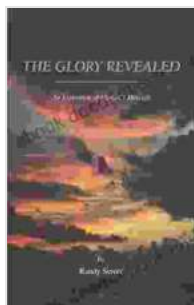


An Exposition of Handel's Messiah: A Comprehensive Guide to the Oratorio's Text, Music, and Historical Context



The Glory Revealed: An Exposition of Handel's Messiah

by Randy Seiver

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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George Frideric Handel's Messiah is one of the most beloved and frequently performed oratorios in the world. First performed in Dublin in 1742, the work has become a staple of the Christmas season, and its choruses, such as "Hallelujah" and "For Unto Us a Child Is Born," are instantly recognizable to music lovers around the globe.

Messiah is a setting of a libretto compiled by Charles Jennens from various texts in the Bible, including the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah and the New Testament accounts of his birth, life, death, and resurrection. The work is divided into three parts, each of which focuses on a different aspect of the Messiah's story.

In this exposition, we will explore the text, music, and historical context of Handel's Messiah. We will begin with a discussion of the libretto, examining its sources and structure. We will then turn our attention to the music, analyzing its style, orchestration, and vocal writing. Finally, we will place Messiah in its historical context, discussing its composition, reception, and enduring legacy.

The Libretto

The libretto of Messiah was compiled by Charles Jennens, a wealthy English landowner and patron of the arts. Jennens was a devout Christian, and he was deeply interested in the Bible. He began work on the libretto in 1741, and he drew on a variety of sources, including the Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah and the New Testament accounts of the life of Jesus Christ.

The libretto is divided into three parts. Part I focuses on the prophecies of the Messiah and his birth. Part II tells the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Part III is a celebration of the Messiah's victory over death and his reign in heaven.

Jennens' libretto is a masterful work of poetry. It is both eloquent and moving, and it captures the essence of the Christian message. The libretto has been praised by critics for its clarity, its dramatic power, and its ability to inspire listeners.

The Music

The music of Messiah is a reflection of Handel's genius as a composer. The work is written in a Baroque style, which is characterized by its use of counterpoint, fugue, and other complex musical forms. Handel also

employs a wide variety of orchestration, including strings, winds, and brass. The vocal writing is demanding, but it is also incredibly expressive, and it allows the singers to convey the full range of emotions that are present in the text.

One of the most striking features of Messiah is its use of choruses. The choruses are often large-scale and dramatic, and they convey the full power of the Christian message. Some of the most famous choruses in Messiah include "Hallelujah," "For Unto Us a Child Is Born," and "Worthy Is the Lamb." These choruses have become iconic works of music, and they are often performed outside of the context of the oratorio.

In addition to the choruses, Messiah also contains a number of beautiful arias. The arias are more intimate and personal than the choruses, and they allow the singers to explore the individual emotions of the characters in the story. Some of the most famous arias in Messiah include "He Shall Feed His Flock," "I Know That My Redeemer Liveth," and "The Trumpet Shall Sound." These arias are showcases for the vocal talents of the singers, and they are often performed as concert pieces.

The Historical Context

Messiah was composed at a time of great religious and political upheaval in Europe. The Protestant Reformation had led to a split in the Christian church, and there was a great deal of tension between Catholics and Protestants. In England, the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 had just been defeated, and the country was still reeling from the effects of the war.

In this context, Messiah was a message of hope and reconciliation. The work celebrated the birth of Jesus Christ, and it offered a vision of a world

where peace and harmony would reign. Messiah was an immediate success, and it quickly became one of the most popular oratorios in the world. The work has continued to be performed regularly ever since, and it remains a powerful testament to the power of music to inspire and uplift.

Handel's Messiah is a masterpiece of music and a timeless work of art. The work's text, music, and historical context combine to create a powerful and moving experience for listeners of all ages. Messiah is a work that deserves to be heard and enjoyed by generations to come.

Additional Resources

- [The Handel Messiah website](#)
- [A performance of Handel's Messiah](#)
- [A recording of Handel's Messiah](#)

Images

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NOVELLO'S ORIGINAL OCTAVO
EDITION

HANDEL.

THE

MESSIAH

EDITED BY VINCENT NOVELLO.

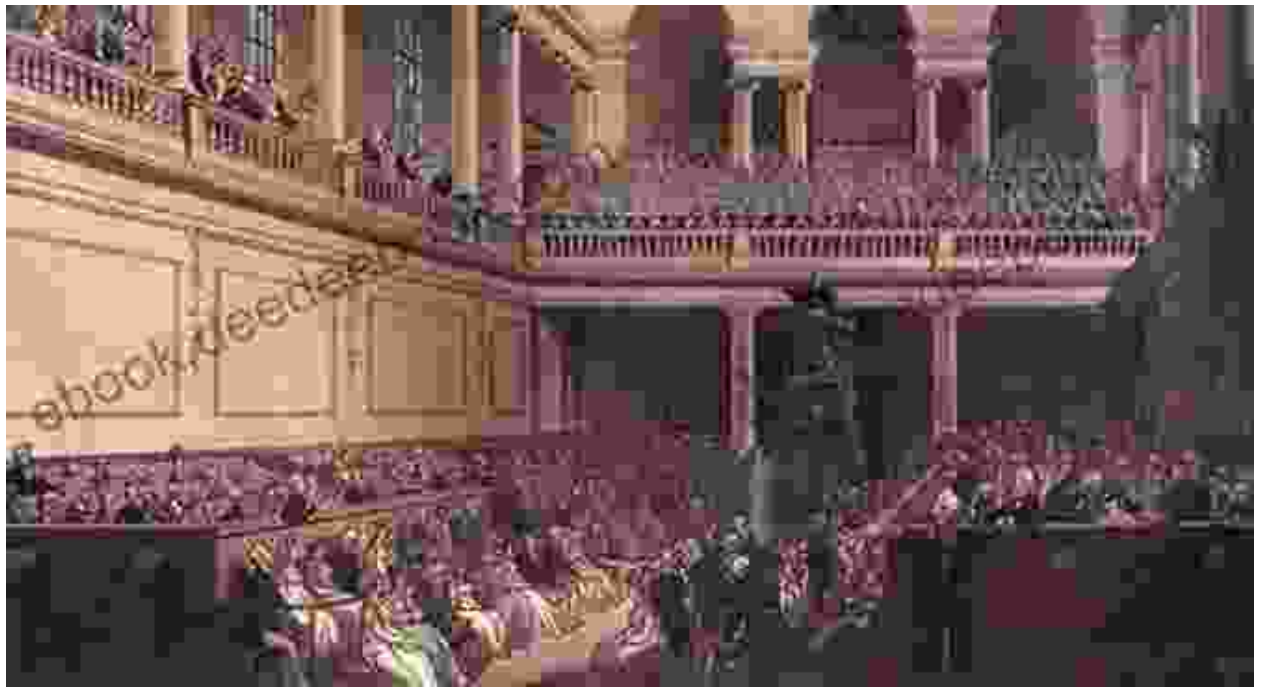
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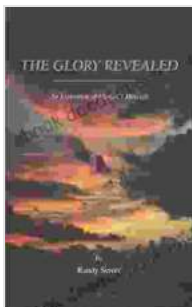
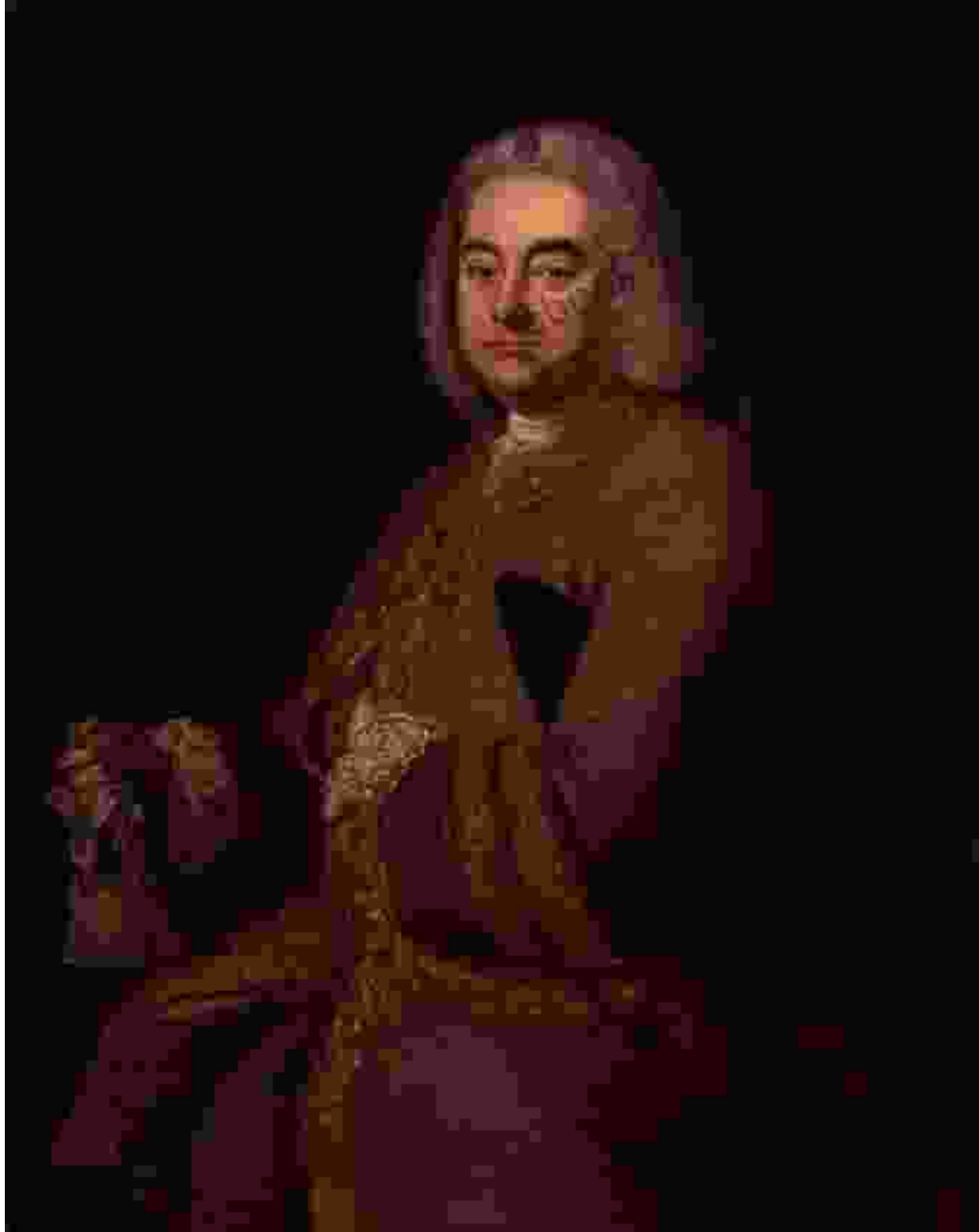
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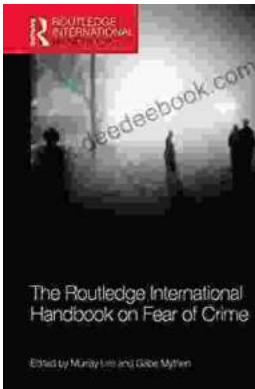
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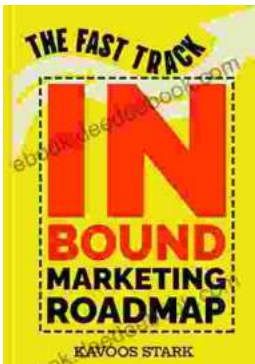
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