

■ **Nantwich Choral Society** ■

**FORTHCOMING CONCERTS**

*Saturday 19th December 1998 at 7.30pm*  
CAROLS FOR CHOIR AND AUDIENCE

*Saturday 8th May 1999 at 7.30pm*  
MONTEVERDI - VESPERS AND MAGNIFICAT  
OF 1610  
ORCHESTRA OF THE GOLDEN AGE  
HIS MAJESTY'S SAGBUTS AND CORNETTS

Nantwich Choral Society is supported by  
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# HANDEL MESSIAH



**SATURDAY 5th DECEMBER 1998**

**The Parish Church of St. Mary, Nantwich  
at 7.30pm.**

 **Nantwich Choral Society** 

NANTWICH SINFONIA  
(Leader: Joanne Quigley)

Sasha Johnson Manning, *soprano*

Adrienne Murray, *contralto*

Stewart Armstrong, *tenor*

Richard Strivens, *bass*

Andrew Mildinhall, *harpsichord*

Conducted by  
Patrick Larley

NATIONAL FEDERATION  
OF MUSIC SOCIETIES



~ PROGRAMME ~

MESSIAH - George Frideric Handel (1685 - 1759)

PART THE FIRST

Sinfonia	
Comfort ye my people	(tenor)
Every valley shall be exalted	(tenor)
And the glory of the Lord	(chorus)
Thus saith the Lord	(bass)
But who may abide the day of his coming?	(bass)
And he shall purify	(chorus)
Behold, a virgin shall conceive	(contralto)
O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion	(contralto & chorus)
For behold, darkness shall cover the earth	(bass)
The people that walked in darkness	(bass)
For unto us a child is born	(chorus)
Pifa	
There were shepherds abiding in the field	(soprano)
And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them	(soprano)
And the angel said unto them	(soprano)
And suddenly there was with the angel	(soprano)
Glory to God	(chorus)
Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion	(soprano)
Then shall the eyes of the blind	(contralto)
He shall feed his flock	(contralto & soprano)
His yoke is easy, and his burthen is light	(chorus)

~ INTERVAL ~

PART THE SECOND

Behold the Lamb of God	(chorus)
He was despised	(contralto)
Surely he hath borne our griefs	(chorus)
And with his stripes we are healed	(chorus)
All we like sheep have gone astray	(chorus)
All they that see him laugh him to scorn	(tenor)
He trusted in God	(chorus)
Thy rebuke hath broken his heart	(tenor)
Behold, and see if there be any sorrow	(tenor)
He was cut off out of the land of the living	(tenor)
But thou didst not leave his soul in hell	(tenor)
Lift up your heads, O ye gates	(chorus)
The Lord gave the word	(chorus)
How beautiful are the feet	(soprano)
Why do the nations so furiously rage together?	(bass)
Let us break their bonds asunder	(chorus)
He that dwelleth in heaven	(tenor)
Thou shalt break them	(tenor)
Hallelujah	(chorus)

PART THE THIRD

I know that my redeemer liveth	(soprano)
Since by man came death	(chorus)
Behold, I tell you a mystery	(bass)
The trumpet shall sound	(bass)
Then shall be brought to pass	(contralto)
Worthy is the Lamb that was slain	(chorus)

"You scoundrel, did you not tell me that you could sing at sight?"

"Yes, sir", said Mr. Jansen, the printer, "and so I can, but not at first sight."

So retells the musicologist Dr. Burney of the disastrous run-through of the *Messiah* choruses by the Chester Cathedral lay-clerks with Handel himself, in 1741. Handel was staying at the 'Golden Falcon' in Chester on his way to Dublin for the first performance of the work and it was the chorus-fugue 'And With His Stripes' that really caught out poor Mr. Jansen. Nevertheless, *Messiah* proved to be a major triumph for Handel and despite thousands of hearings and a multitude of distortions of the composer's intentions, it has survived as one of the greatest choral works of all time.

The work is a compound of three distinct styles; those of the English anthem, the German Passion and the dramatic oratorio - influenced strongly by the Italian opera style.

Charles Jennens, the librettist, drew on passages from the Prophets, the Gospels, the Pauline Epistles and the Revelation of John. His text cleverly accommodated Handel's genius to the spiritual climate of the Church of England. Handel was not a religious composer (which is not to say that he was not a devout man) and it was natural for him to tackle such a subject in a manner at once meditative, theatrical, and "of the earth earthy". Streatfield applied this phrase to the *Hallelujah* chorus, in which the line from Restoration church music, through the Chandos and Coronation Anthems, found its most popular expression. Many of the *Messiah* choruses are of this type. There is no doubt that the unusual prominence of the chorus (with the exception of *Israel in Egypt*, *Messiah* contains fewer airs and a higher proportion of choral writing than the other oratorios), together with the sobriety of the scoring and the comparative absence of vocal display, has commended the work to the British public by emphasising its relationship to the anthem.

The point at which Handel comes nearest to the German Passion is, as we should expect, the scene of the mocking of Christ in Part II. The ferocious chorus *He trusted in God*, of which Burney wrote "Handel has given the effect, not of the taunts and presumption of an individual, but the scoffs and scorns of a confused multitude, is related to the old turba (crowd), familiar to us (though not to Handel) through Bach's superb examples. Some of the following movements, especially the recitatives, bring us close to the *St. Matthew Passion*.

More prominent is the dramatic style of the Old Testament oratorios and even the operas. We find this in the accompanied recitatives and in some of the airs, especially those for low voice.

The score is prefaced by three quotations supplied by Jennens for the first performance in Dublin. *Majora canamus* (*Let us sing of greater things*) is an appropriate reminder of Virgil's Fourth Pastoral, certain lines of which appear to echo the prophecies of Isaiah; the verses from Timothy and Colossians fittingly summarise the overall theme of this great work.

*And without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness; God was manifested in flesh, justified by the spirit, seen of the angels, preached among the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.*

(I Timothy III, 16)

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

(Colossians II, 3)

**SASHA JOHNSON MANNING (soprano)** Sasha trained at the Royal College of Music where she studied voice, cello and composition. She now has a busy career combining teaching, conducting and singing. As both soloist and ensemble singer she has taken part in numerous broadcasts and recordings with the BBC Northern Singers (now the Britten Singers) and sings regularly for BBC Radio 4 Daily Service, for which she has also been Musical Director.

Sasha has toured Germany with the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields singing Haydn's "Creation" and has sung in Holland and Belgium with Paco Penas' "Missa Flamenco". She toured France and Germany with the Deller Consort and has performed "Dido and Aeneas" in Italy, Sicily and on French Television.

Sasha is Director of Music at St. Mary's Parish Church in Bowdon and also conducts The Bowdon Singers. With these choirs she has performed in many of the great cathedrals and churches throughout the country and as a keen composer has had her settings of the Evening Canticles performed in York, Winchester, Worcester and Wells cathedrals.

**ADRIENNE MURRAY (contralto)** was born in the Isle of Man, and is a graduate of Huddersfield Polytechnic and the Royal Northern College of Music. She has an impressive list of operatic solo roles to her name, having sung with the Monte Carlo Opera, at Covent Garden, with the English Bach Festival, and in Athens, Sienna, Seville, Madrid, Vichy, Valencia and Poland.

Adrienne has made numerous festival appearances and has worked with many distinguished conductors, including the late Sir George Solti and Sir Charles Groves, Richard Hickox, Antonio do Almeida, Stephen Wilkinson, Stephen Cleobury, Nicholas Cleobury, Marc Minkowski, Charles Farncombe and Jean-Claude Malgoire. She has a busy concert and recital programme, and has broadcast and recorded with the Britten Singers (formerly the BBC Northern Singers).

Last year she returned to Civic Hills Open Air Theatre to sing the role of Emelia in Verdi's *Otello* with Jeffrey Lawton and Donald Maxwell. Under the direction of Alison Sutcliffe (Royal Shakespeare director) and with members of the Cotswold Theatre Group she has been performing a programme entitled *What is Love?* The venues include the Holywell Rooms and the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford, Tewkesbury and Loughborough festivals and the Erin Arts Centre in the Isle of Man. Their next engagements are in Leicestershire, at the Warwick festival and the Purcell Room in London.

**STEWART ARMSTRONG (tenor)** born in Manchester, Stewart has been singing since school days although the voice has changed somewhat since he won the first prize as a boy treble. He has studied with Hilda Griffiths, Mollie Petrie and is currently with Honor Sheppard.

He has sung a variety of roles in opera, operetta and musicals, including Tamino (*The Magic Flute*), Satyavan (*Savitri*), Nemorino (*L'Elisir d'Amore*), Dick Dauntless, Marco Frederic and Fairfax (G&S), Pierre (*Bless the Bride*), Cable (*South Pacific*), Camille (*Merry Widow*) and Pirelli (*Sweeney Todd*). He also enjoys oratorio and recital and has sung The Evangelist in Bach's St. Matthew Passion, Samson, The Messiah, The Creation, Elijah, Bach's B Minor Mass, The Kingdom, Mozart Requiem and Britten's St. Nicholas.

Recently he appeared at Theatr Cylwyd as one of 'The Alternative Three Tenors' and took part in an opera workshop with Diana Palmerston and David Palmer in Portsmouth.

In February he will be teaming up with John Gough for a recital of songs by Schumann, Faure, Quilter and Ireland as well as some popular songs from the shows for The Penley Music Society.

**RICHARD STRIVENS (bass)** Richard Strivens was born in Thanet, Kent. He studied at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester and the Britten-Pears School for Advanced Musical Studies in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, where he sang Collatinus in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*.

Richard made his operatic debut as Strojnik in Glyndebourne's production of Janacek's *Makropulos Case* and has sung Massenet's *Don Quichotte* for Opera Omnibus. This year Richard sang Masetto in *Don Giovanni* at the Cologne Opera with EurOperaStudio, a new pan-european young singers project and more recently sang the Count in *The Marriage of Figaro* for Pimlico Opera.

More locally, he sang Zuniga in Clontar Opera's *Carmen* in the summer and Elijah for St. George's Singers, Poynton. Richard's recent oratorio performances include Judas in Elgar's *Apostles*, Rossini *Petite Messe Solennelle* and Faure *Requiem*.

Richard is at the National Opera Studio in London and studies with Robert Dean.

**PATRICK LARLEY (conductor)** is Musical Director of Nantwich Choral Society and also conducts Stone and Ludlow Choral Societies. He is a freelance harpsichordist, organist, singer and composer and as a conductor has worked extensively with choirs and professional orchestras. As a member of the BBC Northern Singers, Patrick has broadcast regularly on Radio 3 and taken part in many of the leading music festivals in the U.K. He is also founder and director of his own vocal ensemble, Chudleigh's *Companie* and the early music group, *The Gallery Players*.

An important aspect of Patrick's musical career has been his work with young singers. He was Director of Music of St. James' Choir School in Great Grimsby, Conductor of Howell's School Girl's Choir and Director of the Chapel Choir at Ellesmere College. He founded the Maelor Young Voices and has recently launched the new Nantwich Youth Choir - affiliated to Nantwich Choral Society.

Patrick now spends a great deal of his time composing and arranging. His recent compositions include *Appearing, Shining, Distant or Near* - a setting of the great Hymn to Aten; and *Stone Circles* - an oratorio celebrating the 30th anniversary of Stone Choral Society. In 1997 he composed *On the Edge of Glory* for St. Columba's Church in Chester, which received its first performance at the 1400th anniversary celebrations of the death of St. Columba, on June 13th 1997 - performed by Chudleigh's *Companie*. Future commissions are *Psalm 150* for the 150th anniversary of Flint Parish Church; *The Farmington Suite*, for the dedication of the new organ in Farmington Church in Gloucestershire; and a *Mass for the Millennium*, commissioned by Nantwich Choral Society. This is to be a full-scale setting of the mass in Latin for chorus, semichorus, soprano and bass soloists and orchestra. The movements will be interspersed with settings of four poems written especially for this work by local poets. The *Mass for the Millennium* will receive its world premiere on Saturday 6th May 2000 in Nantwich Parish Church.