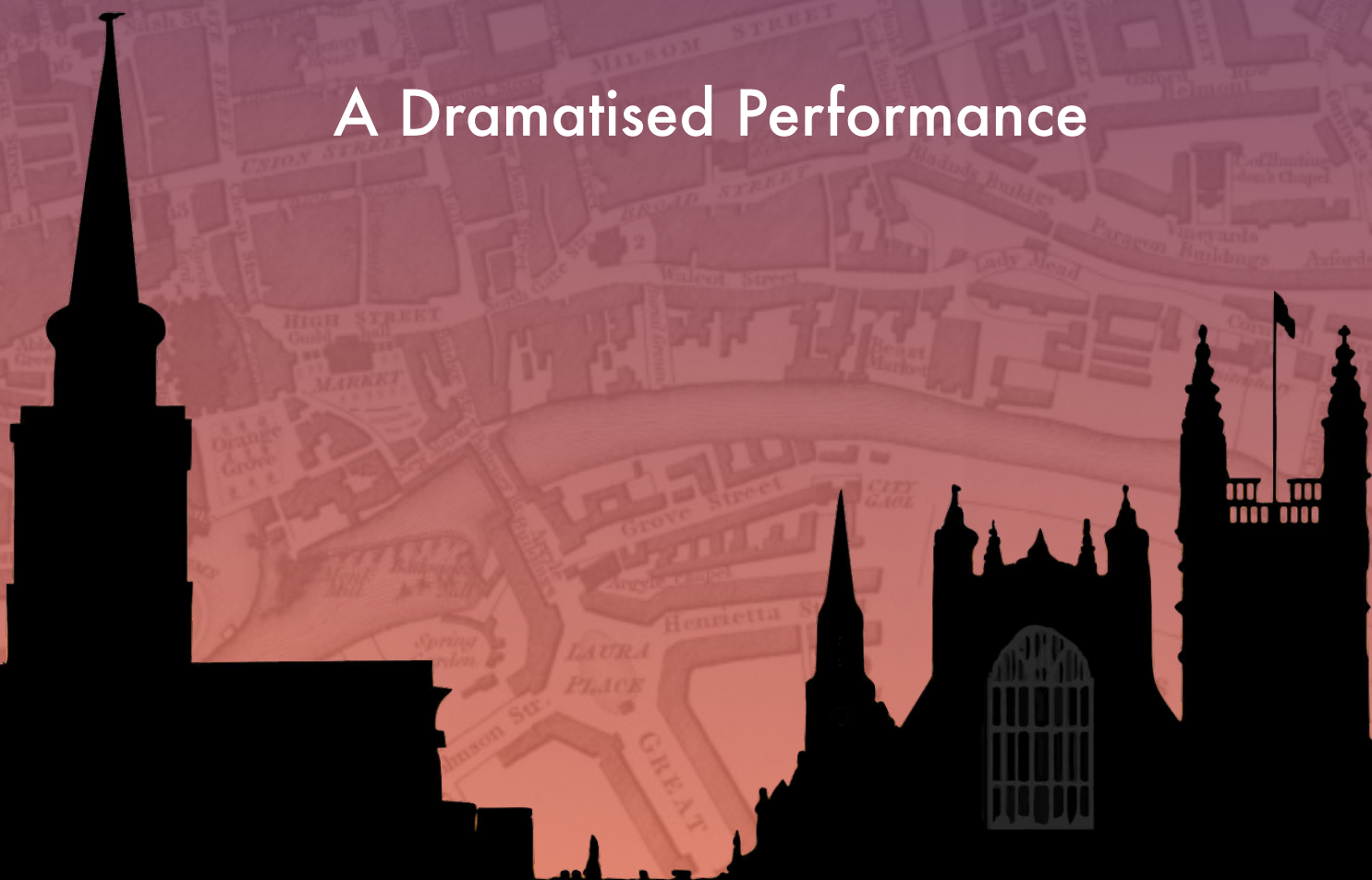


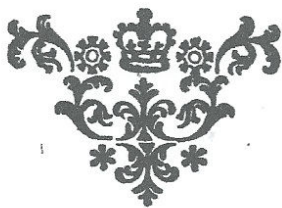


Handel's Messiah

A Dramatised Performance



T H E
M E S S I A H,
← A
S A C R E D
O R A T O R I O,
AS PERFORM'D AT THE
O C T A G O N C H A P E L,
I N
M I L S O M - S T R E E T , B A T H .



Printed by S. HAZARD, in *Cheap-street.*

M. DCC. LXXI.



MESSIAH

George Frideric Handel
1685-1759

Saturday 5 March 2022
7.30pm
St Swithin's Bath

Sarah Latto *conductor*
Thomas Guthrie *director*

Paragon Singers
Echo Vocal Ensemble
Baroque orchestra *led by* Bojan Čičić

This performance was put together over three days of filmed workshops in January 2022 with all the performers together with students from Bath Spa University.



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



WELCOME FROM

I am delighted to welcome you all to this dramatised performance of Handel's *Messiah*.

Paragon Singers has a long and proud tradition of innovative programming, but this is the first time we have strayed into drama. It has offered us new challenges and new experiences, and we are excited to share these with you this evening.

We have been immensely fortunate to have been inspired by the vision of Andrew Clarke, the creative

imagination of Thomas Guthrie and the musical thinking and sensitivity of Sarah Latto.

In addition, working alongside the singers from Echo Vocal Ensemble and wonderful instrumentalists has been a dream in itself! All have inspired us to think differently, to challenge our assumptions about such a familiar work and to revisit this choral masterpiece with fresh insights. We hope tonight, we can manage to convey some of our excitement about what we have discovered!



PARAGON SINGERS

This evening is the culmination of a number of projects in and around Bath celebrating the 250th anniversary of one of the earliest performance of *Messiah* in Bath. These have included workshops for singers both to encourage those new to singing and to offer insights for more experienced singers. We have also delivered vocal workshops with Julian House, the charity supporting vulnerable and at-risk individuals. The filming of the rehearsal process carried out by students from Bath Spa University has also been a core part of this project.

Our hope is that while relatively few are able to be with us this evening, the ethos and creativity behind *Messiah* 250 and, of course, Handel's wonderful music, have spread and touched people across the wider community of Bath. I do hope you will enjoy what should be a revelatory performance of this sublime work.

Tony Shield
Paragon Singers *chair*



Andrew Clarke explores the rich history of Handel's much-loved oratorio in the city and the people involved in creating a 250-year-old tradition ...

At twelve noon, on Tuesday 13 April 1742, in the New Musick Hall, Fishamble Street, Dublin, the first ever performance of *Messiah* was given. One of the soloists was Susanna Cibber, a tragic actress who had played opposite the celebrated actor and theatre impresario, David Garrick. Two years after the Dublin *Messiah* performance, Susanna was in Bath, from where she sent word to Handel that she would perform for him next season. Handel was delighted and wrote to Charles Jennens, author of the libretto for *Messiah*, to encourage him to send words for a new oratorio.

London audiences were first treated to a performance of *Messiah* at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden on 23 March 1743. But the people of Bath had to wait – the first performance in the city was advertised for Wednesday, 14 May 1755 in Wiltshire's Rooms, but probably did not take place. Signor Giuseppe Passerini and his wife, Christina, who had promoted the concert, claimed that they had not been able to engage the chorus singers and had been obliged to defer the performance until the

following season. Christina had been recommended to Handel by Georg Telemann, and she subsequently sang in many of his operas and oratorios including *Messiah*. Bath audiences did eventually get their first performance of *Messiah* on 24 November 1756 at Mr Simpson's Great Room, directed by Passerini 'with an able band of Vocal and Instrumental Performers'.

A few years later, in April 1759, the *Whitehall Evening Post* wrote:

“And this Day Mr Handel proposed setting out for Bath, to try the Benefits of the Waters, having been for some Time past in a bad State of Health.

Handel had already visited Bath twice in 1749 and 1751 when he stayed ten days in June. But five days later the paper brought the news that:

“Mr Handel, who was in Hopes to have set out for Bath last Saturday, has continued so ill, that he could not undertake the Journey.

He died two days later on Good Friday, 14 April 1759.

A month after Handel's death, the Bath Abbey organist, Thomas Chilcot, organised charity performances of Handel's work including *Messiah*. The newspaper advertisement declared that:

*"no expense has been wanting to engage the best voices from
Salisbury, Gloucester, Bristol and Worcester Cathedrals*



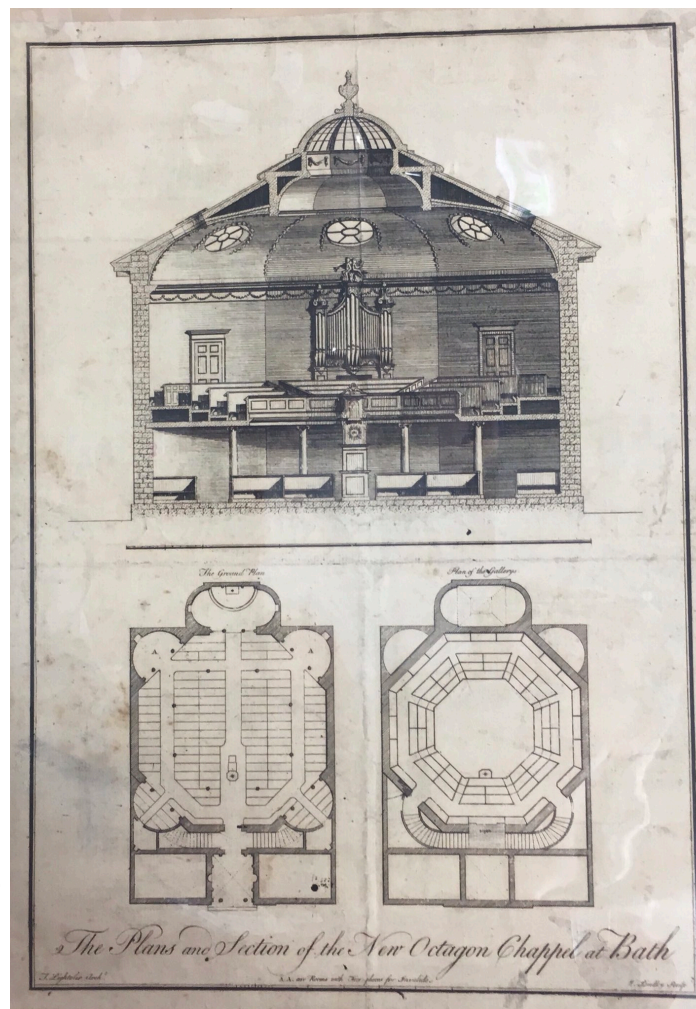
Handel's own working copy of Messiah, 1741

Following Handel's death, it was to be another eight years before *Messiah* was heard again in Bath. The occasion was doubtless auspicious because it was at the opening of the Octagon Chapel in Milsom Street in 1767. Two weeks before the performance the finishing touches to the décor were being completed ...

"As the Pews in this Chapel are to be lined with Cloth of the same Sort and Colour to preserve Neatness and Uniformity; Persons who chuse [sic] whether to line, to cover their kneeling Boards, or to have Cushions in their Pews are desired to send to Mr Bullman [...] who has the Disposal of Seats to the Inhabitants [...]"

The performance of *Messiah* was directed by Dr Hayes from Oxford and given in Wiltshire's Rooms for the Benefit of the General Hospital.

Handel had known several members of Bath society. Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon, knew him personally. She had established a Connection - a Calvinistic movement within the Methodist Church - and in 1765 she built a chapel in Bath in Vineyards. Later the boys and girls of the chapel were often praised for their singing in Bath and elsewhere. John Marsh commended them highly, noting that they sang 'very accurately' the 'Amen' and 'Worthy is the Lamb' from *Messiah* without any organ or instrumental accompaniment.



The plans for the Octagon Chapel, 1766



William Herschel in 1785 by Abbott

William Herschel had been appointed Chapel organist a few months earlier and had recently moved to Bath from his previous tenure at the parish church in Halifax, Yorkshire. He was born in Hanover in 1738 into a family of military bandmen. Following a posting with the Hanover Guards to England in 1756, he had later returned with his brother, Jacob, to find work as musicians.

The Octagon was one of a number of private chapels in the city which rented Fire Recesses ‘where six fires are kept for the sake of Invalids’. Strangers (visitors to the city) could rent them for one, two or three months; those above in the gallery being somewhat cheaper, a guinea a quarter, compared with those below which were twice the price. There were seats likewise for servants.

A contemporary advertisement explained:

“This publick Notice is given, that all Strangers who come to Bath for the Seasons, may have what Sittings they please, for one, two, or three Months, either in the Recesses (where there are Fires from Michaelmas) or in any other Part of the Chapel, by applying to Mr BULLMAN, the Clerk, at Mr Herschel’s in New King street, or at the Vestry an Hour before Service on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.”

Herschel was also part of the administration, personally supplying tickets for the occasion. Such was the popularity of *Messiah* that it was performed on two consecutive mornings ‘in aid of the Industrious Poor’.

Herschel’s sister Caroline assisted him in leading the Octagon choir and copying music. The choir originally consisted of young workmen, carpenters and joiners, with no previous notion of singing but they were soon ‘able to render the choruses of various oratorios with success’. Herschel also engaged the boys and girls from Lady Huntingdon’s Chapel ‘in addition to the voices that were at the theatre in Passion Week’. In preparation for the oratorios during Lent, Caroline copied the scores of *Messiah* and other works for an orchestra (vocalists and instrumentalists) of nearly a hundred performers. The gentlemen of the Chorus came from Oxford, Salisbury and Gloucester; the players came from as far afield as London, a journey which could take the most part of a day and cost over seven pounds return!

Caroline later wrote:

“The summer of 1775 was taken up with copying and practicing [sic] music in addition to attendance on my brother when polishing mirrors, since by way of keeping him alive I was constantly obliged to feed him by putting food into his mouth. [...] As I was to take part in the oratorios, I had for a whole twelve-month two lessons a week from Miss Fleming, the celebrated dancing mistress, to drill me for a gentle woman; God knows how she succeeded.”



Caroline Herschel in 1829 by Tieleman

At the NEW ROOMS,

On WEDNESDAY the 15th of April, 1778.

W I L L B E

Mr. HERSCHEL's Benefit-Concert:

The MUSIC taken from the

SACRED ORATORIO

OF THE

MESSIAH.

The Principal VOCAL PARTS

By Miss HERSCHEL, Miss CANTELO, *afterward Mrs. Harris*
Mr. BRETT, Mr. WILSON, & Mr. HERSCHEL.

The FIRST VIOLIN

By Mr. BROOKS, Junior.

With a Full Chorus of additional Voices and Instruments.

N. B. To begin a Quarter before SEVEN o'Clock.

TICKETS at Five Shillings each to be had of Mr. HERSCHEL,
No. 19, New-King-Street, BATH, and at the Rooms, &c.

Printed by W. GYE, in Westgate-Buildings, BATH.

Poster for a concert at the New Rooms, Bath, of music from Handel's Messiah for William Herschel's benefit, April 1778

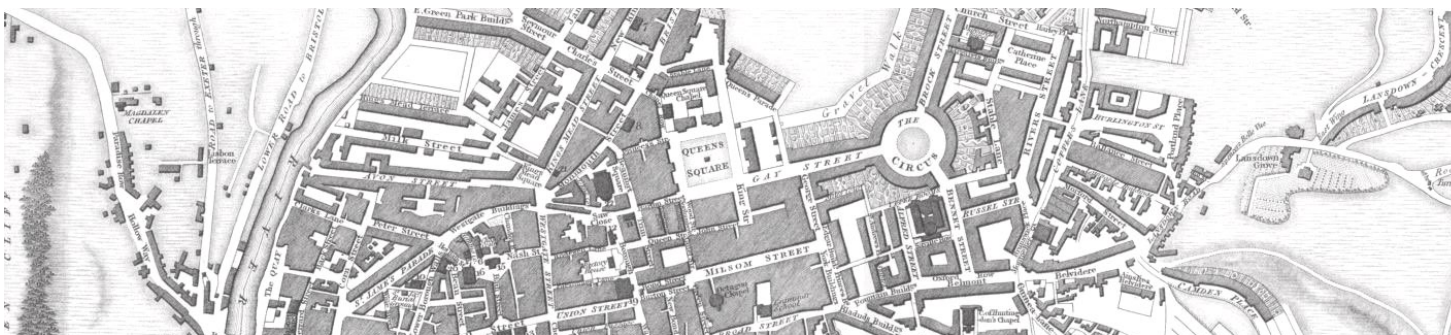
By 1778 Herschel found himself in charge of concerts at both the Old and the New Assembly Rooms. Caroline was to sing in his 1778 *Messiah* as the principal soloist alongside Miss Ann Cantelo who was a pupil of J. C. Bach and his wife, Cecilia Grassi. Their brother, Alexander Herschel, lived with them in New King Street, Bath. He played the cello and was regularly listed in the band for many oratorios until 1810.

Herschel directed at least ten performances of *Messiah*, not only at the Octagon and in the Assembly Rooms, but at the Theatre Royal in Orchard Street. But his interests had been turning increasingly to astronomy. The discovery of the planet Uranus in 1781 brought him international fame and an appointment as the King's Astronomer on the condition that he moved near the King's Court in Windsor. The following year he directed his last *Messiah* at St James's Church, later moving to Datchet near Windsor. From

then his life, and Caroline's, was focused on astronomy, in a partnership now recognised as providing one of the key foundations of modern astronomy.

Despite the Herschels' departure from Bath, the foundations were set and the tradition of performing Handel's *Messiah* in Bath continued. Annual performances in the city have continued for the next 240 or so years. Tonight's performance, reimagining one of the earliest performances by William Herschel in the Octagon Chapel in 1771, builds on this rich history and adds another strand to the story of *Messiah* in Bath.

Andrew Clarke



STAGING

MESSIAH



the texts anew and embody them – with the ultimate goal of refreshing the souls and bodies of the performers and help make the music sing and play as we may never have heard it before. And perhaps to imagine that Handel, master dramatist and storyteller, understood character and knew that to perform freely one has to move.

There is nothing definitive about our staging, and certainly nothing historically accurate. But it is heartfelt, and necessarily of its time, because we have made it now, as honestly as we can. As humans, when we want to express something very important, talking is perhaps not enough: at those moments we might raise our voices in song, and in doing so we use our entire bodies and souls to communicate our needs, emotions, and open our hearts. It takes courage, perhaps, but it fills us with communal joy. We hope you enjoy the performance.

Handel's beloved and wonderful oratorio, *Messiah*, is, among many other things, a true community piece. Initially performed to raise money for three different charities in Dublin in 1742, it subsequently became the means for an annual fundraiser for the Foundling Hospital in London. These days for thousands it represents a chance to come together once a year (or more) to sing, play, support, share and enjoy familiar and wonderful music at Easter or Christmas. It has always nourished and refreshed those who experience it, as it has those who perform it:

it is ebullient, inspired, moving and varied. It also summons a collective spirit. Nowhere is this more apparent than the Hallelujah chorus, with its repeated explosions of human gratitude and joy resounding round our churches, and marking the highpoint of our journey from need for comfort (Comfort ye) and light (The people that walked in darkness) to reassurance and hope.

Singing as an activity combines, in now famously health-giving ways, the physical and the spiritual. Staging *Messiah* is simply an opportunity to explore

Thomas Guthrie

A MUSICAL JOURNEY

Paragon Singers first started looking at the music for this performance in December 2020 – more than fifteen months ago. Amongst other events and concerts, it has been a constant for the group in a difficult time, as we moved from online Zoom sessions to being able to meet once again in person, with all the restrictions that were required to sing safely together.

Fifteen months may sound like a long time, but I hope the singers would agree that it has been a privilege to delve deep into Handel's *Messiah*, its context and the drama inherent in its three distinct parts. It sounds like a cliché, but I've never become bored by Handel's score – there is something new to discover with every single listen. That rehearsal time was also needed in practical terms, because this is by far the most challenging project this group has taken on to date, and memorising fugal choruses is not easy work(!)

Messiah's renown means that it is one of the pieces that has been recorded the most times, which is both a wonderful resource and rather overwhelming! There are countless

questions for performance practice, including the size of ensemble, the number and type of soloists and the number and key of arias and choruses. For example, the Dublin orchestra from 1742 comprised only strings, two trumpets and timpani, although the exact size is unknown. While later productions added oboes to double the upper strings, we have used the very earliest instrumentation as our inspiration here.

However, in other obvious ways we have created a production that strays from tradition and is unique to this group of people, in this space. As performers of early music, there are inevitably questions of

every bar: what, how and most importantly, why? That third question, of dramatic intent, has guided each artistic decision that we've made for this performance. Handel himself seems to have composed the oratorio with no specific performers in mind, and was prepared to adapt it for each production in turn – ten versions are discernible in all from his lifetime. It has been wonderful to add to this living tradition with the brilliant singers and instrumentalists involved in this production, and I'm very proud of the entire group for taking the challenge in their stride.

Sarah Latto



LIBRETTO

Messiah: An Oratorio HWV56 (1741)

Part One

Overture

Comfort ye tenor, *Will Wright*

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.

tenor, James Micklethwaite

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness; prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
(Isaiah 40: 1-3)

Ev'ry valley tenor, *James Micklethwaite*

Ev'ry valley shall be exalted, and ev'ry mountain and hill made low; the crooked straight and the rough places plain.
(Isaiah 40: 4)

And the glory

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.
(Isaiah 40: 5)

And He shall purify

And He shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.
(Malachi 3: 3)

Behold, a virgin shall conceive

alto, Mae Heydorn

Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Emmanuel, God with us
(Isaiah 7: 14; Matthew 1: 23)

O thou that tellest

alto, Mae Heydorn and chorus

O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain. O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, behold your god!
(Isaiah 40: 9)

Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.
(Isaiah 60: 1)

For behold bass, *Tom Herring*

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.
(Isaiah 60: 2-3)

The people that walked in darkness

bass, Tom Herring

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.
(Isaiah 9: 2)

For unto us a child is born

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. (Isaiah 9: 6)

Pastoral Symphony

There were shepherds soprano, Sam Cobb

There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. (Luke 2: 8)

And lo, the angel of the Lord

soprano, Sam Cobb

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. (Luke 2: 9)

And the angel soprano, Sam Cobb

And the angel said unto them: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2: 10-11)

And suddenly soprano, Sam Cobb

And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying: (Luke 2: 13)

Glory to God

Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men. (Luke 2: 14)

Then shall the eyes of the blind

alto, Sophie Timms

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. (Isaiah 35: 5-6)

He shall feed His flock

alto, Sophie Timms

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. (Isaiah 40: 11)

soprano, Hilary Cronin

Come unto Him, all ye that labour, come unto Him 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. (Matthew 11: 28-29)

short pause

Part Two

Behold the Lamb of God

Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.
(John 1: 29)

Surely He hath borne our griefs

Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows! He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.
(Isaiah 53: 4-5)

And with His stripes

And with His stripes we are healed.
(Isaiah 53: 5)

All they that see Him

tenor, James Micklethwaite

All they that see Him laugh Him to scorn; they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying:
(Psalm 22: 7)

He trusted in God

He trusted in God that He would deliver Him; let Him deliver Him, if He delight in Him.
(Psalm 22: 8)

Thy rebuke hath broken His heart

tenor, Will Wright and James Micklethwaite

Thy rebuke hath broken His heart: He is full of heaviness. He looked for some to have pity on Him, but there was no man, neither found He any to comfort him.
(Psalm 69: 20)

Behold and see

tenor, Will Wright and James Micklethwaite

Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow.
(Lamentations 1: 12)

He was cut off

tenor, James Micklethwaite

He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgressions of Thy people was He stricken.
(Isaiah 53: 8)

But Thou didst not leave

tenor, Will Wright and James Micklethwaite

But Thou didst not leave His soul in hell; nor didst Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption.
(Psalm 16: 10)

Why do the nations

bass, Tom Herring

Why do the nations so furiously rage together, and why do the people imagine a vain thing?
The kings of the earth rise up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His anointed.
(Psalm 2: 1-2)

Let us break their bonds

Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their yokes from us.
(Psalm 2: 3)

Hallelujah

Hallelujah: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.

(Revelation 19: 6)

The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.

(Revelation 11: 15)

King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

(Revelation 19: 16)

Hallelujah!

Part Three

I know that my Redeemer liveth

soprano, Sam Cobb

I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.

(Job 19: 25-26)

For now is Christ risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep.

(I Corinthians 15: 20)

Since by man came death

Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

(I Corinthians 15: 21-22)

If God be for us

soprano, Hilary Cronin

If God be for us, who can be against us?

(Romans 8: 31)

Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is at the right hand of God, who makes intercession for us.

(Romans 8: 33-34)

Amen

Amen (Revelation 5: 12-14)

MEET THE Messiah 250 TEAM



Sarah Latto is conductor of Paragon Singers, and conductor and co-artistic director of the young professional ensemble Echo

“Two moments in particular will stay with me from Messiah 250. Firstly, I remember how nervous we were on our first day of filming back in January. However, the first time that we sang ‘And the glory’, the opening chorus of the piece, joined by our orchestra and Echo Vocal Ensemble, was a revelation. Conducting in the round and without music felt hugely liberating, and suddenly all of our efforts made perfect sense. My second memorable moment was listening to Sophie and Hilary sing ‘He shall feed his flock’, while being surrounded by wonderful musicians and friends. The beauty of that piece and its message created an incredibly strong sense of safety and community for me.

Thomas Guthrie is a director, performer, and founder and Artistic Director of the charity Music and Theatre for All.

“One of my favourite moments in *Messiah* has probably always been the soprano aria, ‘If God be for us’. It is just so beautiful with the openness of the melody and the place it comes from – how can you disagree, it seems to say, in the most honest but persuasive way. Now, having worked at it for this performance, I have no favourites – just memories of people meaning what they sing and having the courage to share their feelings in the most direct way.



Andrew and Gill Clarke are the driving force behind the Messiah 250 project

“We have lived in Bath for over 40 years and have loved being active in the music tradition of the city. This project stems from our research into performances of *Messiah* from the 18th century to the present. We have welcomed the challenge to relate this work to a time of conflict, pandemic and uncertainty.

Gareth Somerset is a long-standing member of Paragon Singers and has managed the project

“My outstanding memories are how the whole team, everyone involved, has pulled together to deliver this demanding project, despite the battering received from Covid, how we have explored *Messiah* as we have never done before, and singing with the wonderful Echo Vocal Ensemble and orchestra.

The following people have also been instrumental in the delivery of this project:

Rémi Castaing, Charles Draper, Julia Draper, Margaret Graham, Mary Henderson, Kate Petty and Kira Thomas.

ORCHESTRA



Bojan Čičić
Violin - Leader



Davina Clarke
Violin 2 principal

Davina's highlight

“The pastoral scene – the instrumental accompaniment throughout is so magical with arpeggiated and fluttering strings, creating an ethereal and exciting effect. The energy builds throughout the scene and finally reaches an incredible climax with ‘Glory to God’.



Flora Curzon
Violin 1



Jane Rogers
Viola principal

Jane's favourite moment

“It has to be the chorus ‘Surely he hath borne our griefs’. It’s such powerful word painting with the lashing dotted rhythms in the strings and the incredibly painful dissonances on the word ‘wounded’. It’s certainly one of the most vivid depictions in the whole piece.



Mark Seow
Violin 2



Jordan Bowron
Viola

Jordan's reflections

“I feel the emphatic power between the vocal text and the music in this interpretation allows the narrative to be more convincing and hard hitting in communicating with the listener.



Henrik Persson
Cello



Callum Anderson
Harpsichord & Organ



Emily Newman
Bassoon



Rosie Moon
Bass

We would also like to thank our rehearsal pianists for this project:
Benjamin Newlove, Steven Hollas and Kate Robey.

PARAGON SINGERS



Sopranos

Gill Clarke
Julia Draper
Mary Henderson
Josephine Herrlinger
Stephanie Lockhart
Sarah Kettleby

Altos

Caroline Bush
Arabella Butler
Margaret Graham
Kate Petty
Kira Thomas

Tenors

Mike Gumbley
James Henderson
Marc Horobin
Gareth Somerset

Basses

Rémi Castaing
Stewart Harcourt
Tony Shield
William Starling
Nicholas Stuart

Paragon's highlights

A moment that will stay with Sarah

“Singing the Hallelujah chorus with orchestra and soloists – it felt like it was the first time I had ever heard or sung it and reminded me of its brilliance.

Julia's highlight

“Learning so much music has been a huge challenge but singing without holding a score has been utterly liberating.

Marc's reflections

“I came to this with some reservation owing to the twin challenges of memorisation and the putting aside of my own inhibitions – I have never done anything quite like this. Working with Handel's music and Tom's insight, enthusiasm and encouragement, has made all things possible.

Josephine's highlight

“Being taken out of our comfort zone and realising that it's not out of our comfort zone at all!

Rémi's favourite moment

“The chorus ‘For unto us a child is born’: it is such a happy moment in the story and the music makes you want to dance!

ECHO VOCAL ENSEMBLE

Hilary Cronin
Soprano



Hilary's reflections

“The most rewarding aspect of this project was looking into the face of each performer at various points during the filming process and seeing how much this opportunity means to them.

Having the chance to collaborate, release and express ourselves is so important after months of restrictions and the whole team came together incredibly well during our three-day rehearsal period. I felt there was a profound connection between us all as we worked on a piece we love but in an innovative and challenging way. It was also very moving to let go and trust each other as we delved into the story of the piece and shared in both the seriousness and fun of it all.

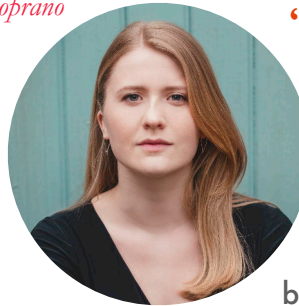
Sophie Timms
Mezzo



Sophie's favourite moment

“I really enjoy singing the chorus ‘Surely he hath borne our griefs’ – there is so much dramaticism from the moment the strings play and I enjoy singing all of the crunchy harmonies that Handel creates!

Sam Cobb
Soprano



Sam's highlight

“A special moment for me was when we were learning some quite complicated movements for the chorus ‘For unto us a child is born’. It demanded a lot of collective concentration between all the singers, and there were some lovely jovial moments of trying to remember what came next and trying to remind each other without then getting lost for the next part! It was a challenging but really fun exercise, which I think clearly demonstrated what a determined and open-minded team we have.

Will Wright
Tenor



Mae Heydorn
Mezzo



Mae's highlight

“I have very much cherished the opportunity of diving into the fabric of Handel's fantastic music and really think deeply about the meaning of the words. Spirituality is ever intriguing and a well of inspiration to me. Dealing with it here, the subject of a theatrical performance is challenging and fascinating.

James Micklethwaite
Tenor



Tom's reflections

“Presenting the choruses in this way really brings a fresh perspective and meaning to the piece and breathes new dramatic life into the narrative.

Tom Herring
Bass





Finding the drama in Messiah during a Come and Sing event in February 2022

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Messiah 250 has brought together communities in Bath through music, celebrating the history of Handel's *Messiah* in the city whilst creating new musical stories, connections and memories. Paragon Singers have been running a series of singing workshops throughout Bath as part of the project, from a taster day for people who were new to singing, to a Come and Sing event to delve deeper into the drama of *Messiah*. We are delighted that some singers from those workshops are joining us tonight in the Hallelujah chorus.

Workshops held in partnership with charity Julian House, for homeless and vulnerable people living in Bath, have been particularly rewarding for all those involved. We hope to have made long-lasting links through all these events in order to create more collaborative projects going forward.

"Really fascinating project – never sung Messiah, or heard it performed in full, but this was so accessible and interesting. Really like the dramatic approach/interpretation – makes more sense of it than just a standard performance. Thank you for involving people outside the choir and putting on this workshop."

"Getting to sing the Messiah has more intimately connected me to this music than simply listening."

"A totally absorbing singing experience!"

Feedback from Come and Sing participants

“One of the things we’re most grateful for on this project has been the opportunity to deliver singing workshops at Julian House’s Hostel on Manvers Street. Every Monday in February, we went to work with clients at the Hostel. We sat in the dining area, singing and chatting with whoever was interested - and over the course of each session we found that we gained more and more singers. We covered music from Handel to Marvin Gaye, created harmonies, added MCing to songs by Bobby McFerrin, worked on guitar chords and generally just enjoyed teaching and learning from the clients we worked with. The sessions were truly joyful. We were all buzzing by the end and delighted with their request for us to return every day not just weekly – it’s a connection that we’d love to continue.

Sarah Latto and Arabella Butler

Learning and development has been an important part of the project from the beginning. Paragon Singers soprano and teacher, Sarah Kettleby, has been exploring the Hallelujah chorus with her Year 5 students, using this project as the inspiration to delve into and rediscover the chorus from a different angle ahead of a performance in the coming months.

Messiah 250 has also formed a major part of the academic course for film students at Bath Spa University. Over three days in January 2022, they documented the workshop and rehearsal processes, and are currently busy creating the film from the footage. A directing observership post was also created to enable a trainee director to gain first-hand experience of the rehearsal room. *Finn Lacey* reflects on this opportunity:

“It’s been a joy to observe the Messiah 250 project in Bath over the past several weeks. With a piece that is so often seen performed in a conventional way with step-out soloists and a stationary chorus, Tom and Sarah along with Paragon Singers and Echo Vocal Ensemble have explored how Handel’s oratorio can be so much more than a musical offering. A particular highlight for me was seeing the staging of ‘For unto us a child is born’ come together. Its busy musical texture invited more staging and movement from the performers on stage and it proved the most ambitious of all the chorus numbers – seeing this one improve over time was clearly rewarding for everyone involved. To work closely with Tom and Sarah and to observe this project has been a great privilege, and I’m sure the final performance will be everything the process has promised: Incredible!

A window onto the rehearsal process: the Messiah 250 team in action on a filming day in January 2022



WITH THANKS TO

Messiah 250 sponsors

This performance of *Messiah* would not have been possible without the generous sponsorship of Andrew and Gill Clarke.

The wider *Messiah 250* project included a Learning and Participation programme of events and the close involvement of the Bath Spa University School of Art, Film and Media in recording rehearsal day performances. These events would not have been possible without a generous Arts Council National Lottery Projects Grant and sponsorship from the Trevor Osborne Charitable Trust and Brian Woodford.

Our thanks also to Charles and Julia Draper, Tim Graham, Sarah Guthrie, Stewart Harcourt, Sally Pollitzer and Robert O'Farrell, William Starling, Lucy Scott-Ashe, and several other anonymous sponsors, all of whom responded to our crowdfunding campaign.

Messiah 250 partners

Thanks also go to our partners on this project:
Bath Spa University School of Art, Film and Media
Bath Spa University School of Music
Julian House

Our thanks also go to ...

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For as little as £30 per annum or £50 joint membership, you will receive the following benefits:

- An invitation to attend and listen to a rehearsal at an annual Friends Evening
- Free programme and glass of wine/soft drink at concerts
- Reserved seats at concerts
- Invitation to occasional choir events
- Acknowledgment of Friends status in the programme

For more information, or to sign up as a Friend, please contact our Friends Secretary, Margaret Graham, on paragonsingers@gmail.com

Our next concerts

Join us for our next concert featuring music on the theme of exile:

Saturday 9 July, St Cyriac's, Lacock

Saturday 16 July, St Alphege, Bath

We are also looking forward to performing Victoria's *Requiem* later this year:
Saturday 12 November, Holy Trinity, Bradford on Avon.



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