



Handel – Messiah

Carolyn Sampson Soprano
James Way Tenor
Benson Wilson Baritone
St Martin's Voices
Academy of St Martin in the Fields
With light projections by Nina Dunn Studio

Available to watch as many times as you like from 7.30pm, Thursday 8 April 2021, and available for 30 days.

St Martin-in-the-Fields Trafalgar Square London WC2N 4JJ 020 7766 1100

PROGRAMME

Messiah — George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

i. Sinfonia (Overture)

ii. Comfort ye (Recit: Tenor)

iii. Ev'ry valley (Air: Tenor)

iv. And the glory of the Lord (Chorus)

v. For behold (Recit: Bass)

vi. For unto us a child is born (Chorus)

vii. Pifa

viii. There were shepherds ... And lo, the angel (Recit: Soprano)

ix. And the angel said ... And suddenly there was (Recit: Soprano)

x. Glory to God (Chrous)

xi. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion (Air: Soprano)

xii. His yoke is easy (Chorus)

xiii. Behold the Lamb of God (Chorus)

xix. Surely he hath borne our griefs (Chorus)

xx. And with his stripes (Chorus)

xxi. All we like sheep (Chorus)

xxii. All they that see him (Recit: Tenor)

xxiii. He trusted in God (Chorus)

xxiv. How beautiful are the feet (Air: Soprano)

xxv. Hallelujah (Chorus)

xxvi. I know that my redeemer liveth (Air: Soprano)

xxvii. Since by man came death (Chorus)

xxviii. Behold I tell you a mystery (Recit: Bass)

xxix. The trumpet shall sound (Air: Bass)

xxx. Worthy is the Lamb (Chorus)

We have chosen not to title each movement in this concert to allow the narrative of the music and visuals to flow uninterrupted.

PROGRAMME NOTES

by Sarah Maxted

This special performance of Handel's *Messiah* combines baroque and modern artistry to create a unique audio-visual experience. There exists a natural historical affinity between the musical genius of Handel and the iconic baroque architecture of St Martin-in-the-Fields. This aesthetic relationship can be seen in a wholly new light in this concert, thanks to the stunning projections by Nina Dunn Studio which illuminate the church's East Window with imagery from The Saint John's Bible.

St Martin-in-the-Fields has existed as a parish church since the twelfth century, but at the start of the eighteenth century the old building was in total disrepair and a replacement was needed. The commission was won by James Gibbs (1682-1754), a contemporary of Handel and a leading architect of the day. In his design for the church, Gibbs drew on the classical training he had received in Rome with papal architect Carlo Fontana. The interior is bright and spacious, divided by Corinthian columns and decorated with plasterwork by two Italian stucco masters, Giuseppe Artari and Giovanni Battista Bagutti. Gibbs' distinctive exterior for St Martin's has been replicated by architects all over the world, from the USA to India. The iconic portico opens onto the north-east corner of Trafalgar Square in a way that is invitational rather than imposing and, since its completion in 1726, the church has remained an oasis from the commotion of the world outside.

When St Martin's underwent an extensive renewal project in 2008, one of the most striking visual changes within the church was the East Window. The former stained-glass window was replaced with a new design by Iranian artist Shirazeh Houshiary (b. 1955). It features the rippled image of a cross around a circular motif, warped like light reflected in water. The etched glass of the central ellipse has an opalescent brilliance which interacts with the changing light of day, radiating subtle shifts of mood and season. The minimal, monochrome grid of Houshiary's design is both classic and thoroughly contemporary, open to interpretation and personal reflection.

Around the time of St Martin's restoration, another ambitious project of devotion and craftsmanship was completed: The Saint John's Bible. Commissioned by Saint John's Abbey and University in central Minnesota in 1998, this was an extraordinary undertaking to create a modern hand-written, hand-illuminated Bible in the ancient Benedictine tradition. The decade of painstaking work was carried out by renowned British calligrapher Donald Jackson (b. 1938) and his team in Wales. In 2009, St Martin's was presented with all seven volumes of the Heritage Edition of the Bible. For this performance of *Messiah*, the breathtakingly rich colours and resplendent gold leaf of The Saint John's Bible are projected in vivid new configurations by Nina Dunn Studio. The images are deconstructed and reconstructed to bring fresh relevance to the text and music of Handel's beloved oratorio and its special resonance in the sacred space of St Martin-in-the-Fields.

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759) was born in the German town of Halle but attained his greatest fame whilst living and working in London, composing Italian-style operas, oratorios and instrumental works. After honing his prodigious musical skills in Halle and Hamburg, the young Handel spent several years travelling around Italy, taking inspiration from the foremost operatic composers and librettists of the age and building a considerable reputation for his own talents. Handel wrote several cantatas and dramatic works during this period and his first fully-Italian opera *Rodrigo* premiered in Florence in 1707. His professional connections and patrons (including Prince George of Hanover, the future King of Great Britain and Ireland) then pointed him in the direction of London, where his 1711 opera *Rinaldo* was an immediate success. The highly fashionable Italian style of his operas brought widespread acclaim and enticed Handel to take up permanent residence in London, eventually becoming a naturalised British citizen in 1727. When the public fervour for Italian operas began to fade, Handel responded creatively; he applied his dramatic flair instead to writing English-language oratorios. These can be defined as large-scale concert works, usually with sacred subject matter suitable for performance in churches.

In the summer of 1741 Handel accepted an invitation to give a season of concerts in Ireland. Around the same time, he received a new libretto from Charles Jennens (1700-1773), an artistic patron and scholar who had also written the libretto for Handel's earlier oratorio *Saul*. Of his latest text, Jennens wrote: "I hope [Handel] will lay out his whole Genius & Skill upon it, that the Composition may excell all his former Compositions, as the Subject excells every other subject. The Subject is *Messiah*." The resulting oratorio was indeed a work of sublime excellence which, since its premiere in Dublin in April 1742, has become one of the most popularly performed choral works of all time.

Messiah is structured in three parts, with biblical texts arranged by Jennens in a series of recitatives, arias and choruses. It tells the story of Christ's coming, not just by depicting the events of the gospels, but by reflecting on the theological significance of a Messiah whose sacrifice brings redemption for humankind.

Part I begins with Isaiah's prophecy of salvation, foretelling the virgin birth, the annunciation to the shepherds and the glory of Christ on earth. The festive joy of the Saviour's birth is summarised in the much-loved chorus *For unto us a Child is born* and the soprano narrative solos which reach their climax in the incandescent aria *Rejoice greatly*, *O daughter of Zion*.

In stark contrast, *Part II* introduces the anguish of Christ's Passion with the solemn chorus *Behold the Lamb of God*. Through a sequence of evocative and dramatically contrasting choruses, Handel emphasises the magnitude of Christ's suffering and its profound consequences for humanity, atoning for "the iniquity of us all". Part II concludes with the irresistible zeal of the *Hallelujah* chorus, celebrating the everlasting omnipotence of the Lord.

Part III reflects on the promise of eternal life, Judgement Day and the Messiah's ultimate victory over sin and death. This section contains two of the work's finest arias, the exquisitely moving *I know that my Redeemer liveth* and the inimitably rousing *The trumpet shall sound*. The oratorio finds a fittingly majestic finale in the chorus *Worthy is the Lamb* with its contrapuntal richness and extravagantly surging *Amen* conclusion.

TEXTS

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. 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: 1–2a, 3

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low: the crooked straight and the rough places plain.

Isaiah 40: 4

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

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

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

There were shepherds, abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. **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: 8b-9

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 there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying:

Luke 2: 13

Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men.

Luke 2: 14

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold, thy king cometh unto thee.

He is the righteous Saviour and he shall speak peace unto the heathen.

Zechariah 9: 9a, 10b

His yoke is easy and his burthen is light.

Matthew 11: 30

Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.

John 1: 29b

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: 4a, 5a

And with his stripes we are healed.

Isaiah 53: 5b

All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way. And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53: 6

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 that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, if he delight in him.

Psalm 22: 8

How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.

Romans 10: 15b

Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.
King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. Hallelujah.

Revelation 19: 6b; 11: 15b; 19: 16b

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

Job 19: 25-26; 1 Corinthians 15: 20

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.

1 Corinthians 15: 21-22

Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep,

but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

1 Corinthians 15: 51–52a

The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1 Corinthians 15: 52

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his blood, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing and honour, glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.

Revelation 5: 12b, 13b



Academy of St Martin in the Fields (c. Benjamin Ealovega)

Our thanks to The National Lottery Heritage Fund, for supporting the Fresh Horizons concert series at St Martin-in-the-Fields.

This concert was pre-recorded in the church and edited together before broadcast. The performers and technical crew carefully adhere to all current government regulations for COVID-19.

PERFORMERS

Carolyn Sampson Soprano
James Way Tenor
Benson Wilson Baritone

Andrew Earis Conductor

Sebastian Frost Sound Design

Nina Dunn Projection Design
Based on illustrations taken from The Saint John's Bible

St Martin's Voices

Academy of St Martin in the Fields



Academy of St Martin in the Fields

Violin I

Tomo Keller Gabrielle Painter Matthew Ward Fiona Brett

Violin II

Martin Burgess Jennifer Godson Rebecca Scott

Viola

Robert Smissen Ian Rathbone

Cello

Will Schofield Juliet Welchman

Bass

Lynda Houghton

Oboe

Tom Blomfield Rachel Ingleton

Bassoon

Julie Price

Trumpet

Neil Brough Anthony Cross

Harpsichord

John Constable

Timpani

Tristan Fry

St Martin's Voices

Soprano

Hilary Cronin Victoria Meteyard Daisy Walford

Alto

Sophie Overin Helen Stanley Sophie Timms **Tenor**

Jack Granby Richard Robbins Will Wright

Bass

George Cook Michael Lafferty Ben Tomlin **Carolyn Sampson** has enjoyed notable successes worldwide in repertoire ranging from early baroque to the present day.



On the opera stage she has appeared with English National Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Scottish Opera and Opéra de Paris, amongst others, and she regularly performs at the BBC Proms and with orchestras including the Bach Collegium Japan, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic and with numerous orchestras in the USA.

A consummate recitalist, Carolyn Sampson appears regularly at the Wigmore Hall and has given recitals at the Leeds Lieder, Saintes and Aldeburgh Festivals as well as at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Barcelona, Freiburg, Oper Frankfurt, Vienna Konzerthaus, and recently her debut recital tour of Japan.

Carolyn has an extensive discography appearing on the Harmonia Mundi, BIS, Hyperion, Virgin Classics, DG Archiv, Linn Records, BIS and Vivat labels. Her recording with Ex Cathedra, 'A French Baroque Diva' won the recital award in the 2015 Gramophone Awards, and her recent disc of Bach Cantatas with Freiburger Barockorchester was awarded a Diapason D'or.

Her debut song recital disc 'Fleurs', with Joseph Middleton, was followed by 'A Verlaine Songbook', exploring settings of the poetry of Paul Verlaine, as well as 'Lost is my Quiet', a duet disc with the countertenor Iestyn Davies, 'A Soprano's Schubertiade', 'Reason in Madness' and most recently 'The Contrast - English Poetry in Song', all for the BIS label.

Born in Sussex, **James Way** was awarded 2nd Prize in the 62nd Kathleen Ferrier Awards. James is a former Britten-Pears Young Artist, a laureate of the Les Arts Florissants 'Jardin

des Voix', and holds an Independent Opera Voice Fellowship. He was awarded the Rising Stars prize by the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment.

Opera credits include Purcell *King Arthur* for Staatsoper Berlin; Holy Fool *Boris Godunov* with the Philharmonia Orchestra; the Ballad Singer *Owen Wingrave* for Aldeburgh and Edinburgh International Festivals; Davy in Panufnik *Silver Birch* for Garsington Opera; the Young King in Benjamin *Lessons in Love* and Violence at St Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre, and Sellem in a worldwide tour of *The Rake's Progress* conducted by Barbara Hannigan.



James Way (c. Ben McKee)

James works with conductors including René Jacobs, William Christie, Christophe Rousset, Christian Curnyn, Harry Bicket, Trevor Pinnock, John Butt, Douglas Boyd and Barbara Hannigan.

Plans for this season and beyond include Stravinsky *Pulcinella* with the BBC Scottish Symphony and Copenhagen Philharmonic orchestras, Handel *Messiah* with the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston, and a tour of Handel *L'Allegro*, *il Penseroso ed il Moderato* with Les Arts Florissants.

Benson Wilson (c. Nick Rutter)



New Zealand-born Sāmoan baritone **Benson Wilson** is the winner of the prestigious 64th Kathleen Ferrier Award, the Most Outstanding Overseas Performer of the Royal Overseas League Competition, the Worshipful Company of Musicians Award, and was the 2018 winner of the Joan Sutherland & Richard Bonynge Foundation Award and the People's Choice Award. He is a Samling and a former National Opera Studio Young Artist.

In 20/21 Benson Wilson joins English National Opera as a Harewood Artist, opening the season as Schaunard *La Bohème* for their Drive & Live production. On the concert platform he gives a recital tour of New Zealand including for Auckland Chamber Concert Hall, Hawkes Bay Opera House and Auckland Opera Studio, and later gives UK recitals for Oxford Lieder and King's Lynn Festivals with pianists Sholto Kynoch and Lucy Colquhoun. Further ahead engagements include house debuts for New Zealand Opera and Queensland Opera, as well as further roles for ENO.

Previous operatic roles include John Shears *Paul Bunyan* for English National Opera, John Sorel *The Consul* at Welsh National Opera (cover), Mirza *Der Gesang der Zauberinsel* at the Salzburger Festspiele as a 2019 Salzburg Young Singer, Marullo *Rigoletto* for Glyndebourne on Tour, and Schabernack *Le Grand Macabre* with London Symphony Orchestra.

Andrew Earis is Director of Music at St Martin-in-the- Fields where he oversees the music programme at this busy London church. Andrew is a graduate of the Royal College of Music

and Imperial College, London, and holds a PhD from the University of Manchester.

Recent performances include Mozart's *Mass in C minor* with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and Beethoven *Mass in C* with Southbank Sinfonia. He has given organ recitals in venues including King's College Chapel, Cambridge, Westminster Cathedral, Westminster Abbey and Washington National Cathedral, and has performed as soloist in performances of Poulenc's Organ Concerto and Saint-Saëns' *Organ Symphony*.



Andrew Earis

In addition to his duties at St Martin's, Andrew is a regular contributor to BBC Radio's religious output as a producer of programmes including Radio 4 *Sunday Worship* and Radio 3 *Choral Evensong*.

Trained at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama, **Sebastian Frost** has been the Sound Designer for a unique and diverse range of hundreds of projects from West End,



Sebastian Frost

Broadway and European theatre productions to artistic installations, large scale public events, temporary and permanent exhibitions, product launches, awards ceremonies and other live events around the world. Theatre designs include *The Last Ship* (UK, US, Canada), 170 Days in Nanjing (Nanjing Opera), Memoirs of a Sailor (Kuwait National Theatre), Kiss Me Kate (WNO), Jekyll & Hyde (Old Vic), Queen Coal (Sheffield Crucible), White Christmas, Annie, A Christmas Carol (West Yorkshire Playhouse), Buxton Opera Festival and Grange Park Opera, Calamity Jane (Watermill & UK Tour), The Witches (Curve), If Only (Chichester), The Lion, The Witch & The Wardrobe (Kensington Gardens), Decade (Headlong), Antony & Cleopatra (Liverpool Playhouse),

Little Shop Of Horrors (Birmingham Rep), The Magic Flute (Duke of York's), The Common Pursuit, Take Flight, Total Eclipse (Menier), Trainspotting (UK Tour), Tonight's The Night (Victoria Palace), Mysteries (Queens), Kat And The Kings (Vaudeville, Broadway, Cape Town). He has a close working relationship with major equipment manufacturers in the UK and globally, and was the first to bring object-based sound design to musical theatre. He was awarded the first ever Tony Award nomination for Best Sound Design of a Musical on Broadway in 2008 for Sunday In The Park With George.

Nina Dunn has been working as a Video and Projection Designer for live events and theatre for nearly fifteen years and is one of the most prominent female artists in her field. Her work spans a wide range of shows, working internationally across theatre, opera, dance, musical theatre, immersive, fashion, opening ceremonies and live events and public art. She is also an educator within her industry, helping to devise and deliver undergraduate courses and mentoring programs in leading UK institutions.

She returns to St Martin's ten years after her first concert collaboration with the church and is a former member of the Choir of St Martin-in-the-Fields.



Nina Dunn (c. Rah Petherbridge Photography

Recent public art includes work for Durham Lumière and Streetwise Opera.

Theatre credits include City of Angels (West End); 9 to 5 The Musical (West End / UK Tour); Der Freischütz, Macbeth (Wiener Staatsoper); The Flying Dutchman (ENO); La Traviata, Hippolyte et Aricie (Glyndebourne); Cinderella (Imagine Theatre); A Museum in Baghdad, Venice Preserved, Miss Littlewood, The Seven Acts of Mercy, Volpone (RSC); Plenty, Copenhagen, Fiddler on the Roof, Forty Years On (Chichester Festival Theatre), Cbeebies Hansel and Gretel (BBC); In the Night Garden Live (UK Tour); Going Through (Bush Theatre); Cookies (Theatre Royal Haymarket); The Mountaintop (Young Vic); No Man's Land (Tour/West End); Alice's Adventures Underground (LET / EBP) The Assassination of Katie Hopkins (Theatr Clwyd), The Box of Delights (Wilton's Music Hall), The Rocky Horror Show (European Tour); Spring Gala (Royal Opera House), Phantom of the Opera (Cameron Mackintosh, UK/US Tour)

St Martin's Voices is one of London's finest and most flexible vocal ensembles. As the flagship professional choral ensemble of St Martin-in-the-Fields, they sing for concerts, broadcasts and special services at St Martin's and beyond. Recent years have seen tours to the USA and South Africa and performances alongside the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, London Mozart Players, Southbank Sinfonia and Will Todd Ensemble. Their concert repertoire ranges from Bach *Mass in B minor* to Brahms *Requiem*, Purcell *Dido and Aeneas* to Parry *Songs of Farewell*.

At the heart of St Martin's Voices performance schedule is Great Sacred Music, a hugely varied weekly exploration of our religious heritage in words and music. This is accompanied by regular podcast episodes, most recently as part of the series The Song and The Story with Rev Dr Sam Wells.

St Martin's Voices feature frequently in BBC broadcasts including Radio 3 *Choral Evensong*, Radio 4 *Sunday Worship* and *Daily Service*. In addition, they have sung for a variety of televised events and services, along with performances at Lambeth Palace, the Houses of Parliament and Greenbelt Festival. St Martin's Voices can also be heard on CD recordings, including two releases in collaboration with composer Will Todd, *Christmas in Blue* (2013) and *Passion Music* (2019).

In response to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, St Martin's Voices have extended their digital recording projects, sharing regular online services and concerts, as well as featuring in the Church of England online worship resources that have attracted more than 40 million views across digital platforms.

The **Academy of St Martin in the Fields** is one of the world's finest chamber orchestras, renowned for fresh, brilliant interpretations of the greatest orchestral music.

Formed by Sir Neville Marriner in 1958, the Academy gave its first performance in its namesake church in November 1959. Through unrivalled live performances and a vast recording output the Academy quickly gained an enviable international reputation for its distinctive, polished and refined sound. With over 500 releases in a much-vaunted discography and a comprehensive international touring programme, the name and sound of the Academy is known and loved by classical audiences throughout the world.

Today the Academy is led by Music Director and virtuoso violinist Joshua Bell, retaining the collegiate spirit and flexibility of the original small, conductor-less ensemble which has become an Academy hallmark. Under Bell's direction, and with the support of Leader/Director Tomo Keller and Principal Guest Conductor Murray Perahia, the Academy continues to push the boundaries of play-directed performance to new heights, presenting symphonic repertoire and chamber music on a grand scale at prestigious venues around the world.

When COVID-19 sparked lockdowns across the globe, the Academy established a digital campaign to fund the production of new performance videos. In addition, the orchestra launched a new concert series at its spiritual home of St Martin-in-the-Fields in London's Trafalgar Square. The series – the first of its kind in the orchestra's home city for many years – has seen the Academy collaborate with internationally artists on concert programmes devised by members of the orchestra.

Other online concerts from St Martin-in-the-Fields:

Academy of St Martin in the Fields:

Bach and Brahms

Thursday 11 March, 7.30pm

Peter Donohoe

Thursday 18 March, 7.30pm

Stainer - The Crucifixion

Thursday 1 April, 7.30pm

Handel - Messiah

Thursday 8 April, 7.30pm

The Gesualdo Six

Thursday 15 April, 7.30pm

Academy of St Martin in the Fields

with John Butt

Thursday 22 April, 7.30pm

Chineke! Chamber Ensemble

Thursday 29 April, 7.30pm

All concerts are available to watch from 30 days after their release date



A beautiful spring-themed online concert, **The Gift of Life**. Taking inspiration from the joyful colours of spring, this uplifting concert is available to stream online now from the comfort of your own home, for just £10.

Purchase tickets online at <u>www.smitf.org/gift-of-life</u>.

As the impact of COVID-19 continues, we need people like you to keep supporting us and helping the musicians we work with.

To help us keep playing on, please consider making a donation today: www.smitf.org/donate

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