



GEORG FRIEDRICH HÄNDEL ~ BELSHAZZAR

Kultur in ihrer authentischen Form zu publizieren heisst für uns: herausragende Aufführungen und Konzerte für die Nachwelt festzuhalten und zu vermitteln. Denn Künstler, Publikum, Werk und Raum treten in einen intimen Dialog, der in Form und Ausdruck - in seiner Atmosphäre - einmalig und unwiederbringlich ist. Diese Symbiose, die Spannung der Aufführung, dem Hörer in all ihren Facetten möglichst intensiv erlebbar zu machen, sehen wir als Ziel, als Philosophie unseres Hauses. Das Ergebnis sind einzigartige Interpretationen von musikalischen und literarischen Werken, schlicht - audiophile Momentaufnahmen von bleibendem Wert - aufgenommen in „*Direct 2-Track Digital Stereo*“.

Die Konzerte im Kloster Maulbronn, die wir in dieser Edition dokumentieren, bieten in vielfacher Hinsicht die idealen Voraussetzungen für unser Bestreben. Es ist wohl vor allem die Atmosphäre in den von romantischem Kerzenlicht erhellten Gewölben, der Zauber des Klosters in seiner unverfälschten sakralen Ausstrahlung und Ruhe, die in ihrer Wirkung auf Künstler und Publikum diese Konzerte prägen. Renommierte Solisten und Ensembles der grossen internationalen Bühnen sind gerne und vor allem immer wieder hier zu Gast - geniessen es in der akustisch und architektonisch vollendeten Schönheit des Weltkulturerbes (Klosterkirche, Laienrefektorium, Kreuzgang, etc.) in exquisiten Aufführungen weltliche und sakrale Werke darzubieten.

Unter der Schirmherrschaft des evangelischen Seminars werden seit 1968 die „*Klosterkonzerte Maulbronn*“ in ehrenamtlicher Leitung und mit grossem musikalischem Enthusiasmus ausgerichtet. In den ehrenwerten Mauern des altsprachlichen Gymnasiums mit Internat, welches seit nunmehr 450 Jahren besteht, haben grosse Denker, Dichter und Humanisten unserer Gesellschaft wie Kepler, Hölderlin, Herwegh und Hesse ihre erste Prägung erfahren. Der jugendliche Elan, das konstruktive Mitwirken der Schüler, die sich in der Tradition ihrer grossen Vorgänger sehen, bewirkt ein menschliches Klima, in dem die künstlerische Motivation in besonderer Weise erblüht. Zwischen Mai und September finden 25 Konzerte statt zu deren Gelingen letztendlich viele ehrenamtliche Helfer aus nah und fern beitragen.

Blühende Kultur in einem lebendigen Denkmal, dem Publikum vor Ort und nicht zuletzt auch Ihnen zur Freude, sind somit jene Werte, welche wir in dieser Reihe dokumentieren.

Andreas Otto Grimminger & Josef-Stefan Kindler

Das Oratorium Belshazzar behandelt die Geschichte um den babylonischen König Belsazar, wie sie in der Bibel im Buch Daniel überliefert wird. Belsazar frevelt gegen den Gott der Israeliten. Eine Geisterhand schreibt daraufhin die geheimnisvolle Inschrift, das „Mene-tekel“, an die Wand des Saales, die den Untergang des Reiches und den Tod Belsazars durch die Perser voraussagt. Noch in der gleichen Nacht erfüllt sich die Weissagung.

Von „Belshazzar“ liegen drei Fassungen vor (1745, 1751, 1758). Die erste komponierte Händel vom 23. August bis zum 23. Oktober 1744. Die genauen Daten der Entstehung sind aus dem Briefwechsel bekannt, den Händel damals rege mit seinem Librettisten Charles Jennens führte. Jennens hatte bereits die Libretti zu Saul und Messias verfasst. Er war einer jener aufgeklärten Theologen, die sich nicht davor scheutnen, biblische Geschichten zugunsten der Dramatik des Librettos auszuschmücken.

Die Uraufführung fand am 27. März 1745 im Haymarket King's Theatre in London statt. Doch weder lockte das Werk viele Zuhörer noch waren sie davon begeistert. Als ein möglicher Grund für diesen Misserfolg wird die politische Botschaft gesehen, die zwar von Händel nicht beabsichtigt, vor der damaligen politischen Situation aber durchaus aus dem Libretto herauszulesen ist. Es kann als Manifest gegen den damals herrschenden König George II. verstanden werden, der als Mitglied des Hannoverschen Hauses vielen Briten nicht als rechtmässiger Regent erschien. So wird die Eroberung des Thrones durch Cyrus als Allegorie einer ebensolchen durch ein Mitglied des Hauses Stuart in England gesehen. „Belshazzar“ wurde nach nur drei Aufführungen abgesetzt und Jahre später, 1751, nach Änderungen von Händel wiederaufgenommen. Diese Änderungen beinhalteten neben kleinen Verbesserungen auch die Hinzunahme neuer Arien, andere wurden weggelassen und die Rolle des Cyrus wurde nun anstelle eines Mezzosoprans von einem Altus gesungen. Diese zweite Fassung war die weitaus erfolgreichere und sie ist es auch, die in dieser Aufnahme (leicht gekürzt) vorliegt. Sie beginnt mit der zweiten Szene der Urfassung.

Charles Jennens schuf ein unglaublich dramatisches Libretto. Er verband die biblische Geschichte des babylonischen Königs Belsazar mit historischen Quellen, die er bei Herodot und Xenophon fand. So ist beispielsweise die im Oratorium so wichtige Gestalt der Nitocris aus Herodots Histories apodexis entnommen. Das Oratorium ist selbst für Händel von ausser-

gewöhnlicher Farbigkeit und Lebendigkeit. Die hohe Dramatik des Werkes wird zu einem grossen Teil vom Chor getragen, dem die musikalische Darstellung der drei Völker obliegt. Schauplatz der Handlung ist die Stadt Babylon, die Hauptstadt Assyriens, im Jahre 538 v. Chr. Durch die Stadt fliest der Euphrat, der westlich der Stadt einen See bildet, der anlässlich des Mauerbaus zum Umleiten des Flusses angelegt wurde. Vor den Stadtmauern lagern die Heere der Meder und Perser, an deren Spitze der Perserfürst Cyrus steht.

**Der erste Akt** beginnt vor den Toren Babylons. Von den Mauern herab verspotten die Babylonier Cyrus ob seines törichten Plans, Babylon einnehmen zu wollen. Der Babylonier Gobryas, der nach dem Mord an seinem Sohn durch Belsazars Hand zu Cyrus übergegangen ist, bestätigt die gute Befestigung der Stadt. Cyrus spendet ihm Trost und berichtet von seinem Traum, in dem er den Euphrat ausgetrocknet sah. Er entwickelt daraus den Plan, den Fluss über den ausserhalb gelegenen See umzuleiten und schliesslich über das ausgetrocknete Flussbett in die Stadt einzudringen. Gobryas unterstützt die Idee, die Eroberung am Tag des Sesachfestes zu wagen, bei dem die Babylonier ihrem Weingott Sesach huldigen und es religiöse Pflicht ist, sich am Wein zu berauschen. Cyrus weckt sein Heer und bittet Gott um Beistand. Der folgende Chor der Perser greift diese Bitte an Gott auf. In Babylon sagt der Prophet Daniel dem gefangenen Volk der Juden den Untergang der Stadt voraus, er nennt Cyrus als deren gottgesandten Befreier. Das Volk der Juden stimmt in einen Chor der Freude über die baldige Erlösung ein. Der erste Teil des Chores drückt in einem feierlichen, homophonen Satz die Hoffnung auf Befreiung aus. **In der vierten Szene** eröffnet Belsazar das Fest zu Ehren des Sesach. Es wird masslos getrunken und gefeiert. Nitocris fleht ihren Sohn an, dem Ganzen ein Ende zu setzen, doch er befiehlt, aus dem Tempel die heiligen Gefässe der Juden zu holen, um sie als Weinkelche zu missbrauchen. Nitocris und die Juden warnen ihn vor den Folgen dieser Schändung. Das jüdische Volk reagiert mit der Ankündigung, Belsazar werde bald die Strafe Gottes für sein Verhalten erhalten. In diesem dreiteiligen Chor „By slow degrees..“ ist zunächst Trauer und Verletztheit, dann im zweiten Teil die angestaute und schliesslich die sich entladende Wut zu spüren. Besonders beeindruckend ist die Frage nach Reue, auf die das jüdische Volk wartet. Sie geht einzeln durch alle Stimmen, baut sich auf und mündet dann in der homophon erklingenden Erkenntnis, dass das Warten offensichtlich vergeblich ist. Mit der chromatisch abwärts schreitenden Linie - „and every step he takes on his devoted head precipitates the thunder down“- wandelt sich das Warten in Wut und versinnbildlicht diese.

Zu Beginn des **zweiten Aktes** beobachten die Perser aufgeregt, wie aus dem Fluss das Wasser weicht „See from his post Euphrates flies...“ - wobei das Soprathema (Koloratur) zu Beginn das Fliessen des Wassers und die freudige Erregung abbildet, die sich bei dem Schauspiel unter den Persern breit macht. Das veranlasst sie im weiteren zu einem bizarren Rollenspiel, in dem sie einen Dialog zwischen erzürnten Babylonieren (Frauenchor) und ermutigenden Persern (Männerchor) ersinnen. Nun gibt Cyrus den Befehl, das Flussbett zu durchschreiten und die Stadt einzunehmen. Die Perser stimmen in einen kampfeslustigen Chor ein.

Das Fest der Babylonier ist auf seinem Höhepunkt. Belsazar lästert hochmütig Jehova und als er im Begriff ist, den Kelch zum Munde zu führen, geschieht das, wovor ihn die Juden gewarnt haben. An der Wand erscheinen von Geisterhand geschriebene unverständliche Worte: „mene, mene, tekel, upharsin“. Hier findet Händel eine musikalische Verarbeitung, die vielleicht wie keine andere den Gepflogenheiten der Oper nahesteht. Die Violinen steigen unbegleitet eine chromatische Linie hinauf, adagio e staccato, ma piano. Belsazar ist vor Entsetzen verstummt, bringt lediglich ein erschrockenes Ah! hervor. Das babylonische Volk schreit um Hilfe und Belsazar zeigt noch immer entsetzt auf die geheime Schrift. Niemand weiss das Geschriebene zu deuten und auf Rat der Nitocris wird der Prophet Daniel gerufen. Er übersetzt, von Händel als spannungsreiches Recitativo accompagnato komponiert, folgendes: mene: nach dem Willen des gelästerten Gottes sind die Tage deines Reiches gezählt, tekel: du wurdest gewogen und zu leicht befunden, upharsin: dein Reich wird geteilt und den Medern und Persern übergeben. Nitocris fleht Belsazar an, Jehova um Verzeihung zu bitten, doch auch jetzt lässt er sich nicht umstimmen. Cyrus und Gobryas dringen in die Stadt ein und legen so den Grundstein zur Entmachtung Belsazars.

Nitocris eröffnet **den dritten Akt**, sie erhält in ihrem Gemach Nachricht von der Einnahme der Stadt. Die Juden feiern ihre Befreiung und danken Jehova für sein Erbarmen. Belsazar tritt in seinem Übermut den Eindringlingen entgegen, überzeugt von seiner Stärke. Er fällt im Kampf, während das Orchester einen kriegerischen Marsch intoniert. Nitocris unterwirft sich dem neuen Herrscher Cyrus, der auch den Babylonieren Freiheit verspricht. Diese gewährt er auch Nitocris, die er gar bittet, ihn an Belsazars Statt als ihren Sohn anzunehmen. Daniel prophezeit Cyrus, er werde der Retter des Volkes Israels sein und die Stadt Jerusalem und den Tempel wieder aufbauen. Cyrus gelobt dies zu tun.

### **MIRIAM ALLAN - SOPRAN (NITOCRIS)**

Miriam Allan, Meisterschülerin von Emma Kirkby und Julianne Baird, ist Preisträgerin des Londoner Händel Wettbewerbs 2003. Nach ihrem Studium an der Universität in Newcastle entfaltete sie eine rege Konzerttätigkeit. Mit führenden Chören und Orchestern wie dem Australian Chamber Orchestra und der Sydney Philharmonia hat sie die wichtigsten Werke von Bach, Händel und Purcell aufgeführt. Ausserdem – und das ist für eine so junge Sängerin eher ungewöhnlich – gibt sie auch Liederabende. Diese sind bis jetzt hauptsächlich dem Repertoire des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts gewidmet.

### **MICHAEL CHANCE - COUNTERENOR (DANIEL)**

Die Karriere von Michael Chance begann, wie die vieler seiner Kollegen, am King's College in Cambridge, als Altus im wohl berühmtesten englischen Chor. Heute ist er weltweit einer der gefragtesten Countertenöre, und zwar sowohl im Bereich Oper (er sang für Kent Opera beispielsweise den Militärgouverneur in der Weltpremiere von Judith Weirs „A Night at the Chinese Opera“), als auch im Bereich Oratorium und Lied. Er ist Gastprofessor am Royal College of Music in London und häufiger Guest in Paris, Amsterdam, Stuttgart und Berlin, USA, Japan und Australien. Zu den Dirigenten, mit denen er regelmäßig zusammenarbeitet, gehören u.a. Frieder Bernius, Frans Brüggen, John Eliot Gardiner und Trevor Pinnock. Etwas ganz Besonderes sind die Liederabende, die Michael Chance zusammen mit dem Gamben-Consort Fretwork, Nigel North und neuerdings auch Roger Vignoles gibt, bei denen er Lautenlieder der englischen Renaissance und häufig auch zeitgenössisches Repertoire hauptsächlich englischer Komponisten singt.

### **PATRICK VAN GOETHEM - COUNTERENOR (CYRUS)**

Der belgische Kontratenor Patrick van Goethem studierte bei Marie-Thérèse Maesen und Zeger Vandersteene. Nachdem er in der Barockmusik durch Paul Esswood, Julia Hamari und Andreas Scholl vorgebildet wurde, ist Van Goethem heute ein gefragter Konzertsänger und arbeitet als Solist mit renommierten Dirigenten. Van Goethem war zu Gast auf den Bühnen aller wichtigen europäischen Festivals und in Konzertsälen wie dem Gewandhaus Leipzig, Festival Van Vlaanderen, Bachfest Leipzig, London Bach Festival und Festival de Vézelay.



## **MARK LEBROCQ - TENOR (BELSHAZAR, ARIOCH)**

Mark LeBrock studierte am St Catherine's College in Cambridge Englisch. An der Royal Academy of Music gewann er mehrere Preise und Auszeichnungen, u.a. den „Blyth Buesset Opera Prize“, den „Royal Academy of Music Club Prize“ und die „Worshipful Company of Musician's Meda“. Er war als Solist an der English National Opera in London engagiert. Im Lauf der Jahre arbeitete der Tenor mit vielen bedeutenden Regisseuren zusammen, u.a. mit David Alden, David Pountney, Jonathan Miller, Niklaus Lehnhoff, Graham Vick und David Freeman. Regelmässig tritt er mit dem Gabrieli Consort unter Paul McCreesh auf. Er sang in Bath mit Monserat Caballé und Dennis O'Neill bei Verdi-Operngalas, Mozarts und Verdis Requiem im Barbican Centre sowie das Mozart-Requiem mit The English Concert unter Trevor Pinnock in Salzburg.

## **ANDRÉ MORSCH - BASS (GOBRYAS, EIN BOTE)**

André Morsch, geboren 1975, begann seine Ausbildung am Konservatorium im österreichischen Feldkirch bei Ralf Ernst. Nach seinem dortigen Studium setzte er seine Ausbildung bei Maargret Honig am Amsterdamer Konservatorium fort, und schloss sie 2002 mit Auszeichnung ab. Die Engagements umfassen u.a. die Rollen des Achill (Giulio Cesare) an der Staatsoper Stuttgart, die des Simonov in Wet Snow von Jan van der Putte mit der Nationale Reis Opera und Mendelssohns Elias mit dem Kammerorchester Israel in Jerusalem und Tel Aviv. Im September 2002 gewann er den Prix Bernac der Ravel Academie in Saint Jean de Luz.

## **HANNOVERSCHE HOFKAPELLE**

Die Hannoversche Hofkapelle steht ganz in der Tradition der historischen Hofkapellen und tritt sowohl in kammermusikalischer als auch in sinfonischer Besetzung auf. Es prägt den Klang des Ensembles, dass seine Mitglieder auch in anderen Formationen der europäischen Barockszenen spielen. Das Repertoire der Hannoverschen Hofkapelle schliesst nicht nur die Barockmusik in ihrer gesamten Bandbreite ein, sondern auch Werke der Klassik, insbesondere die Opern Mozarts, und der Romantik. Die ständige Auseinandersetzung mit der Musik des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts liess jeden einzelnen Musiker der Hofkapelle zu einem Meister seines Instrumentes werden. So entsteht jenes expressive und elegante Spiel, mit dem sich die Hannoversche Hofkapelle ihren Rangichert.

## **MAULBRONNER KAMMERCHOR**

Der 1983 gegründete Maulbronner Kammerchor unter seinem Leiter Jürgen Budday zählt heute zu den Spitzenchören Deutschlands. Das Ensemble erarbeitet sich jährlich neben einem barocken Oratorium ein geistliches und ein weltliches a cappella-Programm, wobei der Schwerpunkt auf der Literatur des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts liegt. Erste Preise bei nationalen und internationalen Wettbewerben, darunter der Sieg beim 5. Deutschen Chorwettbewerb in Regensburg 1998, belegen dessen ausserordentliches musikalisches Niveau. Der Maulbronner Kammerchor erhielt u.a. Einladungen zu den Ettlinger Schlossfestspielen, in die Kammermusikreihe der Dresdner Philharmonie, zu den Kreuzgangkonzerten im Kloster Walkenried, zu den 1. Internationalen Festtagen Geistlicher Musik in Rottenburg, zum Europäischen Musikfest Passau, zum Festival Europäische Kirchenmusik Schwäbisch Gmünd oder zum Europäischen Musikfest Stuttgart (Bach-Akademie Stuttgart). Es ist dem Kammerchor auch auf internationalem Parkett gelungen, sich einen Namen zu machen. Die Debüt-Tournee 1983 durch die USA, mit Konzerten u.a. in New York und Indianapolis, wie auch die Konzertreisen durch mehrere europäische Länder, Israel und Argentinien (1993, 1997), Südafrika, Namibia (2001) trafen bei Publikum und Rezessenten gleichermaßen auf begeisterte Resonanz. Im Herbst 2003 folgte die dritte Südamerika-Tournee mit Konzerten in Argentinien und Uruguay.

## **JÜRGEN BUDDAY**

ist Kirchenmusikdirektor und künstlerischer Leiter der Klosterkonzerte Maulbronn, der Kantorei Maulbronn und des Maulbronner Kammerchores. Er studierte an der Stuttgarter Hochschule Schulmusik, Kirchenmusik und Musikwissenschaft und lehrt seit 1979 am Evangelisch-theologischen Seminar Maulbronn.

Für seine musikpädagogische und künstlerische Arbeit erhielt er u.a. das Bundesverdienstkreuz am Bande und den Bruno-Frey-Preis der Landeskademie Ochsenhausen. Seit 2002 führt Jürgen Budday auch den Vorsitz im Beirat Chor des Deutschen Musikrates.

Unter seiner künstlerischen Leitung entstanden etliche Konzertaufnahmen, die internationale Beachtung fanden und höchstes Kritikerlob erhielten. Darunter u.a. die Händel-Oratorien „Samson“, „Judas Maccabäus“, „Saul“, „Solomon“ und „Messiah“ u.a. mit Emma Kirkby, Michael Chance, Nancy Argenta, Stephen Varcoe.

HANNOVERSCHE HOFKAPELLE

MARLEEN GOEDE - UTER - KONZERTMEISTERIN

VIOLINEN - EVA POLITT, SUSANNE DIETZ, INA KELLER, CORINNA HILDEBRANDT,  
KLAUS BONA, ANNETH KEIMEL, MECHTILD WERNER, SUSANNE BUSCH

VIOLEN - BETTINA IHRIG, HELLA HARTMANN, RACHAEL YATES

VIOLONCELLI - DOROTHEE PALM, DANIELA WARTENBERG

VIOLONE - CORDULA CORDES, CHRISTIAN ZINCKE

ORGEL/CEMBALO - BERNWARD LOHR · LAUTE - ULRICH WEDEMEIER

OBOEN - ANNETH BERRYMAN, JULIA BELITZ · FAGOTT - RHODA PATRICK

TROMPETEN - FRIEDEMANN IMMER, CHRISTOPH DRAEGER

PAUKEN - FRIEDJOF KOCH

MAULBRONNER KAMMERCHOR

SOPRAN - SUSANNE FERBER, TERESA FRICK, HANNAH GLOCKER, ILKA HÜFTLE, JANA KNOBLOCH,  
KATJA KÖRTGE, SUSANNE LAENGER, VERONIKA MIEHLICH, VERONICA CARDENAS DE SATTLER,  
SABINE STÖFFLER, SILKE VOGELMANN, SABINE WIDMANN, MIRIAM WOLF

ALT - MIRJAM BUDDAY, MARIANNE DOHSE, BEATA FECHAU,  
ROSWITHA FYDRICH-STEINER, KATHRIN GÖLZ, BARBARA HIRSCH, DIETLIND MAYER,  
MARGRET SANWALD, ANGELIKA STÖSSEL, STEFFI TROMPLER

TENOR - SEBASTIAN FUIERER, ANDREAS GERTEIS, HARTMUT MEIER,  
MATHIAS MICHEL, KONRAD MOHL, ROLF MOST, GÜNTHER VÖGELIN

BASS - INGO ANDRUSCHKEWITSCH, PAUL-THEODOR BRÄUCHLE, DANIEL FRITSCH, RAINER HIRSCH-LUIPOLD,  
MATTHIAS KÖGEL, HANSJÖRG LECHLER, EBERHARD MAIER, WERNER PFEIFFER, CAN SCHNIGULA



Publishing culture in its authentic form entails for us capturing and recording for posterity outstanding performances and concerts. The performers, audience, opus and room enter into an intimate dialogue that in its form and expression, its atmosphere, is unique and unrepeatable. It is our aim, the philosophy of our house, to enable the listener to acutely experience every facet of this symbiosis, the intensity of the performance. The results are unparalleled interpretations of musical and literary works, simply - audiophile snapshots of permanent value recorded in „*Direct 2-Track Digital Stereo*“.

The concerts in Maulbronn monastery, which we document with this edition, supply, the ideal conditions for our aspirations. It is, above all, the atmosphere of the romantic, candle-lit arches, the magic of the monastery in its unadulterated sublime presence and tranquillity that impresses itself upon the performers and audience of these concerts. Renowned soloists and ensembles from the international arena repeatedly welcome the opportunity to appear here - enjoying the unparalleled acoustic and architectural beauty of this World Heritage Site (monastery church, cloister gardens, lay refectory, etc.), providing exquisite performances of secular and sacred music.

Under the patronage of the Evangelical Seminar, the Maulbronn Monastery Cloister Concerts were instigated in 1968 with an abundance of musical enthusiasm and voluntary leadership. Within the hallowed walls of the classical grammar and boarding school, existent for more than 450 years, some of society's great thinkers, poets and humanists, such as Kepler, Hölderlin, Herwegh and Hesse received their first impressions.

The youthful elan, the constructive participation of the pupils, continuing the tradition of their great predecessors, constructs an enlightened climate in which artistic ambitions can especially thrive. Twenty-five concerts take place between May and September. Their success can be largely attributed to the many voluntary helpers from near and far.

Flourishing culture in a living monument, created for the delight of the live audience and, last but not least, you the listener, are the ideals we document with this series.

Andreas Otto Grimminger & Josef-Stefan Kindler

This recording is part of a cycle of old testament oratorios by George Frideric Handel and it is one of the many concerts performed at Maulbronn monastery over the past years. The series combines authentically performed baroque oratorios with the optimal acoustics and atmosphere of this unique monastic church. This ideal location demands the transparency of playing and the interpretive unveiling of the rhetoric intimations of the composition, which is especially aided by the historically informed performance. The music is exclusively performed on reconstructed historical instruments, which are tuned to the pitch customary in the composers lifetime (a = 415 Hz).

The oratorio, Belshazzar, devotes itself to the story of the Babylonian king, Belshazzar, as presented in the biblical story from the book of Daniel. Belshazzar commits sacrilege against the God of the Israelites, upon which a ghostly hand inscribes the mysterious text, the Mene-tekel, upon the wall of the court, predicting the downfall of the kingdom and the death of Belshazzar at the hands of the Persians. The prophecy is fulfilled that very same night. There are three versions of Belshazzar, dated 1745, 1751 and 1758. Handel composed the first between 23rd August and 23rd October, 1744. The exact dates are known from the correspondence Handel had with his librettist, Charles Jennens. Jennens had already penned the libretti to Saul and the Messiah. He was an enlightened theologian who didn't shy away from embellishing the biblical story to enhance the libretto's dramatic development. The debut performance took place on 27th March 1745 in the King's Theatre, Haymarket in London. But the work attracted few listeners, with even fewer being enthusiastic.

A possible reason for this failure was the political message, from Handel unintended but nevertheless inferable, contained in the libretto. It could be seen as a manifesto against the ruling king of the time, George II, who, as a member of the House of Hanover, was not seen as the rightful monarch by many of the British. So it was that the conquering of the throne by Cyrus was seen as an allegory of a similar conquest in England by a member of the House of Stewart. Belshazzar was discontinued after only three performances and only years later, in 1751, after revisions from Handel, was it resumed. In addition to minor improvements, the changes included new arias, whereby others were cut and the role of Cyrus was song by a countertenor instead of a mezzo-soprano. It was far more successful than the original, and it is this second version (slightly shortened) that was used for this recording. It starts with the

second scene of the première. Charles Jennens created an unbelievably dramatic libretto. He embroidered the biblical story of the Babylonian king, Belshazzar, with historical sources he found in Herodotus and Xenophon. In the oratorio, for example, the key figure of Nitocris is taken from Herodotus's histories apodexis. The oratorio has, even for Handel, extraordinary colour and vitality. The responsibility for the high drama of the piece rests mostly with the choir, which musically represents the three peoples. Babylon, the capital of Assyria, in the year 538 BC, is the scene of the action. The Euphrates flows through the city. It was diverted during the building of the city walls and a lake on the west side of the city was formed. The armies of King Cyrus, are encamped before the walls.

**The first act** starts before the gates of Babylon. From the walls, the Babylonians mock Cyrus and his fatuous plans to take the city. Gobrias, a Babylonian who has defected to Cyrus after his son was murdered by Belshazzar, confirms the sturdiness of the city's fortifications. Cyrus consoles him and relates his dream where he has seen the Euphrates dried up. He then devises a plan whereby the river would be diverted to the lake outside the walls, allowing them to penetrate the city using the waterless riverbed.

Gobrias supports the idea to venture the plan on the day of the feast to Sesach, when the Babylonians pay homage to their god of wine, Sesach, and it is their religious duty to become intoxicated. Cyrus rouses his army and prays to God for support. The ensuing chorale takes up this plea to God from the Persians. In Babylon, the prophet Daniel predicts, for the imprisoned people of the Jews, the impending downfall of the city and proclaims Cyrus their God-sent liberator. The Jewish people sing a joyful chorale about their imminent deliverance. The chorale's first solemn, homophonic section expresses their hope of rescue.

In the fourth scene, Belshazzar opens the festival in honour of Sesach. The people revel and imbibe excessively. Nitocris pleads with her son to put a stop to the celebrations, but he orders the sacred chalice of the Jews to be brought from the temple to be used as a wine goblet. Nitocris and the Jews warn him of the consequences of this sacrilege. The Jewish people react with the announcement that Belshazzar will shortly feel the wrath of God for his actions. In this three-sectioned chorale, the emotions develop by slow degrees: at first, sadness and hurt, then, in the second and third sections respectively, the suppressed and finally the released anger can be perceived. Especially moving is the demand for remorse that the Jewish people express. It goes singly through all the voices, builds up and finally flows into a ho-

mophonic sounding realisation that the waiting apparently will be in vain. The chromatically descending line "and every step he takes on his devoted head precipitates the thunder down" symbolises this hope gradually being transformed into anger.

**The second act** starts with the Persians excitedly observing the diversion of the waters. "See from his post Euphrates flies..." with the soprano theme (coloratura) reflecting the flowing of the waters and the joyful excitement radiating out amongst the Persians as they watch the spectacle. This further prompts them to partake in a bizarre role-play, in which they contrive a dialogue between the incensed Babylonians (female choir) and the emboldened Persians (male choir). Then Cyrus gives the order to cross the riverbed and capture the city. The Persians intone a belligerent chorale. The feasting of the Babylonians is at its highpoint. Belshazzar is arrogantly blaspheming Jehova and, just as he is about to take the chalice to his mouth, there occurs what the Jews had warned him would happen. A ghostly hand inscribes on the wall the incomprehensible words "mene, mene, tekel, upharsin". Here, Handel realizes a musical treatment that is possibly is not close to any other operatic convention. The violins ascend unaccompanied in a chromatic line adagio e staccato, ma piano. Belshazzar is struck dumb with horror, solely able to utter an appalled sigh. The people of Babylon cry for help while Belshazzar still points fearfully at the mysterious script. Nobody can decipher the writings, and, at the suggestion of Nitocris, the prophet Daniel is summoned. He translates, from Handel composed as a suspenseful recitative accompagnato, the following: mene, it is the will of the God you dishonoured that the days of your reign be numbered; tekel, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; upharsin, your kingdom will be divided and be given to the Medes and Persians. Nitocris beseeches Belshazzar to plead with Jehova for forgiveness, but he does not allow himself to be swayed, even now. Cyrus and Gobrias infiltrate the city and lay the foundation for the dethroning of Belshazzar.

**The third act** opens with Nitocris in her chambers receiving news of the conquest of the city. The Jews are joyfully celebrating and thank Jehova for his mercy. Convinced of his strength, the brazen Belshazzar confronts the invaders. He falls in battle, the orchestra executing a military march. Nitocris submits to the new ruler, Cyrus, who promises the Babylonians freedom also. He grants this to Nitocris as well, and even entreats her to accept him as son in Belshazzars stead. Daniel predicts for Cyrus that he will become the deliverer of the people of Israel and will rebuild the city and temple of Jerusalem. This, Cyrus commends to do.



Jürgen Buday



Patrick van Goethem

Die vorliegende Konzertaufnahme ist Teil eines Zyklus alttestamentarischer Oratorien von G. F. Händel, die im Rahmen der Klosterkonzerte Maulbronn über mehrere Jahre hinweg aufgeführt wurden. Grundlage der Reihe ist die Verbindung barocker oratorischer Musik in historischer Aufführungspraxis mit dem akustisch und atmosphärisch optimal geeigneten Raum der einzigartigen Klosterkirche. Dieser Idealort verlangt geradezu nach der Durchsichtigkeit des Musizierens und der interpretatorischen Freilegung der rhetorischen Gestik der Komposition, wie sie durch die historische Aufführungs-praxis in besonderer Weise gewährleistet ist. So wird ausschliesslich mit rekonstruierten historischen Instrumenten musiziert, die in der zu Lebzeiten des Komponisten üblichen Tonhöhe gestimmt sind ( $a' = 415$  Hz).



Andre Marschall



*Miriam Allan*



*Michael Chance*



*Mark LeBlanc*

**MIRIAM ALLAN - SOPRANO (NITOCRIS)**

Miriam Allan, a graduate student of Emma Kirkby and Julianne Baird, was a prize winner at the 2003 London Handel Society's singing competition. Since completing her studies at the University of Newcastle (Australia), she has developed a lively concert career. She has performed the most important works of Bach, Handel and Purcell with such leading choirs and orchestras as the Australian Chamber Orchestra and the Sydney Philharmonia. Additionally – and this is quite unusual for such a young singer – she gives recitals. These are mostly devoted to the repertoire of the 17th and 18th centuries.

**MICHAEL CHANCE - COUNTERTENOR (DANIEL)**

Michael Chance's carrier began, as did so many of his colleagues, in King's College, Cambridge, as countertenor in England's conceivably most famous choir. Today he is one of the worlds most sought after countertenors, not only for opera - he sang, for example, the military governor in the world première of Judith Weir's "A Night at the Chinese Opera" - but also for oratorios and songs. He is a visiting professor at the Royal College of Music, London. He performs often in Paris, Amsterdam, Stuttgart and Berlin and has also been in America, Japan and Australia many times. Frieder Bernius, Frans Brüggen, John Eliot Gardiner and Trevor Pinnock are just some of the conductors that he works with regularly. A specialty of Michael Chance's is the song evenings he gives with the Gamben-Consort Fretwork, Nigel North and, more recently, Roger Vignoles, in which he sings pieces for voice and lute from the English Renaissance and also, frequently, works from contemporary, mostly English composers.

**PATRICK VAN GOETHEM - COUNTERTENOR (CYRUS)**

The Belgian countertenor, Patrick van Goethem, was a student of Marie-Thérèse Maesen and Zeger Vandersteene. After being tutored in Baroque music by Paul Esswood, Julia Hamari and Andrea Scholl, Van Goethem is today a sought after concert singer and works as soloist with many renowned conductors. Van Geothem was a guest on the stages of all the important European festivals and concert halls, such as the Gewandhaus Leipzig, Festival Van Vlaanderen, Oude Muziekfestival Utrecht, Festival di Cremona, Bachfest Leipzig, London Bach Festival and Festival de Vézelay.

## **MARK LEBROCQ - TENOR (BELSHAZZAR, ARIOCH)**

Mark LeBrocq held a choral scholarship at St Catherine's College, Cambridge where he read English. He won several prizes and awards at the Royal Academy of Music including the Blyth Buessel Opera Prize, the Royal Academy of Music Club Prize and the Worshipful Company of Musicians' Medal. He was formerly a company principal with the English National Opera. Over the years, the tenor has worked together with many important directors, including David Alden, David Poutney, Jonathan Miller, Niklaus Lehnhoff, Graham Vick and David Freeman. He performed regularly with the Gabrieli Consort under Paul McCreesh. He sang with Montserrat Caballé and Dennis O'Neill in Verdi Opera Galas in Bath, the Mozart and the Verdi Requiems in the Barbican Centre, London and the Mozart Requiem with The English Concert under Trevor Pinnock in Salzburg.

## **ANDRÉ MORSCH - BASS (GOBRIAS, A MESSENGER)**

Born in 1975, André Morsch began his studies in Austria, at the Conservatory in Feldkirch, with Ralf Ernst. He continued his studies with Margreet Honig at the Conservatorium of Amsterdam, graduating with distinction in 2003. His engagements include the role of Achillas (Giulio Cesare) with the State Opera, Stuttgart, Simanov in Jan van de Putte's "Wet Snow" with the National Reis Opera and Mendelssohn's Elias with the Israel Chamber Orchestra in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. In September 2002 he won the Prix Bernac of the Ravel Academy in Saint Jean de Luz.

## **HANOVERIAN COURT ORCHESTRA**

The Hanoverian Court Orchestra maintains the tradition of the historic court orchestras and performs with both chamber and symphonic instrumentation. The fact that its members also play in other European Baroque formations, helps forge the sound of the ensemble. The repertoire of the Hanoverian Court Orchestra not only incorporates Baroque music in all its forms, but also Romantic pieces and Classical works, especially Mozart's operas and the Romantic genre. The continual involvement with the music of the 17th and 18th century has allowed each of the Court Orchestra's musicians to become a master of his instrument. From this emerges the expressive and elegant playing that allows the Hanoverian Court Orchestra to maintain its prominent position.

## **MAULBRONN CHAMBER CHOIR**

The Maulbronn Chamber Choir was founded by its director, Jürgen Budday, in 1983 and is one of the top choirs in Germany today. In addition to learning a baroque oratorio, the ensemble compiles a sacred and secular a-cappella programme every year, its focal point being 19th and 20th century literature. First prize at the Baden Württemberg Choir Competition in 1989 and 1997, second prize at the Third German Choir Competition in Stuttgart in 1990, and a victory at the Fifth German Choir Competition in Regensburg in 1998 document the chamber choir's extraordinary musical standard. The Maulbronn Chamber Choir has received, among others, invitations to the Ettlingen Palace Festival, the chamber music series of the Dresden Philharmonic, the cloister concerts at the Walkenried convent, the First International Festival of Sacred Music in Rottenburg, and the European Music Festival in Passau. The choir has also made a name for itself internationally. The 1983 debut tour through the USA with concerts in, among others, New York and Indianapolis, and the participation in the Festival of Music in New Harmony, Indiana, as well as concert tours through numerous European countries, Israel, Argentina (1993 and 1997), South Africa, and Namibia (2001) were all greeted with similar enthusiasm by the public and critics alike. The third tour through South America followed in autumn 2003 with concerts in Argentina and Uruguay.

## **JÜRGEN BUDDAY**

is director of church music and artistic director of the concert series at the monastery of Maulbronn, of the cantor choir and of the Maulbronn Chamber Choir. He studied music education, church music and musicology at the Academy of Music in Stuttgart and, since 1979, has taught at the Evangelic Theology Seminar in Maulbronn.

For his teaching and artistic activity, he has received many awards, including the Bundesverdienstkreuz am Bande (German Cross of Merit) and the Bruno-Frey Prize from the State Academy, Ochsenhausen. Since 2002, Jürgen Budday has also held the chair of the choral committee of the German Music Council.

Several concert recordings have been made under his artistic direction. They have often received international recognition and high praise from critics. These have included the Handel oratorios Samson, Judas Maccabaeus, Saul, Solomon and Messiah with Emma Kirkby, Michael Chance, Nancy Argenta and Stephen Varcoe.

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## 1. OUVERTURE

### ACT THE FIRST

*The First Scene is missing  
in the version from the year 1751*

### SCENE II

*The camp of Cyrus before Babylon. A view of the city, with the River Euphrates running through it.*

*Cyrus, Gobrias, Medes and Persians*

### 2. CHORUS ~ THE BABYLONIANS

*upon the walls, deriding Cyrus, as engaged in an impracticable undertaking*

Behold, by Persia's hero made in ample form, the strong blockade! How broad the ditch, how deep it falls! What lofty tow'rs o'erlook the walls! Hark, Cyrus! Twenty times the sun round the great year his course shall run: If there so long thy army stay, not yet to dogs and birds a prey, no succour from without arrive, within remain no means to live, we then may think it time to treat, and Babylon capitulate. A tedious time! To make it short, thy wise attempt will find us sport.

### 3. RECITATIVE ~ GOBRIAS

Well may they laugh, from meagre famine safe, in plenteous stores for more than twenty years; from all assault secure in gates of brass, and walls st pendous; in Euphrates' depth yet more secure.

### CYRUS

'Tis that security shall aid me to their ruin. I tell thee, Gobrias, I will revenge thy wrongs upon the head of this inhuman king.

### GOBRIAS

Oh, memory! Still bitter to my soul! Methinks I see my son, the best, the loveliest of mankind, whose filial love and duty above all sons made me above all other fathers happy, I see him breathless at the tyrant's feet, the victim of his envy.

### 4. AIR ~ GOBRIAS

Oppress'd with never-ceasing grief, I drag a painful, weary life; of all that made life sweet bereft, no hope, but in revenge, is left.

### 5. AIR ~ CYRUS

Dry those unavailing tears, haste your just revenge to speed; I'll disperse your gloomy fears, dawning hope shall soon succeed.

### 6. RECITATIVE ~ CYRUS

Be comforted: safe though the tyrant seem within those walls, I have a stratagem, inspir'd by Heav'n (dreams oft descend from Heav'n) shall baffle all his strength; so strong my mind th'impression bears, I cannot think it less.

### 7. RECITATIVE (ACCOMP.) ~ CYRUS

Methought, as on the bank of deep Euphrates I stood, revolving in my anxious mind our arduous enterprise, a voice divine, in thunder utter'd, to the bottom seem'd to pierce the river's depth. The lofty tow'rs of yon proud city trembling bow'd their heads, as they would kiss the ground.

„Thou deep,“ it said, „Be dry“. No more; but instant at the word, the stream forsook its bank, and in a moment left bare his oozy bed. Amaz'd I stood: horror, till then unknown, uprais'd my hair, and froze my falt'ring tongue. The voice renew'd: „Cyrus, go on, and conquer: 'tis I that rais'd thee, I will direct thy way. Build thou my city, and without ransom set my captives free.“

## 8. RECITATIVE ~ CYRUS

Now tell me, Gobrias, does not this Euphrates flow through the midst of Babylon?

### GOBRIAS

It does.

### CYRUS

And I have heard you say, that on the west a monstrous lake, on ev'ry side extended, four hundred furlongs, while the banks were made, receiv'd th' exhausted river?

### GOBRIAS

'Tis most true.

### CYRUS

Might we not then by the same means now drain Euphrates dry, and through its channel march into the city?

### GOBRIAS

Suppose this done: yet still the brazen gates, which from the city to the river lead, will bar our passage, always shut by night, when we must make th' attempt. Could we suppose those gates unshut, we might indeed ascend with ease into the city.

### CYRUS

Said you not this is the feast to Sesach consecrate? And that the Babylonians spend the night in drunken revels, and in loose disorder?

## GOBRIAS

They do; and 'tis religion to be drunk on this occasion.

## 9. AIR ~ GOBRIAS

Behold the monstrous human beast wallowing in excessive feast! No more his Maker's image found: but, self-degraded to a swine, he fixes grov'ling on the ground his portion of the breath Divine. Behold the monstrous human beast ... *da capo*

## 10. RECITATIVE ~ CYRUS

Can you then think it strange, if drown'd in wine, and from above infatuate, they neglect the means of their own safety?

### AIR ~ CYRUS

Great God, who, yet but darkly known, thus far hast deign'd my arms to bring; support me still, while I pull down Assyria's proud, injurious king. So shall this hand thy altars raise, this tongue for ever sing thy praise; and all thy will, when clearly shown, by thy glad servant shall be done.

## 11. RECITATIVE ~ CYRUS

My friends, be confident, and boldly enter upon this high exploit. No little cause we have to hope success; since not unjustly we have attack'd, but being first attack'd, we have pursu'd th' aggressor. Add to this, that I proceed in nothing with neglect of pow'r divine:

whate'er I undertake, I still begin with God, and gain His favour with sacrifice and pray'r.

## 12. CHORUS ~ THE PERSIANS

All empires upon God depend; begun by his command, at his command they end. Look up to him in all your ways, begin with pray'r and end with praise.

### SCENE III

*Daniel's house*

*Daniel, with the Prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah open before him. Other Jews.*

## 13. AIR ~ DANIEL

O sacred oracles of truth, O living spring of purest joy! By day be ever in my mouth, and all my nightly thoughts employ. Whoe'er withhold attention due, neglect themselves, despising you. O sacred oracles of Truth . . . *da capo*

## 14. RECITATIVE (ACCOMP.) ~ DANIEL

Rejoice, my countrymen! The time draws near, the long-expected time herein foretold: „Seek now the Lord your God with all your heart, and you shall surely find him. He shall turn your long captivity: he shall gather you from all the nations whither you are driven, and to your native land in peace restore you.“

*after Jeremiah 29, 13-14*

For long ago, whole ages ere this Cyrus yet was born or thought of, great Jehovah, by His Prophet, in words of comfort to his captive people foretold, and call'd by name the wond'rous man. „Thus saith the Lord to Cyrus, his anointed, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him: I will

go before thee, to loose the strong-knit loins of mighty kings, make straight the crooked places, break in piece the gates of solid brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron, for my servant's sake, Israel my chosen. Though thou hast not known me, I have surnam'd thee: I have girded thee: that from the rising to the setting sun the nations may confess, I am the Lord, there is none else, there is no God besides me. Thou shalt perform my pleasure, to Jerusalem saying, thou shalt be built; and to the Temple, thy raz'd foundation shall again be laid.“

*after Isaiah 45, 1-6; 44, 28*

## 15. CHORUS ~ THE JEWS

Sing, O ye Heav'ns, for the Lord hath done it! Earth, from thy centre shout! Break forth, ye mountains, into songs of joy, O forest, and each tree therein, for the Lord hath done it! Jehovah hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel. Hallelujah! Amen, Hallelujah!

### SCENE IV

*The Palace  
Belshazzar, Nitocris,  
Babylonians and Jews*

## 16. AIR ~ BELSHAZZAR

Let festal joy triumphant reign, glad ev'ry heart, in ev'ry face appear! Free flow the wine, nor flow in vain; far fly corroding care. Each hand the chime melodious raise, each voice exult in Sesach's praise; let order vanish! Liberty alone, unbounded liberty the night shall crown. Let festal joy triumphant reign . . . *da capo*

## **17. RECITATIVE ~ BELSHAZZAR**

For you my friends, the nobles of my court, I have  
prepar'd a feast magnificent, worthy of you and  
me. Let all my wives and concubines attend. Our  
royal mother -

### **NITOCRIS**

I must prevent thee, son. Who can endure  
th'unbridled license of this festival, miscall'd by  
the licentious, liberty? Where nought prevails  
but riotous excess, the noisy idiot laugh, the jest  
obscene, the scurrl taunt, and drunken midnight  
brawl. My soul starts back at such brutality, asser-  
ting reason's empire.

### **BELSHAZZAR**

It is the custom, I may say, the law, by long  
prescription fix'd. (looking round and spying the  
Jews) These captive Jews! What do they here?  
They low'r upon our joys, and envy liberty they  
cannot taste. Yet something your perverse and  
wayward nation shall to our mirth contribute.  
Bring those vessels, those costly vessels my  
victorious grandsire took from the Temple of  
Jerusalem, and in the temple of Bel laid up, but  
us'd them not: - 'tis fit they should be us'd. And  
let their God, whose pow'r was found too weak to  
save his people, serve the conquerors of him and  
them. We'll revel in his cups: their rich materials  
and choice workmanship shall well augment the  
splendor of our feast. And as we drink, we'll prai-  
se our country gods, to whom we owe the prize.

### **NITOCRIS**

Oh, sacrilege, Unheard of profanation!

## **18. CHORUS ~ THE JEWS**

Recall, O king, thy rash command! nor prostitute  
with impious hand to uses vile the holy things of  
great Jehovah, king of kings. Thy grandsire trem-  
bled at his name, and doom'd to death who durst  
blaspheme; for he, like us, his pow'r had tried,  
confess'd him just in all his ways, confess'd him  
able to abase the sons of men that walk in pride.

## **19. RECITATIVE ~ NITOCRIS**

They tell you true; nor can you be to learn  
(Though ease and pleasure have engross'd you  
all) things done in public view. I'll not repeat  
the seven-fold heated furnace, by that God whom  
you defy, made to his faithful servants a walk of  
recreation; nor the king, in height of all his pride,  
drove from his throne, and from the first of men,  
in thought a god, reduc'd to brutal rank: all this,  
and more, thou know'st as well as I, and shoulds't  
consider.

### **BELSHAZZAR**

Away! Is then my mother convert grown to Jewish  
superstition? Apostate queen! These idle tales  
might well become the dotage of palsied eld, but  
not a queen like you, in prime of life, for wisdom  
far renown'd. On to the feast! I waste my time  
too long in frivolous dispute, time, due of right to  
pleasure and the gods.

## **20. DUET ~ NITOCRIS**

O dearer than my life, forbear! Profane not, O my  
son, with impious rites Jehovah's Name. Remem-  
ber what His arm has done, the earth contains not  
half his fame: remember, and his vengeance fear!

## BELSHAZZAR

O queen, this hateful theme forbear! Join not against your son with captive slaves, your country's foes. Remember what our gods have done to those who durst their pow'r oppose. Remember, and their vengeance fear.

## NITOCRIS

Alas! Then must I see my son headlong to sure destruction run?

## BELSHAZZAR

Not to destruction but delight I fly, and all once more invite to reign with me this happy night.

## NITOCRIS

O dearer than my life . . . *da capo*

*Exeunt severally*

## 21. CHORUS ~ THE JEWS

By slow degress the wrath of God to its meridian height ascends; there mercy long the dreadful bolt suspends, ere it offending man annoy; long patient for repentance waits, reluctant to destroy. At length the wretch, obdurate grown, infatuate, makes the ruin all his own; and ev'ry step he takes, on his devoted head precipitates the thunder down.

## ACT THE SECOND

### SCENE I

*Without the city, the river almost empty  
Cyrus and Chorus of Persians and Medes*

## 22. CHORUS ~ THE PERSIANS

See, from his post Euphrates flies, the stream withdraws his guardian wave, fenceless the queen of city lies!

## SEMI-CHORUS

Why, faithless river, dost thou leave thy charge to hostile arms a prey, expose the lives thou ought'st to save, prepare the fierce invader's way, and, like false man, thy trust betray?

## SEMI-CHORUS

Euphrates hath his task fulfill'd, but to divine decree must yield. While Babel queen of cities reign'd, the flood her guardian was ordain'd; now to superior pow'r gives place, and but the doom of Heav'n obeys.

## FULL CHORUS

Of things on earth, proud man must own, falsehood is found in man alone.

## 23. RECITATIVE ~ CYRUS

You see, my friends, a path into the city lies open. Fearless let us enter, knowing that those we are to cope with are the same we have already conquer'd, strengthen'd then with aid of great and numerous allies, wakeful and sober, rank'd in just array; now all asleep, or drunk, at best disorder'd a helpless state! Still worse, when they shall hear we are within their walls.

## 24. CHORUS ~ THE PERSIANS

To arms, to arms, no more delay! God and Cyrus lead the way.

## ~ CD II ~

### SCENE II

*A banquet-room, adorned with the images of the Babylonian gods. Belshazzar, his wives, concubines, and lords, drinking out of the Jewish temple-vessels, and singing the praises of their gods*

#### 1. CHORUS ~ THE BABYLONIANS

Ye tutelar gods of our empire, look down, and see what rich trophies your victory crown. Let our bounteous gifts, which our gratitude raise, wine, gold, merry notes, pay our tributes of praise. Sesach, this night is chiefly thine, kind donor of the sparkling wine!

#### 2. AIR ~ BELSHAZZAR

Let the deep bowl thy praise confess, thy gifts the gracious giver bless! Thy gifts, of all the gods bestow, improve by use, and sweeter grow. Another bowl! 'Tis gen'rous wine, exalts the human to divine.

#### 3. RECITATIVE ~ BELSHAZZAR

Where is the God of Judah's boasted pow'r? Let him reclaim his lost magnificence, assert his rights, prov'd ours by long possession, and vindicate his injur'd honour! -

*As he is going to drink, a hand appears writing upon the wall over against him: he sees it, turns pale with fear, drops the bowl of wine, falls back in his seat, trembling from head to foot, and his knees knocking against each other.*

- AH! -

#### 4. CHORUS & RECITATIVE ~ THE BABYLONIANS

Help, help the king! He faints, he dies! What envious demon blasts our joys, and into sorrow turns? Look up, O king! Speak, cheer thy friends! Say, why our mirth thus sudden ends, And the gay circle mourns?

#### BELSHAZZAR

Behold! - See there! - Pointing to the hand upon the wall, which, while they gaze at it with astonishment, finishes the writing, and vanishes.

#### THE BABYLONIANS

Oh, dire portentous sign! But see, 'tis gone, and leaves behind it types unknown, perhaps some stern decree of fate, big with the ruin of our state! What God, or godlike man, can tell the sense of this mysterious spell?

#### 5. RECITATIVE ~ BELSHAZZAR

Call all my Wise Men, Sorcerers, Chaldeans, Astrologers, Magicians, Soothsayers: they can perhaps unfold the mystic words, dispel our doubts, and ease us of our fears.

#### SINFONIA ~ ALLEGRO POSTILLONS

*Enter Wise Men of Babylon*

#### 6. RECITATIVE ~ BELSHAZZAR

Ye sages, welcome always to your king, most welcome now, since needed most! Oh, minister to my sick mind the med'cine of your art. Whoe'er shall read this writing and interpret a splendid



purple robe behind him flows, a chain of gold his honour'd neck shall grace, and in the kingdom he shall rule the third.

### CHORUS ~ WISE MEN

Alas, too hard a task the king imposes, to read the characters we never learn'd!

### 7. CHORUS ~ THE BABYLONIANS

Oh, misery! Oh terror, hopeless grief! Nor God nor man affords relief! Who can this mystery unveil, when all our wise diviners fail?

*Enter Nitocris*

### 8. RECITATIVE ~ NITOCRIS

O king, live for ever! Let not thy heart its wonted courage lose, nor let thy countenance be chang'd with fear, though all thy wise men fail thee, in the kingdom there is a man, among the Jewish captives, in whom the Holy Spirit of God resides, and in thy grandsire Nebuchadnezzar's day wisdom, like that of God, was found in him, by which he could interpret mystic dreams, explain hard sentences, dissolve all doubts: Daniel his native name, but by the king nam'd Belteshazzar. Let him now be call'd, he'll read the writing, and interpret it.

*Enter Daniel*

### BELSHAZZAR

Art thou that Daniel of the Jewish captives? I have heard of thee. That thou canst find interpretations deep, and dissolve knotty doubts. If thou canst read this writing, and explain, a purple robe

adorns thy body, a gold chain thy neck, and in the kingdom thou shalt rule the third.

### 9. AIR ~ DANIEL

No, to thyself thy trifles be, or takes thy rich rewards who will! Such glitt'ring trash affects not me, intent on greater matters still.

### 10. RECITATIVE (ACCOMP.) ~ DANIEL

Yet, to obey His dread command, who vindicates His honour now, I'll read this oracle, and thou, but to thy cost, shalt understand. Thou, O king, hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of Heav'n, whose vessels they have brought before thee, and thou, thy lords, thy wives, and concubines, have drunk wine in them! Thou hast prais'd the gods of gold and silver, brass, iron, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor aught perceive! But Him, the God whose hands upholds thy life, and in whose high dispose are all thy ways, thou hast not glorified, but hast blasphem'd. From Him the hand was sent, by His appointment these words were written:

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN

- which I thus interpret:

MENE: the God, whom thou hast dishonour'd, the days hath number'd of thy reign, and finish'd it.

TEKEL: thou in the balances art weigh'd, and art found wanting.

PERES: thy kingdom is divided, and to the Medes and Persians given.

## **11. RECITATIVE ~ NITOCRIS**

Oh, sentence too severe, and yet too sure, unless  
repentance may reverse the doom! Regard, O son,  
my flowing tears, proofs of maternal love!

## **12. AIR ~ NITOCRIS**

Regard thyself; to cure thy fears, regard the God  
above. Repentance sure will mercy find, but wrath  
pursues th'obdurate mind. Regard, O son, my  
flowing tears . . . *da capo*

*Exit*

## **SCENE III**

*Within the City*

*Cyrus, Gobrias, Chorus of Persians and Medes*

## **13. AIR ~ CYRUS**

O God of truth, O faithful guide, well hast thou  
kept thy word! Deep waves at my approach subsi-  
de, the brazen portals open wide, glad to receive  
their lord. The hostile nations scatter'd fly, nor  
dare my presence stay. Where'er I go, sure victory  
attends, for God is always nigh, and He prepares  
my way.

## **14. RECITATIVE ~ CYRUS**

You, Gobrias, lead directly to the palace, for you  
best know the way. This revelling herd cannot  
oppose our passage; those who would, fall easy  
victims. For the rest, they fly, or take us for their  
friends, and reeling shout for joy. We'll be their  
friends, and join the shout. I seek no enemy except  
the tyrant; when he is slain, our task is at an end.  
My worthy friends, let us not stain our swords with  
needless slaughter! I begin already to count this

people mine, myself their shepherd, whose office  
is to feed and to protect them, not to destroy.

## **15. CHORUS ~ THE PERSIANS**

O glorious prince, thrice happy they born to enjoy  
thy future sway! To all like thee were sceptres  
giv'n, kings were like gods, and earth like Heav'n.  
Subjection free, unforc'd, would prove obedience  
is the child of love; the jars of nation soon would  
cease, sweet liberty, beatific peace would stretch  
their reign from shore to shore, and war and  
slav'ry be no more.

## **ACT THE THIRD**

### **SCENE I**

*The Palace*

*Nitocris, Daniel and the Jews*

## **16. AIR ~ NITOCRIS**

Alternate hopes and fears distract my mind, my  
weary soul no rest can find. My busy fancy now  
presents a gracious scene: my son repents and God  
recalls his doom. Now to false shame he quits his  
fears, false courage takes, and madly dares his  
impious feast resume. Then arms and dying groans  
resound, and streams of blood gush out around.  
Alternate hopes and fears distract my mind, my  
weary soul no rest can find.

## **17. RECITATIVE ~ NITOCRIS**

My hopes revive, here Arioach comes! By this 'tis  
plain the revels are broke up. Say, Arioach, where  
is the king?

## ARIOCH

When you had left the room, a while deep silence reign'd; the king sat pensive, as doubting whether to break up the banquet, or to continue. At length some parasites, those insects vile that still infest a court, began to minister false comfort to him. With this, again they sat them down to drink. The bowl went round, the king forgot his fears, the wine inspir'd him, and he blasphем'd again. Not long we sat, when from without the gates a noise tumultuous was heard, loud shouts and cries, and clashing arms. The king deputed some to learn the cause. I gladly seiz'd the opportunity, and fled a place to swift destruction doom'd.

*Enter a Messenger*

## MESSENGER

All's lost, the fate of Babylon is come! Cyrus is here, ev'n within the palace!

## NITOCRIS

Cyrus, impossible!

## MESSENGER

It is too true; a tumult heard without, the gates unbar'd, disclos'd a dreadful scene: the guards overpow'rd by numbers far superior, fell before them with faint resistance. The victorious foe no sooner saw the gates set open wide, but rush'd at once, and easy entrance gain'd.

## 18. CHORUS ~ THE JEWS

Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth! How is Sesach taken, and how is the praise of the whole earth

surpris'd! Thy counsel stands, O Lord, and thou dost all thy pleasure!

## SCENE II

*Belshazzar, his lords, and other Babylonians, with their swords drawn*

## 19. AIR ~ BELSHAZZAR

I thank thee, Sesach! Thy sweet pow'r does to myself myself restore. Thy plenteous heart-inspiring juice all my courage lost renewes. I blush to think I shadows fear'd. Cyrus, come on, I'm now prepar'd! Exeunt to meet Cyrus.

## 20. A MARTIAL SYMPHONY

*during which a battle is supposed, in which Belshazzar and his attendants are slain*

## SCENE III

*Cyrus, Gobrias and Chorus*

## 21. AIR ~ GOBRIAS

To pow'r immortal my first thanks are due; my next, great Cyrus, let me pay to you, whose arm this impious king laid low, the bitter source of all my woe. Tears, sure, will all my life employ, e'en now I weep, but weep for joy.

## 22. RECITATIVE ~ CYRUS

Be it thy care, good Gobrias, to find out the queen, and that great Jew, of whom thou tolds't me. Guard them in safety hither; if harm befall them I shall repent, and curse my victory.

*Exit Gobrias*

## **23. AIR ~ CYRUS**

Destructive war, thy limits know; here, tyrant death, thy terrors end. To tyrants only I'm a foe, to virtue and her friends, a friend.

Destructive war. . . *da capo*

*Re-enter Gobrias, with Nitocris, Daniel, and Jews*

## **24. DUET NITOCRIS**

Great victor, at your feet I bow, no more a queen, your vassal now! My people spare! Forgive my fears, I mourn a son, indulge my tears, relentless nature bids them flow.

### **CYRUS**

Rise, virtuous queen, compose your mind, give fear and sorrow to the wind. Safe are your people if they will; be still a queen, a mother still, a son in Cyrus you shall find.

## **25. RECITATIVE ~ CYRUS**

*to Daniel*

Say, venerable prophet, is there aught in Cyrus' pow'r by which he can oblige thee, or thy people?

### **DANIEL**

O victorious prince, the God of Israel, Lord of Heav'n and earth, long ere thy birth, foretold thee by thy name, and shew'd thy conquests! 'Tis to Him thou ow'st, to Him thou must ascribe them. Read those lines, the great prediction which thou hast already in part accomplish'd, and, we trust, will soon fulfil the rest.

## **26. SOLI & CHORUS**

Tell it out among the heathen, that the Lord is King.

## **27. RECITATIVE (ACCOMP.) ~ CYRUS**

Yes, I will build thy city, God of Israel! I will release thy captives, not for price, not for reward, but to perform thy pleasure. Thus prostrate I confess, Thou art the Lord, there is none else, there is no God beside Thee. Thou condescendest to call me thy shepherd, and I will feed thy flock. To me Thou hast giv'n the kingdoms of the earth; and shall I suffer thy kingdom to lie waste, Thy chosen people in exile and captivity to wander? Far be from Cyrus such ingratitude! Hear, holy people! Hear, elect of God! The God of Israel (he alone is God) hath charg'd me to rebuild his house and city, and let his exil'd captive people go. With transport I obey! Be free, ye captives, and to your native land in peace return. Thou, O Jerusalem, shalt be rebuilt; O Temple, thy foundation shall be laid. No thanks to me; to God return your thanks, as I do mine! We all are to his goodness indebted deep, to Him be all the praise.

## **28. SOLI & CHORUS**

### **DANIEL**

I will magnify Thee, O God my king! And I will praise thy name for ever and ever.

### **DANIEL & NITOCRIS**

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

### **CHORUS**

Amen.

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