



George Frideric Handel: "Messiah" HWV 56

Version for full symphony orchestra by Sir Eugene Goossens (1959)

Orchestration:

3 flutes (3rd also piccolo) | 4 oboes (4th also cor anglais) | 2 clarinets | 2 bassoons | contrabassoon | 4 horns | 2 trumpets | 3 trombones | tuba | timpani | percussion (3 players) | harp | soloists | choir | strings

pm 0038

score and orchestra parts for hire

Sir Eugene Goossens' orchestration of Handel's *Messiah* was composed in early 1959, and the score is in his and his companion Pamela Main's handwriting. The initiative for this venture came from Goossens' former mentor Sir Thomas Beecham, who wished to record the work with a twentieth-century symphony orchestra. He chose Goossens as a composer of symphonies, operas and oratorio who was also an internationally celebrated conductor. He was to orchestrate the main body of the work but not to include those numbers known as Appendix, which are usually omitted in performance.

It would seem that Beecham had miscalculated the overall timing, and presumably had to introduce the Appendix in order to make a reasonably-filled concluding vinyl disc. But there were no matching orchestrations available, and time was pressing. Whatever the reason, Sir Thomas regrettably resorted to a sublimely concealed hotch-potch, using some Ebenezer Prout orchestrations, and also Straussian songs written for him in 1947 by the then-young conductor Norman Del Mar. This was all passed off as being by Goossens who was completely ignorant of the circumstance, as indeed was Del Mar.

Sir Eugene Goossens

(1893 - 1962)



Born in London as the son of the Belgian violinist Eugène Goossens, he also first trained as a violinist and played in Sir Thomas Beecham's Queens Hall Orchestra before changing to conducting. He conducted the British premiere of *Le Sacre du Printemps* in 1921 and subsequently lived in the US and Australia until 1956. After being caught at the Sydney airport with what was considered to be "pornographic material" (photos, books, rubber masks and such) in connection with his intense love affair with Rosaleen Norton, the so-called "Witch of Kings Cross", he was forced to resign from all public positions. Goossens died in England in 1962.

One passing-off often presages another, and whilst he was about it, Sir Thomas also substituted for Goossens the two remaining 1947 Del Mar orchestrations, specifically Nos 32 and 38, which he therefor did not have to learn anew. Goossens' No 38 was even excised from photocopies supplied for performances in Australia in 1980, but having been recently printed is now restored to the present score. Goossens never heard his orchestration: hence his unawareness of Beecham's shadowy shenanigans.

Goossens' manuscript and orchestral material were for many years kept unseen in an attic by Beecham's widow. Even when Karajan tried to obtain the orchestral parts for performance, "they were nowhere to be found", according to his biographer Osborne, and a Japanese choral society asking to perform this orchestration even received a solicitor's letter refusing any sight of the score. As the actual copyright had been inherited by Pamela Main, this was indeed curious! The manuscript was then mysteriously sold to the University of Sheffield and subsequently published by Meriden Music. In 2013, paladino media acquired the publisher's copyright to the work. The eventual aspiration is to print the complete score exactly as Goossens intended.