

Mendelssohn

ST. PAUL

Saturday 2 December 2006, 7.30pm
St James's Church, Muswell Hill
London, N10

Janis Kelly *soprano*
Valerie Reid *mezzo-soprano*
Harry Nicoll *tenor*
Graeme Danby *bass*

North London Chorus and Orchestra

Murray Hipkin *conductor*

Programme £2



Q

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CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS



Saturday 2 December 2006
St James's Church
Muswell Hill
London, N10

Felix Mendelssohn **St Paul**

Part I

interval of 20 minutes

Part II

Janis Kelly *soprano*
Valerie Reid *mezzo-soprano*
Harry Nicoll *tenor*
Graeme Danby *bass*

North London Chorus
and Orchestra
Helena Wood *leader*

Murray Hipkin *conductor*

PART I

The Christian Church in Jerusalem prays to the Lord for power to resist persecution. Stephen is accused of blasphemy by the people, and is brought before the Council. Questioned by the High Priest, he reproves his judges for the obstinacy with which they and their fathers have rejected Christ. They refuse to hear him, and insist upon his death. As he is martyred Stephen prays for mercy on his persecutors. Devout men carry him to his burial and utter words of peace and hope over his grave. Saul, who is present at the martyrdom, resolves to continue his persecution of the Christian Church, and journeys toward Damascus. A sudden light shines on him, and he is blinded. A voice calls him to proclaim the glory of the Lord to the benighted people, and his companions lead him into Damascus. There he prays, in bitter repentance, until the Lord sends Ananias to restore his sight, and confer upon him his divine commission as a Christian preacher. He is baptised, and begins his ministry.

PART II

Saul, who has taken the name of Paul, preaches before the congregation. He and Barnabas are sent as ambassadors to spread Christianity abroad. The crowd acknowledge them as messengers who preach the gospel of peace. The Jews, not believing in the Saviour, are envious, and plot to kill Paul. But Paul and Barnabas turn from them to preach to the Gentiles. Paul miraculously cures a lame man at Lystra and the Gentiles, believing that the gods have come down from heaven as mortals, call them Jupiter and Mercury. The Apostles refuse such homage and Paul endeavours to turn the minds of the people from the worship of false idols to that of the 'one living God'. This angers the multitude and both Jews and Gentiles accuse him of having spoken against Jehovah's temple and the holy law, and raising a cry of "Stone him".

Miraculously saved from persecution, Paul convokes the elders of Ephesus telling them that he must go forth to Jerusalem and that they will never see him again. They weep and pray but Paul expresses his readiness to die for the Lord and leaves Ephesus.



Stone relief of Winged Nike at Ephesus

PART I**I OVERTURE****2 CHORUS OF CHRISTIANS**

Lord, Thou alone art God, and Thine are the heaven, the earth, the mighty waters.

The Heathen furiously rage, Lord, against Thee, and against Thy Christ. Now behold, lest our foes prevail, and grant to Thy servants all strength and joyfulness, that they may preach Thy word.

Acts iv. 24,26,29

3 CHORAL

To God on high be thanks and praise,
Who deigns our bonds to sever,
His cares our drooping souls upraise,
And harm shall reach us never.
On him we rest, with faith assur'd,
Of all that live the mighty Lord,
For ever and for ever.

4 RECITATIVE (Soprano)

And the many that believed were of one heart, and of one soul. And Stephen, full of faith and full of power, did great wonders among the people. And they of the Synagogue were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

Acts iv. 32; vi. 8,10

Then they suborned men who were false witnesses, which said:

Acts vi. 11

CHORUS (Basses)

"We verily have heard him blaspheme against these holy places, and against the law: ourselves have heard him speak."

RECITATIVE (Soprano)

And they stirred up the people and the elders, and came upon him, and caught hold of him, and brought him to the council, and spake:

Acts vi. 13

5 CHORUS OF THE PEOPLE

"Now this man ceaseth not to utter blasphemous words against the law of Moses, and also God!

"Did we not enjoin and straitly command you, that you should not teach in the Name you follow? And lo! ye have filled Jerusalem throughout with your unlawful doctrine!

" He hath said, and our ears have heard him, Jesus of Nazareth, He shall destroy all these our holy places, and change all the customs which Moses delivered us."

Acts vi.11; v. 28; vi.14

6 RECITATIVE (Soprano)

And all that sat in the council looked steadfastly on him, and saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

Then said the High Priest: "Are these things so?" And Stephen said:

Acts vi.15; vii.1

RECITATIVE Stephen (Tenor)

"Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken to me. The God of glory appeared unto our fathers, delivered the people out of their afflictions, and gave them favour. But they understood it not.

He sent Moses into Egypt, for he saw their afflictions and heard their groaning. But they refused him, and would not obey his word, but thrust him from them, and sacrificed to senseless idols.

"Solomon built him an house; albeit the Most High God dwelleth not in temples which are made with hands; for heaven is His throne, and earth is but His footstool. Hath not His hand made all these things?

"Ye hard of heart, ye always do resist the Holy Ghost. As did your fathers, even so do ye. Which of the Prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before the coming of Him, the Just One, with whose murder ye have here been stained. Ye have received the Law by the disposition of angels, and ye have not obeyed it."

Acts vii

CHORUS OF THE HEBREWS

"Take him away! For now the holyName of God he hath blasphemed, and who blasphemes Him, he shall perish! "

Acts xxi. 36; Lev. xxiv.16

RECITATIVE Stephen (Tenor)

"Lo! I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"

Acts vii. 56

7 ARIA (Soprano)

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets, thou that stonest them which are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered unto Me thy children, and ye would not!"

Matt. xxiii. 37

8 RECITATIVE (Tenor)

Then they ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him, and cried aloud:

Acts vii. 57,58

CHORUS OF THE HEBREWS

"Stone him to death. He blasphemes God: and who does so shall surely perish. Stone him to death."

Lev. xxiv. 16

9 RECITATIVE (Tenor)

And they stoned him: and he kneeled down. and cried aloud: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Acts vii. 59, 60

CHORAL

To Thee, O Lord, I yield my spirit,
Who break'st, in love, this mortal chain.
My life I but from Thee inherit,
And death becomes my chiefest gain.
In Thee I live, in Thee I die,
Content, for Thou art ever nigh.

10 RECITATIVE (Soprano)

And the witnesses had laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man whose name was Saul, who was consenting unto his death.

Acts vii. 58; viii. 1

And devout men took Stephen and carried him to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

Acts. viii. 2

11 CHORUS

Happy and blest are they who have endured, yea, blest and happy. For though the body dies, the soul shall live for ever.

James i.12

12 RECITATIVE (Tenor)

And Saul made havoc of the Church; and breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples, he spake of them much evil, and said:

Acts viii. 3; ix.1

AIR Saul (Bass)

" Consume them all, Lord Sabaoth, consume all these Thine enemies. Behold, they will not know Thee, that Thou, our great Jehovah, art the Lord alone, the Highest over all the world.

Pour out Thine indignation, and let them feel thy power."

Psalm lix.13; lxxxiii.18; lxi. 24

13 RECITATIVE (Contralto)

And he journeyed with companions towards Damascus, and had authority and command from the High Priest that he should bring them bound, men and women, unto Jerusalem.

Acts ix. 2

ARIOSO

But the Lord is mindful of His own, He remembers His children. Bow down before Him, ye mighty, for the Lord is near us.

Psalm cxv. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 19; Philipp. iv. 6

THE CONVERSION

14 RECITATIVE (Tenor and Bass) and CHORUS

And as he journeyed he came near unto Damascus; when suddenly there shone around him a light from heaven; and he fell to the earth; and he heard a voice saying unto him:

"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" And he said, "Lord, who art Thou?" And the Lord said to him: "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest."

And he said, trembling and astonished, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?" The Lord said to him: " Arise, and go into the city; and there thou shalt be told what thou must do."

Acts ix. 3, 4, 5, 6

15 CHORUS

Rise up! arise! rise, and shine! for thy light comes, and the glory of the Lord doth appear upon thee.

Behold, now, total darkness covereth the kingdoms and gross darkness the people. But upon thee riseth the mighty Lord; and the glory of the Lord appeareth upon thee.

Isaiah lx. I, 2

16 CHORAL

Sleepers, wake, a voice is calling;

It is the watchman on the walls,
Thou city of Jerusalem.

For lo, the Bridegroom comes!

Arise, and take your lamps. Hallelujah!

Awake! His kingdom is at hand.

Go forth to meet your Lord.

Matt. xxv. 1

17 RECITATIVE (Tenor)

And his companions which journeyed with him stood, and they were afraid, hearing a voice but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth, and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus, and he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink.

Acts ix. 7, 8, 9

18 ARIA Paul (Bass)

" O God, have mercy upon me, and blot out my transgressions according to Thy loving kindness, yea, even for Thy mercy's sake. Deny me not, O cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Spirit from me, O Lord. Lord, a broken heart and a contrite heart is offered before Thee. I will speak of Thy salvation, I will teach transgressors, and all the sinners shall be converted unto Thee. Then open Thou my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall show forth thy glorious praise."

Psalm li. 1, 11, 17, 18, 15

19 RECITATIVE (Tenor and Soprano)

And there was a disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; to him said the Lord, "Ananias, arise, and enquire thou for Saul of Tarsus; for behold, he prayeth. He is a chosen

vessel unto Me, the Lord; and I will shew unto him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake."

Acts ix. 10, 11, 15, 16

20 ARIA Paul (Bass)

I praise Thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart, for evermore. For great is Thy mercy toward me, and Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.

Psalm lxxxvi. 12, 13; Isaiah xxv. 8

CHORUS

The Lord, He is good: He will dry your tears, and heal all your sorrows. For His word shall not decay.

Rev. xxi. 4; Matt. xxiv. 35

21 RECITATIVE (Tenor)

And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house, and laying his hands upon him, said:

"Hear thou, brother Saul! The Lord hath sent me hither, even Jesus" that appeared unto thee as thou camest, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be likewise filled with the Holy Ghost,"

(Soprano)

And there fell from his eyes like as though it were scales; and he received his sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptised. And straightway he preached Jesus in the synagogues, and said: I thank God, who hath made me free through Christ."

Acts ix. 17, 8, 20; Rom. vii 25

22 CHORUS

O great is the depth of the riches of wisdom and knowledge of the Father! How deep and unerring is He in His judgments! His ways are past our understanding. Sing His glory for evermore. Amen.

Rom. xi.33

INTERVAL OF 20 MINUTES

PART II

23 CHORUS

The nations are now the Lord's, they are His Christ's. For all the Gentiles come before thee, and shall worship Thy Name. Now are made manifest Thy glorious law and judgments.

Rev. xi. 15; xv. 4

24 RECITATIVE (Soprano)

And Paul came to the congregation, and preached freely the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Then spake the Holy Ghost: "Set ye apart Barnabas and Paul, for the work where unto I have called them." And when they had

fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

Acts ix. 29; xiii. 2, 3

25 DUETTINO Paul and Barnabas (Tenor and Bass)

Now we are ambassadors in the Name of Christ, and God beseecheth you by us.

2 Cor. v. 20

26 CHORUS

How lovely are the messengers that preach us the gospel of peace! To all the nations is gone forth the sound of their words, throughout all the lands their glad tidings.

Rom. x. 15,18



Ancient Ephesus

27 RECITATIVE (Soprano)

So they, being filled with the Holy Ghost, departing thence delayed not, and preached the word of God with joyfulness.

Acts xiii. 4, 5

ARIOSO

I will sing of Thy great mercies, O Lord, my Saviour, and of Thy faithfulness evermore.

Psalm lxxxix. 1

28 RECITATIVE (Tenor)

But when the Jews saw the multitudes, how they assembled to hear what Paul delivered unto them, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

Acts xiii. 45

CHORUS OF THE MULTITUDE

Thus saith the Lord: "I am the Lord, and Beside Me is no Saviour."

Isaiah xliii. 11

RECITATIVE (*Tenor*)

And they laid wait for Paul, and consulted together that they might kill him, and spake one to another:

Acts ix. 23, 24

29 CHORUS OF THE MULTITUDE

"Is this he, who in Jerusalem destroyed all calling on that Name which here he preacheth?
May all deceivers ever be confounded! Force him away.
Hence, away."

Acts ix. 21

CHORAL (*Quartet and Chorus*)

O Thou, the true and only Light,
Direct the souls that walk in night;
And bring them 'neath Thy shelt'ring care,
To find their blest redemption there.
Illumine those who blindly roam;
And call the wand'rer kindly home:
The hearts astray that union crave,
And those in doubt, confirm and save.

30 RECITATIVE (*Tenor*)

But Paul and Barnabas spake freely and publicly unto the people:

Acts xiii. 46



Statue of Artemis at Ephesus

RECITATIVE Paul (*Bass*)

"Ye were chosen first to have the word of the Lord set before you; but, seeing that ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of the life everlasting, behold ye, we turn, even now, unto the Gentiles;"

Acts xiii. 46

31 DUET Paul and Barnabas (*Tenor and Bass*)

"For so hath the Lord Himself commanded:
'Behold, I have made thee a light to the Gentiles, and for salvation unto all of the earth.'
"For those who call on the Lord, He will hear them, and they shall be blessed."

Acts xiii. 47; ii. 21

22 RECITATIVE (*Tenor*)

And there was a man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, and who had never walked: and the same heard Paul speak; who, stedfastly beholding him, said with a loud voice: "Stand upright upon thy feet." And he leaped up and walked, and praised God. But when the Gentiles saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying one to another:

Acts xiv. 8, 9, 10, 11

33 CHORUS OF GENTILES

"The gods themselves as mortals have descended.
Behold them here, and adore them!
Behold, and worship! Let us all adore them!"

Acts xiv. 11

34 RECITATIVE (*Soprano*)

And they called Barnabas, *Jupiter*; and Paul, *Mercurius*. Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and would have sacrificed with the people, and adored them.

Acts xiv. 12, 18

CHORUS OF GENTILES

O be gracious, ye immortals! Heed our sacrifice with favour!

36 RECITATIVE (*Tenor*)

Now when the Apostles heard the same, they rent their garments, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying:

Acts xiv. 14

RECITATIVE Paul (*Bass*)

"O wherefore do ye these things? We also are men, of like passions with yourselves; who preach unto you, in peace and earnestness, that ye should turn away from all these vanities unto the ever living God, who made the out-stretched heavens, the earth, and the sea.

Acts xiv. 15

"As saith the prophet; 'All your idols are but falsehood, and there is no breath in them: they are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their trouble they shall perish.'

Jer x. 14, 15

"God dwelleth not in temples made with hands.

Acts xvii. 24

ARIA Paul (*Bass*)

"For know ye not that ye are His temple,

and that the Spirit of God dwelleth within you? And whosoe'er God's temple defileth, God shall sure destroy him; "For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

1Cor. iii.16, 17

SOLO (*Bass*) and CHORUS OF CHRISTIANS

"But our God abideth high in heaven, His will directeth all the world."

Psalm cxv. 3

In one true God we all believe,
Maker He of earth and heaven;
Our Father, who to all mankind
Hath the name of children given.

37 RECITATIVE (*Soprano*)

Then the multitude was stirred up against them, and there was an assault of the Jews and of the Gentiles; they were full of anger, and cried out against them:

Acts xiv. 2, 5

38 CHORUS OF THE JEWS AND GENTILES

"This is Jehovah's temple. Ye children of Israel, help us! For this is the man who teacheth all men, against the people, against this place, and also our holy law. We have heard him speak against the law. He blasphemeth God. Stone him to death."

Acts xxi. 28

39 RECITATIVE (*Soprano*)

And they all persecuted Paul on his way: but the Lord stood with him, and strengthened him, that by him the word might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear.

2 Tim. iv. 17

40 ARIA (*Tenor*)

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give to thee a crown of life. Be not afraid. My help is nigh."

Rev. ii. 10: Jer. I, 8

41 RECITATIVE (*Soprano*)

And Paul sent and called the elders of the Church at Ephesus, and said to them:

Acts xx. 17

RECITATIVE Paul (*Bass*)

"Ye know how at all seasons I have been with you, serving the Lord with all humility, and with many tears; testifying the faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold ye, I, bound in spirit, go my way to Jerusalem. Bonds and affliction abide me there; and ye shall see my face no more."

Acts xx. 18, 19, 21, 22, 28, 25

RECITATIVE (*Soprano*)

And they all wept sore and prayed:

Acts xx. 37

42 CHORUS OF THE CONGREGATION

"Far be it from thy path: these things shall not be unto thee."

Matt. xvi. 22

RECITATIVE Paul (*Bass*)

"What mean ye thus to weep, and thus to break my heart? For I am prepared, not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the Name of the Lord our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Acts xxi. 13

RECITATIVE (*Tenor*)

And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they accompanied him unto the ship, and saw his face no more.

Acts xx. 36,38

43 CHORUS

See what love hath the Father bestowed on us, in His goodness, that we should be called God's own children.

John iii. 1

44 RECITATIVE (*Soprano*)

And though he be offered upon the sacrifice of our faith, yet he hath fought a good fight: he hath finished his course; he hath kept well the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for him a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give him at the last great day.

2 Tim. iv. 6,7, 8

45 CHORUS

Not only unto him, but to all them that love truly His appearing. The Lord careth for us, and blesseth us. The Lord saveth us.

2 Tim. Iv. 8

Bless thou the Lord, O my soul, and all within me bless and praise His most holy Name for ever. All ye His angels, praise ye the Lord.

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (1809-1847) Saint Paul (Paulus) - An Oratorio (Op. 36) 1836

Mendelssohn began his oratorio on the life of St Paul in 1832, encouraged by his father, Abraham, who saw it as a work that might, at many levels, 'unite old customs with modern means'. Mendelssohn had already received an informal commission from the conductor, Johann Schelble, who had conducted the second performance of Mendelssohn's revival (and the first complete performance) of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* in 1829. They had met again in Frankfurt in 1831 and Mendelssohn refers to the commission in a letter of March 1832 to his friend and inveterate correspondent, the actor and baritone Eduard Devrient, who had sung the part of Christ in the *Passion*. Mendelssohn sketched out what he then saw as a tripartite structure for the work and indicated his wish that Devrient might compile a text, taking "the words mainly from the Bible and the hymnbook, and in addition have some free ones". Devrient declined, however, and Mendelssohn turned to the musicologist and critic A B Marx, a close friend of Felix at the time, whose programmatic theory of musical composition was becoming widely accepted. Mendelssohn had sketched an oratorio text on *Moses* for Marx, but, on hearing the character of the proposed work, he refused to reciprocate with a libretto for *St Paul*: "What? Chorales in Paul's time, and in the events that make up his life?" Mendelssohn finally found a willing librettist in another close friend, the Dessau pastor, Julius Schubring, with whom he collaborated also, a decade later, on *Elijah*.

... "the blast of the trumpets and trombones from the gallery down into the low hall was quite overpowering"

Mendelssohn's intention had been to work on the oratorio during the winter of 1833, but other commitments intervened and it was not until the spring of that year, after he had secured appointment as Music Director in Dusseldorf, that he was able to begin work. Among the responsibilities of his new post was the preparation each month of a major sacred work, for which he drew on his familiarity from earlier studies with works of Palestrina, Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven. He became, as a result, more determined to undertake an oratorio of his own, and worked intensively on the text with Schubring, drawing on the Pauline narrative in the Acts of the Apostles. Progress was soon interrupted, however, by the need to revise other works, notably the Italian symphony, and by increasing dissatisfaction with his new position. Early in 1835, he began negotiations to direct the Gewandhaus orchestra in Leipzig, a post which he took up in September. It was the death of his father in November that turned his attention back finally to work intensively on *St Paul*, as a way of marking his acute sense of loss. Although subsequently heavily revised, the oratorio was completed in April, 1836, ready



for its first performance on Pentecost Sunday (May 22nd) in Dusseldorf, to open the 18th Niederrheinisches Musikfest, which Mendelssohn had been engaged to direct. It was immediately successful and helped lift the depression Mendelssohn had experienced since the death of his father, with whom his sister Fanny wrote that he shared "an intense sympathy . . . very rarely found in this world". An additional performance was arranged for May 24th - its immediacy necessitated not only by the success of the premiere but probably also by the considerable resources involved in the performance. The orchestra had 172 players, and the chorus 364 singers - 106 sopranos, 60 altos, 90 tenors and 108 basses - most of whom were amateurs drawn from the surrounding region, an indication of the depth and scale of German musical culture at the time. Not surprisingly, one contemporary critic noted that the Rittersaal, where the performance was held, "was too small for the large audience and orchestra; and in 'Sleepers, wake,' the blast of the trumpets and trombones from the gallery down into the low hall was quite overpowering". The Musikfest also included Beethoven's *Choral Symphony*, the first and third of his *Leonora* overtures, Mozart's *Davidde penitente* and one of Handel's psalmic *Chandos* anthems, all of which Mendelssohn conducted, as well as performing at the piano and acting as a genial and energetic host. *St Paul* was hailed as an important moment in reviving the oratorio and assured Mendelssohn's emergence as a major contemporary German composer, as well as cementing the international reputation that he had already begun to develop through earlier visits to Britain, Italy and France. In the years immediately following its composition it was performed in England, Scandinavia, Netherlands, Poland, Russia and the USA. Mendelssohn set to revising the score immediately after the first performances, and changes were made to the musical text until both piano and full scores were submitted for

printing at the beginning of 1837. Although the first English performance was at Liverpool in October, 1836, it was the published version that was performed in London by the Sacred Harmonic Society, whose members presented Mendelssohn with a silver snuff box, on September 12th, 1837 and later that month at the Birmingham Festival. Alongside the still more successful and more frequently performed *Elijah* (1846), *St Paul* has retained a lasting place in the choral repertoire.

Mendelssohn was undoubtedly reflecting on the ideas of Hegel, who had taught him as an undergraduate and was among the audience at the first performance of *St Paul*.

This should not, however, be allowed to disguise its distinctly innovative character. Biedermeier culture in Mendelssohn's Germany had fully embraced the post-enlightenment project of modernity and Mendelssohn himself faced the dilemma of all serious modernist artists, of how to engage with the problem of tradition. Though many of his immediate predecessors and contemporaries (Beethoven, of course, Friedrich Schneider, Carl Loewe, Louis Spohr) had attempted dramatic and/or sacred oratorio, no coherent evolution of the form had emerged to set in contrast to the baroque tradition constituted by Bach, Handel and Haydn. At its most aesthetically extreme, modernism rejects tradition as a condition necessary to developing its own identity; yet the coherence and stability of that very identity ironically requires a tradition of its own - what the twentieth century art critic, Harold Rosenberg, termed oxymoronically a 'tradition of the new'. Mendelssohn's studies of earlier musical forms, in Germany and beyond, had convinced him that he should "work on that which the great masters have left for me, for probably no one should start over from the beginning; but it should also be a further working according to one's powers, not a lifeless repetition of what already exists". The confidence behind this thoughtful sense of innovation led Mendelssohn to choose, as key resources for *St Paul*, works of two contrasting 'great masters' of the oratorio: Bach and Handel. Yet in working from these models he maintains, nevertheless, a sense of the oratorio form which is quite different from either. The musicologist Friedrich Krummacher has recently summarized *St Paul* as a "New Testament narrative as with Bach, but neither Passion nor liturgical music; complete dramatic plot as with Handel but saturated by lyrical moments; primarily Bible text without free poetry but full of text compilations and chorale citations; and in its stock of forms and textures, generally based on historical models, from which the music differs". It is a work that locates itself

between categories in order to approach its genre in a new way. Whereas Bach's choral works were directed towards realisation of the scriptural basis of Lutheran pietism, and Handel's to the more worldly audiences of the eighteenth century European - especially English - bourgeoisie, Mendelssohn had begun to question the sense of social functionality in baroque art, in favour of a more autonomous, self-referential aesthetic, of both art works and, by association, for the artist and his social role. In this, as in other aspects of his thought, Mendelssohn was undoubtedly reflecting on the ideas of Hegel, who had taught him as an undergraduate and was among the audience at the first performance of *St Paul*. If his own work "has similarities with Sebastian Bach", he insisted to Devrient, "I cannot do anything about it, for I have written it just as I had it in my heart".

Both the scale of *St Paul* and its structure are clearly Bachian in character. It consists of 45 separate numbers, in two parts, each of which is subdivided into three separate sub-sections. Its structure is organised around the biblical narrative of Saul/Paul: in Part I his persecution of Christians, centring on the stoning of Stephen, and the drama of his conversion. Part II narrates his commissioning as an apostle, with Barnabas, and the opposition of the Jews, the mission to Lystra, where he heals a lame man (quaintly translated as "impotent in his feet") and is persecuted jointly by gentiles and Jews, to whom he responds with a valedictory declaration of the particularity of the Pauline gospel. Both the narrative of the drama and the introduction of key theological ideas are sustained, combining characteristics of both Bach and Handel, through recitatives, soli and aria. These are interspersed with choruses and chorales which variously reiterate, reinforce and comment upon the narrative events, providing, despite Marx's reservations about their anachronism, what another friend, Karl Klingemann, considered to be "resting points", drawing attention "from the individual occurrence to the general law" and diffusing "calmness throughout the whole".

This calmness is suggested at the very opening of the work, where the overture opens by quietly invoking Bach's 'Wachet auf', in A major, before moving into an increasingly vigorous orchestral fugue, at the end of which the same theme emerges from the turmoil of the orchestra as a prelude to the declaratory strength of the opening chorus: 'Lord, Thou alone art God', immediately followed by the quietude of the first chorale: 'To God on high', a simple statement of the Lutheran Gloria. The dramatic narrative then begins, introducing the persecution of Stephen with the first recitative. This episode is concluded with the lyrical beauty of the chorus (No 11) 'Happy and blest are they' mourning Stephen's martyrdom. As Saul heads for Damascus and his own story becomes the focus of the narrative, Mendelssohn uses a chorus of female voices

(No 14) for the voice of Jesus's challenge to his calamitous, persecutory mission. To do so was quite novel, and caused a controversy which has occasionally recurred. The number uses tenor and bass soloists as narrator and the voice of Saul, and Mendelssohn avoids giving a dual role to either by solving the problem of Jesus's voice in a purely musical way. This has the added advantage of providing an ethereal quality to the divine instruction that will change Saul's life, thus ensuring that this key dramatic moment should not pass unnoticed. The theme of 'Wachet auf' is used yet again, following a distinctly Handelian chorus (No 15: Rise up! Arise) detailing Saul's blinding epiphany on the road to Damascus. Mendelssohn here uses the full text, set in D major (Bach's 'trumpet key'), in the work's most elaborate chorale (No 16: 'Sleepers. Awake!') whose orchestration is brightened by brass fanfares in anticipation of Saul's conversion and restoration of sight. This is accomplished by Ananias as the conclusion of Part I and celebrated in two choruses, the rhythmic, fugal lyricism of 'The Lord, He is good' and a crescendo of majestic certainty in 'O great is the depth of the riches of wisdom and knowledge of the Father'.

Although the major dramatic moments of the Pauline narrative are contained in Part I, Mendelssohn sustains the momentum in Part II by opening, after the ecumenical chorus (No 23) of 'The nations are now the Lord's', with the evangelical commissioning and trials of Paul and Barnabas as apostles, and events surrounding the healing at Lystra. The fluent choral euphony of 'How lovely are the messengers' (No 26) celebrates the two 'ambassadors in the Name of Christ' who are consoled, when their teachings are rejected, with the harmonious chorale (No 29), 'O thou, the true and only Light', as a quartet sings alongside the full chorus. When the gentiles witness the miraculous healing at Lystra, they burst into an awed, heathen chorus (No 33): 'The gods themselves as mortals have descended', then seek, liltily, to entreat the favours of their pagan idols with a further chorus (No 35), the tuneful and charming 'O be gracious, ye immortals'. Referred to by the gentiles as Jupiter and Mercury respectively, Barnabas and Paul warn them against a lapse into polytheism, to which they respond with the lively chorus (No 38) 'This is Jehovah's temple', as Jews and gentiles unite to threaten Paul himself with being stoned, like Stephen. Paul prepares for the possibility that he, too, may be martyred by beginning the lengthy articulation of true faith, before the elders of the Ephesian Church, that brings the oratorio to its close. The evangelistic Pauline doctrine that Christianity is justified by faith, rather than through good works, is Lutheran pietistic dogma, yet Mendelssohn holds back from a complete statement of it, choosing instead to assert a universal monotheism. The implications are encapsulated in two final choruses, the gently grateful devotion of 'See what love the Father bestowed on us' (No 43) and the rousing

confidence of the fugal finale (No 45): 'Not only unto him'.

This is one way of raising the subtextual controversy which underlies much discussion of Mendelssohn's work: the implications of his conversion to Christianity from the Judaism into which he was born. Their parents' decision to have both Felix and Fanny baptised as Christians was taken in 1815, when both were young children. More important than the specious issues raised by Wagner's scurrilous and pseudonymously published 1850 essay *Das Judentum in der Musik*, is the question of whether antisemitism was endemic to Mendelssohn's religious identity as a Neuchrist. This has to be seen in the context of Jewish-Christian cultural relations in Biedermeier Germany, which were changing and developing in subtle and complex ways. One of the reasons for this is a feature of the particularly sophisticated legacy of religious identity which Mendelssohn inherited from his own family. His paternal grandfather, Moses Mendelssohn, was one of the most influential of post-enlightenment eighteenth century German philosophers and, with the publication of his treatise *Jerusalem*, in 1784, initiated a debate on modern Jewish identity that continues to resonate. He argued that the worldly truth of Judaism was a basis for its compatibility with modern life. Modernisation of Jewish life itself, thus, should be seen as a condition of contemporary Jewish emancipation, the enactment of which, as part of the project of modernity, should not require conversion to Christianity but, rather, secularisation of Jewish culture. In its commitment to rationalism and its concession to secularisation, this constituted – and remains – a controversial rejection of orthodoxy as tradition in favour of reform as engagement with modernity. The Hegelian character of this argument was taken a step further by Moses's son Abraham, Felix's father, with what he saw as the progressive conversion of his two children – followed some years later (in 1822) by that of himself and his wife. It was after that (1829), as Felix's reputation as a composer was gathering momentum, that he urged him to adopt the non-Jewish surname of Bartholdy, insisting that "A Christian Mendelssohn is an impossibility. A Christian Mendelssohn the world would never recognize. Nor should there be a Christian Mendelssohn..." In justification he recounted that his own father had changed his name to Mendelssohn from Moses Ben Mendel Dessau for reasons of social mobility, and that the name had thus come to "stand for a Judaism in transition... seeking to transmute itself spiritually". Felix's response was to append the new surname to his existing one, and thus take a stance that was in effect an anticipation of a multicultural sense of Jewish-Christian relations which contrasted constructively with the assimilationism of his grandfather and the conversionist practice of his parents. Any decision that he might have taken himself

about his grandfather's recommendation of assimilation over conversion had been pre-empted by the action of his parents whilst he was still a child. Their own later decision to convert seems to have been a rejection of the re-assertions of orthodoxy which had begun to dominate the debate on reform initiated by Moses. Each generation of the family, thus, had sought to confront the tension between modernity and tradition in a new, and itself thoughtfully modern way. In doing so, they had made important contributions to the continuing debate on modern German Jewish identity.

contemporary problem of (post-)modernism's tradition of the new, and it is worth considering, in deference to Mendelssohn's significant contributions as a composer of sacred oratorio, whether any contemporary choral composers might stand comparison with him in terms of their music and cultural politics." To think," he had said to Devrient after the performance of Bach's St Matthew Passion, "that it has taken an actor and a Jew to revive for the world its greatest Christian music."

Paul Filmer



Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy by Wilhelm Hensel

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St Paul can be seen as both a reply on this point from Mendelssohn to his father, who had supported the projected oratorio so strongly, and a memorial tribute to

“To think that it has taken an actor and a Jew to revive for the world its greatest Christian music.”

their relationship. Certainly, the initial choice of the conversion narrative of Paul as the topic of the work, as well as the discursive details of the Duettino (No 25) and Duet (No 31) between Paul and Barnabas in Part II, and the assertion of the knowledge, wisdom and unerring judgment of the Father in the closing chorus of Part I, can all support such an interpretation. Notwithstanding this, however, the choice of the Acts of the Apostles, with its sustained antisemitism, as the primary scriptural source for the text remains an unfortunate one. The problems of Mendelssohn's own constructive and courageous engagement with the tensions of Jewish-Christian cultural relations of his time should not hide the problematic of the continuing significance of works whose libretti are drawn from antisemitic biblical texts remaining close to the centre of the European choral repertoire. This is a

Janis Kelly *soprano*

Janis Kelly studied at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Drama in her native Glasgow and at the Royal College of Music in London. She is recognised as an excellent actress with a wide-ranging repertoire across the fields of opera, operetta and the musical and is a regular guest with English National Opera, Opera North and Grange Park Opera in repertoire ranging from *La Traviata* and *Der Rosenkavalier* to *Showboat*.

Janis has performed at the BBC Proms and with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, London Festival Orchestra, Halle Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, The Sixteen and London Sinfonietta. Her extensive repertoire includes Britten *Les Illuminations*, Ravel *Sheherazade*, Canteloube *Songs of the Auvergne*, Strauss *Four Last Songs* and the major oratorios from the baroque, classical, Romantic and 20th century periods.

Recent appearances include Kuma (*The Enchantress*) and Elisabetta (*Maria Stuarda*) at Grange Park Opera, Romilda (*Xerxes*) and Iris (*Semele*) at both ENO and Vlaamse Opera. She appears as Liu Turandot in the Hollywood movie *The Life of David Gale*. Recordings include Tchaikovsky *Incidental Music to Hamlet* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra (Chandos), *Street Scene*, *A Little Night Music*, *Showboat* and *Brigadoon* (TER), four award-winning albums for the Inspector Morse television soundtracks on Virgin Records and *The Maid of the Mountains* on Hyperion.

Janis is currently filming a series of comedy operas by Richard Thomas (*Jerry Springer, the Opera*) for BBC TV which will be broadcast in March 2007.

Her most recent appearance with North London Chorus was Fauré *Requiem* in April 2006.



Valerie Reid *mezzo-soprano*

Valerie studied singing at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and drama in Glasgow with Pat McMahon. She won the Governors' Recital Prize, two Caird Scholarships and the John Noble Award which, with further support from the Friends of Covent Garden, enabled her to undertake a year's study at the National Opera Studio, London.

Valerie has appeared at English National Opera as Mercedes in David Pountney's production of *Carmen*, Second Lady (*Magic Flute*), Third Nymph (*Rusalka*), Maddalena (*Rigoletto*), The Lady in David Sawer's *Morning to Midnight* and Grimgerde (*Die Walküre*) (also at the Glastonbury Festival for a world wide television audience of over one billion).

Other roles include Dorabella (*Così fan tutte*), Cherubino (*The Marriage of Figaro*), Charlotte (*Grand Duchess of Gerolstein*) (Scottish Opera), Natasha (*The Electrification of the Soviet Union*) (Music Theatre Wales), *Carmen* (Hong Kong), Rosina in *Barber of Seville* (Festival de la Vézère), Krobyle in Richard Strauss *Des Esels Schatten* with Sir Peter Ustinov (Covent Garden Festival) and Mrs Turner in Will Todd's new opera *The Blackened Man* (Linbury).

Recent concert appearances include the Verdi *Requiem* (Coventry, Glasgow, Barbican), Mendelssohn *Elijah* (St Hellier, Barbican), Elgar *Dream of Gerontius* (Dunblane, St Alban's), Elgar *Sea Pictures* (Athens), Mahler *Eight Symphony* (Glasgow) and *Midsummer Music* with the English Sinfonia (Gibside).

Future plans include *The Marriage of Figaro* (ENO), *Dream of Gerontius* (Glasgow), *Elijah* (St Alban's), co-producing *Carmen* (Northumbria University) and Mozart *Requiem* and *Haydn Nelson Mass* (Rutherford Hall).

Her most recent appearance with North London Chorus was King *The Season of Singing* and Mozart *Requiem* in June 2006.



Murray Hipkin and Graeme Danby are members of English National Opera and appear by permission

Harry Nicoll *tenor*

Harry is a regular guest principal with all the UK opera companies - Scottish Opera, English National Opera, Welsh Opera, Opera North, Glyndebourne Touring Opera and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden - in a variety of roles from Monteverdi to Michael Nyman.

Further afield, he has sung with New York City Opera, L'Opera di Roma, Théâtre Champs Elysées (Paris), New Israeli Opera (Tel Aviv, Frankfurt, Berlin and Cologne), Bregenz (Austria) and Batignano (Tuscany) festivals.

He has sung in London's South Bank, Barbican and Albert Hall, in Amsterdam's Concertgebouw and is one of Britain's leading interpreters of Bach's *Evangelists*.

This season includes *Carmen* and *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Royal Opera House, Covent Garden), *Madama Butterfly* (Scottish Opera) and *Tales of Hoffmann* in Holland (Reisopera).

His most recent appearance with North London Chorus was in a programme of opera choruses (in aid of Wormwood Scrubs Pony Centre for disabled children) in July 2005.



Graeme Danby *bass*

Graeme studied at the Royal Academy of Music with Canadian baritone Bruce Boyce. Principal Bass with English National Opera, his roles include Sarastro (*Magic Flute*), Sacristan (*Tosca*), Pimen (*Boris Godonov*), Sergeant (*The Pirates of Penzance*), Somnus (*Semele*), Quince (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Elviro (*Xerxes*), Doctor Grenvil (*La Traviata*), Don Basilio (*The Barber of Seville*), Pooh Bah (*Mikado*), Zuniga (*Carmen*), Pistol (*Falstaff*), Dulcamara (*L'Elisir d'Amore*) and Count Rostov (*War and Peace*). He is regularly heard at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Opera North, Scottish Opera and Garsington. Abroad, he has appeared in Strasbourg, Barcelona, Paris, Ghent and Antwerp.

Recordings include *The Marriage of Figaro*, Janacek *The Makropulos Case* and Berg *Lulu* for Chandos, Bernstein *Candide* and Blitzstein *Regina* for Hyperion, *Graeme Danby Sings Stories of the North East* with the Northern Sinfonia and Will Todd's oratorio *Cuthbert* with the Halle Orchestra. Concerts include regular appearances at The Royal Albert Hall, Barbican, Sage, Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Bridgewater Hall and the Royal Festival Hall with the RPO, London Concert Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Northern Sinfonia and the Halle. Recent Oratorio performances include Mahler *Eighth Symphony* in the RFH and Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, *Elijah* in the Barbican, Beethoven *Ninth Symphony* in the RAH and the Mozart *Requiem* in Bury St Edmonds' Cathedral.

Future plans include *La Traviata*, *Marriage of Figaro*, *On the Town*, *Kismet*, *Carmen*, and *Aida* (ENO), Tosca and Gonzalo in Thomas Ades' acclaimed opera *The Tempest* (ROH) and *Candide* at the Châtelet in Paris, *Damnation of Faust* in Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent, *Elijah* in St Alban's Abbey, *St Paul* at the Barbican and further recordings of the music of Eric Boswell. In July Graeme was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Northumbria University where he is also Professor of Music.

His most recent performance with North London Chorus was Mozart *Requiem* in June 2006.



Murray Hipkin *conductor*

Murray Hipkin studied at York University, the Guildhall and the National Opera Studio before joining the Music Staff of ENO (1983–8) and then working for Opéra de Lyon, La Monnaie, Opera Factory, Scottish Opera and Opera Brava (as Musical Director).

Since returning to ENO in 1995, he has appeared in *Mahagonny*, *The Silver Tassie*, Leoncavallo's *La bohème* and *The Rake's Progress*, and worked extensively as Senior Répétiteur (his productions have included the complete *Ring*) and assistant conductor. He has conducted *La bohème* (Surrey Opera, Opera Box), the UK première of Salieri's *Falstaff*, Haydn *La vera costanza* (Bampton Classical Opera), and, for English National Opera, *The Pirates of Penzance* and the 20th Anniversary performances of Jonathan Miller's production of *The Mikado* starring Lesley Garrett.

He assisted John Adams and conducted on location for the award-winning Channel 4 film *The Death of Klinghoffer*, and in 2003 he was appointed Musical Director of North London Chorus, where his most recent concerts include Bach *Mass in B Minor* and Buxtehude *Membra Jesu nostri*.



North London Chorus

North London Chorus met as The Hill Singers for the first time on 28 October 1976 and, under the direction of Alan Hazeldine, gave its first concert on 10 December 1977. In 1985 the choir changed its name to "North London Chorus" (NLC). The Chorus has established a reputation as a versatile amateur choir, performing a broad range of choral works drawn from the 16th to the 21st centuries.

Murray Hipkin was appointed Musical Director in 2003, and works with NLC by kind permission of English National Opera. He has considerable experience of both choral music and opera. His enthusiasm and skills as teacher and conductor have enabled the choir to flourish and develop an exciting and ambitious programme of performances.

In 2005, NLC was proud to welcome renowned soprano Janis Kelly as its patron. Janis's recent roles at English National Opera include Romilda in Handel *Xerxes* and Pat Nixon in John Adams' acclaimed *Nixon in China*. Her performing début with the choir was in April 2006, when she sang Britten *Les Illuminations* and Fauré *Requiem* in a concert at St Michael's, Highgate which also included Holst *The Hymn of Jesus* and Finzi *Lo, The Full, Final Sacrifice*, and featured Finchley Children's Music Group. Janis has brought her inspirational energy directly to the choir, regularly running singing sessions at our workshops.

North London Chorus's other recent concerts have included Bach *B Minor Mass* here at St James's Muswell Hill in January 2006 and, in April 2005, an ambitious programme of Puccini and Stravinsky at artsdepot in North Finchley, which was awarded 4 stars in the *Ham & High*. In June 2005 the choir's concert of baroque music with Denise Leigh (winner of Channel 4's *Operatunity*) and a period orchestra was also awarded four stars, and led to the choir being invited to perform in this year's 'Proms at St Jude's' Season. That concert paired a specially commissioned work by Matthew King, *The Season Of Singing*, with Mozart *Requiem*, accompanied by a period orchestra. The Matthew King commission was made possible by grants from the Ralph Vaughan Williams Trust and the Britten-Pears Foundation, and takes its title from a line in *The Song of Songs*. It is a setting of poems by Shakespeare, Blake, Cummings, Herrick, Lawrence, Byrd and Milton which celebrate the act of singing. It is a wonderfully uplifting piece of music and NLC looks forward to giving another performance of it in June 2007.

NLC is a friendly choir and, as well as preparing for concerts, organises a range of related activities, including an annual residential weekend, at least one annual one-day workshop, sectional rehearsals and regular social events and visits to concerts and the opera. Rehearsals take place in East Finchley on Thursday evenings and potential new members are welcome to audition. Please contact the Chairman, Jeremy Pratt, on 0208 883 8123 or Secretary, Norman Cohen, on 0208 349 3022.

Further information about NLC can be found at www.northlondonchorus.org.uk



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Helena Beddoe
Michaela Carlowe
Heather Daniel
Sheila Denby-Wood
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Holly Lloyd
Nikky Lloyd
Jo Lunt
Joanna Macdonald
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Verity Preest
Joan Reardon
Julia Sabey
Janet Saunders
Shantini Siva Prakasam
Julia Tash
Jenny Taylor
Pauline Treen
Enriqueta Vinas

alto

Marian Bunzl
Alison Cameron
Lucy Ellis
Julia Fabricius
Sarah Falk
Eleanor Flaxen
Hélène Gordon
Viv Gross
Sue Heaney
Jo Hulme
Mary Instone
Susan Le Quesne
Jane May
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Joanna Shepherd
Sonia Singham
Phyll White
Catherine Whitehead

tenor

Ridley Burnett
Alan Chandler
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Stephen Sharp
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Mark Wakelin
Christine Westlake
Terrè Yuki

bass

David Berle
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Its guest appearance for the Proms' choral concert spot was especially welcome as it brought with it a world premiere - its own commission, Matthew King's *The Season Of Singing*.

Termed by the composer as a work for soprano (Sally Silver), mezzo (Valerie Reid), choir and classical orchestra (a modern instrument version exists), it is a setting in five parts of verse by Milton, e e cummings, William Byrd, Shakespeare, Blake, D H Lawrence and words from the Song of Songs.

It is a work of complexity that veers from the dissonant to the melodic, but never goes beyond an aural limit where sound becomes obscure and the texts are buried in a welter of effects.

King is also very adept at setting a line and he seems to recognise instinctively that, for the average non-professional choir, there are limits beyond which one should not cross. His restraint was amply rewarded by some really first-rate ensemble singing.

The choir and orchestra then turned to Mozart's requiem K626 where bass Graeme Danby and tenor Amos Christie joined the choir and the female soloists in a performance that featured incisive orchestral playing as well as a focused contribution from the choir.

The quartet of soloists blended particularly well although the overall effect veered towards the operatic. However, Hipkin obtained a good emotional thrust throughout the *Sequenz*, the chorus providing a keen and welcome dramatic edge to the *Dies Irae* and *Rex Tremendae*.

David Sonin's review appears courtesy of *Ham and High*

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