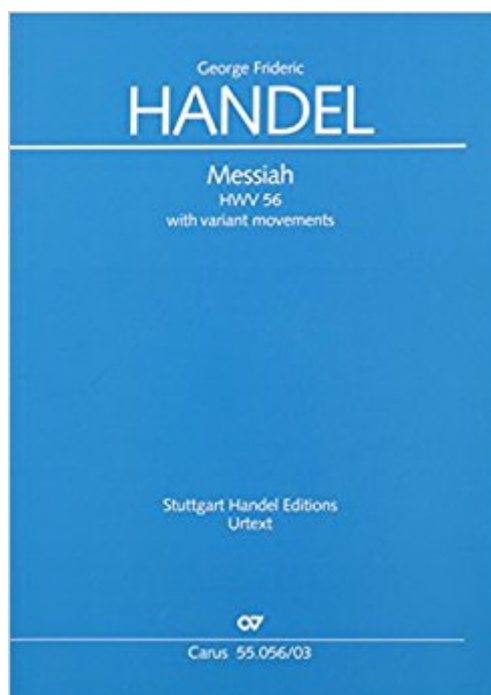


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Handel: The Messiah. Vocal Score - CARUS URTEXT



Synopsis

George Frideric Handel is considered England's first and foremost composer of oratorios. Above all, the Messiah is regarded as the epitome of sacred music and in German-speaking countries it is also one of the most often performed works in the genre. The version of the Messiah which is most often performed today is a combination of various versions. Consequently, the present critical edition by Ton Koopman contains all the surviving alternative versions of the solo movements. A concordance makes it possible to assign these movements to those various performances of the work conducted by Handel between the Dublin premiere in 1742 and the London concerts which took place up to 1759. In accordance with the wishes voiced by many choral conductors and singers, the vocal score will be available in separate English and German versions.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Carus's new edition of the full score of Handel's Messiah, HWV 56, has been edited by famed conductor, keyboardist, and baroque -music scholar Ton Koopman, aided by Jan H. Siemons. If it were not for the presence of Koopman's name on this edition, one might be inclined to ignore yet another version of Messiah. That would, however, be a mistake. The present edition has a clear purpose and place in the number of Messiah scores currently on the market. Koopman and Siemons have prepared a reliable scholarly edition of the full score using Handel's autograph score and two copyists' scores as primary sources, along with six different secondary sources. Their critical report provides appropriate detail about the myriad movement versions produced by Handel

for various performances of Messiah during his later career. Perhaps the most intriguing element in this edition is its foreword. In it Koopman touches briefly, but effectively, on a number of performance -practice issues that plague modern performances of Messiah. He gives informed opinions concerning appropriate performing forces, the use of keyboard instruments, ornamentation, and over-dotting. He reminds the reader that flexibility is the most important virtue in baroque performance, and that what is correct in one pleasure may not be in the next. Unlike most available editions of Messiah, Koopman and Siemons include all of the movement variations that can be reliably assigned to Handel within the main body of the score. Versions of the same movements are presented chronologically in succession, with preference given to the version found in Handel's autograph full score. Autograph versions of movements which Handel never performed are given in an appendix. This is in contrast to the more common practice of providing only the most performed versions within the score, and to relegate all "alternate" versions to an appendix; and interestingly, the vocal score prepared from this edition presents the movements in this very way. However, by presenting the movements chronologically in the full score the editors are allowing conductors to more easily reconstruct individual performances of Handel's Messiah as they would have been heard at specific times and places. This process is further assisted by a concordance, included before the foreword, that lists movement usage in Handel's own performances of the work between 1742 and 1754, with the most common version (that of London, 1745/1749) highlighted. --JAMES WINTLE Library of Congress, Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association (U. S.), September 2010

I don't think it fair to write a detailed evaluation, since the only other edition that presents the whole of the Messiah complex of material and lets the user make the choice of what to perform is mine. For the English-speaking user, the presence of a German text beneath the English is a minor distraction, perhaps outweighed by the bolder and clearer music type. Fifteen years ago, I would have gone meticulously through the score, checking all the places where decisions were needed. But since I produced my edition, somehow Messiah has moved out of my life: I haven't even played it apart from 'I know that my redeemer liveth' at my mother's funeral. Provided that the rest of the material is equally well produced (and judging from the proofs of my new Cams edition of Israel in Egypt, I have no doubts on that score), these would seem to be a very desirable edition. A few points in the introduction invite comment. p. ix. Three weeks may seem a short time for Handel to have composed the work, but it wasn't exceptionally short for him (or, probably, many other composers). p. x. Playing the organ part in Saul recently, I tried to follow the instructions for when the organ played in octaves and when chords. It's not what a continue player expects to do, but it seemed to work. Koopman suggests that the claviorganum used for Saul could be played with the

left hand on the organ manual and the right hand playing harpsichord, but I would have thought it more likely that Handel wanted an organ so that he could vary the continuous sound between movements. p. xi. Overdotting. I was more cautious than older editions in adding this and discussed the pros and cons of individual cases. Just because a composer can notate a passage precisely, it doesn't mean that he needs to: there is pressure on him to write quickly (remember the three weeks!) but also a desire not to encumber the performer with superfluous information. I don't agree with playing the instrumental upbeats of 'Surely...' as written, but in general I concur with Koopman's caution. Handel's trisyllable pronunciation su-re-ly and other linguistic peculiarities receive no comment, nor is anything said on other underlay problems. Jennens' contribution to the success of the work is ignored. One feature I don't like is the use of editorial small trills: unless both types are visible, it is difficult to tell the difference. --Early Music Review, May 2009

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