

George Frideric Handel - Messiah (HWV 56)

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Brief Description about *Messiah* (HWV 56)

Edition: Hallische Händel-Ausgabe, Serie I, Band 17, ed. John Tobin

1. **Year:** 1741
2. **Libretto:** Charles Jennens
3. **Genre:** Oratorio
4. **Period:** Baroque
5. **Premiere:** It premiered in Dublin in 1742, and had its London debut a year later.
6. **Instrumentation:** Soprano solo, Alto solo I, II, Tenor solo, Bass solo, Choir (SSATB), 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 2 trumpet, 2 violins, viola, cello, violone and harpsichord

Baroque orchestras

- Strings formed the foundation of orchestras.
- The violone, a large bowed string instrument from the viol or violin family, is commonly used in early music ensembles performing Renaissance, Baroque, and Classical era. It typically plays the bass line, providing harmonic support.
- Wind instruments were fewer in number and less technically developed.
- Conductors were typically harpsichordists or occupied the first violin chair, leading from those positions.

7. Meaning of “Messiah” (Hebrew: **Māšīaḥ**):

- Refers to the “Anointed One” a title for Jesus Christ in Christian theology, representing the savior of humankind.

8. Structure: The whole work is divided into three parts.

- **Part I:** Predicts the coming of the Messiah; includes the Annunciation to the shepherds, based on biblical texts. This part features pieces like
 - *Behold, a virgin shall conceive*
 - *O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion*
 - *For behold, darkness shall cover the earth*
 - *The people that walked in darkness*
 - *For unto us a child is born*

A more detailed analysis of these pieces can be found in this resource package.

- **Part II:** Details Christ's Passion, death, resurrection, and the spread of the Gospel; concludes with the powerful *Hallelujah* chorus.
- **Part III:** Focuses on redemption, the day of judgement, and the ultimate victory over sin and death; celebrates Christ's triumph.

9. Initial Reception and Legacy: Initially received modestly, *Messiah* gained popularity over time, becoming one of the most performed oratorios in Western music.

Listening material – Hallelujah chorus

- The choir begins with “Hallelujah” repeated in homophonic texture, utilising a simple motif that plays with the interval of a second, a theme that recurs throughout the piece.
- The phrase “for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” is performed by all voices, initially in unison, then in imitation, interspersed with exclamations of “Hallelujah”.
- “The kingdom of this world is become” is arranged in a four-part choral setting.
- The idea “and He shall reign for ever and ever” begins as a fugue with a theme characterised by bold leaps.
- The final proclamation, “King of Kings...and Lord of Lords” is sung on a single note, intensified by repeated calls of “Hallelujah” and “for ever – and ever” rising higher with the sopranos and trumpets until reaching a climactic pause, culminating in a grand, solemn Hallelujah.

George Frideric Handel (1685 – 1759)

- 1. Birth and Training:** George Frideric Handel was born in 1685, in Halle, Germany. He received his musical training in Halle and later worked in Hamburg and Italy before moving to London in 1712.
- 2. Musical Legacy:** Recognised as one of the greatest composers of the Baroque era, Handel is celebrated for his contributions to Italian opera, the English oratorio, church music, as well as orchestral work. The success of *Messiah* solidified Handel's reputation and contributed to the establishment of the oratorio as a significant musical genre in English culture, influencing future composers.
- 3. Transition to Oratorio:** As public interest in Italian opera declined by the early 1730s, partly due to the success of English-language works like *The Beggar's Opera*, Handel began composing oratorios as alternatives to his staged operas.
- 4. Creation of *Messiah*:** Composed in 1741, *Messiah* was a turning point in his career. Following its success, he never returned to composing Italian opera.

**Extended listening materials –
Musical works written by Handel**

1. ***Serse* (HWV 40)**: One of Handel's most famous Italian operas, premiered in 1738. Notable aria:
 - *Ombra mai fu* – A beautiful and lyrical piece that celebrates the shade of a beloved tree, showcasing Handel's melodic genius.

2. ***Water Music* (HWV 348-350)**: A collection of orchestral suites. Notable movements include:
 - Overture – The overture is a music instrumental introduction. Overture in Handel's time, typically features a slow, majestic first section followed by a lively, fugal second section, capturing the magnificence and celebratory spirit of the suite.

 - Air – By the 18th century, composers wrote airs for instrumental ensembles without a voice. These were song-like, lyrical pieces, often movements in a larger composition.

Oratorio and its Musical Components

An oratorio is a large musical composition featuring dramatic or narrative text for choir, soloists, and orchestra or ensemble.

1. Differences from Opera

- **Theatrical Elements:** Oratorios have minimal staging compared to operas, which involve elaborate sets, props, and costumes.
- **Subject:** Oratorio texts often focus on sacred (religious) subjects, making them suitable for church performance. Operas can cover a wide range of themes, including history, romance and mythology, etc.
- **The role of chorus:** In opera, the chorus typically has a minor role, but in oratorio, it assumes a much more significant position.

2. Historical Context

- Gained popularity in early 17th-century Italy, partly as a response to the Catholic Church's restrictions on theatrical performances during Lent.
- Served as a musical alternative for opera audiences during this period.

3. Musical Components

Recitatives

Recitatives is a style of delivery that mimic the rhythms and accents of spoken language, focusing more on communication than on melody or musical motifs.

- **Characteristics:**
 - Sung by soloist.
 - Delivered in a manner similar to speech.
 - Each syllable is articulated with the appropriate length and emphasis.
 - The clarity of the text is crucial; nothing should obscure the words.
 - The lyrics serve to establish the context and propel the narrative.
 - They provide essential connections within the work.

- **Types of Recitatives:**
 - **Secco Recitatives:**
 - Known as “dry recitative”, these are sung with a rhythm that aligns with the natural accents of the words.
 - Typically accompanied by the continuo (cello and harpsichord). The support is straightforward, providing the harmonic structure of the music with a bassline and chord progression.
 - Instruments play a minimal role, contributing little beyond basic harmonic support.
 - More improvisatory for the singer, as the accompaniment is light and sparse.
 - **Accompanied Recitatives:**
 - These recitatives make use of the orchestra for accompaniment.
 - Singers can explore more melodic expression, enriching their vocal delivery while keeping the narrative intact.
 - Even with added musical complexity, the lyrics remain the focal point, ensuring their meaning is clear and prioritised.
 - Less improvisational and declamatory than secco recitatives.

Arias

- Sung by a soloist.
- Usually follow the recitatives.
- Music becomes the primary element.
- Involved fewer words.
- Melodies become more dramatic, serving as an aesthetic and emotional expression.

Choruses

- Sung by a choir.
- Play a powerful role in propelling the drama.
- Pay close attention to the text while allowing the beauty of their musical settings to resonate aesthetically.

Sinfonia and overtures

- Serves as the orchestral introduction to the main body of the work.
- **The French overture**
 - Typically features a two-part structure. The first part is slow and stately with dotted rhythms, creating a sense of grandeur and solemnity. The second part is faster and more lively, often employing fugal or imitative textures. This style was influential and widely adopted in Baroque oratorios.
- **Italian overture**
 - Known as the “sinfonia” was popular among Italian composers like Alessandro Scarlatti. It generally consists of three sections:

Fast opening - Slow and lyrical middle section - Fast closing

Extended listening materials – Oratorios written by Handel (other than *Messiah*)

1. *Solomon* (HWV 67)

- **Description:** This oratorio, first performed in 1749, depicts the wisdom and glory of King Solomon.
- **Notable Movement:**
 - *Arrival of the Queen of Sheba* – This lively sinfonia for two oboes and strings premiered as part of Act III of *Solomon*. This vibrant interlude is widely appreciated and often played at wedding ceremonies. Notably, it was featured during the opening ceremonies of the London 2012 Olympic Games.

2. *Jephtha* (HWV 70)

- **Description:** First performed in 1752, this is Handel’s last oratorio, written as he faced declining eyesight. It tells the story of Jephtha’s rash vow to sacrifice the first living thing he sees upon returning victorious, which tragically turns out to be his daughter, Iphis.
- **Notable Movement:**
 - *Farewell, ye limpid springs and floods* – This poignant aria, sung by Iphis, captures her acceptance of fate and embodies her faith and duty amidst tragedy.

Stylistic Features in Baroque Period

Figured bass:

The image shows a musical score for the recitative 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive' from Handel's Messiah. It features two staves: an Alto voice part and a Continuo part (Violoncello, Cembalo). The Alto part has the lyrics: 'Be-hold, a vir-gin shall con-ceive, and bear a son, / Denn sieh, eine Jung-frau wird ge-bürn den Men-schen-sohn,'. The Continuo part includes figured bass notation below the staff, which is highlighted with a red box. The figures are: 5/3, 7/4/2, 7/4/2, and 5/3.

Recitative: Behold, a virgin shall conceive (Messiah)

A notation system with numerals and symbols placed near a bass note to indicate intervals, chords, and non-chord tones for musicians. Commonly used by harpsichordists, organists, and lute players, it is linked to basso continuo, an improvised accompaniment typical of the Baroque period.

Ornamentations and Improvisation:

The image shows a musical score for 'No. 8 - O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion' from Handel's Messiah. It features a single treble clef staff with a melodic line. A red box highlights three notes, each with a 'tr' (trill) ornamentation above it.

No. 8 - O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion (Messiah)

- Trills and other embellishments are frequently used throughout the music.
- When singers repeat a melody, they often add passing notes, neighbouring notes (also known as auxiliary notes), or other ornamentations to enhance the original melody.

Polyphonic texture:

- Frequent use of counterpoint, where multiple independent melodies are woven together, creating complex texture.

5

For un-to us a Child is born, un-to us a Son is
Denn es ist uns ein Kind ge - born, es ist uns ein Sohn ge -

10

giv-en, un-to us a Son is giv-en, for un-to us a Child is born
ge-ben, es ist uns ein Sohn ge - ge-ben, denn es ist uns ein Kind ge - born

For un-to us a Child is born, un-to
Denn es ist uns ein Kind ge - born, es ist

15

us a Son is giv-en, un-to us a Son is giv-en:
uns ein Sohn ge - ge-ben, es ist uns ein Sohn ge - ge-ben,

For un-to
Denn es ist

19

us a Child is born, un-to us a Son is giv-en, un-to
uns ein Kind ge - born, es ist uns ein Sohn ge - ge-ben, es ist

For un-to us a Child is born
Denn es ist uns ein Kind ge - born

No. 11 - For unto us a child is born (Messiah)

Homophonic texture:

- Even though polyphonic texture played a crucial role during the Baroque period, homophonic texture also held significant importance. In Handel's *Messiah* and other Baroque compositions, homophonic sections provide a striking contrast to the complex and busy contrapuntal movements.

Functional Harmony:

- Use of major and minor tonalities with clear harmonic progressions and cadences, establishing a sense of key.

34

The image shows a musical score for Handel's *Messiah*, page 34. It features five staves: four vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and one basso continuo staff. The lyrics are: "Coun-sel-lor, Herr-li-cher, The Might-y God, der star-ke Gott, The Ev-cr-last-ing Fa-ther, e-wig, e-wig Va-ter und The Prince of Peace! Friede-fürst! Un-to Es ist". A red box highlights the final measure of the piece, which is a perfect authentic cadence (V-I) in the key of G major. The basso continuo staff ends with a *p* dynamic marking and the instruction *senza rip.*

The perfect authentic cadence [V-I] at the phrase "Prince of Peace" (bar 37) in *For unto us the child is born (Messiah)* creates a powerful sense of triumph and resolution.

Rhythmic Drive:

- A strong, consistent rhythm that propels the music forward, often utilising repeated patterns.

9. *Accompagnato*
Andante larghetto
senza rip.



Violino I
Violino II
Viola
Basso
Bassi
(*Violoncello, Violone, Fagotto, Cembalo*)

No. 9 - For behold, darkness shall cover the earth (*Messiah*)

Contrast:

- Strong contrasts in dynamics (loud and soft) are prominent.



Violino I, II
Viola
Basso
Bassi
(*Violoncello, Violone, Fagotto, Cembalo*)

The peo-ple that walk-ed in
Das folk, das da wand-elt im

No. 10 - The people that walked in darkness (*Messiah*)

Word Painting:

- The Baroque era in music was characterised by a significant interest in word painting, a technique that depicts the meaning of words through music. For instance, dissonance is often used to represent “pain”.

Recitative: Behold, a virgin shall conceive

Metre: $\frac{4}{4}$

Tonality: D major

Tempo: Free tempo which reflects the natural rhythms of speech

Style: Recitative

Recitative type: Secco recitative

Instrumentation: Alto (Voice), harpsichord and cello

Text:

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son,
and they shall call his name Emmanuel, "God with us."

– Matthew 1:23

Music and Text

Text-setting

Syllabic Clarity:

- The declamatory text is delivered with one note for each syllable, ensuring clear articulation and emphasising the importance of each word.

Heightened Expectation with Rest:

and shall call his name Emmanuel, "God with us".
und sein Na-me heit E-ma-nu-el, ,Gott mit uns.

- The final words “God with us” are subtly highlighted by a pause/rest after “Emmanuel.” This rest is longer than previous ones, effectively building anticipation and drawing the listener’s focus to the concluding phrase.

Compositional Device

Use of the pedal point:

Recitative

Alto

Be-hold, a vir-gin shall con-ceive, and bear a son,
Denn sieh, eine Jung-frau wird ge-bürn den Men-schen-sohn,

Continuo
(Violoncello,
Cembalo)

5 7 7 5
8 4 4 8

- The use of a tonic pedal point creates a sustained note that underpins the harmony, establishing a sense of tension and anticipation. By maintaining a constant pitch while the harmonies above it change, the pedal point emphasises specific words or phrases in the text.

What are the differences between *drone* and *pedal point*?

Drone is a continuous or intermittent sustained tone, typically low-pitched, that provides a resonant foundation for melodies played at higher pitches. Sometimes, instead of a single-pitch drone, an interval, often a fifth, is used.

Pedal point is a sustained tone that remains through multiple harmonic changes that can be consonant or dissonant with it. In instrumental music pedal point is often found in the bass.

No. 8 - *O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion*

Metre: **6**
8

Tempo: Andante

Style: Aria and Chorus

Instrumentation: Alto (Voice), SATB choir, Bassoon, Violins, Cello and Violone

Text:

O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain;
o thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem,
lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid;
say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!
O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion,
arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

– Isaiah 40:9-11

Music and Text

Metre

The aria introduces a lively compound duple metre that evokes a sense of movement and joy. This reflects the excitement and urgency of spreading the good news.

Tonality

Symbolic Importance:

- D major is introduced by Handel as the most significant key in *Messiah*, representing themes of triumph and celebration. A total of eleven movements are composed in D major, making it the most frequently used key in the oratorio.

- In this piece, despite transitions to other keys (A major, G major), the frequent returns to D major highlight its centrality and reinforce the celebratory nature of the text.

Rhythm

Long Notes for Divine References:

60

Be - hold your God, be - hold your God, be - hold your God!
 Der Herr ist da, der Herr ist da, der Herr ist da!

The image shows a musical score snippet with three staves. The top staff is a vocal line with lyrics. The middle staff is a vocal line with lyrics. The bottom staff is a bass line. The lyrics are: "Be - hold your God, be - hold your God, be - hold your God! / Der Herr ist da, der Herr ist da, der Herr ist da!". The words "God" and "da" are set to long notes, which are highlighted with red boxes. The score is in D major and 4/4 time. The tempo is marked "60". The dynamics are marked "f".

- The words “God” and “Lord” are set to longer notes, allowing them to resonate and impart weight. This rhythmic choice conveys solemnity, underscoring the importance of these divine figures in the context of the text.

Melody

Upward Leaps:

74

a - rise, shine; for thy light is come, a -
steh auf, strah-le, dein Licht ist nah, steh

80

rise, a - rise, a - rise, shine; for thy light is come, and the
auf, steh auf, steh auf, strah-le, dein Licht ist nah, und die

- The melody is characterised by upward leaps that vividly illustrate phrases like “get thee up into the high mountain,” “lift up thy voice,” and “arise.” These melodic choices enhance the text’s call to action and evoke a sense of elevation and hope.

Ascending Melodic Contour:

90

glo-ry of the Lord
Herr-lich-keit des Herrn

is ris-en, is ris-en up-
die Herr-lich-keit des Herrn er-scheint, die

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line. The melody starts with a piano (p) dynamic. A red box highlights the phrase "is ris-en, is ris-en up-", which features a distinct ascending melodic contour. The lyrics are in English and German.

- The phrase “is risen up” features a distinct ascending melodic contour that highlights the meaning in the text.

Cohesive Melodic Structure Across Texts:

12

O thou that tellest good ti-dings to Zi-on,
O du, der uns fro-he Bot-schaft ver-kün-det,

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line. A red box highlights a specific melodic motif consisting of a descending fifth interval followed by an ascending second interval. The lyrics are in English and German.

From No.9 - *O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion*

94

But who may a-bide the
Doch wer kann be-stehn am

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line. A red box highlights a specific melodic motif consisting of a descending fifth interval followed by an ascending second interval. The lyrics are in English and German.

From No.6 – *But who may abide the day of His coming*

1

tutti

p And He shall pu-ri-fy, and
Und er wird rei-ni-gen, wird

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line. A red box highlights a specific melodic motif consisting of a descending fifth interval followed by an ascending second interval. The lyrics are in English and German.

From No.7 – *And he shall purify*

- The phrases from earlier pieces in *Messiah*, *But who may abide* and *And he shall purify* share a similar opening motive in terms of melodic intervals, with that in this piece, i.e. descending fifth interval, succeeded by an ascending second. This similarity in the first several notes creates a cohesive link between the texts, suggesting a thematic connection between the call to rise and the idea of spiritual purification.

Compositional Devices

Use of Sequence:

42

ti-dings to Je-ru-sa-lem,
Bot-schaft nach Je-ru-sa-lem,

lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not a-
er - heb die Stimm mit Macht, ruf es laut und un-ver-

f *p*

The musical score for measures 42-46 shows a sequence of eighth-note patterns in the violin and harpsichord parts. The lyrics are: "ti-dings to Je-ru-sa-lem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not a- und un-ver-". The sequence is highlighted with red boxes in the original image.

- The use of sequence on the phrases “lift up” and “arise”, as well as in the violin part and harpsichord part, captures the essence of ascent and elevation. This reinforces the themes of hope and empowerment.

Call and Response Between Alto Soloist and Violins:

12

O thou that tell-est good ti-dings to Zi-on, get thee up in-to the high
O du, der uns fro-he Bot-schaft ver-kün-det, steig em - por zur Hö-he der

p *p*

The musical score for measures 12-16 shows a call-and-response interaction between the alto soloist and the violins. The lyrics are: "O thou that tell-est good ti-dings to Zi-on, get thee up in-to the high O du, der uns fro-he Bot-schaft ver-kün-det, steig em - por zur Hö-he der". The call-and-response is highlighted with red boxes in the original image.

- The alto solo and the violins feature a dialogue-like interaction, where the violins respond to the soloist’s phrases. This call-and-response creates a dynamic interplay that enriches the texture, further emphasising the message and enhancing the overall sense of engagement.

Imitative Entrance of the Chorus:

- The choir enters in imitation, mimicking the soloist as if gathering together to share the message.

Text-setting

Triumphant Melisma on Key Words:

Melisma is the singing of a single syllable of text while moving between several different notes in succession. The use of melisma and coloratura on words like “mountain” and “glory” captures the essence of victory, and rejoicing.

What are the difference between *melisma* and *coloratura*?

- Melisma is about extending a single syllable over many notes.
- Coloratura refers to an elaborate melody featuring virtuoso elements, such as runs, trills and wide leaps, often involving melismatic text-setting.

Texture

Change of Character Through Homophonic Singing:

11

rise, auf, a - rise, auf, say un - to the cit - ies of Ju - dah, Be - hold your
ver - kün - de den Städ - ten in Ju - da: Der Herr ist

- While the choir enters in with a polyphonic texture, the transition to a homophonic texture when the choir sings “say unto the cities of Ju-dah” creates a powerful, unified expression.

Harmony

90

glo - ry of the Lord is ris - en, is ris - en up -
Herr - lich - keit des Herrn die Herr - lich - keit des Herrn er - scheint, die

- In the word “Lord”, the use of secondary dominant chord and the resolution creates a sense of temporary tonic on G. This harmonic choice enhances the sense of elevation and transformation, effectively depicting the idea of rising.

No. 9 - For behold, darkness shall cover the earth

Metre: $\frac{4}{4}$

Tonality: B minor

Tempo: Andante larghetto

Style: Recitative

Recitative type: Accompanied recitative

Instrumentation: Bass (Voice), Bassoon, Harpsichord, Violins, Viola, Cello and Violone

Text:

For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people:
but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.
And the Gentle shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

- Isaiah 60:2-3

Music and Text

Melody

Contrasting Registers for Two Worlds:

The image displays a musical score for a recitative piece. It is divided into two sections, labeled '5' and '11'. The first section (measures 5-10) features a vocal line in a low register, with lyrics: 'For be-hold, dark-ness shall cov-er the earth, Dun-ke-l be-dek-ke-t die Welt,'. The second section (measures 11-16) features a vocal line in a high register, with lyrics: 'but the Lord shall a-rise up- Doch der Herr wird er-strah-len'. The score includes piano accompaniment for harpsichord and bassoon, and strings. Dynamics include 'p' (piano) and 'scrisa For'.

- The recitative clearly delineates the worlds of darkness and glory by assigning them to different vocal registers. “Darkness” is expressed in the lower bass

tessitura, while “glory” soars in the upper register, creating a stark contrast that enhances the text’s thematic duality.

Disjunct Melodic Line for Darkness:

- The depiction of “darkness” features a disjunct melodic line characterised by wide skips and leaps. This approach reflects feelings of anxiety and turmoil, common in Baroque music, effectively conveying the emotional weight of despair.

Harmony

Use of Diminished Chord:

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The vocal line is written in a soprano clef. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves: the upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. The lyrics are written below the vocal line. A red box highlights a specific measure in the piano accompaniment, which contains a diminished chord. The lyrics for this measure are "and gross dark - ness the".

For be-hold, dark - ness shall cov - er the earth, and gross dark - ness the
Schau um - her! *Dun - kel be - dek - ket die Welt,* *finst - re Nacht al - le*
senza Fag.

- The use of diminished chord in the context of the word “darkness” creates a tense atmosphere. The dissonance associated with diminished chords enhances the portrayal of darkness, reinforcing the emotional impact of the lyrics and heightening the overall dramatic effect.

Text-setting

9

people, and gross dark - ness the peo-ple: but the Lord shall a rise
Völ-ker, finst-re Nacht al - le Völ-ker. Doch der Herr wird er strah - up - en

14

on thee, and His glo - - - ry shall be seen up - on thee, and His glo - - - ry shall be
vor dir, sei-ne Herr - - - lich-keit er-schei-net vor dir, sei-ne Herr - - - lich-keit er-

- The words “arise” and “glory” are set in joyful melismas.

No. 10 - *The people that walked in darkness*

Metre: $\frac{4}{4}$

Tempo: Larghetto

Style: Aria

Instrumentation: Bass (Voice), Bassoon, Harpsichord, Violins, Viola, Cello and Violone

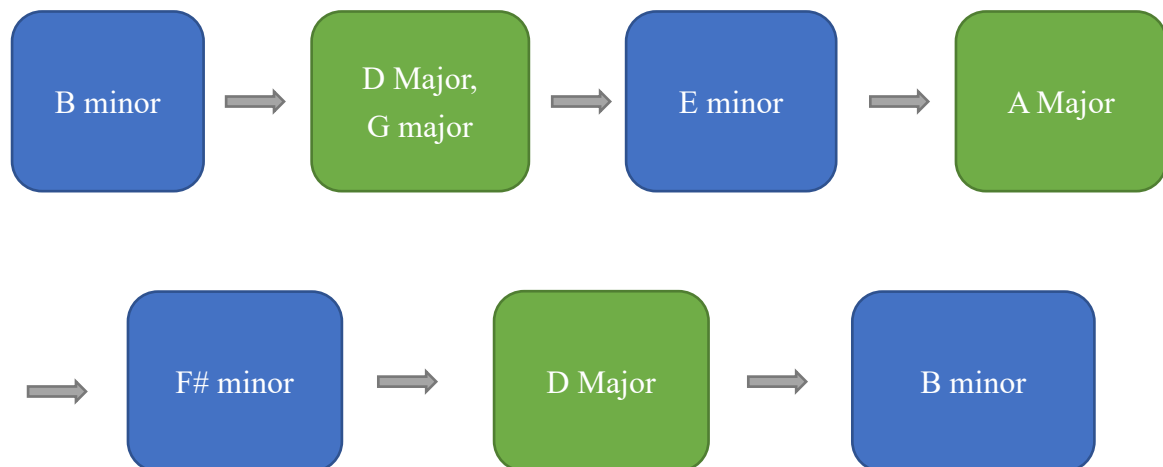
Text:

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light:
they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

- Isaiah 9:2

Music and Text

Tonality and Structure



Minor Tonality and Themes of Darkness:

- The use of minor tonality often evokes feelings of sadness or foreboding. Phrases like “the people that walked in darkness” and “they that dwell in the

land of the shadow of death” align with this somber emotional quality, enhancing the text’s themes of struggle and despair.

Contrast with Major Tonality:

- The shift to major tonality with phrases like “great light” signifies a transformation or hope. The contrast highlights the transition from darkness, the shadow effect of a world to the brightness of the coming salvation.

Irregular Phrasing:

- Handel uses irregular phrasing throughout to create the uneven steps of the people as they walk into this foreboding darkness. This adds to the sense of uncertainty and struggle, deepening the emotional impact of the text.

Melody

Melodic Contour and Representation of Darkness:

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line, likely from Handel's Messiah. The score is written in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It consists of four staves: a treble clef staff with a soprano line, a bass clef staff with an alto line, a bass clef staff with a tenor line, and a bass clef staff with a bass line. The lyrics are: "dark - - ness, that walk-ed in dark - - ness, Dun - - kel, das wan-delt im Dun - - kel." The melody is characterized by a descending contour, particularly in the lower register, which effectively evokes a sense of heaviness and despair.

- The lower vocal register and descending melodic contours effectively evokes a sense of heaviness and despair.

Transition to Higher Register for Light

12

seen a great light, have seen a great light, the
sicht ein gro-Bes Licht, es sieht ein gro-Bes Licht, das

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line. The melody starts in a lower register and then rises significantly, crossing the staff line to reach a higher register. The lyrics are in English and German. The English lyrics are: "seen a great light, have seen a great light, the". The German lyrics are: "sicht ein gro-Bes Licht, es sieht ein gro-Bes Licht, das".

- In contrast, when the text shifts to themes of “light” the melody rises into a higher register. This upward movement symbolises elevation and hope. Higher vocal register associated with “light” reflect clarity and brightness.

Leaps and Accidentals:

34

And they that dwell, that dwell in the land of the shad -
Und die da woh-nen im Lan-de der Schat-ten, der Schat -

The image shows a musical score for measures 34-37. The melody features several leaps and accidentals. A red box highlights a specific melodic leap in the vocal line. The lyrics are in English and German. The English lyrics are: "And they that dwell, that dwell in the land of the shad -". The German lyrics are: "Und die da woh-nen im Lan-de der Schat-ten, der Schat -".

38

- ow of death, and they that dwell, that dwell in the land, that
- ten des Tods, und die da woh-nen im Lan-de der Schat-ten, die

The image shows a musical score for measures 38-41. The melody features several leaps and accidentals. A red box highlights a specific melodic leap in the vocal line. The lyrics are in English and German. The English lyrics are: "- ow of death, and they that dwell, that dwell in the land, that". The German lyrics are: "- ten des Tods, und die da woh-nen im Lan-de der Schat-ten, die".

- Melodic leaps paired with accidentals emphasise key words, drawing attention to their significance. For instance, sudden leaps when singing “shadow” and “dwell in the land” can illustrate the looming presence of darkness, while accidentals may convey the unpredictability of the emotions associated with these themes.

No. 11 – *For unto us a child is born*

Metre: $\frac{4}{4}$

Tonality: G Major

Tempo: Andante allegro

Style: Chorus

Instrumentation: SATB Choir, Oboes, Bassoon, Harpsichord, Violins, Viola, Cello and Violone

Text:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:
and the government shall be upon his shoulder:
and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor,
The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

– Isaiah 9:6

Music and Text

Ritornello and Melodic Motif:

11. Chorus
Andante allegro

Oboe I
Oboe II
Violino I
Violino II
Viola
Soprano
Alto
Tenore
Basso
Bassi
Violoncello, Violone,
Fagotto, Cembalo

5
ptut
For
Den

- The ritornello (a recurring passage in Baroque music for orchestra or chorus) begins with a joyful, simultaneous entry of all instruments, integrating its motifs throughout the piece. This unifying use of materials reinforces the celebratory nature of the piece, enhancing the message of welcoming a newborn.

Rhythm

The use of dotted rhythm:

27

and the gov-ern-ment shall be up-on His shoul -
 und die Herrschaft ist ge - legt auf sei - ne Schul -

and the gov-ern-ment shall
 und die Herrschaft ist ge -

be up-on His shoul - der,
 legt auf sei - ne Schul - ter,

and the gov-ern-ment shall
 und die Herrschaft ist ge -
 con rip.

The musical score for page 27 features a dotted rhythm highlighted in red in the first staff, corresponding to the phrase "and the government shall be upon his shoulder". The score includes vocal lines in German and English, and a piano accompaniment with figured bass notation.

31

der, up - on His shoul-der: and His Name shall be call - ed
 ter, auf sei - ne Schul-ter, und sein Na - me wird hei - Ben: Won - der-ful,
 Wun - der-bar,

be up - on His shoul-der: and His Name shall be call - ed
 legt auf sei - ne Schul-ter, und sein Na - me wird hei - Ben: Won - der-ful,
 Wun - der-bar,

and His Name shall be call - ed
 und sein Na - me wird hei - Ben: Won - der-ful,
 Wun - der-bar,

be up - on His shoul-der, and His Name shall be call - ed
 legt auf sei - ne Schul-ter, und sein Na - me wird hei - Ben: Won - der-ful,
 Wun - der-bar,

The musical score for page 31 features a dotted rhythm highlighted in red in the first staff, corresponding to the phrase "Wonderful, Counselor". The score includes vocal lines in German and English, and a piano accompaniment with figured bass notation.

- The use of dotted rhythms in the phrases “and the government shall be upon his shoulder” and “Wonderful, Counselor” gives the music fanfare-like and triumphant characters.

Texture

Homophonic:

- The phrase “Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace” is delivered with striking clarity through its powerful homophonic texture, ensuring its impact each time it is heard. This also effectively conveys the character, attributes, and future reign of the coming Messiah.

Contrast with Polyphony:

- The surrounding passages of polyphony create a contrast that further emphasises the homophonic statements, placing them in an even greater spotlight and enhancing their significance.

Text-setting

Lengthy Melismas:

19

The image shows a musical score for a Christmas carol. It features four staves: two vocal staves (Soprano and Alto) and two piano accompaniment staves (Right and Left Hand). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: "us a Child is born, un-to us a Son is giv-en, un-to uns ein Kind ge-born, es ist uns ein Sohn ge-ge-ben, es ist". The piano accompaniment includes a *tutti* marking and a dynamic marking of *p*. A red rectangular box highlights a melisma on the word "born" in the piano accompaniment, where the word is repeated multiple times with a continuous, flowing musical line.

- The extensive use of melismas on the word “born” emphasises its significance, drawing attention to the moment of the child’s birth and enhancing the emotional weight of the text.

Compositional Devices

Use of Sequence:

19

us a Child is born,
uns ein Kind ge-born,

un-to us a Son is giv-en, un-to
es ist uns ein Sohn ge-ge-ben, es ist

tutti
For un-to us a Child is born
Denn es ist uns ein Kind ge-born

23

us a Son is giv-en, un-to us a Son is giv-en:
uns ein Sohn ge-ge-ben, es ist uns ein Sohn ge-ge-ben,

and the gov-ern-ment shall
und die Herrschaft ist ge-

- The use of sequences in the phrase “unto us, the Son is given” adds a sense of forward motion and urgency, underscoring the importance of the gift being offered and reinforcing the celebratory nature of the text.

Reflection Box: Connecting Handel's *Messiah* to Baroque Musical Style

1. **Exploring Other Excerpts:** Select other excerpts of *Messiah* that this material has not covered. Try to relate how these pieces feature the characteristics of the Baroque period.
2. **Cultural and Historical Context:** Reflect on how *Messiah* fits into the broader cultural and historical context of the Baroque era. What does it reveal about the tastes, values, and artistic priorities of the time?

Disclaimer:

The above learning and teaching resources were prepared by the Education Bureau. Schools should make appropriate adjustments and apply them flexibly based on the learning objectives and the actual needs of their students.