

EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY
in association with the
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

HANDEL'S
ISRAEL IN EGYPT

E.U.M.S. CHOIR
THE REID ORCHESTRA

Leader: DR. JOHN FAIRBAIRN

Conductor: SIDNEY NEWMAN

MARGARET GOULD MARJORY McMICHAEL
JOHN TAINSH

Organ: DR. FRANCIS THOMAS

Harpsichord: DR. PETER WILLIAMS

USHER HALL
WEDNESDAY, 4th MARCH, 1964
AT 7.30 P.M.

PROGRAMME ONE SHILLING

FOREWORD

WITH WHATEVER feelings of sentimental regret one may reflect upon the destruction of the Crystal Palace, one may be permitted to hope that the 'Handelian Insanity' of megalomania perished for ever in the conflagration. Saul may have had his thousands, but Handel was given a bodyguard equal to the hosts of David—with the consequence that he was hardly ever visible to his humble devotees. Admittedly Handel himself liked robust forces, but in 1739 when "Israel" was first produced his singers normally totalled from about 25 to 35 persons, with an equal number of instrumentalists. Such a balance is all important, but cannot be achieved automatically by imposing numerical parity upon the choral and instrumental forces employed, whatever their character. A double chorus of young singers with light voices amounting to some 200 persons may possibly be matched by an orchestra of 50. During the nineteenth century the bulk of Handel's oratorios were fitted with "additional accompaniments" which employ the whole of the normal modern orchestra. Only in recent years has there been a conscientious movement to restore the original orchestration. To do this in the case of "Israel" we should require two manual organs and a harpsichord, and to multiply the number of oboes and bassoons on the analogy of the string orchestra. For two organs one must suffice. But something of the reedy tone of Handel's orchestra may be restored by doubling the normal modern strength of oboes and bassoons.

"Israel in Egypt" was received at first with disappointment, and as a bid for greater popularity it was immediately decked out with a number of borrowed Italian arias very loosely fitted into the scheme. Our present regard for the work trends in exactly the opposite direction. With a few notable exceptions the strongest and most imaginative writing lies in choruses. At this performance we are limiting ourselves (very much on the lines suggested by the late Sir Donald Tovey) to those portions only which deserve to live. The test is not whether a movement has been borrowed by Handel from another composer or an earlier work of his own. In the case of all such abundant borrowing as this work exhibits the test must be the aesthetic value of each movement as Handel left it, whether reworked by him into an entirely new conception or transcribed without change as being entirely appropriate as it stood. Those interested in the subject of Handel's borrowings should read Sedley Taylor's "Indebtedness of Handel to other Composers" and P. Robinson's "Handel and his Orbit". There will be found almost all that is known about the Erba Magnificat and Urlo Te Deum which Handel drew upon so liberally in Part II of "Israel". Erba and Urlo were two somewhat obscure seventeenth century composers but they happen also to be two villages in the neighbourhood of Lake Como, and so Handel's over scrupulous mentors, to save him from the charge of theft, prefer to foist on him two dull works which they suggest he composed at those places during his Italian visit in 1709.

I cannot here make a reasoned defence of all the omissions made in this performance. On a previous occasion I forbade the frogs to hop into Pharaoh's palace and make their unmentionable messes there. The frog like the mouse is ridiculous whatever Pharaoh or Sennacherib might have had to say to the contrary, but he *was* mentioned amongst the plagues and that shall be counted unto him for Handelian righteousness. But we will excuse ourselves from the reiterations of two basses intent upon reminding the Lord that he is a man of war. By way of overture I am using the opening movement of the Concerto Grosso in G minor which may serve to epitomise the mourning of the Israelites upon the death of Joseph, which in Handel's own refurbishing of the Funeral Anthem provided the impressive but somewhat lengthy preface to this oratorio. Somebody once said apropos of Haydn's Creation that Haydn must have been looking on when it all happened. So too Handel relates these events as though an eye witness.

S. T. M. N.

The following numbers will be omitted:—11, 19-22, 24, 31, 32. No. 27 will be placed after No. 30.

INTERVAL OF 15 MINUTES AFTER No. 16.

ISRAEL IN EGYPT

PART THE FIRST

RECIT. (Tenor)

Now there arose a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph: and he set over Israel taskmasters to afflict them with burthens, and they made them serve with rigour.

CHORUS

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

RECIT. (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.

AIR (Contralto)

Their land brought forth frogs, yea even in their king's chambers.

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.

CHORUS

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

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.

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 enemies, 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.

PART THE SECOND

CHORUS

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

CHORUS

The depths have covered them: they sank in the bottom as a stone.

CHORUS

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

CHORUS

Thou sentest forth Thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble.

AIR (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.

AIR (Soprano)

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

CHORUS

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

Thou stretchest out Thy right hand.

CHORUS

And with the blast of Thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.

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.

AIR. (Contralto)

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.

CHORUS

The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.

RECIT. (Tenor)

For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horseman into the sea, and the Lord brought again the waters of the sea upon them: but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.

CHORUS

The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.

RECIT. (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.

SOLO (Soprano) & CHORUS

Sing ye unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.

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