

# THE SOUL SHAKER

Strong in new Arms, lo! Giant Handel stands,  
Like bold Briareus, with a hundred hands:  
To stir, to rouse, to shake the Soul he comes,  
And Jove's own Thunders follow Mars's Drums.

THIS quotation from Pope's *Dunciad* provides a title of 18th century flavour for a BBC musical biography of Handel, *The Soul Shaker*, which is to be heard from the YA stations, 3YZ and 4YZ, at 2.30 p.m. on Sunday, April 7.



N.P.S. photograph

For *Messiah* alone George Frederick Handel would be assured of immortality; few other serious works are performed and enjoyed so often by so many people all over the English-speaking world. Sir Thomas Beecham once said that there were more choral societies in Lancashire and Yorkshire than there were in France, Italy, Austria, Belgium and Scandinavia put together, with the United States thrown in for good measure. And all

these societies plus a multitude of others all over the Commonwealth sing *Messiah* at least once a year.

Handel was 57 when this greatest of his oratorios was first performed, in Dublin, in 1742; but before, in the 30-odd years from his arrival in England he had already had a good share of triumphs and disappointments.

His first opera to be produced in London was *Rinaldo*, which was performed at the Haymarket Theatre in 1711. After a brief return to Hanover, Handel settled permanently in England in 1712. His coming to England had annoyed George, Elector of Hanover, but some months after the Elector became George I of England he was reconciled to his former court conductor.

Handel's first patron was the Earl of Burlington, and later he became musical director to the Duke of Chandos. While in this latter capacity he composed the first version of his first English oratorio, *Esther*, for which Pope wrote the book.

After the Chandos period, the next eight years (1720-28) saw the triumph of Italian opera in London with Handel as the presiding genius. He wrote more



GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL

than a dozen operas at this time, and was the idol of the nobility.

The first performance of *The Beggar's Opera* (in January, 1728) changed all this, for Gay's satire on court society, and the parody of Italian opera, ironically won over the public who had thrived on what Gay mocked. Years of struggle for Handel followed—with rival opera companies, and with growing indifference in his new public, until in 1737 the crash came, not only in bankruptcy but in a long period of eclipse.

But Handel came finally into his own, into the universal respect of the nation to which he had dedicated some of his music, and at the end, to the honour of a place in Westminster Abbey.

*The Soul Shaker* has as the central climax the first performance of *Messiah*, and ends with the composer's burial in the Abbey. Among the less familiar of Handel's compositions included are the overture to his first opera, *Almira*, and passages from *Rinaldo*. Listeners will hear four excerpts from *Messiah* sung by the soprano Ena Mitchell.

*The Soul Shaker*, which was written by Colin Shaw, features the Sale and District Musical Society Choir and the BBC Northern Orchestra conducted by John Hopkins.

## Wind Quintet

THE New Zealand Wind Ensemble (photo on this page) start their year's programmes with a performance of the quintet by the Danish composer Carl Nielsen. The work was originally written for five of Nielsen's friends, all of them wind players. The flute player was Gilbert Jespersen, master of a very refined style of flute playing; the clarinet player was Aage Oxenvad, who had a somewhat choleric temperament, irascible, full of personal, subjective problems, yet warm at heart. The players are given parts that reflect in some way their own personalities, and the work, which is in three movements, ends with a set of variations in which these character portraits have full play.

The work was composed in 1921-22 as a relief from the immense labours of the Fifth Symphony which Nielsen was then working on. He had always hoped to write a concerto for each of his friends. He completed one for the flute which made much of Jespersen's own personality and another, for Aage Oxenvad, the clarinet player, but he was prevented from completing the sequence by his death in 1931 (2YC, Sunday, April 7, 7.30 p.m.).

N.Z. LISTENER, MARCH 29, 1957.

(Solution to No. 841)

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## Clues Across

1. Miles of ooze (5).
2. Eat late and then strike an attitude. Just imagine! (7)
3. "No rue, Lady," is the burden of this song (9).
4. This thing gives some babies a lot of trouble, but it's of small importance in itself to certain clubmen (3).
5. Do mice care if this is upset? (8).
6. Benevolent class (4).
7. Cheats in order to get the bag (6).
8. A comparatively low way to get your girl! (6).
9. Military order to dismiss a civilian (4).
10. Compensated by a mere deed (8).
11. "Now — the priest sat upon a seat by a post o' the temple of the Lor." (First Book of Samuel, Chapter 1) (3).

## "THE LISTENER" CROSSWORD

23. Sat in gaol (anag.). And naturally suffered from this? (9).
24. A nursery horse in difficult surroundings, and looking very worn (7).
25. Puss turns her back on it, abstaining from speech (5).
17. Came to and end, as in the middle (6).
18. Part of a rifle shot frequently associated with blood (5).
20. It takes supernatural force to make a Scot embrace an American private (5).
21. I can become an ancient king of Peru (4).

## Clues Down

1. Artists would certainly be upset in such difficulties (7).
2. Accustom in an old city to the East (5).
3. Confirmed by a blonde Diana of film fame in a badly laid-out Eden (8).
4. Look for an Eastern ruler in order to consult an oracle (6).
5. What the woman proverbially does in the French country? (5).
6. A saint surrounded by a mixed choir gives you the bird (7).
7. Correct me in the finish (5).
12. Very much to the point about the East Mediterranean region (8).
14. To be an automobile magnate is obviously burdensome (7).
16. Make another rough sketch of a Communist float (7).

No. 842 (Constructed by R.W.H.)

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