

Minehead Choral Society – Autumn Concert 26th November 2022

Our concert tonight combines two favourite works: we start with the uplifting Gloria by Vivaldi, giving us the first opportunity to hear our wonderful soloists, followed by selected highlights, choruses and arias from Handel's great "Messiah". I am pleased to welcome back the glorious Stephanie Berner and very pleased to welcome local singer Helena Payne, joining us as a soloist for the first time. I hope you enjoy the performance as much as we have enjoyed practising and putting the concert together.

Marcus Capel

November 2022

Vivaldi "Gloria"

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|-----|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. | Gloria | Chorus |
| 2. | Et in terra pax hominibus | Chorus |
| 3. | Laudamus te | Duet |
| 4. | Gratias agimus tibi | Chorus |
| 5. | Propter magnum gloriam | Chorus |
| 6. | Domine Deus | Soprano Solo |
| 7. | Domine Fili Unigenite | Chorus |
| 8. | Domine Deus, Agnus Dei | Alto solo + Chorus |
| 9. | Qui tollis peccata mundi | Chorus |
| 10. | Qui Sedes ad dexteram | Alto solo |
| 11. | Quoniam tu solus Sanctus | Chorus |
| 12. | Cum Sancto Spiritu | Chorus |

INTERVAL

Handel "Messiah"

Part 1

- 4. **Chorus- "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed"**
- 9. Alto Air and chorus - "O Thou that tellest good tidings to Zion"
- 12. **Chorus – "For unto us a child is born"**
- 14. Soprano Recitative – "There were shepherds abiding in the field"
- 14b " " "And lo the angel of the Lord came upon them"
- 15. " " "And the Angel said unto them, 'Fear not'"
- 16. " " "And suddenly there was with the Angel"
- 17. **Chorus – "Glory to God"**
- 20. Alto/Soprano Air – "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd" (version 2)

Part 2

- 22. **Chorus – "Behold the Lamb of God"**
- 23. Alto Air – "He was despised and rejected of men"
- 24. **Chorus – "Surely He hath borne our griefs"**
- 25. **Chorus – "And with his stripes we are healed"**
- 26. **Chorus – "And we like sheep have gone astray"**
- 27. Soprano Recitative – "All they that see him laugh Him to scorn"
- 28. **Chorus – "He trusted in God that He would deliver Him"**
- 38. Soprano Air - "How Beautiful are thy feet"
- 44. **Chorus – "Hallelujah"**

Part 3

- 45. Soprano Air – "I know that my redeemer Liveth"
- 46. **Chorus – "Since by Man came death"**
- 53. **Chorus – "Worthy is the lamb that was slain – Amen"**

Gloria in D RV589 - Antonio Vivaldi (1678 - 1741)

Vivaldi's famous Gloria in D. Composed in 1715, lay undiscovered until the late 1920s, when it was found buried among a pile of forgotten Vivaldi manuscripts. Composed for the choir of the Ospedale della Pietà, an orphanage for girls, it presents the traditional Gloria from the Latin Mass in twelve varied cantata-like sections. The Ospedale prided itself on the quality of its musical education and the excellence of its choir and orchestra. Vivaldi, a priest, music teacher and virtuoso violinist, composed many sacred works for the Ospedale, where he spent most of his career, as well as hundreds of instrumental concertos to be played by the girls' orchestra.

The wonderfully sunny nature of the **Gloria**, with its distinctive melodies and rhythms, is characteristic of all of Vivaldi's music. Tonight, our talented accompanist, Angela Morecroft will cover the orchestral parts, the opening movement is a joyous chorus, establishing two simple motifs, one of octave leaps, the other a quicker, quaver - semiquaver figure, that function as the ritornello. The choir enters in chorale-like fashion, declaiming the text in regular rhythms, contrasting with the accompanying ritornello, which contains most of the melodic interest of the movement.

The B minor **Et in terra pax** is in nearly every way a contrast to the first. It is in triple rather than duple time, in a minor key, and rather slower. Its imitative and expressive chromatic texture evokes the motets of the Renaissance era. **Laudamus te**, a passionate duet for soprano and mezzo-soprano, gives us some hint of the skill of Vivaldi's young singers, here beautifully sung by Stephanie Berner and Helena Payne.

Gratias agimus tibi is a very broad prelude to a fugal allegro on **propter magnam gloriam**. The Largo **Domine Deus, Rex coelestis** is in the form of duet between the solo soprano and the accompaniment. This is followed by the joyful F major **Domine Fili unigenite**, dominated by the dotted rhythms characteristic of a French overture.

Domine Deus, Agnus Dei features the resonant tones of our alto soloist, with the chorus providing an antiphonal response, **qui tollis peccata mundi**, to each intercession. The bold harmonies of the following section, **Qui tollis**, provide a refreshing change of tone colour, and complement the intercessional alto aria, **Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris**. The accompaniment contains recollections of the opening movement, and prepares for the following movement, **Quoniam tu solus sanctus**, which takes the shape of a brief reprise of the opening movement's broken octaves.

The powerful double fugue on **Cum Sancto Spiritu** that ends the work is an arrangement by Vivaldi of the ending of a Gloria for two choirs composed in 1708 by an older contemporary, the now forgotten Veronese composer Giovanni Maria Ruggieri, whom Vivaldi seems to have held in high esteem, as he used a second adaptation of this piece in another, lesser-known D Major Gloria setting, RV 588.

Today Vivaldi is one of the most popular of all composers, who during his lifetime enjoyed considerable success and fortune, which he squandered through extravagance, and when he died in Vienna he was buried in a pauper's grave.

"Messiah" - George Frederic Handel (1685-1759)

Handel's sacred oratorio Messiah is without question one of the most popular works in the choral/orchestral repertoire today. In what has become an established Christmas tradition, musicians throughout the country perform this work as a seasonal entertainment and are rewarded with the satisfaction of taking part in one of the great communal musical events.

Tonight's performance omits certain numbers from the original oratorio to help fit in the work to an acceptable time for modern audiences. In Handel's day, the audience would have listened to the entire work without break, with extra organ works added by Handel.

The text for Messiah was selected and compiled from the Authorised (King James) Version of the Bible by Charles Jennens, an aristocrat and musician/poet. With Messiah, Jennens seems to have outdone himself in compiling a libretto with profound thematic coherence and an acute sensitivity to the inherent musical structure. With the finished libretto in his possession, Handel began setting it to music on August 22, 1741, and completed it 24 days later. He was certainly working at white-hot speed, but this did not necessarily indicate he was in the throes of devotional fervour, as legend has often stated. Handel composed many of his works in haste, and immediately after completing Messiah he wrote his next oratorio, Samson, in a similarly brief timespan.

The tradition of performing Messiah at Christmas began later in the 18th century. Although the work was occasionally performed during Advent in Dublin, the oratorio was usually regarded in England as an entertainment for the penitential season of Lent, when performances of opera were banned. Messiah's extended musical focus on Christ's redeeming sacrifice also makes it particularly suitable for Passion Week and Holy Week, the periods when it was usually performed during Handel's lifetime. But in 1791, the Cæcilian Society of London began its annual Christmas performances- establishing a tradition that continues to this day.

Following the pattern of Italian baroque opera, Messiah is divided into three parts. In the first, the way is paved for the Redeemer's coming, drawing heavily from messianic texts in the Book of Isaiah. After His Advent is announced, there follow descriptions of the events of the nativity.

Part Two describes the Passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It concludes with the familiar *Hallelujah Chorus*. It was at this point in the oratorio, during one of the early London performances, that King George II spontaneously rose to his feet in a spirit of exaltation. Audiences have traditionally repeated this practice ever since.

In Part Three, the spiritual messages represented by Christ's teachings are set forth for the instruction and benefit of all. It opens with the moving soprano aria *I Know That My Redeemer Liveth*, and concludes with a final chorus of Amen.

Text:

Part One

4. Chorus

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. (*Isaiah 40:1-5*)

9. Alto Air & Chorus

O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain. O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid. Say unto the cities of Judah: Behold your God! (*Isaiah 40:9*) Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

12. Chorus

For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called: Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace! (*Isaiah 9:6*).

14. Soprano recitative

There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.

15. Soprano recitative

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

16. Soprano recitative

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

17. Chorus

Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men! (*Luke 2:8-14*)

20. Alto & Soprano Air

He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, and He shall gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with young. (*Isaiah 40:2*)

Come unto Him all ye that labour, come unto Him that are heavy laden, and He will give you rest. Take His yoke upon you,

and learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Part Two

22. Chorus

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

23. Alto Air

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

24. Chorus

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

25. Chorus

And with His stripes we are healed.

26. Chorus

All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way. (*Isaiah 53:4-6*)

27. Tenor recitative

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

28. Chorus

He trusted in God that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, if He delight in Him! (*Psalms 22:8-9*)

44. Chorus

Hallelujah! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth! (*Revelation 19:6*) The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever. (*Revelation 11:15*) King of kings and Lord of lords. (*Revelation 19:16*)

Part Three

45. Soprano Air

I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. (*Job 19:25-26*) For now is Christ risen from the dead: the first fruits of them that sleep.

46. Chorus

Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. (*1 Corinthians 15:20-22*)

53. Chorus

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by His blood, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing. Blessing and honour, glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto Lamb for ever and ever. Amen. (*Revelation 5:12-13*)