

*Handel*

House  
Museum

*M E S S I A H,*  
A N  
*O R A T O R I O.*

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Set to Music by *GEORGE-FREDERIC HANDEL, Esq.*

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***Messiah Anniversary Concert***

Saturday 23 March, 6.30pm

Grosvenor Chapel

Pegasus  
Belsize Baroque



Charles  
Jennens  
the man behind  
Handel's Messiah



M E S S I A H,  
A N  
O R A T O R I O.

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Set to Musick by GEORGE-FREDERIC HANDEL, Esq;

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MAJORA CANAMUS.

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*And without Controversy, great is the Mystery of Godliness: God was manifested in the Flesh, justify'd by the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the World, receiv'd up in Glory.*

*In whom are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge.*

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L O N D O N:

Printed and Sold by THO. WOOD in *Windmill-Court*, near *West-Smithfield*, and at the THEATRE in *Croent-Garden*. 1743.

[Price One Shilling.]

A facsimile of the title page of the wordbook for the first London performances of *Messiah*

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## Handel's *Messiah*

In the early 1730s, responding to signs of public interest in English opera and some pirate productions of his own English-language dramas, Handel began to introduce oratorios in English during the opera season. These works, performed without costumes, sets or staging, were immediately popular. Between 22 August and 14 September 1741 Handel composed his most famous work: *Messiah*. Having premiered it during his visit to Dublin in 1742, Handel introduced *Messiah* to London for the first time on 23 March 1743. As a fundraiser for the Foundling Hospital it became an annual Must for London music-lovers, and during the rest of his lifetime Handel produced a further thirty-five performances.

*Messiah* was the brainchild of Handel's most significant collaborator, Charles Jennens, subject of the Handel House's current exhibition and a recently published book. Jennens provided the libretto, on his own initiative, probably as early as December 1739.

The title page of the libretto prepared for the 1743 performances, on show at the exhibition, bears the words which Jennens sent Handel to put at the front of *Messiah*: 'Majora canamus', let us sing of greater things; and 'Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness'. Jennens, a devout Protestant, aimed with *Messiah* to stem the rising tide of rationalism and scepticism, and to reaffirm the truth of Christian revelation. Thousands of sermons and tracts with the same aim have perished, but *Messiah* has reached posterity worldwide, through Jennens' inspired idea of communicating his brilliantly chosen biblical texts with Handel's music.

- **Dr Ruth Smith**, curator of Handel House's exhibition *Charles Jennens: The Man behind Handel's 'Messiah'*

# Programme

## Part One

1. Sinfonia
2. *Recitative*: Comfort ye my people (*Samir Savant, tenor*)
3. *Aria*: Ev'ry valley shall be exalted (*Samir Savant*)
4. *Chorus*: And the glory of the Lord
5. *Recitative*: Thus saith the Lord (*Graham Kirk, bass*)
6. *Aria*: But who may abide the day of his coming? (*Stephen Hogg, alto*)
7. *Chorus*: And he shall purify
8. *Recitative*: Behold, a virgin shall conceive (*Philippa Ouvry, alto*)
9. *Aria and Chorus*: O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion (*Philippa Ouvry*)
10. *Recitative*: For behold, darkness shall cover the earth (*Adrian Collister, bass*)
11. *Aria*: The people that walked in darkness (*Adrian Collister*)
12. *Chorus*: For unto us a child is born
13. Pastoral symphony
14. *Recitative*: There were shepherds abiding in the field (*Christina Birkett, soprano*)
15. *Recitative*: And the angels said unto them (*Christina Birkett*)
16. *Recitative*: And suddenly there was with the angel (*Christina Birkett*)
17. *Chorus*: Glory to God
18. *Aria*: Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion (*Christina Birkett*)
19. *Recitative*: Then shall the eyes of the blind (*David Gabbe, alto*)
20. *Duet*: He shall feed his flock (*David Gabbe, alto; Chrissy Kinsella, soprano*)
21. *Chorus*: His yoke is easy, and his burthen is light

## Part Two

22. *Chorus*: Behold the lamb of God
23. *Aria*: He was despised (*Philippa Ouvry*)
24. *Chorus*: Surely he has borne our griefs
25. *Chorus*: And with his stripes we are healed
26. *Chorus*: All we like sheep have gone astray
27. *Recitative*: All they that see him laugh him to scorn (*Samir Savant*)
28. *Chorus*: He trusted in God
29. *Recitative*: Thy rebuke hath broken his heart (*Luke Phillips, tenor*)
30. *Aria*: Behold, and see if there be any sorrow (*Luke Phillips*)
31. *Recitative*: He was cut off out of the land of the living (*Katy McAdam, soprano*)

32. *Aria*: But thou didst not leave his soul in hell (*Katy McAdam*)
33. *Chorus*: Lift up your heads, O ye gates
34. *Aria*: How beautiful are the feet (*Madeline Smith, soprano*)
35. *Chorus*: Their sound is gone out
36. *Aria*: Why do the nations so furiously rage together? (*James Baer, bass*)
37. *Chorus*: Let us break their bonds asunder
38. *Chorus*: Hallelujah

### Part Three

39. *Aria*: I know that my redeemer liveth (*Anna Kirby, soprano*)
40. *Chorus*: Since by man came death
41. *Recitative*: Behold, I tell you a mystery (*Graham Kirk*)
42. *Aria*: The trumpet shall sound (*Graham Kirk*)
43. *Recitative*: Then shall be brought to pass (*David Gabbe, alto*)
44. *Duet*: O death, where is thy sting? (*David Gabbe, alto; Andy Craig, tenor*)
45. *Chorus*: But thanks be to God
46. *Chorus*: Worthy is the Lamb that was slain

## Performance note from Pegasus

Although *Messiah* is most commonly performed today with a quartet of soloists separate from the choir, in tonight's concert the solos are divided between a dozen or so members of Pegasus. The work's premiere featured a combination of professional and choral soloists, so there was a precedent for this from the beginning. One advantage (apart from giving numerous singers a chance to shine!) is that the different soloists' voices can highlight the varied moods of the oratorio. For example, *The people that walked in darkness* and *The trumpet shall sound* are both bass arias, but the text and music of each suggest very different qualities of sound. Where an aria follows on from a recitative, they are taken by the same soloist, because the aria elaborates upon the idea that the recitative expressed.

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**Matthew Altham** (conductor) has been the director of Pegasus since 2001. He began conducting choirs while studying at Oxford University and led performances of music by Poulenc and the major English Renaissance composers. Alongside his work as a management consultant, Matthew directs Pegasus, Vox Cordis and the London Bach Players, with whom he has performed on several occasions in Pau, France. He has toured as a conductor to Prague, Tolosa, Arezzo and Antwerp and has broadcast on BBC Radio and Classic FM. Matthew also sings regularly in the church choir of St Mary the Virgin, Bourne Street, London.



Formed in 2002, **Belsize Baroque** is one of the UK's leading amateur Baroque orchestras, performing regularly at St. James', Piccadilly and St. George's, Bloomsbury. The orchestra comprises young professionals, students and committed amateurs, performing on period instruments in an historically informed style. It collaborates regularly with leading Baroque directors such as Adrian Butterfield (Musical Director of the Tilford Bach Society and Associate Musical Director of the London Handel Festival), Matthew Truscott (Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment) and Julian Perkins (founder of Sounds Baroque) to give orchestral performances, and additionally works closely with choral groups to perform Baroque choral masterpieces. In February 2013 the orchestra performed with countertenor James Bowman in the Coram Trust's *Handel and the Hospital Chapel 1749 Birthday Concert*, a benefit concert in aid of the charitable organisation formerly known as the Foundling Hospital, with its close connections to both Handel and tonight's work, *Messiah*. In October this year Belsize Baroque will again be performing at Grosvenor Chapel in a concert to help raise funds for a charitable cause, this time on behalf of Cancer Research UK.

Additionally, the orchestra is scheduled to perform in May with the Sittingbourne Orpheus Choral Society in a performance of Bach's *St. John Passion*, and in the opening concert of Belsize Park Arts Week at St. Peter's Church Belsize Park, London NW3 in June.

For further information please see: [www.belsizebaroque.org.uk](http://www.belsizebaroque.org.uk) or visit Belsize Baroque on Facebook.

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# Handel | House Museum

25 Brook Street was home to the great Baroque composer George Frideric Handel from 1723 until his death in 1759. The only composer museum in London, this landmark address is where Handel composed some of the greatest music in history, including *Messiah*, *Zadok the Priest* and *Music for the Royal Fireworks*.

The museum celebrates Handel's life and works, displaying portraits of Handel and his contemporaries in finely restored Georgian interiors and by bringing live music back to his house. Music rehearsals, weekly concerts, family events and exhibitions take place to bring Handel's world to life.

[www.handelhouse.org](http://www.handelhouse.org)

## Charles Jennens Exhibition events

Booking line: 020 7399 1953

### Walking tour and concert

**Sunday 14 April**

**Joint ticket offer:** £20, £10 students

### Walking Tour: Charles Jennens, 11am-12.30pm

Join Martin Wyatt, Deputy Director of Handel House Museum on a Charles Jennens related walking tour to discover the life and world of this leading librettist. **Tickets:** £10

### Concert: *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, 3-4pm

As a foretaste of the London Handel Festival's complete performance on 16 April, Bridget Cunningham, with the Handel House Harmonies, will perform a selection from Handel's English ode *L'Allegro*, composed in 1740. **Tickets:** £12, £6 students