

# WIGMORE HALL

Monday 13 September 2021 7.30pm

## The Sixteen

**Sarah Sexton** violin  
**Sarah Moffatt** violin  
**Ellen O'Dell** violin  
**Daniel Edgar** violin  
**Jean Paterson** violin  
**Nia Lewis** violin  
**Andrew Skidmore** cello  
**Imogen Seth-Smith** cello  
**Hannah McLaughlin** oboe  
**Sally Jackson** bassoon  
**Eligio Quinteiro** theorbo  
**Alastair Ross** harpsichord, organ

**Katy Hill** soprano  
**Kirsty Hopkins** soprano  
**Alexandra Kidgell** soprano  
**Charlotte Mobbs** soprano  
**Jeremy Budd** tenor  
**Mark Dobell** tenor  
**George Pooley** tenor  
**Ben Davies** bass  
**Robert Macdonald** bass  
**Stuart Young** bass

**George Frideric Handel** (1685-1759)

Overture (Sonata) to Chandos Anthem No. 6 'As pants the hart' HWV251b (1717-18)  
Spande ancor a mio dispetto HWV165  
Chandos Anthem No. 2 'In the Lord put I my trust' HWV247 (1717-18)

Interval

Overture (Sonata) to Chandos Anthem No. 1 'O be joyful' HWV246  
Esther HWV50  
*Overture • Scene I*  
Chandos Anthem No. 5 'I will magnify thee' HWV250a (1717-18)

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Soon after the triumph of his music for the royal concert on the Thames in July 1717, **Handel** left London to join the elite company of musicians employed by James Brydges, Earl of Carnarvon and future Duke of Chandos, at Cannons, the nobleman's mansion in Little Stanmore, Middlesex. Much of Brydges' huge fortune was made on the back of his job as Paymaster General during the Spanish War of Succession (1701-14). Between the year of his retirement in 1713 and 1724, he lavished £200,000 on Cannons, transforming the place from medieval manor into baroque palace; the works also included the reconstruction of the nearby Church of St Lawrence and the creation of a private chapel at Cannons.

Brydges maintained an ace ensemble of musicians, including two boy sopranos, two violinists, an oboist, a flautist, a cellist (the composer and librettist Nicola Francesco Haym), and a keyboard player. The resident band grew from nine musicians in 1716 to 24 by 1720. Handel probably remained at Cannons until February 1719, enriching its repertoire with the *Chandos Anthems*, the 'Chandos' *Te Deum*, several pieces for solo keyboard and chamber ensemble, and two works on a larger scale, *Acis and Galatea* and *Esther*.

The *Chandos Anthems*, or 'Anthems for Cannons' as Handel scholars prefer, were written between August 1717 and the summer of the following year for services at St Lawrence. All 11 are scored for strings without viola, solo winds, organ continuo and a varied blend of choral and solo voices. It is likely that Handel used his three Latin psalm settings, crafted in 1707 while he journeyed through Italy, as models for the Cannons anthems. His experiences of music-making in several Italian cities, Florence, Rome and Naples among them, clearly left a lasting impression on his work. The rarely performed cantata *Spande ancor a mio dispetto*, associated on weak evidence with the flamboyant Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni's patronage, dates from 1707-08. The three-movement work amounts to a tour de force for solo bass, two violins and basso continuo, its musical gestures tailored to suit the text's comparisons of turbulent emotions to storms and other natural events.

*As pants the hart*, perhaps the first of the *Chandos Anthems*, began life in 1712 as a work for George I's Chapel Royal. Five years later Handel added solo movements and orchestrated its original organ part. The composition opens with a fine two-movement Sonata, its first part graced by virtuoso writing for solo violin. Handel's setting of the *Jubilate*, Psalm 100, *O be joyful in the Lord*, is brought to life by a short Sonata, both reverent and exuberant in spirit.

For *In the Lord put I my trust*, based largely on verses from Tate and Brady's metrical *New Version of the Psalms of David*, Handel prepares the ground with a forthright Sonata. The first of its two movements is built from repeated call-and-response figures, the second fashioned in the form of a fugue. Both were rehomed by the publisher John Walsh in

the fifth of the Op. 3 *concerti grossi* issued under Handel's name in 1734. The anthem matches a selection of verses from Psalms 9, 11, 12 and 13 to music of great character, from the noble counterpoint of the opening chorus and vehement chordal energy unleashed in 'Snares, fire and brimstone on their heads' to each of the tenor's fine arias.

*I will magnify thee*, to verses from Psalms 144 and 145, starts with a two-part Sonata in which solo oboe commands the spotlight. Handel serves notice of his mastery of choral writing with the rousing 'I will magnify thee, O God my king' and 'One generation shall praise thy works', and demonstrates his arresting ability to deploy sudden dramatic contrasts in the tenor aria 'The Lord preserveth'. The two remaining arias appear to have been added some time after the original score's completion, perhaps for performance in the new Cannons chapel. The fifth *Chandos Anthem* closes with a movement for tenor and chorus, launched by a duet for solo voice and oboe above a walking bass and crowned by an ingenious contrapuntal 'Amen'.

*Esther*, or 'The Oratorium' as it was initially titled, was composed almost certainly for Cannons in 1718. The libretto of Handel's first English oratorio was for long credited to Alexander Pope, but has more recently been attributed in part to one of Handel's oldest London friends, Dr John Arbuthnot, physician to Queen Anne and a member of Pope's circle, who appears to have introduced the composer to James Brydges. Its plot, based on a recent English translation of Racine's eponymous play, omits essential details of the biblical story of the Jewish queen Esther, her second husband, the Persian King Ahasuerus, and the existential plight of the Jewish community living in exile in his country under threat of death. The libretto, in one act divided into six scenes, complicates matters further by delaying the appearance of Esther and her heroic cousin Mordecai until the fourth scene and gives no more than a thumbnail sketch of Ahasuerus.

Handel achieved a remarkable synthesis of existing and freshly composed material, compensating for the libretto's want of drama with music of compelling energy and élan. *Esther* opens with an Overture, the three parts of which – *Andante*, *Larghetto*, *Allegro* – together encompass the lamentations of the Jewish people over their fate and their faith in divine providence. Its first scene explores the retributive intentions of Haman, the king's political adviser, to kill Persia's Jews, expressed with malice in the aria 'Pluck root and branch from out the land' and amplified in the chorus 'Shall we the god of Israel fear?'.

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# George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

## Overture (Sonata) to Chandos Anthem No. 6

'As pants the hart' HWV251b (1717-18)

### Spande ancor a mio dispetto HWV165

*Anonymous*

#### *Aria*

Spande ancor a mio dispetto  
Nube densa, oscura e bruna  
Fiero nembo in faccia al sole.  
E il mio cor, che langue in  
petto  
Al rigor di sua fortuna,  
Più s'affanna e più si duole.  
Spande ancor ...

#### *Recitativo*

Oh! che da fiere pene  
Quasi da mostri orrendi  
Porto il cor lacerate;  
Freme il mare agitato  
Più non son l'aure amene,  
Ma rabbioso ogni vento  
Corre le vie del cielo,  
E con oltraggio toglie  
La verde chioma al pino, al faggio.  
Precipitoso il fiume,  
Cade di balza in balza,  
E dove più s'innalza  
Da torrenti accresciuto  
Al campo i fiori  
E l'innocenti o vil  
Toglie a' pastori.  
Tuona l'etra e balena  
Fulmina Giove irato  
E tenebroso il cielo  
Cinto d'oscuro velo  
Cuopre tutto d'orrore un disperato.

#### *Aria*

Da balza in balza se cade il fiume,  
Da pena in pena pur passa il cor.  
E mai s'inalza sopra le piume  
Di amor che frena l'altrui  
dolor.  
Da balza in balza ...

### Again, to vex me, there spreads

#### *Aria*

Again, to vex me, there spreads  
a dense mist, dark and gloomy,  
a cruel cloud on the face of the sun.  
And my heart, which languishes in  
my breast  
at the harshness of its fate,  
grieves and laments more.  
Again, to vex me ...

#### *Recitative*

Oh! by what fierce pains,  
like horrible monsters  
I harbour, is my heart torn;  
the rough sea shudders,  
the breezes are no longer pleasant,  
but raging, every wind  
races along the paths of the sky,  
and angrily rips off  
the green tresses of the pine, the beech.  
Violently the river  
falls from rock to rock,  
and where it rises farther,  
by mounting torrents  
sweeps away the fields and flowers  
and the shepherds,  
whether good or evil.  
The sky thunders  
and angry Jove throws lightning bolts,  
and the gloomy sky,  
girded by a dark veil,  
covers a desperate man with horror.

#### *Aria*

The river falls from rock to rock,  
the heart passes from pain to pain.  
And there never rises on the wings  
of love that which reduces  
another's sorrow.  
The river falls ...

## Chandos Anthem No. 2 'In the Lord put I my trust' HWV247

(1717-18)

*Liturgical text*

Tenor Solo: Mark Dobell

### *Sinfonia*

#### *Chorus*

In the Lord I put my trust! How say you then to my soul she shall flee as a  
bird unto the hill?

#### *Tenor*

God is a constant sure defence against oppressing rage, as troubles rise,  
his needful aids in our behalf engage.

#### *Chorus*

Behold! The wicked bend their bow, and ready fix their dart, lurking in  
ambush to destroy the man of upright heart.

#### *Tenor*

But God, who hears the suff'ring pow'r, and their oppression knows, will  
soon arise and give them rest in spite of all their foes.

#### *Chorus*

Snares, fire and brimstone on their heads shall in one tempest show'r; this  
dreadful mixture his revenge into their cup shall pour.

#### *Tenor*

The righteous Lord will righteous deeds with signal favour grace, and to the  
upright man disclose the brightness of his face.

#### *Chorus*

Then shall my song, with praise inspir'd, to thee my God ascend, who to thy  
servants in distress such bounty didst extend.

### ~Interval~

## Overture (Sonata) to Chandos Anthem No. 1

'O be joyful' HWV246

### Esther HWV50 (1718 rev. 1732-5)

#### *Overture*

#### *Recitative*

#### *Habdonah*

'Tis greater far to spare than to destroy.

#### *Haman*

I'll hear no more; it is decreed,  
All the Jewish race shall bleed.  
Hear and obey what Haman's voice commands.  
Hath not the lord of all the east  
Giv'n all his pow'r into my hands?  
Hear, all ye nations far and wide,  
Which own our monarch's sway,  
Hear, and obey.

*Air*

*Haman*

Pluck root and branch from out the land:  
Shall I the God of Israel fear?  
Let Jewish blood dye ev'ry hand,  
Nor age, nor sex I spare.  
Raze, raze their temples to the ground,  
And let their place no more be found.

*Recitative*

*An Officer*

Our souls with ardour glow  
To execute the blow.

*Chorus*

Shall we the God of Israel fear?  
Nor age, nor sex we'll spare.  
Pluck root and branch from out the land:  
Nor age, nor sex we'll spare.

### **Chandos Anthem No. 5 'I will magnify thee' HWV250a (1717-18)**

*Liturgical text*

Tenor solo: **Jeremy Budd**  
Soprano solo: **Alexandra Kidgell**

*Sonata*

*Chorus*

I will magnify thee, O God my King, and I will praise thy name for ever and  
ever.

*Tenor*

Ev'ry day will I give thanks unto thee, and praise thy name for ever and  
ever.

*Chorus*

One generation shall praise thy works unto another, and declare thy pow'r.

*Tenor*

The Lord preserveth all them that love him, but scatt'reth abroad all the  
ungodly.

*Soprano*

The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, he will fulfil  
the desire of them that fear him.

*Tenor*

Happy are the people that are in such a case; blessed are the people who  
have the Lord for their God.

*Tenor and Chorus*

My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord, and let all flesh give thanks  
unto his holy name for ever and ever. Amen.

*All editions and translations by Peter Jones*