INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE MESSIAH, Händel's most successful and best-known oratorio, was composed in the year 1741 in twenty-four days, from August the 22d to September the 14th. It was *first performed at a concert given for charitable purposes at Dublin, Ireland, on April* the 13th, 1742, Händel conducting the performance in person.

According to the historical evidence, Händel knew that the Dublin orchestral and choral resources were by no means on a par with those of London, and was markedly influenced by this circumstance in the composition of his work. In his choruses he did not go beyond four-part writing, and kept his orchestra within the most modest limits, so that no instrument except violin and trumpet plays a solo part, and oboe and bassoon do not appear at all in the score, although these instruments participated in the performance, as was proved by a later discovery of orchestra-parts written for both. Thereafter Händel, beginning with March the 23d, 1743, brought out *The Messiah* every year in London with great applause; in the course of time he made various alterations in certain numbers, set several new ones to music, transcribed a few arias for different voices, but left the work as a whole unchanged, both vocally and instrumentally, from its original form; thus bearing witness that, despite its limitations, this primitive conception of the work was likewise the enduring one.

As the centuries have passed, a considerable number of vocal scores have, of course, been made after Händel's partition; notably that by Dr. Clarke (Whitfield-Clarke, 1809), and a later one by Vincent Novello. Their value, however, was more or less doubtful, their character being rather that of transcriptions in pianoforte style, with not infrequent arbitrary or capricious aberrations, than a faithful and exact reduction of the orchestral score. Neither have the more recent editions of vocal scores based on the Mozart orchestra score, with its many contrapuntal charms, quite fulfilled expectations, as they materially increased the difficulty of the piano part.

Hence, a vocal score which should be in every way reliable and practical has become a matter of prime necessity. The present edition agrees at every point with Händel's original score, as it follows the facsimile edition of this *latter with most careful exactitude. Slight* deviations from the original, which in the course of many years have obtained almost traditional authority, are inserted in small *notes in every case, the professional artist being left free to employ them or not, at his* discretion.

With regard to the performance of this grand work by chorus and soloists, much of importance might be said; but this would lead too far afield, and we shall, therefore, confine ourselves to the matters of chiefest concern. The direction of the choruses, which in our Master's works are for the most part peculiarly prominent in their monumental character, will naturally be entrusted to competent chorus conductors, who will care for crystalling precision of execution and a clear, logical conception, and who are responsible for these points.

The interpretation of their parts by the soloists is a different affair. Here we confront the weighty question: "May the soloist proceed subjectively, or must he proceed objectively?" Probably the best answer to this crucial query is found in a passage from the unrivalled work of an authority in this province, namely, "Die Lehre von der vokalen Ornamentik des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts," by Dr. Hugo Goldschmidt. He writes: "The essence of reproduction, to feel and re-create that which was felt and imparted by the creator, does not exclude—within natural limitations—the assertion of creative power. The modern theory of æsthetics founded by Lipps rightly proceeds from the idea, that the interpreting artist creates, in a sense, the work anew. With his gradual penetration of the art-work he creates new values, which are of the highest importance for art, because, without them, the creations of the great masters are only so much writing, and thus remain sealed to enjoyment. But the interpreter's work is no mere execution, comparable, let us say, to that of the builder who transmutes the architect's plans into material reality. His task is rather to seize the vital conception of the art-work, to blend it with his own ego and the views of his period, and thus to imbue it with life and effectiveness. Whether singer or instrumentalist, he is a child of his time. His artistry is a product of its mental culture. It develops and changes with the evolution of artistic requirements. His formative and emotional powers are

derived from the spirit of the epoch to which he belongs. Consequently, we shall always approach the art-productions of earlier times through the medium of our own spiritual and emotional nature. It follows, that the domain which such artistic reproduction may open to us, although of great extent, and as broad in scope as the points of contact with modern sensibility can reach, will be dependent in any given period on a constantly shifting relation to the treasures of former ages. The genuine, great masterworks of the past retain their importance; they are immortal; but our relations to them are not constant, and change with the changing impressionability of the times. We hear the works of these past-masters of former centuries—of Palestrina, Gabrieli, Händel and Bach, yes, even of Mozart and Beethoven—with other ears than our forefathers, or even than our grandfathers. What we have experienced since their time, whatever we have wrested to our eternal gain, this it is which sounds in those works to our ears. Much that charmed former generations has no effect in ours; so much is part and parcel of the time which gave it birth, and decays with its passing. Only what is exalted over time and place remains as eternal gain; and here, again, another generation finds new treasures that earlier ones passed by unheeding. This is the unfailing criterion of true greatness, that its creations continually beget ever-new, ever-changing values, that they bring to each successive generation new revelations. Consider the history of Händel's art. The eighteenth century, in its latter half, admired it in the form of arrangements by contemporaries, those by Mozart and Hiller. Our present-day musical interpretation—on Dr. Chrysander's initiative—has gone back to the historically authenticated form, and disclosed to us the true Händel in his full grandeur. But it owes its success, not to a recognition that things must be so because Händel would have them so, but because they appeal more directly to our sense and feeling than do the arrangements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries."

Such are the pregnant and weighty pronouncements of an experienced man, deeply versed in musico-historical lore and research. They should be of the highest value to the serious artist.

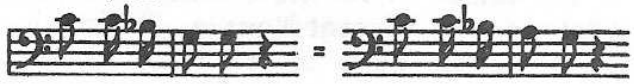
Here a word shall be said touching the employment of the appoggiaturas in the recitatives and (in isolated cases) also in the arias. They are, of course, not given in this edition, or indicated only very infrequently.

The Appoggiatura, in Händel's works, must be treated with the utmost caution and nicest discrimination. It should never be regarded as a mere ornament, but always fulfil some declamatory, melodic or harmonic function. Do not lose sight of the fact, that the appoggiatura lends greater elasticity and emphasis to the flow of melody and declamation, and also to the musical expression; at the same time, one cannot be too careful not to introduce it too often, for this would doubtless produce an unpleasing and inadmissible monotony instead of enhancing the effect.

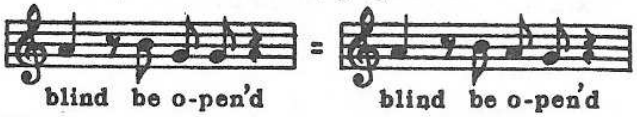
According to historical evidence, Händel permitted his singers to employ appoggiaturas, and even melismata and cadences, in the arias of his oratorios; he invariably insisted, however, that they should not be mere embellishments serving simply for outward display of vocal effect, but calculated to promote the melodic flow and declamatory expression, and must, consequently, possess musical meaning and value. Mistakes in the use of these ornaments can be prevented only by a thorough knowledge of the development of vocal embellishments, a certain penetration into the spirit of Händel's oratorios, and a refined taste in matters pertaining to musical æsthetics.

The Appoggiatura is unquestionably the most important and most frequently employed among the ornaments, and a few general observations concerning the principles involved can hardly fail to be welcome; more especially as they are accompanied by a number of practical illustrations.

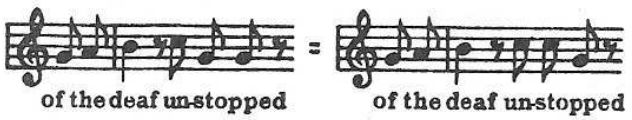
An appoggiatura is in place where its introduction brings about a diatonic succession, and more particularly across the bar, in order to avoid the leap of a third; for example in No. 5, page 26:



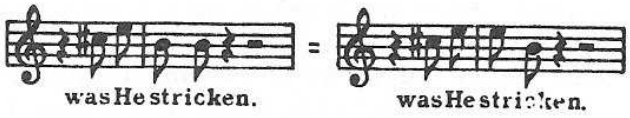
and similarly within the boundaries of one measure, as in No. 19, page 94:



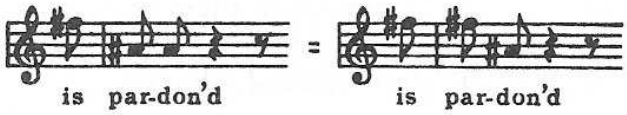
These latter must, however, be introduced with careful discrimination; otherwise appoggiaturas of this sort are very apt to produce a feeling of monotony and an interruption of the melodic flow. Another species of appoggiatura which may be used very effectively is the leap to the fourth below; this occurs both in the midst of a measure (No. 19, page 94):



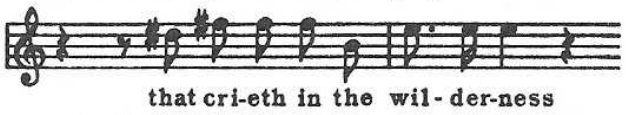
or (and far oftener) at the close of a recitative (No. 31, page 141):



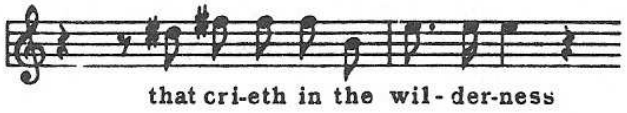
Besides these, the leap of the appoggiatura to the sixth below is occasionally met with (No. 2, page 9):



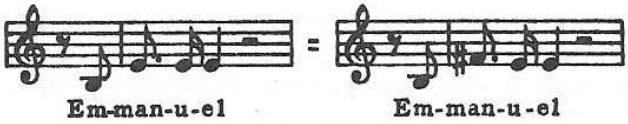
The appoggiatura leading upward by a step is seldom or never employed; leading up by a leap it is very successfully applied in certain cases, for example in No. 2, page 9:



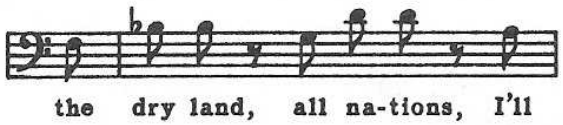
equivalent to



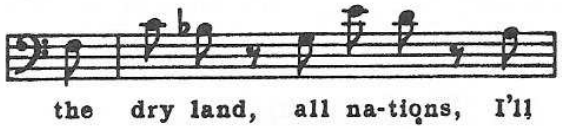
or No. 8, page 47:



Great discretion and sound judgment are, however, very necessary for governing the employment of this upward-leaping appoggiatura; for if, in a quite analogous situation, as shown in No. 5, page 25:



the appoggiatura were introduced at the similar points:



this would be, not simply a regrettably blunder, but a total misinterpretation of this important passage.

Illustrations of this kind show most convincingly how important it is that the singer should treat each case, as it arises, logically and discreetly, and how the appoggiature, in apparently analogous situations, must sometimes be employed and at other avoided. The finest and most striking examples of this description, in our opinion, are those given by Händel in *The Messiah* on page 129 (No. 29): "Thy rebuke hath broken His heart," and on page 140 (No. 30): "Behold, and see." These two numbers, which are among the most beautiful, sublime and affecting of all that Händel has given us in his oratorios, and which convey a sense of mournful, hopeless anxiety in a manner of almost unparalleled realism, should be attentively studied by every oratorio-singer who truly loves his art.

We seize this occasion to direct attention to another important matter, which ought to be mentioned, if for no other reason, because it is unnoticed in all the other vocal scores. We refer to the chorus "Glory to God!" page 82 (No. 17). Here Händel inserted in his original score the following phrase: "da lontano e un poco piano" (as from a distance, and rather softly); and only thus should this chorus be performed. It appears to us that, relying on Händel's directions for the dynamics of this number, there can be no doubt that he intended a gradual approach (augmentation) of this solemn chant, as of an increasingly urgent, divinely inspired announcement, followed by an equally gradual *decrescendo* withdrawal. Supporting evidence is found in the postlude, which, after a grand *fortissimo* climax of the chorus, dies away to a whispered *pianissimo*.— The authenticity of the above reading has occasionally been called in question, with argument both in speech and writing; but such questioning can rest only on a lack of acquaintance—or an inexact acquaintance—with Händel's original score. So, in order to settle this important point definitely, we publish at the beginning of this edition a facsimile of the first page of this chorus from Händel's original manuscript, which should suffice to set the question at rest forever.

In our edition the greatest care has also been bestowed upon the word-text, and each number provided with a correct reference to the corresponding section in the Bible.

We can, therefore, publish this edition with the consciousness that it has been prepared with the thoroughness and reverent care due to this eternally beautiful masterwork.

MAX SPICKER.

New York, March, 1912.