

## Chandos Anthems 9 & 10

**GF Handel (1685-1759): Overture to Esther HWV50a**

**Chandos Anthem No 10, 'The Lord is my light' HWV255**

**Chandos Anthem No 9, 'O praise the Lord with one consent' HWV254**

The Chandos, or Cannons, Anthems were written by Handel sometime during 1717 and 1718, while he was a composer-in-residence at Cannons. Cannons was the sumptuous house built for James Brydges, Earl of Caernarvon, and subsequently Duke of Chandos. (Because he was created Duke after Handel wrote the Anthems, it is more correct to call them the Cannons Anthems, and they will appear so hereafter.) Cannons was designed by James Gibbs and adorned with magnificent artwork, this was the height of Baroque opulence. Brydges' wealth came from his activities as Paymaster General for the army: as with so many patrons of the arts, it is often best not to enquire too closely about the source of funds.

Brydges intended to have an establishment perhaps like the ones that Handel had been familiar with in Italy – the households of Cardinals Ottoboni and Pamphili or of the Marquis Ruspoli. He had his own chapel, which included a music director (Pepusch) and various choral and instrumental musicians – and Handel. The chapel building itself was not completed until 1720, so services took place here, in St Lawrence, built for Brydges by John James, 1714-16. The paintings are by Louis Laguerre (1663-1721), who was about the most fashionable painter an aristocrat could employ.

The Cannons Anthems are all collections of Psalms taken from the King James Bible and from the metrical psalter by Tate and Brady, first published in 1696. These two Anthems comprise Psalms 27, 18, 28 and 45 (HWV255) and 135, 117 and 148 (HWV254). It is nice to think that the opening of HWV254 is a reference to the fine St Anne hymn tune, which was first published in 1708, but Handel used the motif in his Italian *Tu fedel? Tu costante?*, so the similarity is probably coincidental.

The Anthems were descended from the Psalms that the young Handel set in Italy (spotters may find echoes of *Dixit Dominus*, inter alia). But they were also important in the history of the Handel oratorio. Not only did their choral writing set the templates for his oratorio choirs, but the oratorio was born by accident with a Cannons entertainment, *Esther*: *Esther's* siblings are the Cannons Anthems, and if she was the mother of the oratorio, they are its uncles and aunts. Handel's second oratorio, *Deborah* (1732) was, in great part, a reworking of Cannons Anthems – from these two, 'For this our truest int'rest' and 'God's tender mercy' were given to Jael, 'That God is great' to Abinoam, and (from HWV255) 'One thing have I desired' to Barak.

These works are beautifully crafted. Of the word-painting, 'He cast forth lightnings, and gave his thunder... They are brought down and fall'n' (HWV255) is particularly vivid; the praising the Lord 'with one consent' is, of course, done in unison. There is some more subtle word-painting in 'Ye boundless realms of joy', the 'boundless realms' being suggested by multiple entries. The pacing between arias and choruses is always well-judged, and again a model for future oratorios.

Handel left Cannons in 1719, but its cultural life went on until the death of the Duke in 1744: the family, bankrupt, sold everything – even the stones of the building. The cabinet-maker William Hallett bought the site and erected his own building; it is now the North London Collegiate School.

**Chandos Anthem No 9, 'O praise the Lord with one consent' HWV254**

**Chorus:** O praise the Lord with one consent and magnify his name.  
Let all the servants of the Lord his worthy praise proclaim.

**Air:** Praise him, all ye that in his house attend with constant care  
with those that to his utmost courts with humble zeal repair.

**Air:** For this our truest int'rest is glad hymns of praise to sing  
and with loud songs to bless his name, a most delightful thing.

**Air:** That God is great, we often have by glad experience found  
and seen how he, with wond'rous pow'r, above all gods is crown'd.

**Chorus:** With cheerful notes let all the earth to heaven their voices raise.  
Let all inspir'd with godly mirth, sing solemn hymns with praise.

**Air:** God's tender mercy knows no bounds, his truth shall ne'er decay  
then let the willing nations round their grateful tribute pay.

**Chorus:** Ye boundless realms of joy exalt your Maker's fame.  
His praise your song employ above the starry frame.

Your voices raise, ye Cherubin and Seraphin, to sing his praise, Alleluja.

### **Chandos Anthem No 10, 'The Lord is my light' HWV255**

#### **Sinfonia**

**Air:** The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom then shall I fear?  
The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom then shall I be afraid?

**Chorus:** Though an host of men were laid against me, Yet shall my not heart be afraid:  
Though there rose up war against me, Yet I will put my trust in him.

**Air:** One thing have I desired of the Lord, Which I will require:  
That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,  
To behold the fair beauty of the Lord, And to visit his temple.

**Chorus:** I will offer in his dwelling an oblation with great gladness: I will sing, and speak  
praises unto the Lord,

**Chorus:** For who is God but the Lord? Or who hath any strength expect the Lord?  
The earth trembled, and quak'd, the very foundation: Also of the hills shook, and were  
removed;  
He cast forth lightnings, and gave his thunder, and destroyed them.  
They are brought down and fall'n, but we are risen.  
O praise the Lord with me, and let us magnify his name together

**Air:** The Lord is my strength and my shield; My heart has trusted in him, and I am helped:  
Therefore my heart danceth for joy; And in my song will I praise him.

**Air:** It is the Lord that ruleth the sea, The Lord sitteth above the water flood,  
And the Lord remaineth a king for ever.

**Chorus:** Sing praises unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, And give thanks unto him for a

remembrance of his holiness. I will remember thy name from one generation to another;  
Therefore shall the people give thanks unto Thee. World without end, Amen.

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London Handel Festival

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