Esther
First reconstructable version (Cannons), 1720

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

in order of appearance

JAMES GILCHRIST Habdonah ~ Assuerus
MATTHEW BROOK Haman
ASHLEY TURENELL Officer ~ 2nd Israelite
THOMAS HOBBS 1st Israelite
ELECTRA LOCHHEAD Israelite Boy
ROBIN BLAZE Priest of the Israelites
SUSAN HAMILTON Esther
NICHOLAS MULROY Mordecai

DUNEDIN CONSORT

JOHN BUTT Director
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<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soprano</td>
<td>Susan Hamilton, Emily Mitchell, Electra Lochhead</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alto</td>
<td>Robin Blaze, David Gould</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tenor 1</td>
<td>James Gilchrist, Thomas Hobbs</td>
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<td>Tenor 2</td>
<td>Nicholas Mulroy, Ashley Turnell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bass</td>
<td>Matthew Brook, Robert Davies (duet in Chorus)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Violin 1</td>
<td>David Rabinovich (Leader), Sarah Bevan Baker, Sarah Moffatt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Violin 2</td>
<td>Rebecca Livermore, David Wish, Sijie Chen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Viola</td>
<td>Jane Rogers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cello</td>
<td>David Watkin (Continuo), Piroska Baranyay</td>
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<td>Double Bass</td>
<td>Christine Sticher</td>
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<td>Harp</td>
<td>Frances Kelly</td>
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<td>Flute</td>
<td>Katy Bircher</td>
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<td>Oboe</td>
<td>Alexandra Bellamy</td>
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<td>Bassoon</td>
<td>Ursula Leveaux, Zoe Shevlin</td>
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<td>Horn</td>
<td>Anneke Scott, Joseph Walters</td>
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<td>Trumpet</td>
<td>Paul Sharp</td>
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<td>Harpsichord</td>
<td>John Butt</td>
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<td>Organ</td>
<td>Nicholas Wearne</td>
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**Disc 1**  

**Act One**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Recitative</th>
<th>Libretto</th>
<th>Air</th>
<th>Chorus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Andante</td>
<td>Tis greater far to spare, than to destroy</td>
<td>Pluck root and branch from out the land</td>
<td>Shall we the God of Israel fear?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Larghetto</td>
<td>Your soul with ardour glow</td>
<td>Praise the Lord with cheerful noise</td>
<td>Shall we of servitude complain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Allegro</td>
<td>Shall we the God of Israel fear?</td>
<td>Praise the Lord with cheerful noise</td>
<td>Shall we of servitude complain</td>
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**Act Two**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Recitative</th>
<th>Libretto</th>
<th>Air</th>
<th>Chorus</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Why sits that sorrow on thy brow?</td>
<td>Who dares intrude into our presence without our leave?</td>
<td>Who calls my parting soul from death?</td>
<td>Virtue, truth and innocence</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dread not, righteous Queen, the danger</td>
<td>Who dares intrude into our presence without our leave?</td>
<td>O beauteous Queen, unclose those eyes!</td>
<td>How can I stay, when love invites?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I go before the King to stand</td>
<td>If I find favour in thy sight</td>
<td>How can I stay, when love invites?</td>
<td>With inward joy his visage glows</td>
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DISC 2  **Act Three**

**SCENE 1**
1. **AIR** Jehovah crown’d with glory bright ........................................ 1.58
2. **CHORUS** He comes, He comes to end our woes .................................. 4.17

**SCENE 2**
3. **RECYTATIVE** Now, O Queen, they suit declare .................................... 1.38
4. **ACCOMPAGNATO** Turn not, O Queen, thy face away .......................... 2.36
5. **AIR** Flatt’ring tongue, no more I hear thee! ...................................... 4.52
6. **RECYTATIVE** Guards, seize the traitor, bear him hence! ...................... 0.40
7. **AIR** How art thou fall’n from thy height! ........................................ 6.10

**SCENE 3**
8. **CHORUS** The Lord our enemy has slain ............................................ 11.57

Recorded at Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh, UK
from 12th–15th July 2011
Produced and engineered by Philip Hobbs
Assistant Engineer: Robert Cammidge
Post-production by Julia Thomas at Finesplice, UK

Harpsichord generously loaned by Dr Noel O’Regan
Keyboard Technician: Keith McGowan

*Queen Esther*, 1878 (oil on canvas)
by Edwin Longsden Long (1829–1891)
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
The Bridgeman Art Library
‘The Oratorium’ (Esther) of 1720

Handel’s Esther has long enjoyed the cachet for being the first English Oratorio, but its origins during Handel’s short period composing for James Brydges (who became Duke of Chandos in 1719) are obscure and the exact identity of its earliest version uncertain. What has become increasingly clear is the fact that ‘The Oratorium’ (as it was initially called) went through two versions between 1718 and 1720. What survives of the earliest version (much of which was clearly discarded during the revision) corresponds almost exactly to the vocal and instrumental forces required for Acis & Galatea of the same year, while the revised score corresponds to the expansion in the group of musicians that Chandos employed at his sumptuous establishment of Cannons, in Edgware. The libretto, like that for Acis, seems to have originated in the close circle of poets associated with Handel and Brydges during these years. Alexander Pope may have been involved, as he probably was with Acis, but most scholars agree that the bulk of the libretto was the work of John Arbuthnot.

It is clear that Esther was a topical subject during Handel’s Cannons years since Thomas Brereton had recently published his translation (1715) of Racine’s celebrated three-act play of 1689. Several turns of phrase from this appear in Handel’s libretto (e.g. ‘O Banks of Jordan’s stream … when shall we behold your Charms again?’, ‘Both Root and Branch they seek to spoil our Race!’), but it seems likely that the author also consulted Racine’s original, having adopted the French version of the name of the Persian King Ahasuerus, ‘Assuerus’. However, as Brereton notes in the opening dedication for his translation, there were many who were of the ‘Opinion that Religion
and Polite Literature are incompatible’. In other words, these believed that religion should be kept apart from anything that could remotely be called ‘entertainment’. The Puritan strain clearly persisted in English culture, to the extent that Brereton believed those ‘who are over-run with Superstition, or Religious to Melancholy and Enthusiasm’ outnumbered those who are ‘decently’ devout by twenty to one. Given that a dramatic presentation of a biblical story would doubtless have been publically unfeasible in 1718, it is not surprising that Handel’s first attempt at a musical setting should take place within the context of a private establishment.

What was the point of producing sacred dramas set to music if there was likely to be so much opposition in the public domain? Brereton clearly belonged with those (a minority?) who believed that art, correctly used, actually enhances religion, ‘Tragedy wou’d, next to Preaching, be of all Ways the most conducive to Morality’. Moreover, he suggests that such productions provide a useful antidote to ‘atheism’ and attract those who might otherwise despise religion, quoting from George Herbert’s Church Porch, ‘A verse may find Him who a Sermon flies, And turn Delight into a Sacrifice.’ He also notes that the use of a Chorus, after the Greek manner will ‘to such as are especially inclin’d to Musick … have all the good Effects of the Modern Opera, without any of its Absurdities.’ Handel, of course, would have had considerable experience of the Italian genre of Oratorio, having written two examples of his own in Rome. But it is likely that the topicality of sacred drama in England provided him with an excellent opportunity to develop the genre in new directions, capitalizing on his already considerable operatic experience. What the English context in particular afforded was the ready-made establishment of the chorus in the various cathedrals, collegiate and private institutions, with the concomitant genre of the anthem.
The chorus could have a greater emphasis than had been possible in the Italianate works, providing its own moral outlook on the drama and almost becoming a character in its own right. Here Handel could also draw on his native German choral tradition, adapting a large number of movements directly from his recently composed *Brockes Passion* (English audiences would fortunately not have been aware that the evil Haman’s last aria, lamenting his fate, was originally sung by Jesus). In all, the challenge was to integrate what was essentially actual church music into a music drama that benefitted directly from operatic practice.

The libretto for Handel’s *Esther* presents some of the most striking elements of the Esther story (which constitutes the book of Esther, and which is also the subject of a Greek version in the Apocrypha). However, it is very sketchy in places and it may well be that the revisions between 1718 and 1720 resulted in some unevenness of detail. The main characters are Assuerus, the Persian King (sometimes identified with Xerxes); Haman, his evil henchman; Mordecai, leader of the Jewish community in Persia and guardian of his orphaned cousin, Esther. Esther has recently been chosen as queen following an extensive search for an attractive young woman to replace the disobedient Queen Vashti. The libretto opens with three contrasting scenes: first, the order from the king’s chief minister, Haman, to massacre all the Jews (here it would be useful to know, from the full story, that the Jewish leader, Mordecai, had previously refused to bow before him), and the eagerness of his soldiers ‘to execute the blow’; secondly, the Jews, unaware of the decree, celebrating their seeming felicity now that Esther has become queen; thirdly, the sudden change of mood in the Jewish community when the news of their forthcoming massacre arrives. The central section of the story (Act 2 in Racine/Brereton and probably in Handel’s 1720 version)
begins with Mordecai informing Esther herself of the news and imploring her to go and intercede with the king. But anyone who enters the king’s presence unbidden is to be put to death, regardless of status. Here Handel’s librettist, following Racine, uses more of the Greek version of Esther, which describes her deadly fear and fainting when she finally approaches the king. However, the king extends his sceptre to his queen, thus allowing her access without harm, and he expresses his deepest love towards her. Their relationship resumed, Esther invites Assuerus, together with Haman, to a feast. The final act concerns the arrival of the king and his offering Esther anything she desires. At this point it would be helpful to know that the king was not yet aware of Esther’s Jewish identity, but in Handel’s version it seems to be assumed, and the king seems ill-informed about Haman’s evil decree. In reminding Assuerus that Mordecai earlier brought to light a plot to assassinate him, Esther convinces him of Haman’s guilt. The latter is condemned to death and the Jewish community celebrates its freedom.

As is rather the case with Acis & Galatea, the events in this story are somewhat spare and the few changes of state occur very quickly. The opening act has something of the stasis of the first half of Acis, in which there are basically three tableaux in succession, Haman’s evil decree, the joy of the Jews at their supposed freedom, and their lamentation at the forthcoming massacre. Here the music (most of it from the 1718 stage of the composition) comes closest to resembling the charmed world of Acis, with Haman’s ‘Pluck root and branch from out the land’ almost recalling the comic evil of Polyphemus. One of the most attractive scenes of all concerns the Jewish celebration of freedom, very much recalling the pastoral felicity of Acis: the charming pizzicato aria ‘Tune your harps’ and then the actual appearance of a harp in the childish expression of devotion ‘Praise the Lord with cheerful
noise’. This sense of a state of new-found peace – rather than a sequence of events – is enhanced by the repetition of the chorus ‘Shall we of servitude complain’. A similar technique marks the complete change of state for the third scene, with the chorus of lamentation ‘Ye sons of Israel, mourn’ repeated on either side of the centrepiece, the priest’s aria, ‘O Jordan, Jordan, sacred tide’. Here the interlocking violin lines allude both to the ripples of the river and the sadness of the community’s mood.

The central act shows a strong turn towards the solemn but highly intimate mood of the German Passion tradition (the majority of the movements here having their origins in Handel’s Brockes setting). Here the highly charged encounters between Esther and Mordecai, and then between Esther and Assuerus, can benefit from the type of recitative that Handel had developed in his operatic career. The borrowed music, almost miraculously, delineates the three characters, Mordecai’s solemn piety in ‘Dread not, righteous Queen’ and Esther’s frailty in ‘Tears assist me’ and in her duet with Assuerus (originally designed for Jesus and his mother). But it is the king himself who receives the greatest depth of character: a desperately concerned lover in the duet ‘Who calls my parting soul from death?’ and then – in perhaps the emotional high spot of the entire oratorio – he sings his greatest expression of love in ‘O beauteous Queen’. As John Roberts has recently shown, this is an aria on which Handel expended the greatest compositional effort, adapting the melodic material from three different sources. This is also marked by the first significant change of instrumentation since the harp back in the second scene, the addition of two bassoons, which provide a glowing sonorous support for the tenor register. ‘How can I stay, when love invites?’ follows almost immediately, now showing the inescapable joy of Assuerus’s love.
If *Esther* is already marked by its introduction of unexpected instrumentations in each of the first two acts, the final one introduces a pair of horns in the opening scene and a trumpet in the final chorus. Suddenly we seem to be in the world of *Israel in Egypt* or *Saul*, with their vast choral landscapes. The chorus ‘He comes to end our woes’ is perhaps the liveliest music in the work, marking the Jews’ anticipation of God’s intervention to end the tyranny of Haman. The final chorus, perhaps Handel’s longest, is a vast rondo interspersed with duets of praise, first between the priest and trumpet, then between Esther and Mordecai, and finally between two basses announcing the felling of cedars of Lebanon to build the new temple. These two choral blocks enclose the final stage of the drama, musically expressed through Haman’s recitative and aria of sorrow and supplication, and Esther’s aria of rage at his impertinence.

In all, we almost hear the genre of English Oratorio emerge in the course of the 1720 *Esther* itself. It begins like a sort of ‘pastoral entertainment’ along the lines of *Acis & Galatea*, it becomes more operatic and adopts some of the pious intensity of the German Passion, and emerges as a choral oratorio on the largest scale. But this development is somehow central to the success of the music, giving the entire work – containing so many symmetries or complementary blocks – a succinct trajectory that is unique in Handel’s output. If the chorus ultimately emerges as the largest character, it is also there from the start, providing a dimension that is indispensable to the success of the drama. If Handel remained nervous of unleashing this extraordinary genre on the London stage, it was Bernard Gates, music director of the Chapel Royal, who took the plunge and organised a staged production of what was essentially the 1720 *Esther*, for a private audience in central London in 1732. In the wake of this success, and the likelihood of a
pirate performance of the work, Handel correctly gauged that a revised, unstaged, version of *Esther* would become the beginning of a new venture in public music making.

**Sources and Performing Edition**

This recording presents the earliest recoverable performing version of Handel’s *Esther*, responding to recent findings and hypotheses about the origins of the work. The new performing edition (published by the Early Music Company Ltd) differs from the scholarly edition in the *Hallische Händel-Ausgabe* (HHA; ed. Howard Serwer) in that the latter is based entirely on the evidence of the existing sources, while this performing edition reassesses the relationship between them based on inferences about the missing performing sources for the 1720 version. I have examined reproductions of all the relevant sources in detail: Handel’s autograph (GB Lbl *R.M.20.e.7*), the Malmesbury (Malmesbury Collection; deposited in Hampshire Public Records Office, Winchester) and Aylesford (GB Mp *MS 130 Hd 4*, vol. 93) manuscripts and Gates’ libretto of 1732. I am most grateful to Hampshire Public Records Office and the Earl of Malmesbury for access to the original of the Malmesbury MS.

The primary catalyst for reconstructing afresh the earliest recoverable performing version is John H. Roberts’s seminal article of 2010, ‘The Composition of Handel’s *Esther*, 1718–1720’ in the *Händel Jahrbuch*, 353–90. Roberts reiterates what has been obvious for some time: that many details about the origin of *Esther* are unclear, contradictory or simply unknown. According to the wordbook produced for Bernard Gates’s performance in 1732, the oratorio was composed for the Duke of Chandos in 1720. While Handel’s autograph lacks the final page, which would normally carry the
date, the earliest copy, now owned by the Earl of Malmesbury, states that Handel composed it in London in 1718. Thus there is a discrepancy in dates and also the issue of whether it was performed in the Duke of Chandos’s estate (Cannons) in Edgware or at his house in London (or indeed, somewhere else entirely). As the research of Graydon Beeks has shown (‘Handel and the Music for the Earl of Carnarvon’, in *Bach, Handel, Scarlatti: Tercentenary Essays*, ed. Peter Williams (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 1–20), the first part of the work in many respects conforms directly to the forces that Handel had while working at Cannons in 1717–18 (most noticeably lacking violas and including a second tenor line), thus matching much of the Cannons church music and *Acis & Galatea* in many respects. However, *Esther* as transmitted in Handel’s autograph and all the early copies contains an increasing number of movements with larger forces, including viola, extra solo singers, two bassoons, two horns and trumpet. Beeks notes that these larger forces very closely reflect the membership of the Cannons Concert by the middle of 1720.

Roberts’s research shows that one piece in particular could not have been composed at the earlier date. While the basic material of ‘O beauteous Queen’ comes from the *Brockes Passion* (c. 1716), Roberts observes that it also contains borrowings from operas by Keiser and Lotti, and from a serenata by Heinichen, all skilfully intertwined. The latter, and most likely the opera of Lotti too, Handel could not have heard before late 1719, so at last we have firm evidence that at least some of *Esther* as it survives today (particularly after the first few scenes), could not have been written in 1718. Given that Handel’s autograph contains none of the material he must have discarded around 1720, only the latter version is in any way reconstructable. Building on Serwer’s study of the sources, Roberts notes that the two most main copies
of the first version, the Malmesbury and the Aylesford scores, are copied largely from the autograph and thus do not communicate the changes Handel would have made for performance. Unfortunately, Handel’s performance score (often referred to, in the case of his dramatic works, as the ‘conducting score’) is missing, probably lost in the chaotic distribution of all the contents of the Cannons estate.

It is the likely contents of such a score that Roberts most usefully proposes and that this recording and the new performing edition aim to represent. First, he suggests that the autograph’s division into six scenes was replaced by a division into three acts or parts, of three scenes each, as is suggested in the Gates wordbook of 1732 (Handel himself adopted the three-act format in his own later versions of the work). The division into acts mitigates the hitherto awkward tonal and dramatic progression from the chorus ‘Virtue, truth, and innocence’ to the arioso and chorus ‘Jehovah crown’d/He comes, He comes’, given that these now straddle acts 2 and 3 (Roberts remarks that this incongruity was first noticed by Chrysander). But, I might add, given that the three acts are shorter than in Handel’s later oratorios, it may well be that Esther, as the very first experiment in the English oratorio genre, was designed as a shorter work, to be performed in one go without substantial intervals between acts (thus making it about the same length as Acis & Galatea, if performed in its 1720 form without an interval).

The first major change to the content of existing editions of Esther comes with the aria, ‘Praise the Lord’, clearly an insert in the autograph (and coming from the later stage in the composition, given its inclusion of a viola part). Two recitatives are added to the end of this insert, the second, ‘O God, who from the suckling’s mouth’ being the one normally sung after ‘Praise
the Lord’. But, as Roberts notes, both the tonality and the sense of the text point to this being the recitative designed to lead into ‘Praise the Lord’ rather than follow it. Moreover, given that the B section of ‘Praise the Lord’ reuses that latter half of the original aria coming next in the autograph ‘Sing songs of praise’, and much of the rest of its text appears in the final chorus (undoubtedly from the latter period of the composition), ‘Sing songs of praise’ is rendered redundant. In other words, ‘Praise the Lord’ should be preceded by its recitative and it almost certainly replaces ‘Sing songs of praise’. The recomposition of the recitative (with the text about the ‘suckling’s mouth’) also suggests that Handel decided to use a boy to sing the aria (the Gates text assigns it to the ‘Israelite Boy’). Moreover, the autograph contains relatively clear indications of an added flute part, presumably designed to add more sound to the harp’s melodic line. However, Serwer, as followed by Roberts, was wrong to state that the flute part is also indicated in the Malmesbury manuscript. I would also suggest that, given that the roll of musicians at Cannons in 1720 contains three or possibly four boy trebles and no sopranos, it is possible that Esther was performed without female singers. Certainly, the doubling of the vocal line of Esther’s last, rage, aria with oboe is unusual, and may reflect that this role was originally sung with a smaller voice than operatic practice might suggest.

The other important change suggested by Roberts is the insertion of a viola part into ‘Who calls my parting soul from death?’, found in a score now in the Moravian Music Foundation in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Although this is a late source, it may well reflect some of the readings in the performing score: much of the viola part comes directly out of Handel’s Brockes Passion which would have been unknown to any in England but Handel in 1720; secondly, since Handel had reworked the two violin parts in places to
accommodate the lack of a viola in 1718, he seems to have altered the replaced viola part at some of these places. Most of Roberts’s other suggestions relate to the names given to some of the characters: the ‘Israelite Boy’ has already been noted, and the Gates wordbook also suggests that the solo alto part belongs to the ‘Priest of the Israelites’. This role had clearly become a major one by 1720 and Roberts suggests that it may have been designed for Thomas Bell, a celebrated countertenor at that time, who entered service at Cannons that year.

This recording is designed as a sequel to *Acis & Galatea* (presented in its 1718 Cannons version), reflecting the expansion of the Cannons Concert and Handel’s evident expansion of his conception of ‘The Oratorium’. The expanded band (as examined and presented by Beeks) allows for three violins per part, viola and two bassoons. The single trumpet clearly reflects the 1720 scoring although there is no sign of any horns. The vocal complement (ten singers, including the boys, being on the list of employees), seems to allow for roughly two singers per part in the choruses (nearly all singers thus taking a solo at some point, including the major roles), although it seems a little short in terms of the double tenor line. The Gates layout of scenes and acts (admittedly not so clearly evident in Handel’s autograph) provides a nicely symmetrical structure of nine, roughly equal, scenes which offer opportunities for planning a performance that attempts both a consistent musical integration of each situation and an overall dramatic trajectory.

© John Butt, 2012
Esther

An Oratorio or Sacred Drama
Words attributed to John Arbuthnot

DISC 1

ACT ONE

1. Overture – Andante
2. Larghetto
3. Allegro

Scene 1

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. RECITATIVE Officer
Our souls with ardour glow,
To execute the blow.

7. 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.

Scene 2

8. RECITATIVE 1st Israelite
Now persecution shall lay by her iron rod;
Esther is Queen, and Esther serves the living
God.

9. AIR 1st Israelite
Tune your harps to cheerful strains,
Moulder idols into dust!
Great Jehovah lives and reigns,
We in great Jehovah trust.

10. CHORUS
Shall we of servitude complain,
The heavy yoke and galling chain?

11. RECITATIVE Israelite Boy
O God, who from the suckling's mouth
Ordainest early praise:
Of such as worship thee in truth,
Accept the humble lays.

12. AIR Israelite Boy
Praise the Lord with cheerful noise,
'Wake my glory, 'wake my lyre!
Praise the Lord each mortal voice,
Praise the Lord, ye heav'nly choir!
Zion now her head shall raise,
Tune your harps to songs of praise!

13. CHORUS
Shall we of servitude complain,
The heavy yoke and galling chain?
Scene 3

14 RECITATIVE Priest of the Israelites
How have our sins provok’d the Lord!
Wild persecution has unsheath’d the sword.
Haman hath sent forth his decree:
The sons of Israel all
Shall in one ruin fall.
Methinks I hear the mother’s groans,
While babes are dashed against the stones!
I hear the infant’s shriller screams,
Stabb’d at the mother’s breast!
Blood stains the mur’drer’s vest,
And through the city flows in streams.

15 CHORUS
Ye sons of Israel mourn,
Ye never to your country shall return!

16 AIR Priest of the Israelites
O Jordan, Jordan, sacred tide,
Shall we no more behold thee glide
The fertile vales along?
As in our great fathers’ days,
Shall not thy hills resound with praise,
And learn our holy song?

17 CHORUS
Ye sons of Israel mourn,
Ye never to your country shall return!

ACT TWO

Scene 1

18 RECITATIVE Esther
Why sits that sorrow on thy brow?
Why is thy rev’rend head
With mournful ashes spread?
Why is the humble sackcloth worn?
Speak, Mordecai, my kinsman, friend,
Speak, and let Esther know,
Why all this solemn woe?

Mordecai
One fate involves us all!
Haman’s decree,
To strike at me,
Hath said that ev’ry Jew shall fall.
Go, stand before the King with weeping eye.

Esther
Who goes unsummon’d, by the laws shall die.

19 AIR Mordecai
Dread not, righteous Queen, the danger;
Love will pacify his anger;
Fear is due to God alone.
Follow great Jehovah’s calling,
For thy kindred’s safety falling,
Death is better than a throne.

20 RECITATIVE Esther
I go before the King to stand.
Stretch forth, O King, thy scepter’d hand!

21 AIR Esther
Tears assist me, pity moving,
Justice cruel, fraud reproving.
Hear, O God, thy servant’s prayer!
Is it blood that must atone?
Take, O take my life alone,
And thy chosen people spare.

22 CHORUS
Save us, O Lord,
And blunt the wrathful sword!

Scene 2

23 RECITATIVE Assuerus
Who dares intrude into our presence without our leave?
It is decreed, he dies for this audacious deed.
Hah! Esther there!
The law condemns, but love will spare.

Esther
My spirits sink, alas I faint.
Assuerus
Ye powers, what paleness spreads her beauteous face!
Esther, awake, thou fairest of thy race;
Behold the golden sceptre in my hand,
Sure sign of grace. The bloody stern decree
Was never meant, my Queen, to strike at thee.

DUET
Esther Who calls my parting soul from death?
Assuerus Awake, my soul, my life, my breath!
Esther Hear my suit, or else I die.
Assuerus Ask, my Queen, can I deny?

AIR Assuerus
O beauteous Queen, unclose those eyes!
My fairest shall not bleed,
No, my fairest shall not bleed.
Hear love's soft voice that bids thee rise,
And bids thy suit succeed.
Ask, and 'tis granted from this hour,
Who shares our heart shall share our pow'r.

RECIPIVATIVE Esther
If I find favour in thy sight,
May the great monarch of the East
Honour my feast,
And deign to be his servant's guest.
The King, and Haman I invite.

AIR Assuerus
How can I stay, when love invites?
I come, my Queen, to chaste delights.
With joy, with pleasure I obey,
To thee I give the day.

Scene 3
RECIPIVATIVE First Israelite
With inward joy his visage glows,
He to the Queen's apartment goes.

Second Israelite
Beauty has his fury charm'd,
And all his wrath disarm'd.

CHORUS
Virtue, truth, and innocence
Shall ever be her sure defence.
She is heav'n's peculiar care,
Propitious heav'n will hear her pray'r.

DISC 2

ACT THREE

Scene 1
AIR Priest of the Israelites
Jehovah crown'd with glory bright,
Surrounded with eternal light,
Whose ministers are flames of fire:
Arise, and execute thine ire!

CHORUS
He comes, He comes to end our woes,
And pour his vengeance on our foes.
Earth trembles, lofty mountains nod!
Jacob, arise to meet thy God!

Scene 2
RECIPIVATIVE Assuerus
Now, O Queen, thy suit declare;
Ask half my empire, and 'tis thine.

Esther
O gracious King, my people spare,
For in their lives, you strike at mine.
Reverse the dire decree,
The blow is aimed at Mordecai and me.
And is the fate of Mordecai decreed,
Who, when the ruffian's sword
Sought to destroy my royal Lord,
Brought forth to light the desp'rate deed.
Assuerus
Yes, yes, I own:
To him alone,
I owe my life and throne.
Say then, my Queen, who dares pursue
The life to which reward is due?

Esther
'Tis Haman’s hate
That signed his fate.

Assuerus
I swear by yon great globe of light
Which rules the day,
That Haman’s sight
Shall never more behold the golden ray.

ACCOMPAGNATO Haman
Turn not, O Queen, thy face away,
Behold me prostrate on the ground!
O speak, his growing fury stay,
Let mercy in thy sight be found!

AIR Esther
Flatt’ring tongue, no more I hear thee!
Vain are all thy cruel wiles!
Bloody wretch, no more I fear thee,
Vain thy frowns and vain thy smiles!
Tyrant, when of pow’r possess’d,
Now thou tremblest, when distress’d.

RECITATIVE Assuerus
Guards, seize the traitor, bear him hence!
Death shall reward the dire offence.
To Mordecai be honour paid:
The royal garment bring,
My diadem shall grace his head,
Let him in triumph through the streets be led,
Who sav’d the King.

AIR Haman
How art thou fall’n from thy height!
Tremble, ambition, at the sight!
In power let mercy sway.

When adverse fortune is thy lot,
Lest thou by mercy be forgot,
And perish in that day.

Scene 3

CHORUS
The Lord our enemy has slain,
Ye sons of Jacob, sing a cheerful strain!
Sing songs of praise, bow down the knee,
The worship of our God is free!

The Lord our enemy has slain,
Ye sons of Jacob, sing a cheerful strain!
For ever blessed be thy holy name,
Let heav’n and earth his praise proclaim.

Priest of the Israelites
Let Israel songs of joy repeat,
Sound all the tongues Jehovah’s praise.
He plucks the mighty from his seat,
And cuts off half his days.

CHORUS
For ever blessed be thy holy name,
Let heav’n and earth his praise proclaim.

Esther & Mordecai
The Lord his people shall restore,
And we in Salem shall adore.

CHORUS
For ever blessed be thy holy name,
Let heav’n and earth his praise proclaim.

Bass I, II
Mount Lebanon his firs resigns,
Descend, ye Cedars, haste ye Pines,
To build the temple of the Lord,
For God his people has restor’d.

CHORUS
For ever blessed be thy holy name,
Let heav’n and earth his praise proclaim.
Dunedin Consort

Winners of the 2008 Midem Baroque Award and the 2007 Gramophone Award for Best Baroque Vocal Album for their recording of Handel’s Dublin Messiah, Dunedin Consort, under the combined Artistic Direction of John Butt, Susan Hamilton and Philip Hobbs, performs throughout Scotland and Europe.

Under the musical direction of John Butt the group has consolidated its existing strength in the Baroque repertoire. Dunedin’s commitment to excellence in both live performances and recordings, coupled with the latest research in historical performance, is complemented by its strong belief in supporting new music. As part of its contemporary strand, Dunedin has commissioned and performed works by living composers – including William Sweeney, Errollyn Wallen, Peter Nelson and Sally Beamish – to complement and enhance the meaning of the old masterpieces.

Dunedin Consort has performed at music festivals in Canada, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Scotland and Spain – including the Edinburgh International Festival, Lufthansa Festival of Baroque Music in London, la Chaise Dieu (France), Thuringer Bachwoche and Händel-Festspiele Halle (Germany) – and broadcasts frequently on BBC Radio 3 and BBC Scotland.

Dunedin enjoys a close relationship with Linn Records, named ‘Label of the Year’ at the 2010 Gramophone Awards. In 2008 the Dunedin Consort released Bach’s Matthew Passion (Last performing version, c.1742) and Handel’s Acis & Galatea (Original cannons performing version, 1718). These have both received numerous plaudits, including the nomination for a Gramophone Award for Acis & Galatea. In 2010 Dunedin released Bach’s Mass in B Minor (Breitkopf & Härtel Edition, edited by Joshua Rifkin, 2006) to critical acclaim.
Since 2010, Dunedin also enjoys a close relationship with the Lammermuir Festival and Perth Concert Hall where it has presented all its major projects. 2013 sees the Dunedin Consort recording Bach’s *Brandenburg Concertos* and *John Passion*.

Dunedin Consort takes its name from Edinburgh’s castle (Eidyn’s Din) and, like the famous landmark, has great cultural significance in Scotland’s capital city.

**John Butt**  
**D**IRECTOR

John Butt is Gardiner Professor of Music at the University of Glasgow and musical director of Edinburgh’s Dunedin Consort. As an undergraduate at Cambridge University, he held the office of organ scholar at King’s College. Continuing as a graduate student working on the music of Bach he received his PhD in 1987. He was subsequently a lecturer at the University of Aberdeen and a Fellow of Magdalene College Cambridge, joining the faculty at UC Berkeley in 1989 as University Organist and Professor of Music. In autumn 1997 he returned to Cambridge as a University Lecturer and Fellow of King’s College, and in October 2001 he took up his current post at Glasgow.

His books have been published by Cambridge University Press: these include *Bach Interpretation* (1990), a handbook on Bach’s *Mass in B Minor* (1991), *Music Education and the Art of Performance in the German Baroque* (1994). *Playing with History* (2002) marked a new tack, examining the broad culture
of historically informed performance and attempting to explain and justify it as a contemporary phenomenon. He is also editor or joint editor of both the Cambridge and Oxford Companions to Bach and of the *Cambridge History of Seventeenth Century Music* (2005). His book on Bach’s Passions, *Bach’s Dialogue with Modernity*, was published in 2010, and explores the ways in which Bach’s passion settings relate to some of the broader concepts of modernity, such as subjectivity and time consciousness.

John Butt’s conducting engagements with Dunedin Consort (2003–) have included major Baroque repertory and several new commissions. He has been guest conductor with the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, the Göttingen Handel Festspiele, the Berkeley Festival, the RSAMD Chamber Orchestra and Chorus, the Irish Baroque Orchestra and the Orchestra of the Age of the Enlightenment. John Butt also continues to be active as a solo organist and harpsichordist. Eleven recordings on organ, harpsichord and clavichord have been released by Harmonia Mundi. As conductor or organist he has performed throughout the world, including recent trips to Canada, France, Germany, Israel, Korea and Poland.

In 2003 John Butt was elected to Fellowship of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and received the Dent Medal of the Royal Musical Association. That year his book, *Playing with History*, was shortlisted for the British Academy’s annual Book Prize. In 2006 he was elected Fellow of the British Academy and began a two-year Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship for his research on Bach’s Passions. He has recently been appointed to the Council of the Arts and Humanities Research Council. In January 2011 he became the fifth recipient of the Royal Academy of Music/Kohn Foundation’s Bach Prize, for his work in the performance and scholarship of Bach.
Robin Blaze COUNTER Tenor

Robin Blaze is firmly established in the front rank of interpreters of Purcell, Bach and Handel, and has worked with many conductors including Christophers, Gardiner, Herreweghe, Hogwood, Jacobs, King, Koopman, Goodwin, Leonhardt, Kraemer, McCreesh, McMegan, Mackerras, Pinnock and Suzuki. He studied music at Magdalen College, Oxford and at the Royal College of Music.

He regularly appears with the Academy of Ancient Music, Bach Collegium Japan, Collegium Vocale, The English Concert, The Gabrieli Consort, The King’s Consort, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, RIAS Kammerchor, The Sixteen, Concordia, Fretwork, Florilegium and Palladians. Other engagements have included the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, Washington, St Paul Chamber Orchestra, La Chapelle Royale, City of London Sinfonia, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Royal Flanders Philharmonic, BBC Philharmonic, The Hallé, Münchener Kammerorchester, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Northern Sinfonia, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Tafelmusik, Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra and the Philharmonia.

He has visited festivals in Ambronay, Beaune, Boston, Edinburgh, Halle, Iceland, Jerusalem, Innsbruck, Karlsruhe, Leipzig, Lucerne, Saintes and Utrecht, and has given recitals in Göttingen, Innsbruck, Karlsruhe, Paris, Tenerife, at the York Early Music, Three Choirs Festivals, for BBC Radio 3 and at Wigmore Hall.
Robin Blaze’s opera engagements have included Athamas *Semele* (Covent Garden and English National Opera), Didymus *Theodora* (Glyndebourne Festival Opera), Arsamenes *Xerxes*, Oberon *Midsummer Night’s Dream* and Hamor *Jephtha* (English National Opera); and Bertarido *Rodelinda* (Glyndebourne Touring Opera and at the Göttingen Handel Festival where he has also appeared as Arcane *Teseo*).

Robin’s many recordings include the ongoing Cantata Cycle with Bach Collegium Japan, Handel Oratorio Duets (OAE/Kraemer), several recital discs of lute songs with Elizabeth Kenny, Didymus *Theodora* (Gabrieli Consort/McCreesh), Vivaldi, Kuhnau and Knüpfer with The King’s Consort, Purcell *Odes* (Collegium Vocale Gent/Herreweghe) and Thomas Adès’ song cycle *The Lover in Winter*.

**Matthew Brook** Bass-Baritone

Matthew Brook has appeared as a soloist throughout Europe, Australia, North and South America and the Far East, working extensively as a recitalist and concert artist with Gardiner, Hickox, Mackerras, Christophers, Rousset, McCreesh and Elder, and many orchestras and ensembles including the Philharmonia, London Symphony and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestras, St Petersburg Philharmonic, Freiburger Barockorchester, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, English Baroque Soloists, Collegium Vocale Gent, Gabrieli Consort, The Sixteen, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Dresden Staatskapelle, Orchestre
des Champs-Élysées, Ensemble Orchestra de Paris, Salzburg Mozarteum Orchester, Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg and Orchestra Nationale de Lille. He has performed at festivals such as Edinburgh, Cheltenham, Utrecht, the BBC Proms, Ambronay, La Chaise Dieu, Innsbruck, Bermuda, and the Three Choirs Festival.


Matthew’s recordings include *Il Re* in *Ariodante* for Il Complesso Barocco, with Joyce DiDonato in the title role, a Gramophone Award-winning recording of Handel’s original Dublin score of *Messiah*, Bach’s *Matthew Passion*, and Handel’s *Acis & Galatea* with Dunedin Consort.
James Gilchrist TENOR

James Gilchrist began his working life as a doctor, turning to a full-time career in music in 1996.

James’ concert appearances include Damon Acis & Galatea (BBC Proms), Bach Cantatas (Monteverdi Choir Bach Pilgrimage, Bach Collegium Japan), Tippett The Knot Garden (BBC Symphony Orchestra), Monteverdi Vespers (The Sixteen), Septimius Theodora and Nelson Mass (Scottish Chamber Orchestra), title role Judas Maccabeus (The King’s Consort), Israel in Egypt (Collegium Vocale Gent), Mozart Requiem (Seattle), Alexander’s Feast (Salzburg), Christmas Oratorio (Zürich), Messiah (St Louis, San Francisco and Detroit), Gerontius (Three Choirs Festival), Mozart’s C Minor Mass (Salzburg Festival), St Matthew Passion (Rotterdam Philharmonic), St John Passion (Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra), Britten’s Serenade for Tenor Horn and Strings (Gateshead), Stravinsky Pulcinella (Lugano), Ugone Flavio (Academy of Ancient Music), Creation (for the Bach Choir and on tour with Herreweghe), The Pilgrim’s Progress (Richard Hickox/Sadler’s Wells), Oedipus Rex (BBC NOW), War Requiem (Dresden Philharmonie), Der Sturm (Concertgebouw), King Arthur (Concert Spirituel), Athalia (Concerto Köln), On Wenlock Edge (BBC NOW, Leeds Lieder Festival), Haydn Seasons and Creation (Monteverdi Choir), Die Jahreszeiten (Royal Flanders Philharmonic), and Les Illuminations at the Aldeburgh Festival. James is a keen exponent of contemporary music and has performed in the world premieres of Knut Nystedt’s Apocalypsis Joannis (Oslo Philharmonic), and Tavener’s Total Eclipse (Academy of Ancient Music).
James is a versatile and prolific recitalist. His imaginative programming has been heard in major recital venues including Wigmore Hall, Aldeburgh and Perth Concert Halls. James performs regularly with Anna Tilbrook, Julius Drake and harpist Alison Nicholls.

James’ operatic performances include Quint *Turn of the Screw*, Ferrando *Cosi Fan Tutte*, Scaramuccio *Ariadne Auf Naxos*, Gomatz *Zaide* (Istanbul), Vaughan Williams’ *Sir John in Love* (Barbican/Radio 3), *Hyllus Hercules* (Berlin), *Acis & Galatea* (Berlin), Evandre *Alceste* (La Monnaie, Brussels) and Purcell’s *King Arthur* at English National Opera.

Amongst his numerous recordings are Bach *St Matthew Passion* and *St John Passion*, Rachmaninov *Vespers* (Kings College, Cambridge), Schütz Sacred Music (The Sixteen), Leighton ‘*Earth Sweet Earth*’ and Britten’s *Winter Words* (Linn Records), and critically acclaimed recordings of *Die Schöne Mullerin*, *Schwanengesang* and *Winterreise* with pianist Anna Tilbrook.

**Susan Hamilton soprano**

Scottish soprano Susan Hamilton specialises in Baroque and contemporary music and is in demand as a soloist working with many conductors including Raphael Frühbeck de Burgos, Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Philippe Herreweghe, Jos van Immerseel, Robert King, Ton Koopman, Paul McCreesh, Masaaki Suzuki and John Butt. She has collaborated with many great composers including Richard Allain, Harvey Brough, Pascal Dusapin, Gabriel Jackson, Witold Lutoslawski, James
MacMillan, Peter Nelson, Ronald Stevenson, Bill Sweeney and Errollyn Wallen.

She has performed with many leading European orchestras and ensembles including the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, A Sei Voci, Cantus Cölln, Collegium Vocale Ghent, Florilegium, Flanders Recorder Quartet, Gabrieli Consort, Il Gardellino, Irish Baroque Orchestra, The New London Consort, Ensemble Plus Ultra, The Rare Fruits Council and Ricercar Consort.

Susan has appeared at major international festivals in Australia, Canada, Europe, Japan, Mexico and the USA, including the Edinburgh International Festival, Boston Early Music Festival, La Folle Journée, Melbourne, St Magnus, Salzburg and Utrecht.

Susan broadcasts regularly on both television and radio. Her solo recordings include A’e Gowden Lyric a recital of songs by Ronald Stevenson with pianist John Cameron, Dallapiccola’s Quattro Liriche di Antonio Machado, (Delphian Records), Haydn’s Scottish Songs (Flora), Alfonso Ferrabosco songs with the Ricercar Consort, Purcell’s Ode to St Cecilia’s Day with Philippe Herreweghe and The Walsingham Consort Books with La Caccia.

Founding co-artistic director of the Dunedin Consort, Susan has attained critical acclaim for her performances in the award-winning recordings of Handel’s Messiah, Galatea in Handel’s Acis & Galatea, Bach’s Matthew Passion and his Mass in B Minor under John Butt.

Recent work includes performances of Vivaldi Motets with Portland Baroque Orchestra in Oregon, USA, Irish Baroque Orchestra, directed by Monica Huggett and performances with Mr McFall’s Chamber.
Thomas Hobbs  TENOR

Born in Exeter, Thomas Hobbs graduated in history from King’s College London. He was awarded the RCM Peter Pears Scholarship at the Royal College of Music and recently completed his formal studies at Royal Academy Opera.

An associate artist of Classical Opera, Thomas made his Royal Academy Opera début as Fileno in Haydn’s La fedelta premiata, conducted by Trevor Pinnock, and has subsequently made debuts with English National Opera (Telemaco, Monteverdi The Return of Ulysses) and with Bordeaux Opera (Handel Messiah). Other engagements include the title role in Arne’s Alfred, Tempo in Handel’s Il Trionfo del Tempo e del Dinsinganno (both Classical Opera) and the title role in Britten’s Albert Herring (Royal Academy Opera).

On the concert platform, recent and forthcoming highlights include Mozart C Minor Mass on tour in Italy (Frans Bruggen), Bach B Minor Mass in Europe and the Far East (Philippe Herreweghe/Collegium Vocale), Bach St Matthew Passion in Europe and the USA (also with Herreweghe), Handel Messiah (Helmut Rilling/Bachakademie Stuttgart), Britten Nocturne (Paul McCreesh/Stavanger Symphony Orchestra), Handel Joshua (Hans-Christoph Rademann/Akademie fur Alte Musik Berlin) and Handel Israel in Egypt (Frieder Bernius/Stuttgart Kammerchor). Closer to home, his engagements have included Bach St Matthew Passion (Stephen Cleobury/King’s College Cambridge) and a programme of Haydn arias at Wigmore Hall (Classical Opera).
His growing discography includes the role of Damon in Handel *Acis & Galatea* and Bach’s *B Minor Mass*, both with the Dunedin Consort, and Monteverdi *Vespers* (New College Oxford/Edward Higginbottom). Further ahead, recording plans include Bach *Cantatas*, a second Bach *B Minor Mass* and the arias in *St Mathew Passion*, all with Philippe Herreweghe and Beethoven *Mass in C* with Frieder Bernius/Stuttgart Kammerchor.

**Electra Lochhead soprano**

Electra Lochhead joined St Mary’s Music School as a chorister aged 9 and was head chorister at St Mary’s Episcopal Cathedral from Sept 2008 to Sept 2009. She is currently studying singing with Susan Hamilton.

During her time as a chorister she sung in many BBC Radio 3 and 4 broadcasts and toured the Eastern United States and Canada. Recordings as head chorister include the acclaimed Taverner *Sacred Choral Music* album (Delphian Records) which reached No. 7 in the Classical chart. Live broadcast solos include the Stanford *Magnificat in G* during the Edinburgh Festival and performing as a soloist in the Classic FM Christmas Eve 2008 service.

Electra has performed as a soloist in Jonathan Dove’s *Far Theatricals of Day* and Henry Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*. She has sung on several occasions in the ripieno choir in Bach’s *Matthew Passion* with the Dunedin Consort.

She was winner of the Marion Richardson medal in the Edinburgh Competition Festival 2011. Electra enjoys singing a variety of music, including jazz and folk, as well as classical.
Nicholas Mulroy

Born in Liverpool, Nicholas Mulroy read Modern Languages at Clare College Cambridge and then studied at the Royal Academy of Music. Appearances include Bach St John Passion (Marc Minkowski and Le Musiciens du Louvre), Bach Christmas Oratorio (Monteverdi Choir and Sir John Eliot Gardiner), St John Passion (Gabrieli Consort and Paul McCreesh), L’inconronazione di Poppea (Glyndebourne on Tour), Septimius, Handel Theodora (Trevor Pinnock), Messiah (Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Nicholas McGegan), Premiere Parque, Rameau Hippolyte et Aricie (Emmanuelle Haïm at the Theatre du Capitole Toulouse), le Récitant, Berlioz L’Enfance du Christ (Sir Colin Davis), Dardanus (Emmanuelle Haïm in Lille), Caen and Dijon, Monteverdi Vespers 1610 (Magdalena Consort and Peter Harvey), as well as several appearances at the London Handel Festival with Laurence Cummings. He has also appeared regularly with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Wrocklaw Philharmonic, Koelner Akademie, Staatskapelle Dresden and at the BBC Proms. He made his Glyndebourne debut under Jurowski in Prokofiev’s Betrothal in a Monastery.

A committed recitalist, highlights include Janáček’s Diary of one who Vanished with The Prince Consort in Oxford, Vaughan Williams On Wenlock Edge in Edinburgh with the Badke Quartet, Gavin Bryars Eight Irish Madrigals with Mr McFall’s Chamber, Britten Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo and Fauré La Bonne Chanson at the Lichfield Festival, and, with regular collaborator

Recordings include a Gramophone Award-winning *Messiah* and Acis *Acis & Galatea* with Dunedin Consort, Monteverdi *Vespers 1610* with The King’s Consort, a disc of Michael Finissy with Exaudi, Monteverdi *Vespers 1610* with Edward Higginbottom and Charivari Agréable, a series of Monteverdi with I Fagioli, as well as a critically acclaimed Evangelist in *Matthew Passion* also with Dunedin Consort.

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DISC 1 TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 65:31
DISC 2 TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 34:11