

SUNDAY EVENING, APRIL 11, 1976, AT 7:30 P.M.

DOROTHY CHANDLER PAVILION

LOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE AND SINFONIA ORCHESTRA

ROGER WAGNER, Music Director

ELIJAH

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)

ROGER WAGNER

Conductor

HAROLD ENNS

Bass-baritone, as the Prophet Elijah

BRENDA QUILLING

Soprano, as the Widow and as an Angel

BONNIE HURWOOD

Mezzo-soprano, as Jezebel the Queen,
and as an Angel

VAL STUART

Tenor, as Obadiah, as Ahab the King,
and as an Angel

DOROTHY WADE

Concertmistress

PART I

Introduction. *Elijah*. As God the Lord

Overture

Chorus. *The Israelites*. Help, Lord!

Duet and Chorus. *The Israelites*. Lord, bow thine ear

Recitative. *Obadiah*. Ye people, rend your hearts

Air. *Obadiah*. If with all your hearts

Chorus. *The Israelites*. Yet doth the Lord

Recitative. *An Angel*. *Elijah!* get thee hence

Recitative. *An Angel*. Now Cherith's brook

Recitative and Air. *The Widow and Elijah*. What have I to do with thee

Chorus. *The Angelic Choir*. Blessed are the men who fear Him

Recitative. *Elijah, Ahab and his Courtiers*. As God the Lord

Chorus. *The Priests of Baal*. Baal, we cry to thee!

Recitative and Chorus. *Elijah, Priests of Baal*. Call him louder!

Recitative and Air. *Elijah*. Draw near, all ye people

Chorus. *The Angelic Choir*. Cast thy burden upon the Lord

Recitative. *Elijah*. O Thou, who makest thine angels spirits

Chorus. *The Israelites*. The fire descends from heaven

Air. *Elijah*. Is not His word like a fire

Air. *An Angel*. Woe unto them who forsake Him!

Recitative. *Obadiah*. O man of God, help thy people!

Recitative and Chorus. *Elijah, a Youth, The Israelites*. O Lord, thou hast overthrown

Chorus. *The Israelites*. Thanks be to God!

INTERMISSION

PART II

Air. *An Angel*. Hear ye, Israel!

Chorus. *The Angelic Choir*. Be not afraid

Recitative. *Elijah, the Queen and her followers*. The Lord hath exalted thee

Recitative. *Obadiah and Elijah*. Man of God

Air. *Elijah*. It is enough

Recitative. *An Angel*. See, now he sleepeth

Chorus. *Angels*. Lift thine eyes

Chorus. *The Angelic Choir*. He, watching over Israel

Recitative. *An Angel, Elijah*. Arise, Elijah

Air. *An Angel*. O rest in the Lord

Chorus. *The Angelic Choir*. He that shall endure

Recitative. *Elijah, an Angel*. Night falleth round me

Chorus. *The Angelic Choir*. Behold, God the Lord

Recitative and Double Chorus. *An Angel, the Seraphim*. Above Him stood the Seraphim

Recitative. *Elijah*. I go on my way

Chorus. *The Angelic Choir*. Then did Elijah

Air. *An Angel*. Then shall the righteous shine forth

Chorus. *The Angelic Choir*. And then shall your light break forth

The musical presentations of the Los Angeles Master Chorale and Sinfonia Orchestra are sponsored by the Southern California Choral Music Association, a Resident Group of the Music Center, and by grants from the Mayor, City Council and Municipal Arts Commission of the City of Los Angeles; the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and County Music Commission; and the National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal Agency in Washington, D.C.

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Elijah, Op. 70

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Shortly after Mendelssohn's first oratorio, *St. Paul*, was completed (in 1836), the composer began to plan a second oratorio on the subject of "the wrath and the grief of the prophet Elijah" (to use H. E. Jacob's phrase). However, the work on the libretto did not go well, and the project was shelved until 1845, when the composer received an invitation to write and conduct a new oratorio at the Birmingham Festival the following year. The first performance took place August 26, 1846. It was the second of four evenings of choral music of the festival, the other works being Haydn's *Creation*, Handel's *Messiah*, and the Beethoven *Missa Solemnis*. A correspondent who was present at the performance wrote,

"How shall I describe what today has been in the Music Hall? After such an intense enjoyment it is a hard task to express one's feelings in cold words. It was a great day for the festival, a great day for Mendelssohn, a great day for art. There were eight encores . . ."

In spite of the success of the premiere, Mendelssohn was not satisfied with the work, and all but five numbers were revised during the following months, in time for the first London performance on April 16, 1847. This was Mendelssohn's tenth and last trip to England. Friends pressed him to remain in London a little longer, but he had a presentiment that he must leave hurriedly. "Ah, I wish I may not already have stayed too long here! One more week of this unremitting fatigue and I should be killed outright." He was manifestly ill. Upon his arrival in Frankfurt, he abruptly learned that his beloved sister, Fanny, had died at the piano while conducting a choir rehearsal. With a cry, Felix collapsed. The shock of the news and the violence of his fall on hearing it brought about a rupture of one of those delicate cerebral blood vessels which had caused so many deaths in the Mendelssohn family. He made a partial recovery, but another stroke on November 3 caused his death the following day, three months short of his 39th birthday.

The text of *Elijah* was prepared by

Mendelssohn's friend, Julius Schubring and translated into English by William Bartholomew, under the constant supervision of the composer. "The personages should act and speak like living beings — for Heaven's sake let them not be a musical picture, but a real world, such as you find in every chapter of the Old Testament; and the contemplative and pathetic element, which you desire, ought to be entirely conveyed to our understanding by the words and the mood of the acting personages."

The decision to limit the text to words from the Bible proved to be an unfortunate one, particularly in the second part. Pastor Schubring's desire to derive uplifting lessons from the story of the prophet led to an extension of the work beyond the ascent of Elijah into heaven (where Mendelssohn originally planned to end the oratorio). The few cuts in tonight's performance are excisions of this added section.

Despite occasional unevenness, largely due to dramatic deficiencies of the text, *Elijah* contains much music of great power and beauty. "Elijah is elemental music . . . Just as the depths of the Rhine and the rocks in Wagner's *Ring* are not merely the scene of the human and divine drama, but help to shape the drama, in fact form the basis for it — similarly, the soil of Palestine in *Elijah* shares the stage with Elijah himself. It is a land of drought, thirst and hunger, and also of lightning, thunder, blue-black torrents of rain; of earthquakes, fires, raging storms, green oases and golden deserts of leathery palm leaves and aromatic shrubs, and whistling wind 'in which is the Lord.' Such is the ground on which Elijah walks, and he himself, the zealot, quick to wrath and subsiding into sorrow, has the character of the soil itself." (H. E. Jacob: *Felix Mendelssohn and His Times*, p. 251).

Elijah consists of a series of tableaux. After the master-stroke of the prophet's curse occurring before the overture: "A fugue. A fear-stricken crowd creeps along, on winding paths; this is not a march but a slow dragging movement of dying creatures who fall out by the wayside — we can almost see it! This is drought . . . The Israelites languish and die." (Ibid., p. 252).

Elijah is sent to a widow who will provide sustenance until the three years of the curse are concluded. Her son sickens and "there is no breath in

him." Elijah prays that the child be brought back to life. *This scene, though operatic in treatment, provides the only interior scene in the work and shows the wrathful prophet in a more gentle mood.*

The three years are over. Elijah issues his challenge to Ahab: let two sacrifices be prepared, one altar for Baal and one for Jehovah. "The God who answers by fire, he is God." Confidently at first, then desperately, the priests of Baal cry to their God; as they vainly wait for a response, Elijah mocks them. Finally, in one of the most dramatic grand pauses in musical literature, it becomes evident that there will be no answer for the impotent priests of Baal. Elijah then quietly prays to the "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel" that His prophet be vindicated. The prayer is answered, the fire descends, the awed populace reaffirms a belief in one God as they proclaim the *Sh'ma Yisroel*.

Elijah is now completely in charge — as he has been all the time — and orders the false priests slain. In a fanatical song of triumph, Handelian and inexorable, the victorious prophet sings of the judgment of Jehovah. But He is also merciful, and in response to Elijah's prayers, the heavens are opened and torrents of rain pour upon the thirsty land. *This entire tableau is highly effective, musically and dramatically. Mendelssohn manages to limn the drama of the miraculous happenings, and, without unduly slowing the pace, performs his homage to Bach and Handel in chorale and arioso.*

Mendelssohn and Schubring were not as successful in keeping up the pace and comprehensibility in the second part. Much of the music is glorious, but the taut drama of the first part is often lacking. Often, little seems to be happening, but it is commented on at length. Mendelssohn's desire for drama yields to Schubring's wish to uplift the listener. The aria which begins the second part is a good example. It has great beauty, but is not very relevant to the story, which must be reconstructed partly from sources outside the libretto.

Ahab and his people have lapsed again into idolatry. Elijah continues to warn them, but people grow weary of being told they are wrong. Jezebel, the Sidonite, has never forgiven Elijah for the slaughter of her priests and directs that he be seized and slain. Elijah flees into the desert and takes refuge

WHO'S WHO

"beneath a juniper tree." And now occurs "a passage of such grandeur that it makes us forget the dramatic weakness of the second act. For now Elijah no longer wishes to serve . . . He feels that he has lived in vain. He has been unable to extirpate the worship of Baal. All his anger has accomplished nothing. Profound melancholy overpowers him. He wishes to die. He pleads with God to grant him death. It is no Bachian death he desires, no consoling entrance into Eternal Life, but a quiet passage into nothingness . . . But God will not permit Elijah to die. For the present he is still needed on earth . . . Elijah continues to hold back, but an angel leads him to Mount Horeb." (*Jacob*, p. 255).

Here God speaks to him, and gives him his marching orders. It is not the substance of the Lord's commands that Mendelssohn deals with; rather, it is the glory of God's presence. *Behold God the Lord passed by* is the greatest, most inspired chorus Mendelssohn ever wrote. It "is elemental music, begotten of the Palestinian landscape; and at the same time it is spiritual music. Greater intensity is scarcely possible than the intensity achieved in the *Ascension of Elijah*. God sends His chariot of fire and carries the prophet off to Heaven. There are flashes of jagged lightning in the orchestra; the winds are like molten metal; the chorus accompanies the miracle with stormy rhythms and long-drawn-out cries." (*Ibid*, p. 155).

Of the five numbers in the final section, only two are included in this performance. Although they serve to end the work with fine dignity (and endeavor to relate the prophet to the fulfillment of the New Testament), one must admit that the best music of the oratorio has already occurred.

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HAROLD ENNS has enjoyed repeated successes with many of America's major opera companies (San Francisco, Houston, San Diego, Los Angeles, Metropolitan National Company, Portland, Omaha, and Honolulu). His orchestral credits include performances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston Symphony at Tanglewood, San Francisco Symphony, and National Symphony Orchestra of Washington, D.C. He won the San Francisco Opera auditions and was awarded a contract. Mr. Enns was one of the select few to sing at the coronation festivities of Queen Elizabeth II with the Roger Wagner Chorale in 1953.



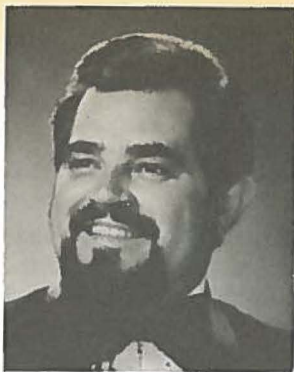
BRENDA QUILLING represents the kind of superior local talent the Los Angeles Master Chorale seeks to encourage. As winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Western Regional Auditions Finals, she was engaged by Dr. Roger Wagner as soloist not only for *The Creation* but also for the performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* in April. Miss Quilling's awards

also include the Gladys Turk Foundation Grant from Young Musicians Foundation, Orange County Young Artists Competition, and International Vocal Competition, s'Hertogenbosch, Holland. She received a B.M. and M.M. in Voice from University of Southern California and has performed extensively on television and radio in the United States and Austria. Her opera performances include engagements with San Francisco Opera's Western Opera Theatre, Euterpe Opera (Los Angeles), Wolf Trap Company, Kentucky Opera Association, and in Graz, Austria.



Mezzo-soprano **BONNIE HURWOOD**, a fourth-generation Californian, won the San Francisco Youth Symphony auditions in 1959 and that same year enrolled as a scholarship student at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where she sang Dorabella in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* and the wife in Milhaud's *La Pauvre Matelot*. After two years of study with Dr. David Scott at California State University Northridge, she entered and won the Metropolitan Opera Western Regional Auditions and in New York was a winner in the National semi-finals. While at Cal State Northridge, Miss Hurwood sang in many opera productions, including the title role in Bizet's *Carmen*. With the Los Angeles Philharmonic Miss Hurwood has performed both at Hollywood Bowl and in the Music Center, and she has completed two national tours as alto soloist with the Roger Wagner Chorale.

(continued on next page)



VAL STUART has performed from the east to the west in operatic and symphonic works and has toured twice for the State Department to the Far East and South America.

Mr. Stuart studied at the Indiana University Opera Theatre, where he performed more than 70 times in three years. Since moving to California he has sung with San Diego, Euterpe, West End, and Riverside Opera Companies and Palm Springs, West End, San Gabriel, Riverside, Redlands, Utah, and Los Angeles Philharmonic Symphonies, as well as several appearances with the Los Angeles Master Chorale.

Mr. Stuart is married to soprano Li-la Stuart, and they have five children.



ROGER WAGNER, during his long and illustrious career, has received a plethora of signal honors from his city, county, the nation, and throughout the world. In 1953 Wagner and his Chorale were invited to participate at the coronation festivities of Elizabeth II in London. In 1959 and again in 1964 he and the Chorale were selected to represent the United States in concerts throughout Latin America. In 1966 the United States State Department, through its Cultural Exchange Program, again sent the Chorale on tour to the Middle East, Turkey, Yugoslavia, France, and Italy. In Rome he and the Chorale had the honor of singing for Pope Paul VI at an audience in St. Peter's Basilica — the first non-Italian

choir to do so in twenty-five years. In January, 1973, Roger Wagner shared the podium with Eugene Ormandy to conduct the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Los Angeles Master Chorale at the Inaugural Concert at Kennedy Center. In May, 1973, Dr. Wagner served as guest conductor of major symphonies during a month-long tour of the major capitals of South America, and in July he conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic and his Chorale in Bach's B Minor Mass at the Hollywood Bowl. In May, 1974, he conducted a triumphal tour of the Soviet Union with the Master Chorale, where "he made a notable impact on the Soviet musical world." Dr. Wagner holds a full professorship in the Music Department at UCLA. He has made numerous recordings and received the Grammy Award for his album *Virtuoso*.

The Los Angeles Master Chorale and Sinfonia Orchestra is now in its twelfth season of presenting great choral masterworks in the Music Center and the Hollywood Bowl. The organization, which was formed by Roger Wagner and the Los Angeles Junior Chamber of Commerce, became a resident company at the Music Center in 1964. Dr. Wagner has been music director for the Chorale and Orchestra since its formation. Each year a series of important choral programs is presented in the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, marking Los Angeles as the only city in the country which supports its own professional resident chorus presenting an annual choral season. One hundred twenty-five of the Southland's finest singers have been admitted to the select membership in the ensemble. The sinfonia Orchestra membership is drawn from professional ranks in the Los Angeles area and is one of the finest in the United States.

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