

Emmanuelle Haïm conducts Handel's Messiah at the Salzburg Easter Festival

Sunday, March 21, 2027 · 19:00 · Großes Festspielhaus

Emmanuelle Haïm, conductor · Sabine Devieille, soprano · Carlo Vistoli, countertenor · Eric Ferring, tenor · William Thomas, bass · Le Concert d'As-trée, choir

approximately 140 minutes

George Frideric Handel

1685–1759

Messiah, HWV 56

140 minutes

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Part I deals with prophecy and the Nativity. After a grave overture in the minor, the tenor enters gently with “Comfort ye, my people” and the music turns to the major. The first sequence builds to the chorus “For unto us a child is born”, and its origin as a duet is easy to hear: for long stretches only two voice parts sing at a time, and the whole choir comes together for the shouts of “Wonderful, Counsellor”. Then comes the only real scene of narrative in the work. A short pastoral for strings, the *Pifa*, evokes shepherds’ pipes, the soprano tells of the angel appearing to the shepherds, and the chorus answers with “Glory to God”.

Part II is the heart of the work at Easter. It opens with the chorus “Behold the Lamb of God” and the alto aria “He was despised”, slow and bare, with the voice sometimes left alone. In its middle section the strings break into sharp dotted rhythms for the scourging, a figure that returns in the choruses that follow. The music then moves through death and resurrection to the spreading of the gospel. A run of violent numbers, the bass’s “Why do the nations so furiously rage together” and the tenor’s “Thou shalt break them”, leads straight into the “Hallelujah” chorus, which in this setting sounds as much like a cry of victory as a hymn of praise.

Part III is a meditation on the resurrection of the dead and the life to come. It begins with the soprano's serene "I know that my Redeemer liveth". The bass aria "The trumpet shall sound" brings a long solo for the trumpet. The oratorio closes with the chorus "Worthy is the Lamb" and a great fugue on a single word, "Amen".

Listen throughout for how the chorus moves between two manners: quick, speech-like declamation that follows the rhythm of the English words, and long, sung lines.



CONCERT PROGRAMS

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