

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHORAL SOCIETY
(REHEARSAL CONDUCTOR - MARGARET MORTIMORE)

85th SEASON

ASSEMBLY HALL, TUNBRIDGE WELLS
SUNDAY 13th NOVEMBER 1988

3. 00 p.m.

ELIJAH

MENDELSSOHN

Carol Smith	<i>Soprano</i>
Janine Roebuck	<i>Mezzo Soprano</i>
Richard Braebrook	<i>Tenor</i>
Peter Harvey	<i>Bass - Baritone</i>
David Gooda	<i>Treble</i>

TUNBRIDGE WELLS GIRLS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL CHOIR
(REHEARSAL CONDUCTOR - DAVID POULTER)

HEATHFIELD CHORAL SOCIETY

Orchestra led by **ALEXANDER GASCOINE**

CONDUCTOR
JARED ARMSTRONG

Programme 40p

ELIJAH - MENDELSSOHN

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) was a composer of grace and invention whose many and varied works have melodic freshness, style and elegance. He rediscovered J S Bach and put on the first performance of the St Matthew Passion since the previous century and was also familiar with Handel's oratorios which stood him in good stead when he came to write his own. A popular and frequent visitor to England, he was commissioned to compose an oratorio for the Birmingham Festival of 1846 and duly wrote *Elijah* in English, and conducted the first performance. The work became an instant success among English Choral societies. It requires large orchestral and vocal forces to relay the stirring events, most of which, as in Handel, are described by the chorus. *Elijah* himself is shown as a very human character, subject to moods and passions, zealous, brooding, angry, self pitying, yet in the end elevated. The choral movements combine narration, inspiration, prayers of pleading and devotion as well as the monumental events, and the chorus doubles as Israelites, priests or angels as appropriate. The various scenes could be headed Drought; Exile; Ahab's Court; Contest by Fire; Deluge; and in Part 2 Ahab's Court; In the Wilderness; The Revelation; Epilogue.

PART 1 The work opens gravely as *Elijah* forecasts years of drought in Israel. The sombre mood is expanded in the dark tones of the orchestral overture foreshadowing the tumultuous events to come. The Israelites pray to the Lord for help bemoaning the lack of water and Obadiah, the King's Chamberlain, adds a more restrained appeal. The great dramatic chorus "Yet doth the Lord" is marked by changes of mood from despair to awestruck realisation of his mercy. *Elijah* is urged by an angel to flee and is supported by a double chorus of the heavenly host promising comfort and protection "For He shall give His angels charge over thee". He takes refuge at Zarephath where his host, a widow, bitterly resents his presence as her son is dying, but *Elijah*'s prayers are answered and the boy is restored to life.

A stately fanfare follows as after three years of drought *Elijah* returns to King Ahab's court to promise rain. He is mocked and reviled by King and courtiers as "he that troubleth Israel" but *Elijah* denies this pointing out that their idolatry has caused God's wrath and the subsequent drought and famine. He challenges the priest of Baal to a public fire raising contest on Mount Carmel to see which God will bring fire and should therefore be worshipped as the Lord. The challenge is accepted.

In a double chorus which starts confidently and majestically but becomes increasingly desperate as the priests and people cry to Baal, pleading for fire to fall on the sacrificial altar. Nothing happens so, taunted by *Elijah*, they renew their cries in greater and greater frenzy until there is a sudden and dramatic silence as all wait in vain for the idol to answer. *Elijah* summons the people to his altar while he prays devoutly to the God of Abraham that He will prove Himself God. An angelic chorus supports him as he calls for fire from heaven. The music moves forward relentlessly to a great climax depicting the onlookers' excitement and wonder as flames descend, but stops abruptly as they prostrate themselves in submissive reverence to the Lord. *Elijah* rouses them to kill the false prophets and justifies this in a wrathful aria as the Lord's vengeance

on the wicked, echoed in a contemplative aria "Woe unto them."

Obadiah reminds Elijah that they still need rain and Elijah leads the Israelites in fervent supplication to the Lord. Elijah sends a young servant to study the skies until the youth announces seeing a small cloud approaching. Rapidly this develops into a mighty storm and the first part of the work ends in a tremendous climax as rain falls, the waters gather momentum and rush along and joyfully the Israelites give praise and thanks to God.

PART 2 This opens quietly and peacefully with the Angel reassuring Elijah before he returns once again to face the royal court. The angelic host encourages him with the command "Be not afraid". Thus strengthened Elijah fearlessly tells King Ahab that he has abused his powers by permitting idolatry and slaying the Lord's prophets, but Queen Jezebel points out that Elijah himself had ordered Baal's prophets to be killed and forecast the drought and subsequent famine. The courtiers are incited to call for his death "Woe to him" and Obadiah warns him to escape and rely on the Lord.

Alone in the wilderness, bitter and full of self pity, Elijah wishes for death but angels guard him with the tranquil "Lift thine eyes", offering consolation and inspiration in "He, watching over Israel". The angel tries to persuade Elijah to travel to mount Horeb but in despair he desires death, to be comforted in the gentle aria "O rest in the Lord" and hymn-like chorus "He that shall endure to the end". Elijah is now prepared to see God's glory in a vision in which the Lord passes by with cataclysmic results: a mighty wind, broken rocks, high seas, earthquakes, fire. The music increases in tension until there is a sudden calm as the Lord is revealed in a still small voice. All sing His praise in a tremendous double chorus "Holy, holy, holy".

Commanded to return to help the many true believers in Israel, Elijah obeys willingly: "I go on my way". Solemnly the chorus relates how Elijah zealously overthrew wicked kings and heard judgments of the future. A vivid musical description is given of his final ascension to heaven in a fiery chariot lifted by a whirlwind. In an epilogue Elijah's life is summed up in the contemplative tenor aria "Then shall the righteous shine forth". The final chorus is a eulogy of the prophet upon whom the Lord's spirit rested, solemn then triumphant as the pace changes to a final exuberant figure in praise of the universal Creator.

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JARED ARMSTRONG Our guest conductor began his musical life as a chorister at Newcastle Cathedral and subsequently went to the Royal College of Music, then Exeter College, Oxford with a break for war service in Burma. He became involved with choral conducting and operatic activities during his student days, and these became major interests throughout his life as a schoolmaster at Oundle, Cranleigh and Wellington. Now resident in Crowborough he continues participating in all aspects of music making and is currently conductor of Heathfield Choral society who have come to support him. We are very pleased to welcome him today.

CAROL SMITH (Soprano) commenced her musical education in Huddersfield and continued it at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where she was a Gold Medallist. Amongst other awards were scholarships from British Petroleum and the Countess of Munster Musical Trust to help her operatic studies. Miss Smith has given a debut recital at Carnegie Hall, New York and broadcast on BBC Radio. She joined Glyndebourne Touring Opera in 1984 for *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* and amongst other engagements has performed with Opera North, the Hallé Orchestra and the London Sinfonia. Festival recital appearances include those at Edinburgh and Aldeburgh.

JANINE ROEBUCK (Mezzo Soprano) studied at Manchester University and the Royal Northern College of Music followed by the Paris Conservatoire. Her many operatic engagements include Flora in *La Traviata* and Maddalena in *Rigoletto* as well as a variety of rôles with the London Savoyards at the Barbican. She has appeared in several opera festival productions, amongst them Buxton and Camden. Abroad she has sung in Jerusalem, the Netherlands (*Messiah*), Granada and Athens, the latter in *Dido and Aeneas* with the English Bach Festival.

RICHARD BRAEBROOK (Tenor) was born in Huddersfield and studied at the Royal College of Music during which time some of his Operatic performances won critical acclaim. He was a prize winner in the International Singing Competition at Rio de Janeiro. He toured overseas with D'Oyley Carte Opera and then joined English National Opera. He has considerable experience of oratorio including *Messiah*, *St John Passion* and *The Dream of Gerontius*. Future plans include a concert recital in Tokyo.

PETER HARVEY (Bass Baritone) won a choral scholarship to Magdalen College, Oxford followed by further study at the Guildhall School of Music and drama. Winner of several prizes for both opera and lieder singing he made his debut recital at the Purcell room with a Maisie Lewis Award. He has since performed with many opera companies, among them Kent opera (the *Coronation of Poppea*) and at Glyndebourne. His repertoire ranges from medieval music to the first performances of contemporary works and BBC recordings. He has appeared at numerous festivals including those at St Endellion, Leith Hill and the Lufthansa Festival of Baroque Music.

Part 1

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

Part 2

Air	Hear ye Israel
Chorus	Be not afraid
Recit Chorus	The Lord hath exalted thee
Chorus	Woe to him
Recit	Man of God
Air	It is enough
Recit	See now he sleepeth
Trio	Lift thine eyes
Chorus	He, watching over Israel
Recit	Arise Elijah
Air	O rest in the Lord
Chorus	He that shall endure to the end
Recit	Night falleth around me
Chorus	Behold, God the Lord passed by
Recit, Quartet and Chorus	Holy, Holy, Holy
Chorus	Go return upon the way
Recit	I go on my way
Chorus	Then did Elijah
Air	Then shall the righteous
Recit	Behold God hath sent Elijah
Chorus	And then shall your light break forth

FORTHCOMING CONCERTS AT THE ASSEMBLY HALL AT 3.00 p.m.

1988

Sunday	4 December	Royal Tunbridge Wells Symphony Orchestra
Sunday	11 December	Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society - Carols

1989

Sunday	9 April	Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society - B Minor mass, <i>Bach</i>
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The Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society acknowledges financial assistance from the South East Arts Association and the Borough of Royal Tunbridge Wells.



THE ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHORAL SOCIETY 85th SEASON

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Musical Director and Principal Conductor:	Derek Watnough
Honorary Life Member:	Anthony Smith-Masters

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We are most grateful for the support of Patrons and Vice Patrons, and new ones are always welcome. Please ring or write to the General Secretary, Mr L.A. Lee, 233 Greggs Wood Road, Tunbridge Wells (Tunbridge Wells 21937).

The choir rehearses on Monday evenings from September to April. New members are always welcome. There is a simple and private audition. Please contact the General secretary (as above) in the first instance - we shall be pleased to have you join us.