing that line on a “doh” syllable, even in the performance. This trick will not be noticed, but can solve a lot of problems.

“For Unto Us a Child Is Born”

Background

“For Unto Us a Child Is Born” is the twelfth movement of *Messiah* and the fourth appearance of the chorus. It is one of the most difficult choruses of the work for choirs to sing because of the extended melismatic passages. The main motive for this chorus, like that of “He Shall Purify,” is borrowed from Handel’s cantata *No, di voi non vo’ fidarmi*.⁷⁸ It is often referred to as one of the “love duet” choruses.⁷⁹ “For Unto Us a Child Is Born” deals with the same “light and dark” theme as the other choruses, and marks the final time that we hear the voice of the prophets. The text is taken from Isaiah 9:6: “For unto us a child is born, for 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.”

Dynamics

This chorus is very joyful in nature and is often performed in a grand and declamatory manner. The Schirmer edition indicates a *forte* dynamic level for the orchestral introduction. This is contrasted by a *piano* dynamic level for each of the choir’s various entrances. There is another dynamic contrast when the chorus reaches letter D; the score indicates a *fortissimo* dynamic level here to convey the joy associated

⁷⁸ Dennis Shrock, *Handel’s Messiah: A Performance Practice Handbook* (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2013), 2.

⁷⁹ Van Camp, *A Practical Guide*, 49.

with the different names of the Messiah. I feel that the dynamic markings are appropriate, yet should be performed within the context of one's interpretation of the overall work. One could argue that these dynamic indications could suggest the composer's desire to employ the Baroque practice of the *concertino* and *ripieno*. This will be discussed in further detail underneath the conducting considerations. Even though it is not indicated in the score, the orchestral coda is most often performed at a *forte* dynamic level.

Instrumentation and Accompaniment

This chorus is the first movement of the work to use the full complement of orchestral instruments. Not only do we have the standard strings, reeds (oboes) and continuo, but this is the first that we hear of the trumpets and the tympani. During this time period, these instruments were most commonly associated with royal celebrations. I feel it especially appropriate that they are used on the portions of the chorus that proclaim the many names of the coming King.

In addition to the standard harmonic support of the lower instruments, this piece is characterized by the extensive use of sixteenth notes in the violins. These will not be too difficult for string players, but the fast-moving notes could prove difficult for an organist. Upon special examination of the score, organists may discover notes that could be left out without compromising the integrity of the music. If you are using any type of instrumental ensemble, your keyboard accompanist may benefit from playing from the continuo score. This proved very helpful in my situation.

Structure and Form

This movement begins with an orchestral introduction. Throughout the composition, there are three main themes. The first one appears on the text “for unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.” This phrase is then embellished and extended with a melisma. The next theme begins at C and incorporates the words “and the government shall be upon His shoulder.” The third theme occurs for the first time at D and proudly proclaims “Wonderful, Counselor.” This pattern is then repeated three more times. The piece ends with an orchestral coda that is very similar to the introduction. For a more detailed look at the individual themes, please see the Musical Analysis for this movement in my edition of the score (Appendix A).

Texture

This chorus incorporates both homophonic and polyphonic textures. Erich Schmid (editor of the Peters edition of *Messiah*) would consider this chorus polyphonic with florid passages. The orchestral texture is thinner during the polyphonic sections in the chorus, which allows the polyphony to be heard more clearly. The texture is thicker during the homophonic parts, however, and the orchestra is more active. Handel saves the full homophonic texture for the words “Wonderful, Counselor” in order to put emphasis on the names of the Messiah.

Melody

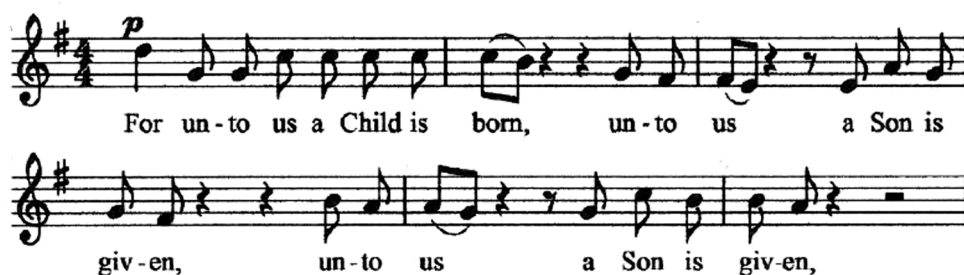
The melody of the opening phrase alternates between large intervals and steps. The melismatic passages are made of patterns that vary slightly from one vocal part to another. Special care should be given so that the “mi, re, do” melodic figure is found in the tenor part at letter D is heard above the rest of the voices.⁸⁰ Historical performance practices would suggest that the opening theme would have been sung using a type of passing tone ornamentation.

In the Schirmer score, this idea is written out above the first statement of the word “born.” This is not continued, however, on the words “us” or “given.” The conductor should decide which interpretation he or she prefers and instruct the singers accordingly. As shown in the examples below, I personally prefer this type of ornamentation and encouraged my singers to incorporate it into the performance:



Example 1. “For Unto Us a Child Is Born,” mm. 7-12, soprano part (Schirmer Edition).

⁸⁰ Van Camp, *A Practical Guide*, 51.



Example 2. "For Unto Us a Child Is Born," mm. 7-12, soprano part (with passing tone ornamentation).

Portions of this chorus lie in the high part of most singers' ranges. Singers should be careful of the large intervals that occur throughout the piece, and every effort should be made to ensure accuracy. The melismatic passages are especially difficult for amateur singers, taking into account that they were originally composed for soloists, not a chorus. I will discuss ideas for how to deal with this in the Conducting Considerations section below.

Notice the symbolism that appears within the melody. The melismatic passages occur on the word "born," which implies the movement and energy of the of birth process itself. The phrase "and the government shall be upon His shoulder" climbs the scale by means of steps and skips; this could imply the rise of the Messiah to power. Finally, the large intervals used on words such as "God" and "everlasting Father" give great emphasis and importance to these words.

Rhythm

This particular chorus is characterized by its unique use of rhythmic material. One distinctive feature would be the sixteenth note melismas that permeate the score. In contrast to these melismas are the simple eighth notes in the accompanying voices, which provide stability to the tempo. The dotted rhythms on the phrases “and the government shall be upon His shoulder,” and “Wonderful, Counselor” refer to the French overtures, which use dotted rhythms as their driving force. The rhythms of this movement are also heavily associated with the types of ceremonial pieces used to honor royalty.

As discussed in the previous section, there is also great symbolism associated with the rhythms of this composition. The sixteenth notes used in some melismatic passages imply a great sense of energy and excitement; this corresponds to the excitement revolving around the event that is about to take place. The steady use of the eighth note throughout also gives the piece a sense of stability, much like the stability of the Messiah’s government. (This steady pulse will be beneficial to the singers in helping them to create an accurate and precise performance of the work.) Finally, notice the use of rests after the words “Wonderful” and “Counselor”; these give the listener an opportunity to rest and to reflect on the importance of the message being conveyed.

Tonality and Harmony

The tonality of this piece is G major. At letter B the music modulates to the brighter key of D, which represents the coming of the “light.” Also, writing in the key of

D allowed composers to use trumpets and tympani. (Trumpets during the Baroque Period had no valves and could only play in the key of D.) The piece also modulates to C Major beginning at measure 56. The harmony used throughout this chorus is very strong and centers around the prominent chords of the key signature. Of special interest is that the composer often remains on the same chord for several measures in a row. This is plainly obvious on the “Wonderful Counselor” motives, and could be Handel’s way of representing the immutable nature of Christ as the Messiah. Handel avoids a feeling of being too static, however, because of all of the interesting effects he uses on the melody and the rhythm.

Meter and Tempo

This piece is scored in common time, which provides a very strong and steady foundation on which the composer can convey his message. The desired tempo indicated in the Schirmer edition is that of *andante allegro*; this is consistent with Handel’s original score. Interpretations of tempo, however, vary from conductor to conductor. Even though the score suggests a tempo of quarter note equals 76, I will be using a tempo of quarter note equals 104 for my performance. I think that this lively interpretation will better reflect the overall mood of the piece. The singers’ ability to sing the melismatic passages accurately, however, should determine any conductor’s final tempo.

In various recordings of this work, the listener can hear a *ritardando* (slowing down) on the final statement of “Prince of Peace.” While this can be very effective in

creating a sense of drama, employing the *ritardando* in this manner makes it very hard to return to the original tempo for the orchestral coda. For my performance, I will request that the singers not slow down at that particular point. I will, however, request that the orchestra play a slight *ritardando* in the next to the last measure of the piece. Unfortunately, grand *adagios* are commonly performed and thus expected by present-day audiences. The original integrity of the piece can be maintained if the *ritardando* is not too drastic.

Conducting Considerations

As mentioned earlier, the melismatic passages of this piece are especially difficult for amateur singers. In my 2010 performance of *Messiah*, I truly felt that this chorus did not live up to the caliber of the rest of the performance. Taking into account the limitations of my singers, my 2013 performance employed the use of historical performance practices in order to make this chorus a rewarding experience for everyone involved. Since the composer already uses contrasting textures and dynamic levels, I performed this chorus using the concept of the *concertino* and *ripieno*; a division of a small chorus against the large chorus.⁸¹ Since we were privileged enough to have four professional soloists contracted to sing in the performance, I requested that they sing all of the melismatic/polyphonic portions of this movement as a solo quartet. I then asked the full choir to enter on the “Wonderful, Counselor” sections along with the

⁸¹ Schmid, *George Frideric Handel's Messiah*, 28.

brass and tympani. This practice is even indicated in the orchestrations of some editions of the work with *con rip.* (full ensemble) and *senza rip.* (part of the ensemble). I feel that this not only solved quite a few problems created by amateur singers trying to sing melismatic lines that were originally meant for professionals, but it also presented this chorus in a way that is unique to most listeners.⁸²

Rehearsal Considerations

In light of the way that I performed this piece, this movement required very little rehearsal time when compared to the other selections. I believe that the full homophonic sections make an excellent addition to a choral warm-up. Even though this way of adapting the chorus may be considered “easy” by a choir, is a wonderful vehicle through which other concepts can be conveyed. I would recommend that the conductor pay close attention to the pronunciation of the text, and use this chorus to address strong beginning and ending consonants. Also, the concept of unifying the choral “r” can be addressed through phrases like “the everlasting Father.”

⁸² Van Camp, *A Practical Guide*, 7.

“Glory to God”

Background

“Glory to God” is the seventeenth movement of the work and the fifth appearance of the chorus. It follows a set of soprano recitatives, the last one relating the words of the angel to the shepherds. This is the first we hear of the actual historical account of the nativity; all prior choruses deal with the prophecies. The choir portrays the multitude of angels appearing to the shepherds. In the *historias* this would have been referred to as a “turba,” wherein the chorus expressed the feelings of a crowd.⁸³ The text for this movement is “Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth, good will toward men,” and is taken from Luke 2:14.

Dynamics

In the Novello edition, the choir’s entrance is marked *forte* to represent the joyous proclamation of the angels. The Schirmer edition, which is believed to reflect Handel’s score at this point, calls for the choir to sing *piano* so as to sound as if they are coming from far away.⁸⁴ These various interpretations can be confusing for singers who have sung the work from multiple editions over the course of their lives. It is up to the

⁸³ Stapert, *Handel's Messiah*, 102.

⁸⁴ Nobel, T. Tertius, Max Spicker. *The Messiah: An Oratorio by G.F. Handel*. (New York, NY: Schirmer Editions, 1912), 82.

conductor to make clear which dynamic level he or she prefers. I prefer *forte* so that the sound resembles “a sudden multitude of angels.”

The Schirmer edition requests that the choir sings *piano* on “and peace on earth” to reflect the message of the text; the Novello score makes no such suggestion. I requested a softer sound on those passages to suggest a sense of “peace.” (The Novello score does suggest that the basses sing slightly louder at this point. This is because their octave jump is considered the melody.) The polyphonic passages are marked *mezzo forte* in order that the various parts may be heard clearly. The *forte* should always return on the “Glory to God” passages in order to emphasize this portion of the text. Throughout this movement, special consideration should be given to notes that fall high in the ranges of the sopranos and the tenors. The high quality of these notes should never overpower the dynamics of the rest of the ensemble.

Towards the end of the movement, the instrumentation begins to thin out, creating a softer sound. The score also calls for softer dynamic levels towards the end. This is apparent in both the Schirmer and Novello editions and represents the departure of the angels into heaven.

Instrumentation

This particular movement uses the strings and continuo as the foundation of its sound. Trumpets are added at various portions for effect. This is very symbolic, since trumpets are often associated with the proclamations of the angels. This piece is in D Major, most likely because Handel wanted to once again use valveless trumpets. The

recitative just prior to this movement is an accompanied recitative. This is important to know because the recitative will prepare the choir for their first entrance. Also, prior to this movement and its recitatives, the strings alone have a “Pastoral Symphony” which sets the peaceful mood of the “field” prior to the angels’ arrival.

Structure and Form

This piece has no official introduction, but instead is a direct segue from the preceding recitative. In a broad sense, this movement is in ABAB form. Each section varies in some way when it returns, and the variants occur mostly within the accompanying parts. The texture is imitative in the polyphonic sections, and Handel portrays the joy that comes with “goodwill” by using the energy of a stretto fugue.⁸⁵ This movement has an instrumental *coda* and is one of the shortest choruses of the entire oratorio.

Texture

The choral texture of this piece is thick; however, the four parts rarely do the same thing at the same time. This particular movement employs both homophonic and polyphonic textures. The homophony reinforces the central theme of “Glory to God,” while the movement created by the polyphony on “good will toward men” represents the “good will” spreading throughout the earth. Handel also uses varying pitch levels for symbolic purposes; the higher voices sing the role of the angels, while the lower

⁸⁵ Stapert, *Handel's Messiah*, 103.

voices portray the earth. This can be seen, for example, in measures 1-3 (heavenly) and measures 5-7 (earthly). For a more detailed look at these themes, please see the Musical Analysis for this movement in my edition of the score (Appendix A).

Melody

This movement uses three main motifs. The first is the grand melody on “Glory to God.” This melody is based on a descending scale, and many people believe that this, along with “Comfort Ye” and “Lift Up Your Heads,” could be one of the Handelian connections to the carol “Joy to the World.”⁸⁶ One can see text painting on the word “highest” as the pitch moves up, which is suggestive of heaven. The second theme is the simple “peace on earth.” This motive is performed mostly in unison, with the exception of the occasional major chord, providing a nice musical demonstration of unity and peace. The third theme is the fast-moving “good will toward men.” This melody is very imitative, with voices entering at various intervals. The tenors have the melody at the beginning and at letter A, and they should be heard above the other parts.⁸⁷ For a more detailed look at the individual themes, please see the Musical Analysis for this movement in my edition of the score (Appendix A).

⁸⁶ Kenneth W. Osbeck, *Joy to the World: The Stories behind Your Favorite Christmas Carols* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999), 42.

⁸⁷ Van Camp, *A Practical Guide*, 58.

Rhythm

In typical Baroque fashion, the rhythms of this movement are driving. The dotted rhythms on “Glory to God” are perfect examples of the French Baroque style. This could be symbolic of the entrance of a king. The longer note values on “peace on earth” provide wonderful imagery of this peace. Also, the short eighth-note interludes between the sections in measures 7-9, 16-17, and 31-32 recall the motive used in the “Comfort Ye” recitative.⁸⁸

Accompaniment

On the imitative sections, the accompaniment doubles the voices (*colla parte*). On the “Glory to God” motive; however, the accompaniment uses a very impressive sixteenth note pattern that could represent both God’s glory and the wings of the angels.

Tonality and Harmony

The tonality of this movement is in D major, with a temporary (5 measures) modulation to G major in measure 30. Once again, the key of D allows for the use of trumpets and tympani. The singers can find their pitches from an A chord at the end of the previous recitative.

⁸⁸ Stapert, *Handel's Messiah*, 102.

Meter and Tempo

The meter of this piece is 4/4 and the tempo is marked *allegro*. The change from quick note values to longer ones on “and peace on earth” makes the piece feel as if it slows down. A *ritardando* at the end is up for interpretation. In Baroque fashion, slowing down slightly at the end of a piece would have been appropriate. Modern day performances of the work, however, often include a large tempo change. One must remember that Handel has slowed the tempo naturally by using longer note values and rests at the end. If the tempo change is not too drastic, the historical integrity of the music will be maintained.

Conducting Considerations

The first entrance will be difficult for some singers because their pitches are not given directly. In the polyphonic sections, the tenors and altos may find their starting pitches by singing one note higher than the note in the other vocal part that precedes their entrances. As you can see in the example below, this causes a temporary suspension in some places, however, which may be difficult for the singers.



Example 3. "Glory to God," mm. 18-19, SATB.

The entrances in measure 38 will be a problem for singers because they are a sudden break in the previously established pattern. In my performances of this piece, I have noticed that the first trumpet entrance in measure 22 can sometimes make the sopranos enter early. In this case, the trumpet doubles the tenors. Since this piece is a repetition of familiar material, it may be beneficial to point out to singers the differences between each occurrence of a particular theme.

Rehearsal Considerations

When warming up the choir, I would use descending scales similar to the opening motive of "Glory to God." The choir should pay special attention to the intonation of the pitches in relation to each other. I would also have the choir build a major triad similar to the one in measure 30, paying special attention to intonation, blend, and balance. Next, I would consider doing a warm-up that would work the

articulators for words such as “glory,” “God,” “good will,” and “toward.” Also, I would address the letter “r” and do warm-ups that focus on unifying vowels; this could be useful on words such as “earth,” “peace,” and “highest,” etc. Some examples of these warm-ups may be found in Appendix D.

Directors should also work to minimize the amount of “s” used on the end of the word “peace.” This can be achieved by only allowing certain singers to sing the final consonant. When teaching the parts, I would suggest working on the homophonic sections first, pointing out the differences between them. Next, I would teach the polyphonic sections. I would hold sectionals if necessary, and I would always have them practice this movement with the recitative before.

“Hallelujah”

Background

This chorus is the end of Part II of *Messiah* and signifies the coronation of the Lamb as King after the rebellion of the nations. This movement is composed in the style of a coronation anthem, and portions of it bring to mind Handel’s *Zadok the Priest*. Coronation anthems are often associated with Henry Purcell (1659-1695), who served as organist at Westminster Abbey. Coronation anthems usually use brass and tympani to reflect the grandeur of the occasion, and they often use texts about biblical kings.

“Hallelujah” is by far the best known of all the choruses in *Messiah*. Van Camp suggests that the many different performances of the movement outside the context of the work have prevented modern audiences from understanding its true meaning.⁸⁹ The text is taken from the nineteenth chapter of the book of Revelation and uses the word “hallelujah” as its theme. The word “hallelujah” is taken from the Jewish word *halel*, which means to praise, and the Jewish name of God, *Yahweh*; thus, the word means “praise to God.”⁹⁰

Of special note is the odd use of verbs in this chorus. Phrases like “the kingdom of this world *is* become” rather than “*has* become” tell us a great deal about Handel’s limited knowledge of the English language.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Van Camp, *A Practical Guide*, 112.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 113.

⁹¹ Ibid., 209.

Dynamics

The Peters edition suggests that nothing could be worse than to execute this piece solely in a *fortissimo* manner.⁹² The Schirmer edition of the score asks for a *forte* dynamic level at the beginning of the chorus. I might even request a *mezzo forte* at that point, which would reflect the “senza” indication seen in some editions. When performing this chorus in the context of the overall work, choral directors must remember that, even though this piece is often associated with the end of certain performances, it was not intended to have the same amount of grandeur as “Worthy Is the Lamb,” which is the actual end of the entire oratorio.

The middle section, beginning at measure 34, asks for a *piano* dynamic level. This, in contrast to the louder sections about the heavenly kingdom that surround it, could represent the lowliness of earth. While I agree with a contrasting sound at this point, I would make sure that it is done in context with the other dynamics being used. The *crescendo* marked in measure 36 is editorial and does not reflect what Handel would have desired.

Special care should be given to the soprano line throughout the “King of Kings” section; just because the notes climb higher on the staff should not mean that the singers have to increase their dynamic level (The vocal dynamics will actually increase naturally with an ascending line, so singers do not need to give more). I agree with the dynamic increase at letter F, but do not think that it warrants a *fortissimo*; just a slight

⁹² Schmid, *George Frideric Handel's Messiah*, 46.

increase in sound will achieve the declamatory effect that the composer desires. Even though the increased dynamics requested on the repetitions of “forever” near the end of the piece are most likely editorial, they do emphasize the importance of the text. Of particular interest to the choral director is that the final chords are not marked for a louder dynamic level. I agree with this concept. Since most of the notes are in the middle ranges of the voice parts, singing a louder dynamic level would be difficult and might sound forced.

Instrumentation and Accompaniment

This piece begins with an indication in many scores for the choir and orchestra to begin *senza rip*. I think that this is a very good idea in that it prevents the choir from singing this piece in a bombastic fashion and reinforces the fact that this is not the end of the story. With the exception of the introduction and interlude, the orchestra does a good bit of doubling of the vocal parts. Once you reach measure 78, however, the violins suddenly burst into sixteenth notes.

Structure and Form

This movement begins with three statements of the “hallelujah” theme by the orchestra, which is then echoed by the choir. The chorus then repeats this theme in a quicker repeated fashion. This type of call and response between the choir and orchestra is evident throughout the movement. Measure 74 suggests the start of a coda. Note that a grand pause is often observed before the final “Hallelujah.” Ham

claims that during this long silence the “Hallelujahs ring on in our hearts and in heaven.”⁹³ This is a nice sentiment, but most likely is not what Handel intended. In line with practices of the time period, he probably would have observed only the rest indicated and added only a slight *ritardando*.

Texture

This movement uses both homophonic and polyphonic textures. The opening “hallelujah” is proclaimed in a grand homophonic style. This type of texture can be seen again on the words “forever and ever.” Handel uses a unison texture on the words “for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.” Other statements of the word “hallelujah” tend to be more polyphonic and involve quite a bit of imitation. This can be seen at letter B.

Note the use of extended polyphony during the “He shall reign” sections; this could suggest the eternal nature of the reign of Christ. Another use of polyphony may be found on phrases such as “and He shall reign.” There is a contrasting section at letter C which is very homophonic in nature. “The kingdom of this world” is presented in a very hymn-like fashion, yet is immediately interrupted once the eternal “reign” begins at letter D.

Melody

This movement is comprised of four themes. The first one is used on the opening “hallelujah” and is composed of a “do-sol-la-sol” theme, which can be seen in the

⁹³ Ham, “The Hallelujah Chorus,” 29.

example below. This alternates between parts and should be heard above the other voices.⁹⁴



Example 4. "Hallelujah," m. 4, soprano part.

The second theme is heard for the first time at measure 12 and is associated with the words, "For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." The third theme begins at measure 41 and accompanies the words "and He shall reign forever." The fourth and final theme begins at measure 51 and boldly proclaims "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." For a more detailed look at the individual themes, please see the Musical Analysis for this movement in my edition of the score (Appendix A).

As seen in the example below, portions of this movement are borrowed from Lutheran chorales. "For the Lord God Omnipotent" is similar to the fifth phrase of Philip Nicolai's "How Brightly Shines the Morning Star."⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Van Camp, *A Practical Guide*, 113.

⁹⁵ Stapert, *Handel's Messiah*, 136-137.



Example 5. "Hallelujah," mm. 12-14, soprano part and "How Brightly Shines the Morning Star," fifth phrase, chorale melody.

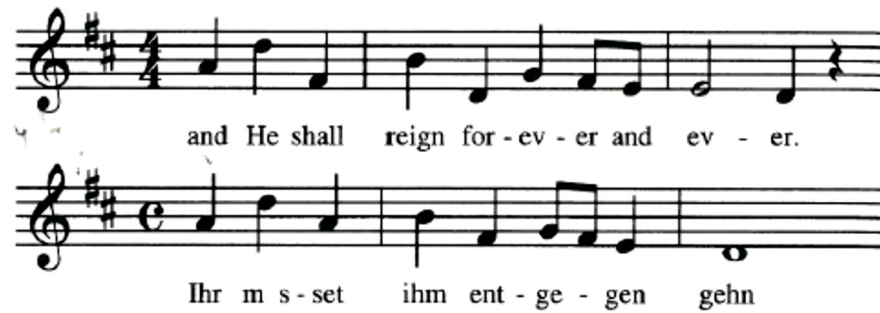
As seen below, both the theme for "the kingdom of this world" and "And He shall reign forever" are taken from the same composer's "Wake, Awake for Night is Flying."⁹⁶

Perhaps this reflects the Handel's Lutheran heritage.



Example 6. "Hallelujah," mm. 34 and 35, soprano part and "Wake, Awake for Night is Flying," mm. 17 and 18, chorale melody.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 136-137.



Example 7. “Hallelujah,” mm. 46-48, alto part and “Wake, Awake for Night is Flying,” mm. 23-25, chorale melody.

The tessitura of this movement is quite high for most voice parts. Choral directors should pay special attention to tone quality in measures 44 (tenor) and 49 (sopranos). Sopranos should also be encouraged to hold back as they move through the long “King of Kings” and “Lord of Lords” passages. Pushing too hard can cause the singers to give out quickly and to sing out of tune. This is especially important for performances in which this chorus is not the concluding movement. The higher tessitura for the singers on that section, however, could imply heavenly themes.

Rhythm

This piece uses a dotted motive on the word “hallelujah.” Note that the word “hallelujah” is stated twice in dotted quarter notes and eighth notes and then followed immediately by a quicker occurrence, which uses eighth notes and sixteenth notes. This, along with the rests between them, creates a renewed momentum. Handel uses rhythm as a contrasting element; for example, he sets quick-moving notes on the words “and he

shall reign,” but long note values on the words “King of Kings” and “Lord of Lords.”

These longer note values could suggest that Christ’s reign will go on forever.

Tonality and Harmony

This piece is in the key of D major. According to the doctrine of affects, the key of D held special significance to Baroque composers in that it often represented love and life.⁹⁷ Secondary dominants, which prepare us for key changes, are prominent at points of modulation throughout the movement. This can be seen at measure 26 with the appearance of G sharps, suggestive of a shift to the dominant key of A. There is also evidence of a climbing chromatic motive at measure 60. Notice that the final “hallelujah” uses a plagal cadence, symbolizing an “amen.”

Meter and Tempo

The time signature of this piece is 4/4, and the tempo is *allegro*. Once again, this piece has seen many different interpretations when it comes to tempo. Some conductors choose to interpret this marking in Handel’s score to mean a very lively tempo, while other conductors prefer to perform this chorus in a very grand manner, employing a slightly slower tempo. For my performance of *Messiah*, we performed this chorus with the quarter note equaling 104. I consider this somewhere in the middle of the two previously mentioned interpretations. (The Schirmer edition suggests a tempo of quarter note equals 72.) One problem spot in this work is the hymn-like section at C.

⁹⁷ Paul Hedrick, *The Doctrine of Affections* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2010), 11.

Many conductors request the singers to sing this section softly, but as a result, the singers also often sing this section slower. This should be avoided at all costs, in that it is very challenging to resume the original tempo once that section is over.

Of major debate among music scholars is the proper execution of the end of this chorus. Some editions of the work indicate an *adagio* there, and it has become common practice to perform the ending as such. Some conductors feel that the final four chords should be sung in strict tempo, while others feel that a grand pause should occur before the final word, and that the final word should be done in a very grand and slow manner. While I think that the strict tempo may be closer to what Handel intended, I will be applying a slightly longer pause than indicated in the score before the singing of the last word. My reasoning for this has nothing to do with music, but rather theology. I once attended a workshop where a conductor stated that that grand pause represented our time waiting for the Messiah to return. While that may be a little far-fetched, it holds great personal significance to me.

Conducting Considerations

One major concern in performing this piece should be its level of popularity. Because it is performed so often, its interpretation has become both bombastic and routine. This chorus is often one of the sloppiest choruses in modern-day performances because so many people think they know it, and therefore do not try very hard when they sing it. Every effort should be made to encourage the choir to approach this movement with new eyes. My goal was to perform the “Hallelujah” in a way that would

be different from what most audience members were expecting. In doing so, I also hoped to fix many problems that normally would not be addressed.

This movement is another one that I would suggest the conductor (and even the singers) memorize. The more eye contact one can have with the singers and instrumentalists, the less likely they will be to fall back into old habits. In addition to the frequent practice of bombastic singing, one other common problem with this chorus is the unintentional stressing of the “-jah” syllable in the word “hallelujah.” Singers should be encouraged to stress the “-lu” syllable instead. This will not only cause the piece to sound more musical, but it will also solve the common problem of “barking” the last syllable of the word.

Other problem areas include the difficult octave jump in measure 18, the timing of the entrances in the polyphonic section at B, the difficult interval (descending seventh) for the tenors in measure 38, and the sudden rhythm change in measure 66. One other section that is often difficult for the tenors is their entrance at measure 44; one way to strengthen and encourage the section on these high notes is to ask a few members of the alto section to sing with them.

Rehearsal Considerations

I would begin reviewing this chorus at the very first rehearsal. A tendency might be to leave this chorus until the very end, since it is the most familiar, but I fear that this could be disastrous in that “bad habits” on behalf of the singers may cause this movement not to complement the desired interpretation of the rest of the work. I

would encourage the use of this chorus at as many rehearsals as possible and in as many creative ways as possible.

One possible warm-up is to have the entire choir whisper-speak the rhythms of their respective parts. Sometimes taking away the pitches is a wonderful way to address accuracy of rhythms, as well as correct pronunciation, diction and articulation. Any of the four main themes could be used as a melodic vocal warm-up. Consider singing each of these in unison moving up and down by half steps. Once again, isolating a particular theme with the entire choir is a wonderful way to address and solve problems.

In early rehearsals, I would encourage the choir to sing this movement as quietly as possible and with as much energy as they can muster. This contributes to developing the desired tone quality. Once proper care has been given to the main homophonic theme, the director should devote more time to the polyphonic sections. This can most effectively be addressed in sectional rehearsals.

Conclusion

My approach to Skidaway Island United Methodist Church's performance of *Messiah* in 2013 was to present the work in a fashion that was as historically accurate as possible. I also tried to use historic performance practices as a way to make the work more accessible for my choir. This musical journey has been a joy for me, and it is my hope that the information contained within this document will provide insight to the history of the work and how a church choir director might approach *Messiah* in a new and different way. Robert Ham says that when we sing *Messiah*, we "take our place in history as proclaimers of great joy through this timeless music."⁹⁸ May that be truly said of us all.

⁹⁸ Robert N. Ham, "The Hallelujah Chorus: Let the Hallelujahs Ring!" *Christian Sound & Song*, no. 9 (Spring 2002): 29.

Bibliography

- Barrett, Wayne. "Messiah: Drama Theologicus." *The Choral Journal*, 53, No. 5 (December 2005): 8-14.
- Dickson, Andrew. *The Story of Christian Music: from Gregorian chant to Black gospel: An Authoritative Illustrated Guide to All the Major Traditions of Music for Worship*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996.
- Gordon, David and Peter. *Musical Visitors to Great Britain*. Wiltshire, UK: Cromwell Press, 2005.
- Grout, Donald Jay. *A History of Western Music*. 7th ed. New York: Norton, 2006.
- Ham, Robert N. "The Hallelujah Chorus: Let the Hallelujahs Ring!" *Christian Sound & Song*, No. 9 (Spring, 2002): 29.
- Hedrick, Paul. *The Doctrine of Affections*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2010.
- Hettrick, Jane Schatkin. "Review of *Messiah*: Comfort for God's People." *The American Organist*, 46, No. 12 (December 2012): 78-80.
- Hill, John Walter. *Baroque Music: Music in Western Europe, 1580-1750*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2005.
- Kavanaugh, Patrick. *The Spiritual Lives of Great Composers*. Milton Keynes, England: Word (UK), 1992.
- Lord, Suzanne. *Music from the Age of Shakespeare: a Cultural History*. West Point, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003.
- Nobel, T. Tertius, Max Spicker. *The Messiah: An Oratorio by G.F. Handel*. New York, NY: Schirmer Editions, 1912.
- Osbeck, Kenneth W. *Joy to the World: The Stories behind Your Favorite Christmas Carols*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999.
- Pahlen, Kurt, Werner Pfister, Rosemarie König, and Thurston J. Dox. *The World of the Oratorio: Oratorio, Mass, Requiem, Te Deum, Stabat Mater, and Large Cantatas*. Portland, OR: Amadeus, 1990.
- Randel, Don Michael. *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*. 4th ed. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003.

Schalk, Carl. *Key Words in Church Music: Definition Essays on Concepts, Practices, and Movements of Thought in Church Music*. Revised and enlarged edition. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004.

Schalk, Carl. *Musical Heritage of the Church: an outline*. 1976.

Schmid, Erich. *George Frideric Handel[']s] Messiah: Introduction and Instructions for Study*. Frankfurt, Germany: C.F. Peters, 1979.

Shrock, Dennis. *Handel's Messiah: A Performance Practice Handbook*. Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2013.

Slover, Tim, and David Willcocks. *Messiah: The Little-known Story of Handel's Beloved Oratorio*. Sandy, UT: Silverleaf, 2007.

Smither, Howard E. *A History of the Oratorio*. Vol. 2. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977.

Stapert, Calvin. *Handel's Messiah: Comfort for God's People*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2010.

Ulrich, Homer. *A Survey of Choral Music*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973.

Van Camp, Leonard. *A Practical Guide for Performing, Teaching, and Singing Messiah*. Dayton, OH: Lorenz, 1993.

Van Til, Marian. *George Frederic Handel: A Music Lovers Guide to His Life, His Faith, and the Development of Messiah and His other Oratorios*. Youngstown, NY: WordPower Press, 2007.

Appendix A

Score

Appendix B

Program

Appendix C

Musical Analysis of Part I of Handel's *Messiah*

Appendix D

Suggested Warm-Ups

Warm-Up No. 1

(Up and down by half steps)



Joy to the world the Lord is come

Use this descending scale warm-up to work on range, intonation and vowels

Warm-Up No. 2

(Up and down by half steps)

Use this chordal warm-up to address vowels, diction and tuning.

Warm-Up No. 3

(Up and down by half steps)

Sing a lit-tle, sing a lit-tle, tra la la. Sing a lit-tle, sing a lit-tle, tra la la.
(fa la la) (fa la la)

Sing a lit-tle, sing a lit-tle, tra la la. Sing a lit-tle, sing a lit-tle, tra la la.
(fa la la) (fa la la)

Tra la la la la la la la la. ↑ ↓
(Fa)

Use this warm-up to work on range, diction and articulation.

Warm-Up No. 4

(Up and down by half steps)

And the glo - ry, the glo - ry of the Lord.

Use this warm-up to work on the desired articulation and lighter tone.

This would also be a nice way to address a unified "choral R."

Warm-Up No. 5

As the singers to speak the text of "O Thou That Tellest Good Tidings to Zion" in rhythm as a way to address diction and beat/text emphasis.

Consider asking the singers to sway from side to side as they speak in order to help them feel the pulse of two.

Appendix E

Other Resources

- Barber, David W. and David C. Donald. *Bach, Beethoven and the Boys: Music History as It Ought to Be Taught*. Toronto: Sound & Vision, 1986.
- Barber, David W. and David C. Donald. *Getting a Handel on Messiah*. Toronto: Sound & Vision, 1994.
- Booth, Al and Joel Kabakov. *The Do it Yourself Messiah*. Hal Leonard Corporation, 1994.
- Bullard, Roger A. *Messiah: The Gospel according to Handel's Oratorio*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993.
- Cowling, Douglas and Jason Walker. *Hallelujah Handel*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2002.
- Jennings, Paul. *Hallelujah! From G.F. Handel's Messiah*. Wauwatosa, Wisconsin: Plank Road Publishing, 2008.
- Kemp, Michael. "The Aging Church Choir: Can Senior Singing Skills be Revitalized?" *Worship Arts*, 58, No. 1 (September-October 2012): 4.
- Korte, John. *A Christmas without Snow*. San Francisco, California: Korty Films, 1980.
- McCabe, Joseph E. *Handel's Messiah: A Devotional Commentary*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978.
- Miller, Norman and Gail Hamilton. *Handel's Messiah; a Soulful Celebration*. USA: Reprise Records, 1992.
- Silverthorne, Lloyd. *Three Steps to Sing Handel's Messiah*. Stroud, UK: ChoralLine, 2013
- Stevens, James and Daniel Landes. *Christmas Messiah for Young Voices*. Nashville, Tennessee: SBW and Associates, 1991.
- Quillin, Robert T. *Meeting Christ in Handel's Messiah: Lent and Easter Messages based on Handel's Texts and Music*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984.
- Shackley, Larry. *The Christmas Messiah for Piano Four Hands*. Dayton, Ohio: Lorenz Publishing Company, 2008.

Appendix F

Performance Reviews

Comments from Local Colligate Music Appreciation Students

"You walk into a spacious sanctuary and immediately, you are greeted by warm lighting pouring down from mahogany chandlers. Subtle melodies lift from the many instruments and travel to the pointed ceiling, bouncing back, raining the sound of tuning over an eager congregation. The golden horns of a digital pipe organ overlook the main entrance of the Sanctuary. They point reaching out to the holy cross accompanied by pipes in a circumzenithal arc, as if ready to play for their fallen king who rose on third day. There is no doubt that the architecture of this amazing church was made with music honoring the most high in mind."

"Skidaway Island Methodist Church was amazing in its construction. The acoustics helped to carry the voices throughout the entire building. The choir looked very professional and perfectly arranged."

"I was completely in awe of the beauty extending from the breathtaking voices of the soloists and choir to the intense talent of the instrumentalists to the amazing architecture of Skidaway Island United Methodist Church. There was hardly standing room left when the concert began. The church was beautifully adorned with Christmas decoration to inspire the mood of the text of Handel's *Messiah*."

"The soloists, choir, and orchestra were perfectly synchronized. This was not only because they were all extremely prepared, but also because their conductor was completely under control. At all times he seemed very at ease and professional. His knowledge of how to lead a performance as great as Handel's *Messiah* was very evident throughout this concert. The soloists were also very professional and graceful."

"Another piece that I was familiar with was 'For Unto Us a Child Is Born.' This was an upbeat and cheerful song about the birth of Jesus Christ. This was also performed by the whole chorus and soloists. I haven't heard this song performed in this manner, nonetheless, I still enjoyed every second of it. It opened up my perspective of how a familiar piece can be done in different ways and still be a great work."

"My favorite piece, sung beautifully by the chorus, was 'And the Glory of the Lord.' I loved the contrasts and the chase between the voices."

"The final piece on the program was the famous 'Hallelujah Chorus.' I stood to my feet and sang along with the sopranos."

"I really enjoyed the concert that day. It gave me chills whenever the sopranos and tenors raised their voices in the final 'Hallelujah Chorus.'"

"In this concert it seemed that chorus had a lot of energy to sing along with providing emotions towards the work without tiring. The Soloists, Conductor, and the Chorus succeeded in building emotional meaning into their musical work. When listening to the music, I was felt like religious moment for me."

"This production was well produced, conducted, and presented. The talent of the delivery of the Choir, the Soloists, and the Musicians were impeccable. If there were any faux pas or mistakes they were not in evidence to my untrained ears and since this composition was for untrained ears like mine the production was flawless. I attended this presentation with my mother, mother-in-law, and Grandmother. Their opinions echo mine. We have decided to make this an annual event whenever and wherever this program is offered."

"Handel's *Messiah* is the first ever classical music concert that I have ever attended. It has now set the bar high for any other that I will attend in the future. Perfection of the chorus' singing and orchestra, strings mostly, coming together as one was a sound that anyone can appreciate."

Notes from Friends, Choir Members, and Members of the Congregation

"I've just come from having lunch with my golf group. Two of my golfing friends were at the *Messiah* concert, along with four other couples. They echoed all the good things we're hearing from everyone. They went on and on about how meaningful this performance was, for it to be the way Handel intended! Those of us who have sung it many, many times feel the same way. These people really appreciated the program - every word that was sung was there in print for them to see and to follow along. Your Performance Notes gave them an understanding of the composition of the *Messiah* - reminded them of the Biblical basis for the words - gave them Handel's background - etc., etc." – Ann Robertson

"Just a note to let you know I enjoyed the *Messiah* last evening. I expected the soloists to be good and they were, but I especially enjoyed the full rich sound of the choir. Where I was seated near the front the blend was very nice - It didn't sound like a church choir with several big voices added, but a fully involved singing group. I enjoyed the warm sound, but also noticed how clear the diction was - especially those final consonants :) Now you can relax...well, maybe after Christmas Eve!" – Jim Adams

"The *Messiah* was FANTASIC! We have heard this several times and you did yourself proud in the presentation. You would receive a A+++ if we were your professor! Thank you for a wonderful evening of sheer delight." – Jim and Judy Hanna

"Let me just say if I were giving you a grade, you made an A+....I was so impressed with everything...this was not the same choir that sang at Easter....they were truly prepared and you pushed them to perfection.....you are an amazing musician....and you should be so proud! Thank you for letting me be a part of a magical evening.....it was such an honor to sing under your baton!" – Danny Cohen

"What an exquisite performance by everyone! We had chills the entire time, it was so beautiful! All the attendees were truly transformed! You are so gifted! We are so lucky to have you! Have a wonderful Christmas and please stay with us a while (I know forever is too much to ask for!). Thank you!" – Joe and Mimi Harkness

"Today I began my day reading the performance notes for the *Messiah* program. I am overwhelmed with the beauty, the brilliance, the educational value of your writing. It brought tears to my eyes, thinking of the time and effort you gave to this endeavor. Outstanding! Thank you, too, for the joy of singing *Messiah* 'in the spirit of the times in which it was composed'. Such a meaningful experience. You have given a most precious gift not only to those of us who sang but also to those who heard God's message proclaimed in the words and the music." – Ann Robertson

“What a glorious time we had at SIUMC last night! You knew exactly the way of praising God and how people’s hearts should feel at the season. Congratulations!!! You’ve done again a magnificent job – you’ve made everyone on the stage to giving all their best. People will talk about the evening for years to come. Hope you’d have a time to get a nice rest before the next one. God bless you!” – June Lee

“What a beautiful evening you gave us....well done! VERY proud of our beautiful church, choir, and our Director of Music. Thank you!” – Mo Field

“Thank you and all the singers and instrumentalists for an outstanding presentation of the *Messiah*. I have been a part of many, many *Messiah* performances, and this was by far the most spiritual and inspiring of any of them. What a gift you all gave those of us fortunate enough to be in the packed house. God bless you all, especially at this joyful time of year.” – Sarah Marley

“I had a leisurely afternoon yesterday and was truly blessed to view the SIUMC performance of Handel's *Messiah*. It just awes me that there are congregations out there with that caliber of talent and such truly amazing voices. You are so gifted and work equally well with talent such as you have at Skidaway and from poor homes of children in Cowpens. I was literally smiling broadly at the end of the tape. I especially liked how you acknowledged the soloists, choir, and incredible musicians. I am going to save this link in my "keepers" folder, at least until I lose it next time I have bad luck with the existing computer! Have a blessed Christmas!” – Christine Phillips

“You should be very proud indeed! Your production of Handel’s *Messiah* was an OUTSTANDING success. Congratulations!” – Dick and Ardie Boggs

“Thank you so much for inviting me to be a special part of this beautiful work (and your Master’s thesis)! I hope it is not the last time we get to do *Messiah* together. Best of luck in all your future endeavors, and many congratulations!” – Michelle Jarrell

“It looks as if you just skipped the masters and have gone directly to doctorate! Thank you, thank you for such a stunning and meaningful *Messiah*. Merry Christmas!” – Onnie Duffy

“Thank you for bringing such lovely music into our church. Also, thank you for sharing your talents and hard work! I think Handel would have loved the performance last night!” – Camille Fisher

“Thank you for the outstanding *Messiah* production this past Sunday! It was a beautiful performance. The soloists were exceptionally fine and the choir was the best I have ever heard it!” – Larry Wills

“Bravo! What a delightful and deeply moving concert of the *Messiah*. I have heard it performed at various venues throughout the country over the years, but this was one of the finest. Merry Christmas!” – Trish Huene

“Your last concert was overwhelming in its beauty, and the attendance must have made you swell with pride. My friend and I were able to have a fine seat. I always like to see your hands in motion.” – Perri Grumish

“Thank you many times over for the beautiful, inspiring *Messiah* program. It was very professionally done and a wonderful gift to the community.” – Eleanor Mallory