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Please contact Sylvia Andrew on 0161 626 4032 if you feel able to support the choir in this way

# HANDEL

# "MESSIAH"

The Albion Church, Ashton

*Nicola Howard*  
Soprano

*Alison Hudson*  
Mezzo

*John Pierce*  
Tenor

*Edward D'arcy-Hatton*  
Bass



*Organist:*  
**ANGELA  
BRZEZINKA**

*Conductor:*  
**NIGEL  
WILKINSON**

**OLDHAM CHORAL SOCIETY**  
**7.00pm Sunday March 2nd 2008**

## A Message From The Chair

On behalf of Oldham Choral Society, I offer you a warm welcome to this, our first concert in this beautiful Church. I want to thank Albion Church, and especially Mary Whitehead, for all the help we have received in organising today's performance.

We are sure you will enjoy the magnificent "Messiah" by G.F.Handel. The choir have enjoyed rehearsing the work, and are very much looking forward to singing with this evening's excellent line-up of soloists. Angela, our accompanist, is very keen to play the Organ - one of the finest instruments in the country - so the stage is set for a memorable evening.

Our recent very successful visit to Manchester Cathedral for the Verdi "Requiem" made the choir known to a wider audience – indeed the Cathedral was packed! Coming to Ashton will continue this process, and we look forward to seeing members of today's audience with us in May, when we will perform "A Celebration of Britain" – works by Elgar, Parry, and others, with a "Last Night of the Proms" flavour to it.

And of course, we would welcome new singers (especially tenors), to join us at rehearsals on Mondays – Oldham's not all that far from Ashton, after all!

But for now, it's time to sit back and enjoy . . . . Handel's "Messiah"

Fred Jones [Chairman]

### INTERESTED IN SINGING .....???

Oldham Choral Society is a flourishing forward thinking choir that has undergone a period of steady growth and musical development over the past few years. Membership is currently at its highest level for some considerable time, but we are always keen to welcome new tenors and basses.

Rehearsals take place every Monday evening at the New Baptist Church in Oldham, adjacent to Union St.

In the past 12 months the choir has enjoyed a successful concert tour to the South Coast of Ireland, and performed the Verdi Requiem in Manchester Cathedral; in addition to singing more locally.

A performance of the Verdi in Chester Cathedral is scheduled for later this year.

The choir engages soloists of the highest calibre—which make us the envy of many other choirs in the region, and the majority of our concerts are accompanied by the highly regarded East Lancs. Sinfonia.

If you are interested in singing with us, please contact Fred Jones on 0161 205 4638

Further details of the choir can be found on our website

[www.oldhamchoral.org.uk](http://www.oldhamchoral.org.uk)

### Forthcoming Concerts

Sun. May 18th 7.30pm in The Queen Elizabeth Hall, Oldham

#### "A Celebration of Britain"

with Antonia Sotgiu (Mezzo-soprano) and the East Lancs. Sinfonia

Programme includes Elgar: "The Music makers" and "Pomp and Circumstance March No.1"

Parry: I was glad, Blest Pair of Sirens & Jerusalem, Gilbert & Sullivan, and Vaughan-Williams—to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of his death in 1958.

**Saturday Sept. 13th @ 8.00pm**

**The Verdi Requiem in Chester Cathedral**

## A Brief History of Handel's "Messiah"

Messiah was written in anticipation of a visit to Dublin in 1741. At the invitation of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Handel organized two series of six subscription concerts at the New Music Hall, Fishamble Street, during the winter season. The concerts featured some of his most popular works (including 'Acis and Galatea' and 'Esther'), but the new oratorio 'Messiah' was reserved until the end of the season when it was performed in aid of three Dublin charities on 13 April 1742.

In order to squeeze in as many people as possible the Stewards of the Charitable Musical Society requested 'the Favour of the Ladies not to come with Hoops' and the Gentlemen 'to come without their Swords'. The precaution paid off, and the papers reported that 'There were about 700 People in the Room, and the Sum collected . . . amounted to about £400'. As for the music, the Dublin Journal was eloquent in its praise:

*'Words are wanting to express the exquisite Delight it afforded to the admiring crowded Audience. The Sublime, the Grand, and the Tender, adapted to the most elevated, majestic and moving Words, conspired to transport and charm the ravished Heart and Ear.'*

By popular demand Messiah was repeated at Handel's farewell concert on 3 June, and, as at the premiere, it was interspersed with organ concertos played by the composer, as was his usual practice in oratorios.

'Messiah' was introduced to London audiences the following year, at the end of Handel's Lenten oratorio season at Covent Garden Theatre. It met with a distinctly hostile reception. As one press article put it:

*'An Oratorio either is an Act of Religion, or it is not; if it is, I ask if the Playhouse is a fit Temple to perform it in, or a Company of Players fit Ministers of God's Word.'*

Added to this, the public apparently preferred Handel's other new oratorio, Samson; this was heard nine times that season compared with only three performances of Messiah.

Although Handel made a number of attempts to revive his 'Sacred Oratorio' in 1745 and 1749, it was not until 1750 that regular performances of the work became an established feature of his Lenten oratorio season at Covent Garden. It was in this year too that Handel judiciously renewed the connection between 'Messiah' and charity, by establishing the tradition of performing it in April or May for the benefit of the Foundling Hospital, of which he was a governor.

In subsequent years Handel made many amendments to suit the singers available for, and the circumstances of, a particular performance. There are, for example, alto, soprano and bass versions of 'Thou art gone up on high'. This evening's performance takes account of many of the most popular of these revisions, including the 'duet' setting of 'He shall feed his flock' and the choral version of 'Their sound is gone out'. It seems possible that the latter, which started life as the middle section of the soprano aria 'How beautiful are the feet', was re-composed in direct response to the criticism from the librettist Jennens, who did not consider that the oratorio represented Handel at anywhere near his best!

In this performance, 3 of the items originally intended for a counter-tenor have been omitted, whilst the 4th – "But who may abide?" is performed in the soprano version which he wrote for the Foundling Hospital performance in 1754.

The earliest provincial performance of 'Messiah' was given at Oxford in 1749 by 'about forty voices and fifty instruments'. By all accounts it was an overwhelming success, and the 'crowded audience' received it with 'great applause'. The following year William Boyce introduced the work to the Three Choirs Festival at Hereford, and it was soon taken up by musical societies in Salisbury, Bath, Bristol, Gloucester and Worcester. In the nineteenth century 'Messiah' almost approached the status of a national institution. It was increasingly performed with mammoth forces (choirs of 2,500 singers were by no means exceptional), as a potent form of imperial propaganda and as a convenient mouthpiece for the Victorian doctrines of progress and social amelioration.

Tinkering with 'Messiah' continued long after Handel's death. Mozart's celebrated re-orchestration opened the floodgates to many well-intentioned but misdirected attempts to elaborate the calculated sobriety of Handel's orchestration. Men such as Ebenezer Prout, Sir Hamilton Harty, Sir Malcolm Sargent and even Sir Thomas Beecham all sincerely believed that they were reinforcing Handel's message, thickening the orchestral texture by the addition of extra woodwind, brass and percussion, (inc. harps in the spectacular arrangement by Goosens). In the last fifty years or so there has been a vital reassessment of the authentic performance of Baroque music, and "Messiah", has been at its very forefront. But ultimately, however performed and by whoever, 'Messiah' is never likely to relinquish its position as the most popular and enduring work in the English choral repertoire.

**John Pierce - Tenor** was born near Holywell, Flintshire in 1983. His early ambition was to be a pianist, which was overtaken by his love of singing, and at the age of 17, he began his singing with Robert Alderson and then entered the R.N.C.M. to study with Jeffrey Lawton.

During his time at the R.N.C.M., John has been involved in many opera excerpts and in the main college productions, he has played the character of 'Jake' in 'Kurt Weill's' *'Threepenny Opera'*, and 'Adolfo' in the November 2005 production of *'La Rondine'*.

In September 2006, John performed in the Erin Arts production of Verdi's, *'La Traviata'*, in the Isle of Mann, more recent highlights include singing in Venice, and Uzerche, (France) in 2007.

Oratorio engagements have included: *'The Messiah'*, Karl Jenkins, *'The Armed Man'*, Hady's *'Nelson Mass'*, Rossini's *'Messe di Gloria'*, Mozart's *'Requiem'* and *'Coronation Mass in C'* and Bach *'Magnificat'*

John was also involved in the recording of Karl Jenkins world premiere, *'Dewi Sant'* which was recorded at Pembrokeshire Castle with the four counties choir in December 1999, which was televised in January 2000 on BBC2 Wales, then performed in March 2000 in St David's Hall, Cardiff. In that same year John joined The National Youth Choir of Wales where he performed in many Cathedrals all over Wales.

Future engagements in 2008 include Puccini's, *'Messa di Gloria'*, in Whitehaven (Cumbria,) Rossini's *'Stabat Mater'*, in Frodsham. Mozarts *'Requiem'*, in Bollington. Karl Jenkins *'The Armed Man'* and Hady's *'Paukenmesse'*, in Southport, and a Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Gala in Maelor (Wrexham). John also enjoys using his talent to raise money for charities.



**Edward D'arcy-Hatton –Bass** was born in Liverpool, and studied singing with Jean Gordon-Brown at Sandown College of Performing Arts. Whilst at the SCPA Edward was asked to sing the role of Hercules in a modern-day first known performance of John Stanley's 'The Choice of Hercules', to great acclaim. It was after this performance on stage that Edward decided to follow a career in opera. He then went on to win a place at the Royal College of Music Post-Graduate course, studying singing with Edward Brooks, and repertoire with Robert Sutherland. Edward also gained the 'Exhibitioner' Scholarship, and, won a place in the Royal College of Music Opera School, under the direction of James Lockhart. He also gained many roles in the Opera School, winning the 'Opera scholarship' award, and the 'Major Van Somervan Godfrey Prize' for English Song.

Roles included: Papageno, Eugene Onegin (in Russian), and World Premiers of operas by Odaline di la Martinez, and Paul Max-Edlin. Edward also studied in Master classes with Sir Thomas Allen, Senja Jurinac, and in the Covent Garden Crush bar in scenes in Don Giovanni as Leporello.

Edwards professional career has taken him to ENO in Gianni Schicci, LSO with Michael Tilson-Thomas as the Viking in a live Radio 3 performance at the Barbican, and with Wexford Festival opera, English Bach Festival, London International Opera Festival, Covent Garden Festival, and many more, with roles in operas ranging from Donizetti to G&S.

An experienced conductor, Edward also studied conducting with the eminent Maestro Sir Charles Groves. Edward has also worked on the concert platform, both here and abroad, including recent performances of Messiah at Liverpool Cathedral, Stainer's Crucifixion. Olivet to Calvary, and Faure Requiem. Edward has also sung as a Lay Clerk for Liverpool Cathedral, The Pilgrim Singers, All Hallows Church Choir, and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir. Over the years he has taken to working within the acting profession, appearing in Coronation St, Brookside, Hollyoaks, Bread, and many other TV dramas, playing roles as a squaddie, to the Microwave delivery man to the 'Caff' in Eastenders! Recent films include the role of 'Trebzor' in a short film called 'Spider', shown at the Edinburgh Festival, and Slave Trader Jonathan Earle, in a CD-ROM for Liverpool Maritime Museum. Future engagements include 'Messiah', Faure 'Requiem', Vaughan Williams 'A Pilgrim's Journey', Stainer 'Crucifixion', Maunder 'Olivet To Calvary', and Handel's Acis and Galathea.



**Nicola Howard – Soprano** is a graduate of the Royal Academy of Music (London), currently working with Barbara Robotham, She has had a wide and varied operatic career throughout the UK and Europe.

In the UK, Nicola has been a principal artist for the major opera houses. Her roles include the Countess, *'Le Nozze di Figaro'* (Bloomsbury Theatre, London); Michaela, *'Carmen'* (Clonter Opera); Gilda, *'Rigoletto'*, Fiordiligi, *'Cosi Fan Tutte'*, Pamina, *'Zauberflote'* and Blumenmadchen, *'Parsifal'*, all for Scottish Opera; Second Niece, *'Peter Grimes'* (Welsh National Opera). Other roles include Lucia *'Rape of Lucretia'*, Mary Warren *'The Crucible'*, Carolina *'Il Matrimonio Segreto'*, Emmy *'The Basement Room'*, Lauretta *'Gianni Schicchi'*, Mimi *'La Boheme'* and the title role in Anna Bella (an opera project by Hans Werne Henze), a role created for Nicola at the Montepulciano Opera Festival.

As a soloist, Nicola has sung oratorio throughout the world including the Messiah and The Creation at the Royal Albert Hall with Sir David Wilcocks and a programme of Beethoven and Wagner as guest artist with the orchestra of Opera De Lyon and Kent Nagano in Lyon, St Etienne and Geneva. She is in demand as a recitalist and has performed regularly at St Martin's in the Field, The Queen Elizabeth Hall and The Purcell Room, London as well as in the United States and Canada. Nicola also specialises as a performer of contemporary music, premiering many works by composers such as Elena Firsova, Stephen Albert and Roxanna Panufnik. She has appeared extensively with the BBC Singers, including a peace concert and radio broadcast in Zagreb.

Radio and television work has included numerous recitals for Classic FM, the BBC and Tele France as well as recordings of Carmina Burana (Orff), and Susannah (Floyd).

Nicola is also a winner of the Royal Overseas League International singing competition.

**Alison Hudson – Mezzo-soprano** was born in Doncaster and graduated from the Royal Northern College of Music. Along with the coveted Decca Kathleen Ferrier Prize she has won a number of awards and gained international recognition in the Peter Pears Awards. Among her operatic roles was her notable international debut as Cherubino in Mozart's *'Le Nozze di Figaro'* for Leipzig Opera. A regular performer on the concert and recital platform, Alison made her London debut at the Barbican in Beethoven's *'Missa Solemnis'*. She has an extensive repertoire, ranging from the Handel oratorios and the Bach Passions to the works of Tippett and Elgar. Recent performances include Elgar's *'Music Makers'* and *'Sea Pictures'* and a memorable live relay of *'Messiah'* for BBC Radio 3 together with solo appearances with the London Bach Choir. Last summer marked her thirteenth consecutive season performing with the New Spa Orchestra in Scarborough where she is able to cross over into the West End musicals. Last autumn Alison appeared in concert with Marilyn Hill Smith in Durham and will soon return to the North East for a gala evening at Auckland Castle. Future oratorio engagements include Bach's *'Magnificat'* and Elgar's *'Dream of Gerontius'*. Alison is also looking forward to appearing at the Civic Theatre on May 21st..



# Handel: “Messiah”

## PART ONE

1. **Overture** (*Abridged*)
2. **Tenor recitative** Comfort ye, comfort ye my people
3. **Tenor aria** Ev'ry valley shall be exalted
4. **Chorus** And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed
5. **Bass recitative** Thus saith the Lord of hosts
6. **Soprano aria** But who may abide the day of his coming? \*
7. **Chorus** And He shall purify the sons of Levi
8. **Contralto recitative** Behold a virgin shall conceive,
9. **Contralto aria and Chorus** O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion
10. **Bass recitative** For behold, darkness shall cover the earth
11. **Bass aria** The people that walked in darkness have seen  
a great light
12. **Chorus** For unto us a child is born
13. **Pifa** (*Pastoral Symphony*)
14. **Soprano recitative** There were shepherds, abiding in the field
15. **Soprano recitative** And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them
16. **Soprano recitative** And the angel said unto them, fear not
17. **Soprano recitative** And suddenly there was with the angel
18. **Chorus** Glory to God in the Highest
19. **Soprano aria** Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion +
20. **Contralto recitative** Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened
21. **Contralto / soprano aria** He shall feed His flock like a shepherd /  
Come unto him
22. **Chorus** His yoke is easy and his burden is light

\* This is the 2nd version of the aria to be set by Handel. Version 1 was written for Counter-tenor. There is no evidence at all that Handel ever intended or sanctioned it to be sung by a bass, as was the fashion in the first half of the 20th century.

+ The original version in 4/4 time not the later 12 /8 version

## INTERVAL

– Refreshments will be available at the rear of the church.

## PART TWO

1. **Chorus** Behold the Lamb of God
2. **Contralto aria** He was despised and rejected of men
3. **Chorus** Surely He hath borne our griefs
4. **Chorus** And with His stripes we are healed
5. **Chorus** All we like sheep have gone astray
6. **Tenor recitative** All they that see him laugh him to scorn
7. **Chorus** He trusted in God that he would deliver him
8. **Tenor recitative** Thy rebuke hath broken his heart
9. **Tenor aria** Behold and see if there be any sorrow
10. **Soprano recitative** He was cut out of the land of the living
11. **Soprano aria** But thou didst not leave his soul in hell
12. **Chorus** Lift up your heads, O ye gates
13. **Tenor recitative** Unto which of the angels said he at any time?
14. **Chorus** Let all the angels of God worship him
15. **Countertenor aria** *Thou art gone up on high – Omitted tonight*
16. **Chorus** *The Lord gave the word – Omitted tonight*
17. **Soprano aria** How beautiful are the feet of them that preach
18. **Chorus** Their sound is gone out into all lands
19. **Bass aria** Why do the nations so furiously rage together?
20. **Chorus** Let us break their bonds asunder
21. **Tenor recitative** He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh  
them to scorn
22. **Tenor aria** Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron
23. **Chorus** Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth

## PART THREE

24. **Soprano aria** I know that my Redeemer liveth
25. **Chorus** Since by man came death
26. **Bass recitative** Behold, I tell you a mystery
27. **Bass aria** The trumpet shall sound
28. **Countertenor recitative** *Then shall be brought to pass* [These
29. **Countertenor/tenor duet** *O death, where is thy sting?* 4
30. **Chorus** *But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory* items
31. **Soprano aria** *If God be for us, who can be against us?* omitted]
32. **Chorus** Worthy is the Lamb that was slain
33. **Chorus** Amen