

George intended
message of peace.
these instances thus



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George Frideric Handel's piece, "Messiah", is an oratorio, which he composed in London in 1741. A German by birth, Frideric became a naturalized English citizen later in life, which explains his city of composition. "Messiah" however first premiered in Dublin, Ireland the following year, in 1742. "Messiah" is composed of three parts, each highlighting different aspects of prophecies, glory, acts and ultimately the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Kerman and Tomilson 407).

The text of "Messiah" borrows from The King James Version of the Bible; the work of Charles Jennens, a scholar of literature and editor of some of William Shakespeare's plays. He selected the texts from various Books in the Old and New Testaments of the King James Bible. Handel appointed Jennens as his Librettist (source for the texts) and the two further worked together in other pieces by Handel.

The piece begins with the slow and rhythmic introduction by the orchestra band, without any voices from the choir. The orchestra band uses the violins as the primary instruments in this introduction. A soloist then joins at a certain stage after the introduction, a sharp soprano that begins to tell of the prophecy of the coming Messiah (part I), the death and resurrection of the Messiah (Part II), and the ultimate triumph over death by the resurrection of the Messiah (Part III).

There are several aspects of "Messiah" that I found captivating. From the very beginning, the piece sets the tone for the blending of the texts in the song with the instrumentation, giving an overall effective delivery of the idea (story of Christ) in the piece.

For instance, in the choir's rendition of the Part I recitative "For Behold, Darkness shall cover the earth" (Handel Stanza 1), the general tone of the choir creates a mood that evokes sadness and as a listener I get engrossed in this mood for a moment. The accompanying instruments, at this point, also adopt a rhythm that connotes the prevailing mood commensurate with the message of "darkness" in the text.

Additionally, in Part I when the choir joins the soprano soloist in singing the chorus "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth..." (Handel Stanza 1), there is a considerable variation in the tone of the singers. When the choir sings out "Glory to God" - the first part of the chorus line - there is a discernable and heightened projection of the voice amongst the choir. The element of praise to God, intended in that phrase, is self-evident simply from the manner of singing of the choir members.

The accompanying instruments, especially the violin, are also at this point struck with short and climactic strokes that convey the element of praise to God. The second part of this chorus line "...and peace on earth" follows, and its delivery also alludes to its message. I noticed that when the choir sings this part of the chorus, their voices are in low tones and the message of 'peace on earth' in the chorus is conveyed.

This part comes in sharp contrast to the earlier forceful part when God gets the praise. Instruments like the violin here play long strokes to convey the accompanying and intended message of peace. These instances thus summarize the musical expression that prevails in the entire "Messiah"

composition, and the listener's mood varies according to the specific message that is delivered at different stages of the composition.

The musical expression in "Messiah" was quite poignant for me because the piece combines an orchestra and a choir, and as a listener, the manner in which these two parts of the band are able to encapsulate the messages in the piece with their instrumentation and singing respectively aids in following the Messianic epic from Part I through III.

I was therefore able to guess or have an idea of the kind of message that was being propagated in the piece even without necessarily hearing the words of the text, and this was in part due to the madrigalism in the piece (Stapert 83). The listener is thus able to listen to the song and experience the different moods even before the specific words and phrases get pronounced.

The musical texture of "Messiah" is thus 'thick' or polyphonic, in many instances of the composition, largely because both the choir and the orchestra are involved in the piece. At various points in "Messiah", simultaneous singing (recitation) and instrumentation give the piece its polyphonic stance, and particularly the final "Amen" chorus of Part III exemplifies the polyphonic nature of the entire piece.

Because this particular oratorio has a narrative aspect to it, there is a specific rhythm and form present. Each part (Parts I, II, III) has a distinct form that involves a recitation, an aria then proceeding onto the chorus. Each of the distinctive patterns present a specific message of the texts; drawn from different books in the Bible.

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I feel that this particular form ensures that I am able to absorb the separate messages distinctly as the composition moves towards a climax and finally a conclusion. Additionally, because each text is encapsulated in its own context and with a chorus, the messages are more amplified especially with the polyphonic choruses.

Generally, the piece “ Messiah – “ There were shepherds, Glory to God” (Handel Stanza1) struck me as a true representation of the Biblical texts, as intended by the creators of this religious music. When I listened to “ Messiah” for the first time, the composition evoked in me images of piousness and created a relaxed and prayerful mode in me.

When I proceeded to listen to the words as the orchestra continued to play, I felt moved by the message, and I feel that Handel succeeds at achieving the intended aim of delivering the gospel, ‘ preaching’, through this particular oratorio (Dorn 34). The intent of the composer manifests itself in his composition.

However, in conclusion, there were elements of the piece that I felt hindered the overall delivery of the contents of the texts of “ Messiah”. For instance, there were sections when the narrator and even the recitations were inaudible due to the intensity of the accompanying instruments. During the delivery of the chorus, the messages of ‘ Amen’ were largely inaudible in the face of high-pitched instrumentation.

I also tended to appreciate the various elements of the entire band separately. For instance, when the soloist would deliver the narration, I would find it much easier to hear and understand the textual content being <https://assignbuster.com/george-intended-message-of-peace-these-instances-thus/>

narrated, and conversely, I would find that the orchestra's violin playing was very soothing and 'spiritually' exclusive. I therefore felt that the unity of the choir and the orchestra at some stages of the composition only served to prevent the effective and clear narration or recitations of the text.

Works Cited

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