

Program Notes

The educated English in the 18th century were thoroughly familiar with the histories of the Israelites in the Old Testament, so when George Frideric Handel chose “Zadok the priest” as the text for one of his anthems to be sung and played for the coronation of King George II and Queen Caroline on 11 October 1727, he could be certain that the audience would recognize the name of the priest who crowned King Solomon. Whether or not all four coronation anthems were heard at that coronation, their subsequent performance history has been illustrious. *Zadok the Priest* was so popular that in 1732 Handel incorporated its opening (“Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet”) and closing (“God save the king!”) sections as the finale of Act II of his revised oratorio *Esther*. Independent of *Esther*, *Zadok the Priest* has been performed at the coronation of nearly every British monarch since George II.

In 1748, Handel gave King Solomon an oratorio of his own. In so doing, Handel was implying a connection between the Old Testament and British kings. George II was the last British monarch to lead troops into battle (in 1743, at Dettingen), yet—even as Handel was completing *Solomon*—George oversaw the negotiation of the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. In her book *Handel’s Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought*, Ruth Smith writes that *Solomon*

exalts peace and trade, proclaims national prosperity, shows Church and crown endorsing each other’s interests to the benefit of society, and at its centre depicts the monarch—no arbitrary, absolute ruler—dispensing true justice.

In contrast to his earlier Israelite oratorios depicting a nation struggling for survival, Handel’s *Solomon* would be devoid of plot, were it not for the Act II judgment of Solomon. Act I—beginning with the chorus “Your harps and cymbals sound” and ending with the chorus “May no rash intruder”—concerns the dedication of Solomon’s temple and his marriage to Pharaoh’s daughter. Act II opens with the chorus “From the censer curling rise.” Act III concerns the visit of the Queen of Sheba, who praises Solomon’s wisdom and splendid court.

The familiar title of the Te Deum for Queen Caroline has its origin in Charles Jennens’ 1740 edition “Te Deum, perform’d on the Arrival of the Princess, the late Q. Caroline.” The misleading title was perpetuated by Charles Burney (1726-1814) in his *General History of Music*. Both men believed that the Te Deum was performed for Queen Caroline on a visit to the Continent in 1737, the year of her death. Actually, the D-major Te Deum was performed in the Chapel Royal at St. James’s Palace on 26 September 1714 to welcome to the Hannover royal family—George I and his entourage—to London. Robert King has written that this Te Deum

Looks back to Purcell ... particularly the “Vouchsafe” which has much in common with Purcell’s own 1694 setting of the same text. (Handel, though rude about many of his contemporaries, revered Purcell ...). But Handel’s Te Deum also shows the influence of the opera (in which he was already proving a great success), particularly in the tenor aria “The glorious company” and the lyrical aria for alto and solo flute “When thou lookest upon thee.”

Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837), pianistic prodigy who came to study with Mozart, devoted much of his early composing to instrumental music. Yet in 1804, when he accepted the post of *Konzertmeister* for Prince Nikolaus Esterházy at Eisenstadt, he suddenly found himself responsible for writing music for the Esterházy’s chapel. Consequently, nearly all of Hummel’s sacred music was written while he held his Eisenstadt post, which he relinquished in 1811. With his masses, Hummel was continuing the tradition of Joseph Haydn (nominal *Kapellmeister* at Eisenstadt until his death in 1809): composing works for Princess Marie Hermenegild Esterházy’s name each September. Following Haydn’s *Harmoniemesse* in 1802, Hummel composed five masses for Eisenstadt, alternating with one Johann Nepomuk Fuchs and Ludwig van Beethoven, who contributed his Mass in C in 1807.

Hummel's Mass in D minor (1805), his second, has yet to be published for sale (Chora Nova performs it from rental materials available from the record label Chandos). Many have presumed the influence of Haydn on Hummel's masses, but David Wyn Jones has written:

But Hummel's point of departure [in the Kyrie] is not Haydn, it is Mozart, specifically the very atmospheric opening of the D minor Piano Concerto (K. 466), a work well known to Hummel the virtuoso pianist and which gives a distinctive nervousness to the supplicatory text.

Hummel's Mass in D minor is currently represented by only one commercial recording (originally on the Chandos label), but we hope that performances such as Chora Nova's will encourage further recorded performances, as well as an edition of the score that libraries will be able to acquire.

John Shepard

Head, Jean Gray Hargrove Music Library, University of California, Berkeley