

# Hallelujah Handel

## Exploring Handel's Messiah

[www.tarsus.ie](http://www.tarsus.ie)

# Programme

1. Introduction + Part 1, scenes 1-3
- 2. Part 1 : scenes 4-5**
3. Part 2: scenes 1-4
4. Part 2: scenes 5-7
5. Part 3: scenes 1-2
6. Part 3: scenes 3-4

*Messiah*  
*an Oratorio*

# Layout of the whole Messiah

## Part I

"The prophecy and realisation of God's plan to redeem mankind by the coming of the Messiah" (= **Advent and Christmas**, the life of Jesus)

## Part II

"The accomplishment of redemption by the sacrifice of Christ, mankind's rejection of God's offer, and mankind's utter defeat when trying to oppose the power of the Almighty" (= **Lent, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost**)

## Part III

"A Hymn of Thanksgiving for the final overthrow of Death" (= **the Church year**)

# Layout of the whole Messiah

## Part I

"The prophecy and realisation of God's plan to redeem mankind by the coming of the Messiah"

Scene 1: "Isaiah's prophecy of salvation" (movements 2–4)

Scene 2: "The prophecy of the coming of Messiah and the question, despite (1), of what this may portend for the World" (movements 5–7)

Scene 3: "The prophecy of the Virgin Birth" (movements 8–12)

Scene 4: "The appearance of the Angels to the Shepherds" (movements 13–17)

Scene 5: "Christ's redemptive miracles on earth" (movements 18–21)

# Part 1, scene 3

## **Movement 10: Isaiah 60:2-3**

For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

## **Movement 11: Isaiah 9:2**

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light, and they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

## **Movement 12: Isaiah 9:6**

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

## Part 1, scene 3

### **Movement 10: Isaiah 60:2-3**

For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

### **Movement 10: Isaiah 60:2-3**

Strings playing mysterious repeated motifs in major and minor seconds, until the text switches to "but the Lord shall arise" (which the voice presents as a melisma of two measures), followed by coloraturas on "glory" and an upward octave leap to proclaim in the end "and kings [to the brightness of thy rising]".



## Part 1, scene 3

### **Movement 11: Isaiah 9:2**

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light, and they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

### **Movement 11: Isaiah 9:2**

The darkness is illustrated by the bass and the cello in unison, starting with the seconds of the movement before and proceeding in uneven steps, carefully marked for irregular phrasing.

On "have seen a great light", the melody begins to leap, and finally reaches on the word "light" a long high note which the voice holds, while the cello continue their movement.

# Part 1, scene 3

## **Movement 12: Isaiah 9:6**

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

## **Movement 12: Isaiah 9:6**

Marked piano, the sopranos enter a fugue first, singing a delicate theme with many rests. The tenors' entry is a shimmering coloratura for more than three measures. The words "and the government shall be upon his shoulders" appears in stately dotted rhythm, culminating in the names "Won-derful", "Coun-selor", "The Mighty God", "The Everlasting Father", "The Prince – of Peace", with the shimmering coloratura in the strings.



S. For un-to us a Child is born

A. For un-to us a Child is born

T. For un-to us a Child is born Un-to us a son is

B. For un-to us a Child is born Un-to us a son is

us a Child is born un-to us a Child is born Un-to us a son is

S. un-to us

A. un-to us

T. giv - en un - to us a son is giv-en un-to us

B. giv - en un - to us a son is giv-en un-to us

giv - en un - to us a son is giv-en un-to us

# Bits of gossip

- Although he neither married nor was known to have had a long-lasting romantic relationship, Handel was pursued by various young women and a leading Italian soprano, Vittoria Tarquini, according to accounts by his contemporaries.
- Intensely loyal to friends and colleagues, he was capable of appalling temper outbursts.
- Because of a dispute over seating in an orchestra pit, he fought a near-fatal duel with a fellow composer and musician, Johann Mattheson, whose sword thrust was blunted by a metal button on Handel's coat. Yet the two remained close friends for years afterward.
- During rehearsals at a London opera house with Francesca Cuzzoni, Handel grew so infuriated by her refusal to follow his every instruction that he grabbed her by the waist and threatened to hurl her out an open window. "I know well that you are a real she-devil, but I will have you know that I am Beelzebub!" he screamed at the terrified soprano.

# Bits of gossip

- Handel, who grew increasingly obese over the years, certainly had an intimidating physique. "He paid more attention to food than is becoming to any man," wrote Handel's earliest biographer, John Mainwaring, in 1760.
- Artist Joseph Goupy, who designed scenery for Handel operas, complained that he was served a meagre dinner at the composer's home in 1745; only afterward did he discover his host in the next room, secretly gorging on "claret and French dishes."
- The irate Goupy produced a caricature of Handel at an organ keyboard, his face contorted into a pig snout, surrounded by fowl, wine bottles and oysters strewn at his feet.

# Bits of gossip

- "He may have been mean with food, but not with money," says Keates. Amassing a fortune through his music and shrewd investments in London's burgeoning stock market, Handel donated munificently to orphans, retired musicians and the ill.
- He gave his portion of his Messiah debut proceeds to a debtors' prison and hospital in Dublin.
- A sense of humanity imbues his music as well—a point often made by conductors who compare Handel with Bach.
- But where Bach's oratorios exalted God, Handel was more concerned with the feelings of mortals. "Even when the subject of his work is religious, Handel is writing about the human response to the divine," says conductor Bicket.
- Nowhere is this more apparent than in Messiah. "The feelings of joy you get from the Hallelujah choruses are second to none," says the conductor Cummings. "And how can anybody resist the Amen chorus at the end? It will always lift your spirits if you are feeling down."

# Part 1, scene 4

13	12	<i>Pifa</i>	Pastorale	Instrumental	Larghetto e mezzo piano		12/8	C major
14		There were shepherds abiding	Recitative	Soprano			<b>C</b>	C major
15	13	And lo, the angel of the Lord	Accompagnato	Soprano	Andante		<b>C</b>	F major
		And the angel said	Recitative	Soprano			<b>C</b>	A major
16	14	And suddenly	Accompagnato	Soprano	Allegro		<b>C</b>	D major
17	15	Glory to God in the highest	Chorus		Allegro	Oboe, Trumpet	<b>C</b>	D major

13.Pastoral

14.Recitative (Soprano)

15. Accompagnato (Soprano)

15.B Recitative (Soprano)

16.Accompagnato (Soprano)

17.Chorus



# Part 1, scene 4

## Scene 4

Scene 4 is the only real scene of the oratorio: the annunciation to the shepherds, and is taken from the Gospel of Luke, Luke 2:14. This is an episode in the Nativity of Jesus described in the Bible in Luke 2, in which angels tell a group of shepherds about the birth of Jesus.

## 13. Pastorale

The shepherds are introduced by an instrumental Pastorale, the Pifa, which takes its name from the shepherd-bagpipers, or pifferai, who played in the streets of Rome at Christmas time.[6][9] The music in C major and swinging 12/8 time gently rises and falls like a cradle song (i.e. lullaby).



## Part 1, scene 4

### **Movement 14: Luke 2:8**

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

In a short recitative, the soprano tells "There were shepherds abiding in the field". Handel saved the soprano solo voice until this point in the narration, exactly as Bach had done in his Christmas Oratorio.

# Part 1, scene 4

## **Movement 15: Luke 2:9**

And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.

Vivid string accompaniment, as of wings in action, illuminates the accompagnato "And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them" which is sung by the soprano.

With "And the angel said unto them", the soprano delivers in simple recitative the message "Fear not".

The upward fourth, followed by a rest, stresses the phrases "for behold", "good tidings", "for unto you" and ultimately "which is Christ".

# Part 1, scene 4

## **Movement 16: Luke 2:13**

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

With "And suddenly there was with the angel", the soprano continues to tell of the arrival of "a multitude of the heav'nly host".

Singing more fourths and rests on "And suddenly" and "praising God", the music is supported by an even more vibrant accompaniment of the violins.

# Part 1, scene 4

## **Movement 17: Luke 2:14**

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

Handel waited until the angels' song "Glory to God" to introduce the trumpets. He marked them as "da lontano e un poco piano" (from afar and somewhat quietly) and originally planned to place them offstage (in disparate), to create the effect of distance.

Handel's setting of the famous words is strikingly simple and effective: "Glory to God, glory to God in the highest" is sung by the high voices (soprano, alto and tenor), whereas "and peace on earth" is given to the low voices of tenor and bass in unison, with the bass dropping an octave for "on earth".

In great contrast, "goodwill towards men" is sung in a fast sequence of entries in imitation, with the word "goodwill" on another upward fourth. The sequence is repeated, but this time all four voices sing "glory" and "peace", the first in a high register, then low again with the bass dropping an octave. After the song the angels disappear, diminuendo, gradually thinned out in instrumentation, with more and more rests, and always rising.

# Part 1, scene 5

18	16	Rejoice greatly	Aria	Soprano or Tenor	Allegro		<b>C</b> or 12/8	B-flat major
19		Then shall the eyes of the blind	Recitative	Alto or Soprano			<b>C</b>	D major (alto) / G major (soprano)
20	17	He shall feed His flock Come unto Him	Aria or Duet	Alto or Soprano (Aria) Alto & Soprano (Duet)	Larghetto e piano		12/8	F major (alto) / B-flat major (soprano)
21	18	His yoke is easy	Chorus		Allegro	Oboe	<b>C</b>	B-flat major

18. Aria

19. Recitative

20. Aria or Duet

21. Chorus

## Part 1, scene 5

- **Scene 5** summarises the deeds of the Messiah on earth and the response of men and women.
- The text is compiled from Zechariah (who saw God's providential dealings),
- Isaiah's oracle of salvation for Israel,
- and his vision of the Shepherd (seen fulfilled by the Evangelist Matthew).



# Part 1, scene 5

## **Movement 18: Zech 9:9-10**

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, thy King cometh unto thee! He is the righteous Saviour, and He shall speak peace unto the heathen.

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion" (Zechariah 9:9–10) is usually performed as a virtuoso coloratura aria of the soprano which might express any kind of great joy—as seen in an opera—although the original version is an utterly charming Baroque dance in 12/8 time.

An upward fourth followed by a rest accents "Rejoice", and further repeats of the word are rendered as seemingly endless coloraturas. "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee" is given in dotted rhythm and is reminiscent of the French overture.

The middle section tells in mellow movement "He is the righteous Saviour and he shall speak peace unto the heathen"—with "peace" repeated several times as a long note. Finally, a da capo seems to begin, but only the first entry of the voice is exactly the same, followed by even more varied coloraturas and embellishments to end the aria.

# Part 1, scene 5

## **Movement 19: Is 35:5-6**

Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.

In prophetic words of Isaiah, the alto (originally soprano) recitative relates the Saviour's actions: "Then shall the eyes of the blind be open'd ... and the tongue of the dumb shall sing".

# Part 1, scene 5

## **Movement 20: Is 40:11**

He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, and He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.

## **Matthew 11:28-29**

Come unto Him, all ye that labor, come unto Him ye 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.

A summary of the Saviour's deeds is given in a compilation of words from both Isaiah and Matthew. The Old Testament part "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd" (Isaiah 40:11), is sung by the alto in music in 12/8 time which is reminiscent of the Pifa, but moving first down, then up.

The New Testament part, in the Gospel words of Jesus, are changed to the third person "Come unto Him, all ye that labour" (Matthew 11:28–29). The soprano sings the same melody, but elevated by a fourth from F major to B flat major. Handel originally wrote the entire aria for soprano solo in B flat.

# Part 1, scene 5

## **Movement 21: Matthew 11:30**

His yoke is easy, and His burthen is light.

Matthew's gospel continues "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light", however for the closing choral movement of Part I, the words are changed to "His yoke is easy, His burden is light". Light and easy-going is the theme of a fugue.

"His yoke" is again set as an upward fourth, and "easy" is a playful coloratura. The texture is intensified to the end, when all proclaim as a solemn statement "and His burden is light".