

THE COVENANTER CHORAL SOCIETY

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Jackson, Michigan
Presents A

GRAUN - HANDEL
MUSIC FESTIVAL

Sunday Afternoon

April 30, 1961

Covenanter Choral Society

Crusader Choir

J. J. C. Chamber Ensemble

J. Alfred Fryer, Conductor

Marilyn Mason, Organ

Doris Kays Kraushaar, Soprano

LaVerne Mujais, Soprano

Jacqueline Magg, Contralto

David Strickler, Tenor



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James Payson Martin

J. Alfred Fryer

Samuel Mujais

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This vast epic, scored for double choir and containing more chorus work than any other major oratorio, presents music scarcely to be matched. Many critics consider "Israel" to be the Everest among the Handel Himalayas.

The oratorio was composed in October (exactly one month) of 1738 and had its first performance on April 4, 1739 at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket. There were subsequent performances on April 11th and 17th of that year and at least eight performances before Handel's death in 1759. Long after his death the work received great popularity and for some decades rivaled that of the "Messiah."

From a musical point of view, what is extraordinary about "Israel in Egypt," in addition to the unexampled might and majesty of its choruses, is that much of it is program music. What could better body forth despair and the tragedy of lost freedom than the first chorus, "And the children of Israel sighed"? In the air "Their land brought forth frogs" we can all but see the frogs--and the accompaniment to the chorus's words "and there came all manner of flies and lice in all their quarters" is the very buzzing of flies.

Crowding upon this comes the "Hailstone Chorus," in which the pellets of falling ice are almost to be felt, and in which the "fire mingled with the hail" is present in the choral shouts of "fire." Beyond the power of words to explain is the effect of thick, appalling darkness which Handel produces at the words "He sent a thick darkness over the land, even darkness which might be felt."

Julian Harbage well said of the powerful chorus to the words "He smote the first-born of Egypt, the chief of all their strength" that it "displays once more Handel's power of evoking nemesis by contrapuntal means." Its strongly accented beats really smite.

Part II of "Israel in Egypt" is somewhat less programmatic than Part I, but no less magnificent musically. The gleaming instrumental introduction to the opening chorus, "Moses and the children of Israel," immediately establishes that we are going to hear extroverted music of joyful praise. Simple but overwhelming is the effect Handel creates at the repetitions of the phrase "the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea."

Students and other lovers of "Israel in Egypt" have many times said that the double chorus "The people shall hear" is Handel's greatest; it too has a subtle phrase "shall melt away." High drama is wrung from a repetition of the chorus "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever" after an intervening recitative ("For the horse of Pharaoh"); a similar psychological climax is achieved with cumulative power when "The horse and his rider" (bare of counterpoint) occurs between two contrapuntal passages.

At last the entire Part II--and "Israel in Egypt" with it--is rounded out beautifully with a literal restatement of the second section of its opening chorus, "I will sing unto the Lord."

OUR COMPOSERS

ABOUT THE LIFE OF CARL HEINRICH GRAUN

Carl Heinrich Graun was born in Saxony, May 7, 1701 and died in Berlin, August 8, 1759. Gifted as a boy with a remarkable soprano voice, he later became one of the outstanding opera tenors of his day, and a composer for the opera and the church.

Endowed as he was with this magnificent soprano voice, he entered, at the age of twelve, the famous Kreuzschule (Holy Cross) School in Dresden, one of Germany's oldest and most distinguished Lutheran educational institutions. The youth received excellent training at the school, both in the humanities and in music. Like many other great masters he was amazingly precocious and, while still a student, composed a large amount of sacred music for the school choir. The "Great Passion Cantata," still preserved in manuscript, has often been called a most remarkable achievement for a boy of barely fifteen years.

At the age of twenty-four, Graun was appointed to the opera at Brunswick, where he became the leading tenor and began his successful career as opera composer--and also wrote a great deal of church music.

In 1735 he was invited to Rheinsberg, the residence of the Crown Prince of Prussia, afterwards Frederick the Great; and from this time on until his death twenty-four years later, Graun's entire career took its course under the egis of this remarkable king. Frederick II had no equal in his century as a military leader, administrator, and as a protector of the arts.

Frederick the Great took Graun to his court in Berlin and appointed him Kapellmeister with the very considerable salary of 2,000 thalers. The new king sent Graun to Italy for an entire year to enlist opera personnel for a permanent opera in Berlin. His traveling days were over now, and in the remaining eighteen years of his life he displayed a truly remarkable activity as a dramatic composer, singer and conductor. He wrote and produced twenty-seven operas. His two major church works of this period, by which he is known almost exclusively, are the "Te Deum" and the "Tod Jesu" (Passion).

So deep was the sorrow of Frederick the Great at Graun's passing that he wept unabashedly and exclaimed: "Never shall I find such a man again."

ABOUT THE LIFE OF GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL

Handel was born in 1685 at Halle, Germany and died in London on the 14th of April, 1759. His father was a barber-surgeon and his mother came from a background of deep religious piety, being the daughter of a Lutheran clergyman.

Handel showed early promise as a musician and served as a young organist (1702) at Halle, and joined the Hamburg opera orchestra (1703) as a violinist. Avoiding the clamors of a gay city, Handel applied himself to composition, and at this early age, while living in Hamburg, he composed four operas and the "Passion of St. John."

From Hamburg (1704) he visited Italy. There he absorbed the influence of the Italian oratorio and opera masters, and from that day the Italian style saturated his work. In 1710 Handel went to England where music was in a woeful state. Shortly thereafter he settled there, became a naturalized citizen in 1727, and spent the greater part of his life. He finally settled in London where he excelled as opera composer, conductor and promoter. He was popular and liked it. Here he found financial success and, on several occasions, went bankrupt. He could make enemies as fast as friends.

After his health broke and fatigue oppressed him (1740) he decided that "sacred music was best for a man in failing years." It was in this resolve that the flowering of his genius was manifested in the oratorio, the marriage of the musical art of the past to Handelian form and sublimity. Thus in this period of 1739-1752 he wrote nineteen oratorios, the greatest of which is the "Messiah," from which his name is forever inseparable. Upon his death he was buried in Westminster Abbey.

PROGRAM



Instrumental Music

Jackson Junior College Chamber Ensemble

-Dr. J. W. Davidson, Dir.

"March of the Conquering Heroes" (from "Judas Maccabaeus")-----Handel
Two Marches (from "Sinfonie Diverse") -----Handel



Lift Up Your Heads Motet for Double Choir

C. H. GRAUN

Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, everlasting doors!
that the King of glory may come in.
Who is the King of glory?
He is the Lord strong and mighty,
the mighty Lord!
Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, everlasting doors!
that the King of glory may come in!
Who is the King of glory?
He is the Lord God of hosts,
he is the King of glory!

Psalm 24:7-10



Israel In Egypt

Sacred Oratorio

G. F. HANDEL

PART ONE

RECITATIVE - Tenor

Now there arose a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph; and he set over Israel task-masters to afflict them with burdens, and they made them serve with rigor.

DOUBLE CHORUS

And the children of Israel, sighed by reason of the bondage, and their cry came up unto God. They oppressed them with burdens, and made them serve with rigor: and their cry came unto God.

RECITATIVE - Tenor

Then sent He Moses, His servant, and Aaron whom He had chosen; these shewed His signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. He turned their waters into blood.

CHORUS

They loathed to drink of the river. He turned their waters into blood.

ARIA - Alto

Their land brought forth frogs, yea even in their king's chambers. He gave their cattle over to the pestilence; blotches and blains broke forth on man and beast.

DOUBLE CHORUS

He spake the word, and there came all manner of flies and lice in all their quarters. He spake; and the locusts came without number, and devoured the fruits of the ground.

DOUBLE CHORUS

He gave them hailstones for rain; fire mingled with the hail ran along upon the ground.

TOWARD YOUR APPRECIATION

MOTET FOR DOUBLE CHOIR - C. H. GRAUN "LIFT UP YOUR HEADS"

This will be an American premiere of a beautiful Graun motet discovered by Dr. Siegert in manuscript form in the Bibliothèque du Conservatoire in Paris last fall. Dr. Siegert and Mr. Fryer have prepared and edited the score for publication. The English translation by the editors follows the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

This motet is one of considerable length and was composed for double choir. Although no date is visible on the manuscript the editors believe this to be of the latter period of Graun's life, probably while he was employed by Frederick the Great. Graun used as his text (taken from the German Bible) the last four verses of Psalm Twenty-four.

The form of the motet is in four large sections. The pattern is - choral - fugue - choral - fugue. The first section is a double choral section - flowing and melodic; the second section is one of the most exciting fugues Graun ever composed; the third section is familiar and at times repetitious of the opening double choral section; the fourth and last movement is another fugue of even greater difficulty.

Graun used this form in treating his text as question and answer-question and answer. The performance of this work today makes twenty-one different Graun works which have been presented at our Festival, of which seventeen were first performances.



ORATORIO - "ISRAEL IN EGYPT". G. F. HANDEL

"Israel in Egypt" is unusual among the nineteen Handel oratorios in several ways. Its text, taken entirely from the Bible (Exodus XV, Psalms 78, 105, 106), is naturally prose, whereas all his other oratorio texts--"Messiah" excluded--make use of verse. It is predominantly a series of mighty single and double choruses, containing few solo airs and a few duets. On this magnificent text (Exodus) Handel reared an edifice of music so overpoweringly grand--so very Handelian--that Streatfeild wrote: "Handel might have said of 'Israel' as Wagner said of 'Tristan und Isolde,' that it was an extravagance, not to be repeated or imitated, but of all his works it is the most completely out of reach of every other composer who ever lived."

CHORUS

He sent a thick darkness over the land,
even darkness which might be felt.

CHORUS

He smote all the first-born of Egypt, the
chief of all their strength.

CHORUS

But as for His people, He led them forth
like sheep; He brought them out with silver
and gold; there was not one feeble person
among their tribes.

DOUBLE CHORUS

He rebuked the Red Sea, and it was dried
up.
He led them through the deep as through
a wilderness.

But the waters overwhelmed their ene-
mies, there was not one of them left.

CHORUS

And Israel saw that great work that the
Lord did upon the Egyptians; and the people
feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and
His servant Moses.

Intermission

PART TWO

DOUBLE CHORUS

Moses and the children of Israel sung
this song unto the Lord, and spake, say-
ing: I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath
triumphed gloriously; the horse and his
rider hath He thrown into the sea.

DUET - Two Sopranos

The Lord is my strength and my song;
He is become my salvation.

DOUBLE CHORUS

He is my God, and I will prepare Him
an habitation; my father's God, and I will
exalt Him.

CHORUS - Children

Thanks be to Thee! Thou hast led forth
Thy chosen folk, Israel, safe through the
sea.

As a good shepherd leads forth his flock,
Lord, Thine own hand tended them, yea,
in Thy goodness gave them Thy grace.

DOUBLE CHORUS

Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glo-
rious in power; Thy right hand, O Lord,
hath dashed in pieces the enemy.

DOUBLE CHORUS

And in the greatness of Thine excellency
Thou hast overthrown them that rose up
against Thee.

ARIA - Tenor

The enemy said, I will pursue, I will
overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust
shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw
my sword, my hand shall destroy them.

ARIA - Soprano

Thou didst blow with the wind, the sea
covered them; they sank as lead in the
mighty waters.

DOUBLE CHORUS

Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among
the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in
holiness, fearful in praises, doing won-
ders?

Thou stretchedst out Thy right hand, the
earth swallowed them.

DUET - Tenor & Alto

Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth Thy
people which Thou hast redeemed; Thou
hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy
holy habitation.

DOUBLE CHORUS

The people shall hear, and be afraid;
sorrow shall take hold on them; all the
inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away: by
the greatness of Thy arm they shall be as
still as a stone; till Thy people pass over,
O Lord, which Thou hast purchased.

ARIA - Alto

Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them
in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in
the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made
for Thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O
Lord, which Thy hands have established.

DOUBLE CHORUS

The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.

RECITATIVE - Tenor

For the horse of Pharaoh went in with
his chariots and with his horsemen into
the sea, and the Lord brought again the
waters of the sea upon them; but the child-
ren of Israel went on dry land in the midst
of the sea.

DOUBLE CHORUS

The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.

RECITATIVE - Tenor

And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of
Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all
the women went out after her with timbrels
and with dances. And Miriam answered
them:

DOUBLE CHORUS

Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath tri-
umphed gloriously: the horse and his rider
hath He thrown into the sea.