

**AN ACCOUNT OF THE MUSICAL  
PERFORMANCES IN WESTMINSTER  
ABBAY, AND THE PANTHEON,  
MAY 26TH, 27TH, 29TH AND JUNE THE  
3RD AND 5TH, 1784, IN  
COMMEMORATION OF HANDEL**

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An account of the musical performances in Westminster abbey, and the Pantheon, May 26th, 27th, 29th and June the 3rd and 5th, 1784, in commemoration of Handel by Charles Burney

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**CHARLES BURNEY**

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OF THE  
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IN  
**WESTMINSTER ABBEY,**

AND  
*THE PANTHEON,*  
May 26th, 27th, 29th, and June the 3rd and 5th, 1784,

IN  
COMMEMORATION

OF  
**H A N D E L ;**  
By CHARLES BURNEY, Mus. D. F.R.S.

To which is added,

A NOTICE OF THE FORTHCOMING  
**ROYAL MUSICAL FESTIVAL**  
OF 1834.

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"——— All  
The multitude of Angels, with a shout  
Loud as from numbers without number, sweet  
As from bless'd voices, uttering joy, heav'n rung  
With jubilee, and loud Hosannas fill'd  
Th' eternal regions."

MILT. PARAD. LOST, Book III.

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1834.

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TO  
THE KING.

GREATNESS of mind is never more willingly acknowledged, nor more sincerely revered, than when it descends into the regions of general life, and by countenancing common pursuits, or partaking common amusements, shews that it borrows nothing from distance or formality.

By the notice which Your Majesty has been pleased to bestow upon the celebration of HANDEL'S memory, You have condescended to add Your voice to public praise, and give Your sanction to musical emulation.

The delight which Music affords seems to be one of the first attainments of rational nature; wherever there is humanity, there is modulated sound. The mind set free from the resistless tyranny of painful want, employs its first leisure upon some savage melody. Thus in those lands of unprovided wretchedness, which Your Majesty's encouragement of naval investigation has brought lately to the knowledge of the polished world, though all things else were wanted, every nation had its Music; an art of which the rudiments accompany the commencements, and the refinements adorn the completion of civility, in which the inhabitants of the earth seek their first refuge from evil, and perhaps, may find at last the most elegant of their pleasures.

But that this pleasure may be truly elegant, science and nature must assist each other; a quick sensibility of Melody and Harmony, is not always originally bestowed, and those who are born with this susceptibility of modulated sounds, are often ignorant of its principles, and must therefore be in a great degree delighted by chance; but when Your Majesty is pleased to be present at Musical Performances, the artists may congratulate themselves upon the attention of a judge in whom all requisites concur; who hears them not merely with instinctive emotion, but with rational approbation, and whose praise of HANDEL is not the effusion of credulity, but the emanation of Science.

How near or how distant the time may be, when the art of combining sounds shall be brought to its highest perfection by the natives of Great Britain, this is not the place to enquire; but the efforts produced in other parts of knowledge by Your Majesty's favour, give hopes that Music may make quick advances now it is recommended by the attention, and dignified by the patronage of our Sovereign.

I am,

With the most profound Humility,

Your MAJESTY'S most dutiful

And devoted Subject and Servant,

CHARLES BURNEY.

## PREFACE.

A PUBLIC and national tribute of gratitude to deceased mortals, whose labours and talents have benefitted, or innocently amused, mankind, has, at all times, been one of the earliest marks of civilization in every country emerged from ignorance and barbarism. And there seems no more rational solution of the mysteries of ancient Greek mythology, than to imagine that men, whose virtue and abilities surpassed the common standard of human excellence, had excited that degree of veneration in posterior times, which gave rise to their deification and apotheosis.

Such a gigantic idea of commemoration as the present, for the completion of which it was necessary that so many minds should be concentrated, must have been long fostering ere it took a practicable form and was matured into reality. But from the conception of this plan to its full growth, there was such a concurrence of favourable circumstances as the records of no art or science can parallel: the Royal Patronage with which it was honoured; the high rank, unanimity, and active zeal of the directors; the leisure, as well as ardour and skill of the conductor; the disinterested docility of individuals, and liberal contributions of the public; all conspired to render this event memorable, and worthy of a place, not only in the annals of music, but of mankind.

And indeed it was hardly possible for a Musical Historian not to imagine that an enterprise honoured with the patronage and presence of their Majesties; planned and personally directed by noblemen and gen-



tlemen of the first rank ; attended by the most numerous and polite audience that was ever assembled on a similar occasion in any country ; among whom, not only the King, Queen, Royal Family, Nobility, and great Officers of State appeared, but the Archbishops, Bishops, and other dignified Clergy, with the heads of the Law, would form an era in Music, as honourable to the art and to national gratitude, as to the great Artist himself who has given occasion to the Festival.

HANDEL, whose genius and abilities have lately been so nobly commemorated, though not a native of England, spent the greatest part of his life in the service of its inhabitants ; improving our taste, delighting us in the church, the theatre, and the chamber ; and introducing among us so many species of musical excellence, that, during more than half a century, while sentiment, not fashion, guided our applause, we neither wanted nor wished for any other standard. He arrived among us at a barbarous period for almost every kind of music, except that of the church. But besides his oratorio choruses, which are so well intitled to immortality, his organ-pieces, and manner of playing, are still such models of perfection as no master in Europe has surpassed ; and his operas were composed in a style so new and excellent, that no Music has since, with all its refinements of melody and symmetry of air, in performance, had such effects on the audience.

Indeed his works were so long the models of perfection in this country, that they may be said to have formed our national taste. For though many in the capital have been partial, of late years, to the compositions of Italy, Germany, and France, yet the nation at large has rather tolerated than adopted these novelties.

The English, a manly, military race, were instantly captivated by the grave, bold, and nervous style of

Handel, which is congenial with their manners and sentiments. And though the productions of men of great genius and abilities have, since his time, had a transient share of attention and favour, yet, whenever any of the works of Handel are revived by a performer of superior talents, they are always heard with a degree of general satisfaction and delight, which other compositions seldom obtain. Indeed, the exquisite manner in which his productions are executed at the concert established for the preservation and performance of old masters, stimulates a desire in all who hear them to have a more general acquaintance with his works. And it was, perhaps, at the late performance in Westminster Abbey, that the compositions of this great master were first supplied with a band, capable of displaying all the wonderful powers of his harmony.

Pope, more than forty years ago, imagining that his band was more numerous than modern times had ever seen or heard before, contented himself with calling him *Centimanus*, where he says,

Strong in new arms, lo! Giant HAXURT stands,  
Like bold Briareus with his hundred hands.

But if our great Bard had survived the late Commemoration, when the productions of Handel employed more than five hundred voices and instruments, he would, perhaps, have lost a pun, a simile, and a *bon mot*, for want of a classical allusion to lean on.

Notwithstanding the frequent complaints that are made of the corruption of Music, of public caprice and private innovation, there is, perhaps, no country in Europe, where the productions of old masters are more effectually preserved from oblivion, than in England: for, amidst the love of novelty, and rapid revolutions of fashion, in common with other countries, our cathedrals continue to perform the services and full anthems of the

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, by Tye, Tallis, Bird, Morley, Gibbons, Humphrey, Blow and Purcell, as well as those produced at the beginning of the present century by Wise, Clarke, Crofts, and others, whose grave and learned compositions have contributed to keep harmony, and the ancient choral style, from corruption and decay. The Crown and Anchor Concert, established in 1710, for the preservation of old masters of every country, has long endeavoured to check innovation; and the annual performances at St. Paul's for the benefit of the Sons of the Clergy; the Madrigal Society, as well as the Catch Club, and Concert of Ancient Music, are all more peculiarly favourable to the works of the illustrious dead, than those of living candidates for fame.

But the most honourable eulogium that can be bestowed on the power of music is, that whenever the human heart is wished to expand in charity and beneficence, its aid is more frequently called in, than that of any other art or advocate; as the delight it affords in exchange for superfluous wealth, is not only the most exquisite which the wit of man can supply, but the most innocent that a well-governed state can allow.

Indeed, Handel's Church Music has been kept alive, and has supported life in thousands, by its performance for charitable purposes;—as at St. Paul's for the Sons of the Clergy; at the Triennial Meetings of the Three Choirs of Worcester, Hereford, and Gloucester; at the two Universities of Oxford and Cambridge; at the Benefit Concerts for Decayed Musicians and their Families; at the Foundling Hospital; at St. Margaret's Church for the Westminster Infirmary; and for Hospitals and Infirmaries in general throughout the kingdom, which have long been indebted to the art of Music, and to Handel's Works in particular, for their support.

This will not only account for the zeal of individualy