

Guildford Corporation Concerts

Director of Music : J. CROSSLEY CLITHEROE

SATURDAY, 21st MAY, 1960, at 7 p.m.

TECHNICAL COLLEGE, GUILDFORD

'ELIJAH'

(Mendelssohn)

FESTIVAL CHOIR

GUILDFORD

MUNICIPAL ORCHESTRA

Leader : TATE GILDER

Soprano :

ALICE HALIFAX

Contralto :

MAUREEN GUY

Youth : BARBARA LANK

Tenor :

JOHN MITCHINSON

Bass :

JOHN LAWRENSEN



Conductor : CROSSLEY CLITHEROE



PROGRAMME - - PRICE SIXPENCE

PROGRAMME

PART I

Introduction	...	"As God the Lord of Israel liveth"	
Overture	...		
Chorus	...	"Help, Lord!"	
Duet and Chorus	...	"Lord, bow Thine ear to our prayer"	
Recitative	...	"Ye people, rend your hearts"	
Air	...	"If with all your hearts"	
Chorus	...	"Yet doth the Lord see it not"	
Recitative	...	"Elijah, get thee hence"	
Double Quartet	...	"For He shall give His angels charge over thee"	
Recitative	...	"Now Cherith's brook is dried up"	
Recitative, Air and Duet	...	"What have I to do with thee, O man of God?"	
Chorus	...	"Blessed are the men who fear Him"	
Recitative and Chorus	...	"As God the Lord of Sabaoth liveth"	
Double Chorus	...	"Baal, we cry to thee"	
Recitative	...	} "Call him louder"	
Chorus	...		} "Hear our cry, O Baal"
Recitative	...	} "Call him louder"	
Chorus	...		} "Baal, hear and answer"
Air	...	"Lord God of Abraham"	
Quartet	...	"Cast thy burden upon the Lord"	
Recitative	...	} "O Thou, who makest Thine angels spirits"	
Chorus	...		} "The fire descends from heaven"
Air	...	"Is not His word like a fire?"	
Air	...	"Woe unto them who forsake Him!"	
Recitative	...	} "O man of God, help thy people"	
Recitative and Chorus	...		} "O Lord, Thou hast overthrown Thine enemies"
Chorus	...		"Thanks be to God"

INTERVAL

PART II

Air	...	"Hear ye, Israel"
Chorus	...	"Be not afraid"
Recitative and Chorus	...	"The Lord hath exalted thee"
Chorus	...	"Woe to him"
Recitative	...	"Man of God"
Air	...	"It is enough"
Recitative	...	"See, now he sleepeth"
Trio	...	"Lift thine eyes"
Chorus	...	"He watching over Israel"
Recitative	...	"Arise, Elijah"
Air	...	"O rest in the Lord"
Chorus	...	"He that shall endure to the end"
Recitative	...	"Night falleth round me"
Chorus	...	"Behold, God the Lord passed by"
Recitative, Semi-Chorus, and Chorus	...	"Holy, Holy, Holy"
Recitative	...	"I go on my way in the strength of the Lord"
Chorus	...	"Then did Elijah"
Air	...	"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the Sun"
Chorus	...	"And then shall your light break forth"

During his life-time by general consent Mendelssohn was given a place alongside Bach, Handel, Mozart and Beethoven. But after his death his prestige fell and his music for the most part began to be dismissed as superficial and trifling. It is the old story of the swing of the pendulum of values from one extreme to the other. Even to-day musicians are generally uncritical in their estimate of Mendelssohn's achievements: either his music is dismissed with contempt, or else it is treated with a reverence that reminds one of Queen Victoria's attitude towards her deceased husband's clothing.

Apart from the "Songs without words," the choral works "St. Paul," "Elijah" and "Hymn of Praise" brought more fame and popularity to Mendelssohn in England than any other of his works. The effectiveness of Mendelssohn's writing, his wealth of simple and pleasing melodies, and his clear and well-balanced designs appealed to that immense public, both active and passive, who loved singing in consort, particularly music of a devotional character. And Mendelssohn provided the very material that was wanted—material eminently suitable for both festivals and concerts and yet at the same time not too profane to be presented in church and cathedral.

The words of "Elijah" come from various sources in the Old Testament and the story, which outlines the great prophet's meditations between God and the Israelites, is made up of incidents in the life of the prophet, though strict Biblical sequence is not followed. The chief characters are Obadiah, the Angel, the Widow, the son Elijah restored to life, the boy whom Elijah instructs to watch for signs of coming rain, King Ahab and the Queen. While the soloists are allotted the parts of the most important characters, the chorus generally represents the Israelites but occasionally the prophets of Baal and the Angels.

Part I opens with a brief introduction in which Elijah proclaims the words: "As God, the Lord of Israel liveth, for whom I stand, there shall not be dew or rain these years, but according to my word." This is followed by a lengthy orchestral overture which leads straight into the opening chorus, depicting the Israelites bewailing the drought that is spreading over the land, and which God has sent to scourge the people of Israel. The remainder of this section is concerned with various incidents, including Elijah's trial by fire and his intervention and prayer in the form of rain.

In Part 2 Elijah first denounces Ahab, is denounced to the people by Jezebel, is warned by Obadiah and goes into the wilderness, is shown a vision of God upon Mount Horeb, and is subsequently taken up to heaven. The oratorio finishes with prophecy foretelling the advent of Christ.

After the first performance of "Elijah" at the Birmingham Festival in 1846, Sir Julius Benedict, the famous biographer of Weber and the composer of the popular opera "The Lily of Killarney," wrote an account of the occasion in which he described how "The Noble town Hall was crowded at an early hour of that forenoon with a brilliant and eagerly expectant audience. It was an anxious and solemn moment. Every eye had long been directed towards the conductor's desk, when, at half-past eleven o'clock, a deafening shout from the band and chorus announced the approach of the great composer. The reception he met with from the assembled thousands on stepping into his place was absolutely overwhelming; whilst the sun, emerging at that moment, seemed to illumine the vast edifice in honour of the bright and pure being who stood there, the idol of all beholders." Benedict was surely a forerunner of modern "purple" journalism!

In the following year the work was given in its revised and present form at Exeter Hall, London, to which performance the Queen and Prince Consort went to pay homage to their beloved Mendelssohn. Albert the Good was so enthusiastic that he wrote in his book of words a message which he sent round to Mendelssohn: "To the Noble Artist who, surrounded by the Baal worship of debased art, has been able by his genius and science to preserve faithfully, like another Elijah, the Worship of True Art, and once more to accustom our ear, amid the whirl of empty frivolous sounds, to the pure tones of sympathetic feeling and legitimate harmony: to the Great Master, who makes us conscious of the unity of his conception, through the whole maze of his creation, from the soft whispering to the mighty raging of the elements. Inscribed in grateful remembrance by ALBERT."