



and  
**The Omaha Symphonic Chorus**  
 Presents  
 G. F. Handel's  
**SOLOMON**

The Omaha Symphonic Chorus  
 Dr. Greg Zielke, conductor  
 Jay Carter, Solomon  
 Anne DeVries, Queen (Part 1)  
 Karen Kness, 1<sup>st</sup> Woman and Queen of Sheba  
 Lucinda Sloan, 2<sup>nd</sup> Woman  
 Daniel Smith, Levite  
 Kevin Hanrahan, Zadok  
 The Omaha Symphony Chamber Orchestra

Sunday, May 17, 2009

3:00 P.M.

Overture (Orchestra)

**ACT 1**

Your harps and cymbals sound (Chorus)  
 Praise ye the Lord (Levite)  
 With pious heart (Chorus)  
 Almighty power (Solomon)  
 Imperial Solomon (Zadok)  
 Sacred raptures (Zadok)  
 Thou fair inhabitants (Solomon)  
 Welcome as the dawn (Solomon)  
 My blooming fair (Solomon)  
 Haste, haste to the cedar grove (Solomon)  
 When thou art absent (Queen)  
 With thee th'unsheltered (Queen)  
 Search around the world (Zadok)  
 May no rash intruder (Chorus)

**-Intermission-**

**ACT 2**

From the censor curling rise (Chorus)  
 Prais'd be the Lord (Solomon)  
 When the sun o'er yonder hills (Solomon)  
 Great Prince (Levite)  
 Thrice bless'd (Levite)  
 My sovereign liege (Attendant, Solomon, First Woman)  
 Words are weak (First Woman, Second Woman)  
 Thy sentence, great King (Second Woman)

Withhold, withhold (First Woman)  
 Can I see my infant gor'd (First Woman)  
 Israel, attend to what your king (Solomon)  
 Thrice bless'd be the king (Solomon)  
 From the east unto the west (Chorus)  
 No more shall armed bands (First Woman)  
 Beneath the vine (First Woman)  
 Swell the full chorus (Chorus)

**-Intermission-**

**ACT 3**

Sinfonia (Orchestra)  
 From Arabia's spicy shores (Queen of Sheba, Solomon)  
 Ev'ry sight these eyes behold (Queen of Sheba)  
 Sweep the string (Solomon)  
 Music spread thy voice around (Solomon, Chorus)  
 Now a different measure try (Solomon, Chorus)  
 Then at once (Solomon)  
 Draw the tear (Chorus)  
 Next the tortured (Solomon)  
 Thus rolling surges rise (Chorus)  
 Thrice happy king (Zadok)  
 Golden columns (Zadok)  
 Adieu, fair queen (Solomon)  
 Ev'ry joy that wisdom knows (Solomon, Queen of Sheba)  
 Praise the Lord (Chorus)

**-Notes-**

"Solomon"

George Frideric Handel  
 (1685-1759)

The word "oratorio" at first meant "hall for prayer," a structure built next to a church, yet also having a religious purpose. The rectangular shape of such buildings proved to be acoustically favorable to the performance of music and they became the birthplace of the musical form "oratorio." The form flourished in the early part of the 17th century, functioning as a way of countering the Reformation and attracting adherents to the Roman church. In the latter part of the 17th century, oratorios showed a tendency toward secularization, became the same length as operas, emphasized arias, often portrayed the lives of saints, and took on a definitely earthly character. They were in two parts, and a few had staged action, like operas of the time. The oratorio style had its influence of the work of Lutheran composers, resulting in dramatic music for church performance, beginning as early as in 1643. Bach's *Passions* and his *Christmas Oratorio* are examples, showing a contrast between Biblical texts and contemplative ones, and even a few choruses sung by the *turba* (the crowd.)

Handel nearly single-handedly developed the English oratorio. In the early 1730s, his career had almost met a dead end. He was essentially an opera composer, but English audiences became disaffected with his Italianate style and stayed away in droves. His first oratorio, *Esther*, appeared in 1732, used action on stage, and appeared in the Kings Theatre until the bishop of London intervened. He kept on writing both operas and oratorios, facing bankruptcy all the while, until in 1741 he wrote his last opera, *Deidamia*, which was a dismal failure. He left London for Dublin, taking with him two new works, the oratorios *Messiah* and *Samson*. Only *Messiah* (described as an "entertainment") was given, but it was a financial success, as was *Samson*, when it appeared in 1743, back in London. Handel presented an actionless opera, *Semele*, in 1744, stating that he was presenting it "after the manner of an oratorio." It was not acted, but, was described as "bawdy." *Israel in Egypt* (1738) and *Messiah* (1742-50) differ from other oratorios of Handel, in their emphasis on the use of the chorus. Although

these two are in three parts, others, including *Saul* (1738), *Judas Maccabeus* (1746), *Samson* (1742), *Joshua* (1747), *Jephtha* (1751), and of course *Solomon* (1749) are in three acts, and in their reliance on the aria and dramatic situations, are quite different the two works that emphasize the chorus. Curiously, Handel once identified as his favorite among his oratorios as *Theodora*, in three parts, also from 1749.

On May 5, 1748, Handel began composing *Solomon*, finishing it by June 13. On March 17, 1749, a newspaper advertisement described "A New Oratorio, Solomon, to be performed this day. With a concerto (6:30) p. m." The libretto of *Solomon* extolled the English monarchy, by implication. But some members of the public took an opposite view, viewing the libretto as a satirical and hostile allegory. Modern writers have found that the libretto also glorifies the king's investment in a national religion, wealth, peace (the Treaty of Aix la Chapelle was signed in October of 1748), and trade. Handel relied on individuals such as Thomas Morell (thought by some to be the author of *Solomon*) and Hamilton Newburgh to provide librettos—his command of English was lacking—although he thought that Morell overdid "iambics."

The overture has a typical (for French overture style) opening slow portion in dotted rhythms, followed by a fugal *Allegro*, but an added closing section is in dance style, in triple meter. The oratorio is in three acts, the first of which had 21 numbers (as is usual, a number of these have omitted in this and in the other acts in this performance). Nine numbers (Scene 1) extol the glory and power of God and the opening of a newly-completed temple, while the remaining twelve (comprising Scene 2) deal with the loving relationship of Solomon and his new queen. Act II, Scene 1 concerns itself with the description and praise of the wisdom of Solomon in five numbers; in Scene 2, the first eleven numbers tell the story of the two harlots ("women" in this version of the text), their dispute over the parentage of a new-born infant, and Solomon's decision in the case (I Kings 3, 16), followed by seven numbers expressing the gratitude of the first harlot and general praise for Solomon.

Act III is an exaltation of the pomp, wealth, and generosity of the monarch on the occasion of a visit by the Queen of Sheba. An instrumental introduction (often heard separately, apart from productions of the oratorio) begins the act (described by some as a masque). As the 21 numbers of the act unfold, The Queen is welcomed, she offers her admiring comments, Zadock admires the new temple (again), Solomon comments on the wealth and beauty of his kingdom, and as the Queen departs, she compliments Solomon on his wisdom and in a duet, they offer mutual good wishes.

Selections which have received particular praise include the so-called "Nightingale Chorus" at the end of Act I sung as Solomon retires with his queen ("May no rash intruder"); the chorus that opens Act II, ("From the censor curling rise"), and the chorus from Act III, number seven, ("Draw the tear from hopeless love").

The 1749 production of *Solomon* was not Handel's last word on the subject. In 1759 he gave a much shortened version of the work, possibly to stay in competition with a *serenata* of the same name by William Boyce that had performances in 1743, 1744, 1748 and 1756. Handel was even a subscriber for the 1743 performance, so he was aware of Boyce's work.

-Notes by H. Bruce Lobaugh

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