

HANDEL: ALEXANDER'S FEAST



**THREE CHOIRS
FESTIVAL 2025**
HEREFORD 26 JUL – 2 AUG

George Frideric Handel
Alexander's Feast 90'

Rowan Pierce *soprano*
Gwilym Bowen *tenor*
Gareth Brynmor John *baritone*
Three Cathedral Choirs
Musical and Amicable Society
Geraint Bowen *conductor*

**Supported by Elizabeth and Simon Allen and an
anonymous donor**

Alexander's Feast PART ONE

1. Overture

2. Recitative

Tenor

'Twas at the royal feast, for Persia won
By Philip's warlike son:
Aloft in awful state
The god-like hero sate
On his imperial throne:
His valiant peers were plac'd around;
Their brows with roses and with myrtles bound.
So should desert in arms be crown'd.
The lovely Thaïs by his side
Sate like a blooming Eastern bride,
In flow'r of youth, and beauty's pride.

3. Air (tenor) and Chorus

Happy, happy, happy pair!
None but the brave,
None but the brave,
None but the brave deserves the fair.

4. Recitative

Tenor

Timotheus plac'd on high,
Amid the tuneful quire,
With flying fingers touch'd the lyre.
The trembling notes ascend the sky,
And heav'nly joys inspire.

Concerto in B flat, Op. 4 No 6 HWV294, first movement (Andante allegro)

5. Accompagnato

Soprano

The song began from Jove,
Who left his blissful seats above;
(Such is the pow'r of mighty love)
A dragon's fiery form bely'd the God;
Sublime, on radiant spires he rode,
When he to fair Olympia press'd,
And while he sought her snowy breast:

Then, round her slender waist he curl'd,
And stamp'd an image of himself, a sov'reign of the world.

6. Chorus

The list'ning crowd admire the lofty sound,
'A present deity!' they shout around;
'A present deity!' the vaulted roofs rebound.

7. Air

Soprano

With ravish'd ears
The monarch hears,
Assumes the God,
Affects to nod,
And seems to shake the spheres.

8. Recitative

Tenor

The praise of Bacchus, then, the sweet musician sung;
Of Bacchus, ever fair, and ever young:
The jolly God in triumph comes;
Sound the trumpets, beat the drums:
Flush'd with a purple grace,
He shows his honest face;
Now give the hautboys breath; he comes, he comes!

9. Air and Chorus

Bass

Bacchus, ever fair and young,
Drinking joys did first ordain;
Bacchus' blessings are a treasure,
Drinking is the soldier's pleasure:
Rich the treasure,
Sweet the pleasure,
Sweet is pleasure after pain.

Chorus

Bacchus' blessings are a treasure,
Drinking is the soldier's pleasure:
Rich the treasure,
Sweet the pleasure,
Sweet is pleasure after pain.

10. Recitative

Tenor

Sooth'd with the sound, the king grew vain;
Fought all his battles o'er again;
And thrice he routed all his foes, and thrice he slew the slain!
The master saw the madness rise,
His glowing cheeks, his ardent eyes;
And while he Heav'n and earth defy'd,
Chang'd his hand, and check'd his pride.

11. Accompagnato

Soprano

He chose a mournful muse,
Soft pity to infuse.

12. Air

Soprano

He sung Darius great and good,
By too severe a fate,
Fall'n from his high estate,
And welt'ring in his blood:
Deserted at his utmost need,
By those his former bounty fed,
On the bare earth expos'd he lies,
Without a friend to close his eyes.

13. Accompagnato

Soprano

With downcast looks the joyless victor sate,
Revolving in his alter'd soul,
The various turns of chance below,
And, now and then, a sigh he stole,
And tears began to flow.

14. Chorus

Behold Darius, great and good,
Fall'n, fall'n, fall'n, fall'n, welt'ring in his blood;
On the bare earth expos'd he lies,
Without a friend to close his eyes.

15. Recitative

Tenor

The mighty master smil'd to see
That love was in the next degree;
'Twas but a kindred sound to move,
For pity melts the mind to love:

16. Arioso

Soprano

Softly sweet, in Lydian measures,
Soon he sooth'd his soul to pleasures.

17. Air

Soprano

War, he sung, is toil and trouble,
Honour but an empty bubble,
Never ending, still beginning,
Fighting still, and still destroying;
If the world be worth thy winning,
Think, oh think it worth enjoying,
Lovely Thaïs sits beside thee,
Take the good the Gods provide thee.
War, he sung, etc.

18a. Chorus

The many rend the skies, with loud applause;
So love was crown'd, but music won the cause.

19. Air

Soprano

The Prince, unable to conceal his pain,
Gaz'd on the fair,
Who caus'd his care;
And sigh'd and look'd, sigh'd and look'd,
Sigh'd and look'd, and sigh'd again:
At length with love and wine at once oppress'd,
The vanquish'd victor sunk upon her breast.
The Prince, etc.



18b. Chorus

The many rend the skies, with loud applause;
So love was crown'd, but music won the cause.

Interval – please remain in your seat until the Royal Party has left the cathedral

PART TWO**20. Accompagnato and Chorus**

Tenor

Now strike the golden lyre again,
A louder yet – and yet a louder strain!
Break his bands of sleep asunder,
And rouse him, like a rattling peal of thunder.
Hark, hark! – the horrid sound
Has rais'd up his head,
As awak'd from the dead,
And amaz'd, he stares around.

Chorus

Break his bands of sleep asunder,
And rouse him, like a rattling peal of thunder.

21. Air

Bass

Revenge, revenge, Timotheus cries,
See the furies arise,
See the snakes that they rear,
How they hiss in their hair,
And the sparkles that flash from their eyes!
Behold a ghastly band,
Each a torch in his hand!
Those are Grecian ghosts, that in battle were slain,
And unbury'd, remain
Inglorious on the plain.
Revenge, etc.

22. Accompagnato

Tenor

Give the vengeance due
To the valiant crew:
Behold how they toss their torches on high,
How they point to the Persian abodes,
And glitt'ring temples of their hostile gods!

23. Air

Tenor

The princes applaud with a furious joy;
And the king seiz'd a flambeau, with zeal to destroy.

24. Air and Chorus

Soprano

Thaïs led the way,
To light him to his prey;
And like another Helen, fir'd another Troy.
The princes applaud with a furious joy;
And the king seiz'd a flambeau, with zeal to destroy.

Chorus

The princes applaud with a furious joy;
And the king seiz'd a flambeau, with zeal to destroy.

25. Accompagnato and Chorus

Tenor

Thus long ago,
Ere heaving bellows learn'd to blow,
While organs yet were mute,
Timotheus to his breathing flute,
And sounding lyre,
Could swell the soul to rage, or kindle soft desire.

Chorus

At last divine Cecilia came,
Inventress of the vocal frame;
The sweet enthusiasts from her sacred store,
Enlarg'd the former narrow bounds,
And added length to solemn sounds,
With Nature's mother-wit, and arts unknown before.

26. Recitative

Tenor

Let old Timotheus yield the prize,

Bass

Or both divide the crown;
He rais'd a mortal to the skies,

Tenor

She drew an angel down.

27. Soli and Chorus

Let old Timotheus yield the prize,
Or both divide the crown;
He rais'd a mortal to the skies,
She drew an angel down.

Additional Chorus

Your voices tune, and raise them high,
Till th'echo from the vaulted sky
The blest Cecilia's name;
Music to Heav'n and her we owe,
The greatest blessing that's below;
Sound loudly then her fame:
Let's imitate her notes above,
And may this evening ever prove
Sacred to harmony and love.

Please remain in your seat until the Royal Party has left the cathedral