

MIDI FILES FOR MESSIAH, G F HÄNDEL

Several websites have electronic versions of major choral works for learning the notes. There is an interesting one that uses real voices from *Single Parts with study spots*, found at the website rehearsalarts.com (many thanks to Helen Hyland for alerting us to this one). Other sites include Choralia.net, Cyberbass.com and LearnChoralMusic.co.uk.

Even if you have never used these resources before and even if you are adept at reading music, please do try them out. Learning at least some of the music by ear will allow us to look up from our music books and engage much more fully with the audience. I also like to think that Alistair will be delighted – or possibly terrified – when he realises that 90 pairs of eyes are trained on his every move.

1. Rehearsalarts.com

Messiah: http://rehearsalarts.com/Handel_Messiah_30.html

This American site provides mp3 files for download. The music is recorded using real voices. Each vocal part is then emphasised.

Advantage: individual parts (SATB) can be downloaded. As real singers are singing the parts, the whole thing is much more musical than the usual electronic versions. Parts can be downloaded as MP3 files (to be played on computer) or can be received by post as CDs. Most of the tracks are at a tempo approaching concert speed but, according to the site, the most challenging passages are recorded at a slower than normal tempo to facilitate learning. The slower passages are then followed by a check track of the same music back at the normal tempo.

Disadvantage: As real singers are used to produce a very good-quality recording there is a financial cost. The individual parts cost \$28.70 (around £22) each. (Technical note: I found that the purchasing went more smoothly if I used the Chrome search engine on my computer rather than Microsoft Edge.)

2. Choralia.net

Messiah (Edition 1): <http://www.choralia.net/hn03mp3/hn03mp3en.htm>

Messiah (Edition 2): <http://www.choralia.net/hn04mp3/hn04mp3en.htm>

This site provides electronic music and an electronic voice that gives an approximation of the words. Separate voice parts can be played individually or together. Sliders can be used to slow down (tortoise) or speed up (hare) the music, to emphasise the music or the voice, or to change the left-right balance. As the music plays there is a useful timer so that you can, if you wish, pinpoint the music sequences you wish to practice.

Advantage: all the parts can be listened to separately (SATB) and the sliders make the site very versatile for practice. The approximation of words gives an added clue to whereabouts you are in the score.

Disadvantage: some people may find the electronic voice annoying.

3. Cyberbass.com

Messiah:

http://www.cyberbass.com/Major_Works/Handel_GF/Handel_Messiah.htm

This site provides electronic music and an electronic tune representing the voice. Separate voice parts can be played individually or together. Buttons further down the web page can slow down or speed up the music, jump backwards and forwards in the music in multiples of 3 seconds or ten seconds, or play the music on an infinite loop.

Advantage: Being able to jump backwards and forwards in the music by a few seconds means that a small but difficult area of the music can be practised repeatedly.

Disadvantage: the notes are there, but no indication of the words.

4. LearnChoralMusic.co.uk

Messiah (part 1):

<http://www.learnchoralmusic.co.uk/Handel/Messiah/messiah.html>

Messiah (part 2):

<http://www.learnchoralmusic.co.uk/Handel/Messiah/messiah2.html>

Messiah (part 3):

<http://www.learnchoralmusic.co.uk/Handel/Messiah/messiah3.html>

This site provides electronic music and an electronic tune representing the voice. Separate voice parts can be played individually or together.

Advantage: Parts can be played separately.

Disadvantage: The music is quite loud in relation to the voice parts and so the voice parts themselves are harder to distinguish. The music cannot be slowed down or speeded up.

5. Speedshifter

For those of you who hate electronic “voices” and prefer to practice using the whole performance rather than individual parts, there is “*Speedshifter*”. This software has been produced by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM). Essentially, it is an app that slows down and speeds up music that you have already downloaded, while the pitch remains the same. This means that you can practise at a slower tempo and then build up to concert speed. The app can be downloaded onto your computer or mobile phone from:

<https://gb.abrsm.org/en/exam-support/practice-tools-and-applications/speedshifter/>

Advantage: you have the sounds of a real choir and orchestra and can practise at a tempo suitably slower than concert speed.

Disadvantage: the voice parts cannot be played separately and the software is not free. Its cost is currently around £5.

