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The Messiah

"But Who May Abide The Day"

(Air For Bass)

Georg Friedrich Händel

Adapted and Edited with Instructions as to Interpretation
and Method of Study by

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Biographical Sketch, General Information and Glossary by
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"BUT WHO MAY ABIDE THE DAY."

(BASS AIR FROM THE MESSIAH).

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH—GEORG FRIEDRICH HÄNDEL.

*Born at Halle, Saxony, February 23, 1685.
Died in London, England, April 14, 1759.*

HHE father of Georg Friedrich Händel was a surgeon-barber; his one ambition for his son was that he should become a lawyer. He did all in his power to prevent the young Händel from studying music, but the boy prevailed upon an aunt to assist him in smuggling a harpsichord into the garret of his father's house, and there he practised softly in the small hours of the night, quite unknown to his father. When he was eight years old he had an opportunity to play to the Duke of Weissenfels, who was so impressed by the boy's talent that he took pains to convince the father of the futility of putting obstructions in the way of his musical development.

The father died in the year 1697, and six years later Händel, who was then sixteen years of age, journeyed forth into the world, going first to Hamburg where he obtained a position as viola player in the orchestra under the directorship of Keiser. A friendship sprang up between Händel and Mattheson, a musician and writer on musical subjects. At this time the post of organist in Lübeck became available by the death of the famous organist Buxtehude; the two friends set off together in friendly rivalry, each hoping to be successful. Together they returned, depressed yet amused, for the thoughtful Buxtehude had arranged that whoever should be appointed to the position should marry his daughter. It must be assumed that his daughter did not possess great charm or beauty.

But their friendship was to pass under a dark cloud. They quarreled over some trifling matter of orchestral rehearsals and even fought a duel one chilly morning to decide the issue. Luckily for posterity Mattheson broke his sword-point on a button of Händel's coat. They reconsidered their differences and again became fast friends; thus a mighty master of music was saved to the world.

While in Hamburg, Händel wrote a number of operas of which *Almira* was the most successful. The cold northern atmosphere, however, did not appeal to his artistic instincts. He had always admired the grace and fluency of Italian music, so with his accustomed energy he packed his small belongings and departed for southern climes. Four years were spent in the Land of Song; there he composed operas, met the celebrities of the period and imbibed much at the fountain-head of Italian opera.

After leaving Italy he was for a few months capellmeister to the Elector of Hanover, when he was again seized with the desire to wander. But it was now the fogs of England that called him. It was not long until he had established himself in the hearts of the British public and although his career of operatic composer and impresario frequently brought him into the bankruptcy court, he was always able to extricate himself and begin afresh. Händel had reached the age of fifty-three before he turned his genius to the creation of sacred music, and yet it is principally through his oratorios that his name will remain immortal. His first oratorios, *Saul* and *Israel in Egypt*, were by no means well received. It was in the year 1742, when his fortunes were at a very low ebb that he undertook the composition of *The Messiah*—one of the greatest oratorios in musical literature. It was written in 1741, between the dates of August 22nd and September 14th, a period of twenty-four days. In so short a time was such a work of genius brought into the world. He was invited to Ireland by the Duke of Devonshire the following spring, the oratorio receiving its first performance at a charity concert in Dublin, April 13th, 1742. The following year it was given in London before a large audience which included the royal family. Its success was tremendous, the King rising to his feet at the *Hallelujah Chorus*, followed by his court and the entire audience. It has now become a custom all over the world to rise during the performance of this chorus.

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After this great achievement Händel naturally applied himself assiduously to the composition of religious music. The oratorios *Samson*, *Joseph*, *Belshazzar* and *Heracles* followed in quick succession and later *Judas Maccabaeus* and *Joshua* among others. His last work in this form was *Jephthah*, in 1752. At this time he was seriously troubled by the weakness of his eyes and an unfortunate operation resulted in his total blindness. On the 4th of April, 1759, *The Messiah* was given its final performance of the season at Covent Garden, Händel presiding at the organ. A little more than a week later the master died. He was buried in Westminster Abbey with ceremonies befitting a musician of his genius.

GENERAL INFORMATION: The text of *The Messiah* was taken from the Scriptures, it having been arranged by Charles Jennens, who did not approve of Händel's work when he heard it. Mr. Jennens wrote a friend expressing his sentiments rather strongly, as follows: "I shall show you a collection I gave Händel, called *Messiah*. He has made a fine entertainment of it, though not near so good as he might and ought to have done. I have with great difficulty made him correct some of the grossest faults in the composition; but he retained his overture obstinately, in which there are some passages far unworthy of Händel, but much more unworthy of the *Messiah*."

The subject of this Adaptation is the great air for bass in which human apprehension is expressed before the arrival of the Messiah. The words to the air are printed below.

But who may abide the day of His coming?
And who shall stand when He appeareth?
Who shall stand, etc.
But who may abide, etc.
For he is like a refiner's fire,—
Who may abide the day of His coming?
etc.

LESSON: This air is in the original key of D minor. The student should note carefully the imitation between the bass and treble occurring frequently throughout the entire Adaptation. For instance the notes under the first slur in the right-hand part are immediately imitated by the first four notes in the bass; again at the end of m. 4 and in m. 5 the left-hand part imitates the right-hand part, following one measure after the treble. Then it will be noticed that the phrase entering in the bass at the end of m. 12 is taken up by the right hand at the end of m. 13. See also measures 60-61-62.

At the last beat of m. 12 the bass solo begins with the words, "But who may abide the day of His coming?" In measures 15-16 the upper voice of the left-hand part is sung by the solo voice in the oratorio, while from the last beat of m. 16 to the last beat of m. 18 there is a short interlude for the orchestra, after which the voice part is taken up by the upper voice of the right-hand part, an octave above its actual pitch.

The rhythm requires little discussion as it is very simple three-four measure without syncopation or other rhythmic complication. A characteristic of Händel's method is evident in the frequent use of a dotted eighth-note followed by a sixteenth-note, the dotted eighth-note always coming at the beginning of the measure. Observe that in measures 51, 53 and 54 the descending sixteenth-note groups in the treble always start a note higher in the scale.

When two notes of equal value are slurred together, the first note is to be slightly accented and a little sustained, with the second note softer and somewhat curtailed in time value. The student will apply this rule in measures 32-33-34 and in many other instances in this composition. The accents and slurs must be observed closely in order to produce the proper phrasing and rhythmic effects. The spirit of this air is grandiose and massive as befits a text of such dramatic import. The dynamic signs are so clear as to require no elucidation; it rests with the student to follow the indications of the editor. The *adagio* marked at m. 81 shows that the last four measures are to be broad and noble in their interpretation. The pedal should be taken with every fundamental note (lowest bass note) except when this note is a sixteenth-note, following a dotted eighth-note, in which case it is pedaled together with the preceding dotted note. In measures 45-46-47 and 56 the pedal is used *only* with the eighth-note of the measure. In m. 83 the pedal is taken on the first and second beats of the measure.

EDUCATIONAL ADAPTATIONS

The Messiah

(Air for Bass)

GEORG FRIEDRICH HÄNDEL.

Larghetto. ♩ = 100 - 112

This musical score is for a piece in 3/8 time, marked 'Larghetto' with a tempo of 100-112 beats per minute. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score is divided into four systems, each with a treble and bass staff. Measures 1-5 are in the first system, 6-11 in the second, 12-16 in the third, and 17-22 in the fourth. The music features a variety of note values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5. Dynamics include *f* (forte), *mp* (mezzo-piano), *p* (piano), and *mf* (mezzo-forte). There are also accents and slurs. The bottom of the page has a row of decorative symbols.

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Measures 23-27. Treble staff: 23 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 24 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 25 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 26 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 27 (5 4 3 2 1 2). Bass staff: 23 (3 2 1 2), 24 (1 2 3 4), 25 (1 2 3 4), 26 (1 2 3 4), 27 (1 2 3 4). Dynamics: *mf* (25), *p* (26).

Measures 28-32. Treble staff: 28 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 29 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 30 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 31 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 32 (5 4 3 2 1 2). Bass staff: 28 (1 2 3 4), 29 (1 2 3 4), 30 (1 2 3 4), 31 (1 2 3 4), 32 (1 2 3 4). Dynamics: *mf* (28), *p* (30).

Measures 33-37. Treble staff: 33 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 34 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 35 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 36 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 37 (5 4 3 2 1 2). Bass staff: 33 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 34 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 35 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 36 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 37 (5 4 3 2 1 2). Dynamics: *mf* (37).

Measures 38-42. Treble staff: 38 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 39 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 40 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 41 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 42 (5 4 3 2 1 2). Bass staff: 38 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 39 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 40 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 41 (5 4 3 2 1 2), 42 (5 4 3 2 1 2). Dynamics: *p* (38), *mf* (42).

43 44 45 46

p

47 48 49 50

51 52 53 54

55 56 57 58 59

72 73 74 75 76 77

Adagio

78 79 80 81 *mf* 82 83 *rall.* 84