



University Music Class Room,  
EDINBURGH.

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FOUR HISTORICAL CONCERTS.

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**CONCERT III.**

TUESDAY, JANUARY 24, 1905.

**Carissimi and Handel as Oratorio  
Composers.**

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*Performers:—*

THE CHOIR OF THE CATHEDRAL OF ST MARY.

Mr TH. H. COLLINSON, Mus B., Conductor.

Mr J. E. F. MARTIN, Organist.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
Programme, - - - - -	2
On the History of the Oratorio, - - - - -	5
Dates and Programmes of the Four Historical Concerts, - - - - -	10

# Programme.



## GIACOMO CARISSIMI (1604-1674):—

“JONAH,” an Oratorio.

1. Introduction.
2. “When the iniquity of Nineveh.”
3. “Jonah! arise.”
4. “Now when Jonah heard.”
5. “And when he had proceeded.”
6. “And there was a mighty tempest.”—Eight-part Double Chorus.
7. “High and great gods.”—Three-part Chorus.
8. “Jonah had gone down.”
9. “What meanest thou?”
10. “Come, come and let us cast lots.”—Two-part Chorus.
11. “And thereupon they cast lots.”—Narration.
12. “Wilt thou disclose to us.”—Three-part Chorus.
13. “Of Hebrew race am I.”—Recitative (Jonah).
14. “What shall we do unto thee?”—Three-part Chorus.
15. “Take me and cast me forth into the ocean.”—Recitative (Jonah).
16. “So they did take up Jonah.”—Eight-part Double Chorus.
17. “Now the Lord had prepared a great fish.”—Narration.
18. “Just art thou, O Lord.”—Air (Jonah).
19. “Then did the Lord speak unto the fish.”—Three-part Chorus.
20. “And then the Ninevites.”—Narration.
21. “Lord, we have sinned.”—Eight-part Double Chorus.

} Narration.

} Narration.

## GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL (1685-1759):—

“ESTHER,” an Oratorio. (Composed in 1720 for the Duke of Chandos. The words by S. Humphreys, founded on Racine’s *Esther*. This was his first English Oratorio. The long series of his great oratorios began in 1738 with *Saul* and *Israel in Egypt*, followed in 1741 by the *Messiah*.)

### PART I.

1. Overture (Andante, Larghetto, and Allegro).
2. “’Tis nobler far.”—Recitative (Habdonah and Haman).
3. “Pluck not a branch.”—Air (Haman).
4. “Our souls with ardour glow.”—Recitative (Officer).
5. “Shall we the God of Israel fear.”—Chorus (Persians) here and subsequently in five parts.
6. “Now persecution.”—Recitative (First Israelite).
7. “Tune your harps.”—Air.
8. “Shall we of servitude complain.”—Chorus.
9. “Praise the Lord.”—Air (Israelitish Woman).
10. “O God, who from the sucklings’ mouth.”—Recitative (Second Israelite).
11. “Sing songs of praise.”—Air.
12. “How have our sins.”—Recitative (A young Israelite).
13. “Methinks I hear.”—Recitative (A young Israelite).
14. “Ye sons of Israel, mourn.”—Chorus.
15. { “O Jordan, sacred tide.”—Air.  
“Ye sons of Israel, mourn.”—Chorus.

### PART II.

16. “Why sits that sorrow.”—Recitative (Esther and Mordecai).
17. “Dread not, righteous Queen.”—Air (Mordecai).
18. “I go before the King.”—Recitative (Esther).

19. "Tears, assist me."—Air.
20. "Save us, O Lord."—Chorus.
21. "Who dares intrude."—Recitative (Ahasuerus and Esther).
22. "Who calls my parting soul."—Duet.
23. "O beauteous Queen."—Air (Ahasuerus).
24. "If I find favour."—Recitative (Esther).
25. "How can I stay."—Air.
26. "With inward joy."—Recitative (First and Second Israelite).
27. "Virtue, truth, and innocence."—Chorus.

### PART III.

28. "Jehovah crowned."—Invocation (A young Israelite).
29. "He comes."—Chorus.

### ON THE HISTORY OF THE ORATORIO.

The formulation of a comprehensive definition of an oratorio is a task passing the wit of man. Even a definition so loose and wide as almost to cease to be a definition cannot hold all the varieties to which the name has been applied. Suppose we were to define an oratorio as a sacred composition of a narrative, dramatic, and lyrical cast, written for voices and instruments, and intended for concert performance. Investigation would soon show that, whatever its adequacy may be to present-day conditions, its utter inadequacy from the historical point of view is so patent as to be indisputable. Among the works entitled oratorio are purely secular works, works acted in costume and with scenery, works from which one or more of the qualities indicated is or are absent, etc., etc. Not to go farther back, and to confine ourselves to a single master, what variety do not the oratorios of Handel present? *Semele* has a mythological subject; *Esther* and other oratorios, although not written for the stage, were repeatedly performed on it; and the best known of them, the *Messiah*, *Israel in Egypt*, and *Judas Maccabæus* illustrate strikingly the various mixtures of the narrative, dramatic, and lyrical constituents. Of later works, Haydn's *Seasons* is an instance of an oratorio with a secular subject; and Rubinstein's *Paradise Lost*, *The Tower of Babel*, and *Moses* may be instanced as oratorios of the sacred-drama type. In fact, under the designation "oratorio," we meet with works which in subject-matter are biblical, hagiological, and allegorical, but also with such as are mythological, historical, and romantic; which in form range from the drama proper to and through all kinds of cantata; and which in texture exemplify the ecclesiastical plain-chant style (as in the early mysteries, miracle plays, and moralities, and to a large extent also in the later ecclesiastical Passion and other oratorios), the unaccompanied contrapuntal choral style, the instrumentally accompanied melodic-harmonic monodic style, and all the other and later developments.

Inquiries into the origin of the oratorio prove generally even more idle than inquiries into the origin of the sonata and symphony. Unless we penetrate to the true source and first beginning, to the seed-corn, to the generative mental tendency—in this case the dramatic instinct—we shall at best find roots, not a root, origins, not an origin, and certainly not *the* origin. Menestrier and others after him have gone as far back as the Crusades, and have said that the pilgrims returning from the Holy Land, from St James of Compostella in Spain, and from other places to which pilgrimages were made, composed songs reciting the life and death of the Son of God and the mysteries of the Christian faith, and celebrating the achievements and constancy of saints and martyrs. Supposing the pilgrims to have done all this, could it be said that they were the first who did something of the sort? It is the same with the suggestion that the mediæval mystery plays are the origin of the oratorio. Is not the Mass itself a mystery? And are not similar poetico-musical forms discoverable in the religious services and festivals of the ancients, nay, are they not traceable even in the customs of the savages? The most common course of historians and others is to give the credit of the origination to St Philip Neri (1515-95), the founder of the Congregation of the Oratory, a society one of whose main objects was the instruction of the young and uneducated. Crescimbeni says: "The Oratorio, a poetical composition, formerly a commixture of the dramatic and narrative styles, but now [about 1698] entirely a musical drama, takes its origin from St Philip Neri, who, in his chapel [S. Maria in Vallicella at Rome], after sermons and other devotions, had hymns, psalms, and such like prayers sung by one or more voices, in order to allure young people to pious offices, and to detain them from earthly pleasure. These, in the process of time, were published at Rome, and particularly in a book printed in 1585, with the title of '*Laudi Spirituali*, at the instance of the Reverend Fathers of the Congregation of the Oratory;' and another in 1603, entitled '*Laudi Spirituali* by various authors, which are sung after sermons by the Fathers of the Congregation of the Oratory.' Among these spiritual songs were dialogues, and these entertainments becoming more frequent, and improving every year, occasioned in the seventeenth

century the invention of oratorios, so called from the place of their origin. It is not known who was the first who gave them this name, not even by the Fathers of the Congregation, who have been asked about it." Before the above-mentioned collections, Giovanni Animuccia, the chief musical helper of Neri, published books of *laudi* in 1563 and 1570. In recent times it has been pointed out that as early as the fourteenth century festival plays were acted at Florence in honour of John the Baptist. These *Rappresentazioni sacre* treated of legendary subjects, scenes from the Old Testament, and episodes from the lives of the saints, intermixed with secular matter, and were performed with great scenic splendour in churches and oratories. Music appeared in them as solo-recitation, choral song, and instrumental accompaniment. *Laudi* (songs in praise of God and his saints) formed notable ingredients. Neri, a Florentine by birth, cannot but have been acquainted with this kind of devotional spectacle. Whether his recollections of them gave, as has been suggested, the impulse to his innovation must remain an open question. At any rate, when instituting in 1564 his "spiritual exercises," he dispensed with the scenic pomp and machinery, and confined himself to the dialogue form. Among the most absurd statements as to the origin of the art-form under discussion, is that Cavalieri's *Rappresentazione dell'anima e del corpo*, performed in 1600, is the first oratorio. It can only be called the first oratorio in the Florentine monodic style. The libretto had the character rather of a mediæval morality than of a modern oratorio. The *dramatis personae* were personifications of Human Life, the World, Pleasure, the Body, Time, etc. The performance, in costume, included acting and dancing as well as singing. As to the music, the choruses are simple, the recitatives terribly dry, and of the songlike there is hardly anything.

Although we cannot look either upon Neri's devotional exercises or Cavalieri's allegorical drama as the origin of the oratorio, both are undoubtedly important facts in its history. When the *genus* oratorio is mentioned, we think first of all of Handel's oratorios, which are indeed the greatest and grandest achievements of the kind, nay, with few exceptions, are the only ones that satisfy all requirements, and show real and vigorous vitality. In fact, when we ask what is the

origin of the oratorio, we really mean what are the antecedent men and works that lead up to Handel and his works? To see clear in this matter we must divest ourselves of the usual evolution theory. Artistic evolution is more capricious than natural evolution. There individualism plays sometimes a revolutionary and often a dominating part. Nor are the parts played by fashion and opportunism negligible. At the same time and in the same country we may have totally different forms and styles, the difference arising from the genius of the composer, and the place, occasion, audience, and performers in view. Is the work to be an integral part of a devotional church service, or is it to illustrate a saint's day, a church or college festival, or to entertain and pleasantly edify an aristocratic gathering at a palace or mansion? For all such purposes oratorios used to be written.

Giacomo Carissimi (1604-74), one of the foremost composers of his time, is also the most distinguished representative master of one type of oratorio. This type is, on the one hand, thoroughly ecclesiastical, adapted to form part of divine service; and, on the other hand, has a personage called Historicus (in Italian libretti the name is Testo. Evangelist is yet another name), to whom the narrative part is wholly or partly entrusted. Carissimi, from 1624 to the end of his days conductor at the church of the German College at Rome, S. Apollinare, wrote at least sixteen oratorios, four of which were published by Chrysander (*Jephthæ*, *Judicium Salomonis* [?], *Baltazar*, and *Jonas*). The words are in Latin; and the beautiful, noble music is of great simplicity—the choruses, which form a large portion of the works, are not fugal, but melodico-harmonic and pronouncedly rhythmical; and the recitatives and little-developed arias more restrained and less impassioned and elaborate than those in his secular cantatas. The instrumental accompaniment, to a large extent indicated by a mere unfigured thorough bass, is for the organ or for the organ and two violins and bass. The oratorios, with Italian words, of Alessandro Stradella (c. 1645-81), for instance *San Giovanni Battista*, approach the operatic form, having instrumental symphonies, impassioned and developed recitatives and arias, some of them elaborately accompanied by a *concertino* (three-solo strings) and a *concerto grosso*

(four-part band), but with rare choruses, fugal or otherwise. The oratorio form of the somewhat later Neapolitan School, founded by Alessandro Scarlatti (1659-1725), is that of the contemporary opera, consisting of recitatives and arias, most of them of the *da capo* type, with perhaps a chorus at the end of the parts.

As to the evolution of the Handelian style and form, it is best illustrated by the early works of Handel himself. They show quite distinctly two musical styles and forms that influenced the master. In Italy he wrote two oratorios—*La Resurrezione* and *Il Trionfo del Tempo e della Verità* (both in 1708): they are exact reproductions of the operatic Italian pattern, the former with two choruses, the latter with none. In Germany he wrote two Passion Oratorios, one in 1704 and another in 1716, in which, as in their prototype or types, also followed by J. S. Bach, the chorus has a large share. But to make the achievement of the Handelian Oratorio possible, much more was required than these two influences—first, the master's powerful, manly, serious, and religious individuality, and further, the influence of the character of the English people, as manifested in their political, religious, and social life, in their literature, and in their music. Henry Purcell, as well as Italian and German masters, aided in the building up of the grand personality of Handel and its sublimest outcome, his oratorios. In the structure of his oratorios Handel follows in the main the lines of the operatic Neapolitan Oratorio, with two important exceptions however—an immense extension of the choral element, and the infusion of a spirit previously unheard and undreamt of. Indeed, Handel's eminence does not arise from the novelty of his ideas, forms, and style, but from their justness, force, and beauty. He shines above all as the great assimilator, harmoniser, perfecter, and realiser.

DATES AND PROGRAMMES OF THE FOUR  
HISTORICAL CONCERTS.

*December 1 (Thursday), 1904.*—First Recital of Beethoven Piano-forte Sonatas by Mr FREDERIC LAMOND. Programme: Op. 106; 111; 110; 53; and 57.

*December 8 (Thursday), 1904.*—Second Recital of Beethoven Pianoforte Sonatas by Mr FREDERIC LAMOND. Programme: Op. 109; 101; 14, No. 2; 2, No. 3; and 81-a.

*January 24 (Tuesday), 1905.*—Carissimi's Oratorio "Jonah," and parts of Handel's first English Oratorio, "Esther," performed by the CHOIR OF ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL, conducted by Mr TH. H. COLLINSON, Mus. B.

**February 16 (Thursday), 1905.**—The Overture from Monteverde to Wagner. The Orchestra of about Fifty Members, selected from THE SCOTTISH ORCHESTRA, conducted by Professor NIECKS.

FREDERICK NIECKS,  
*Reid Professor of Music.*