

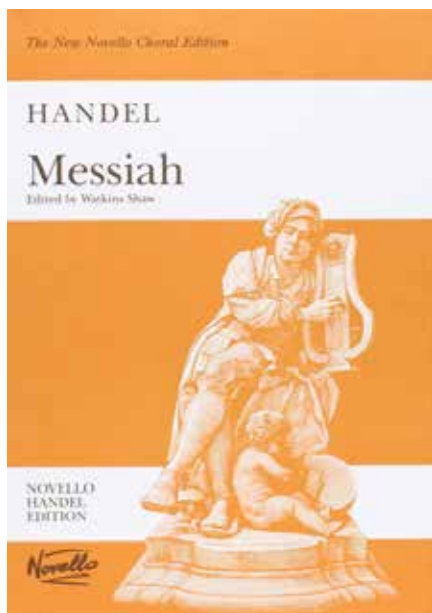
## Book Case

### 'CHORAL WORKS'

#### Professor Pascal McKeown

Whilst absolutely delighted to have been invited by the Editor to prepare this short piece, I was then faced with a challenge: how does one select only 6 pieces? My personal experience has been in singing the great choral masterpieces, most of which were commissioned for church performance, and that has greatly influenced my choice of music. I have tried to rationalise this by choosing a number of different genres. There is some evidence that choral singing has both physical and mental health benefits. Readers may also wish to peruse Daniel Levitin's book 'This is Your Brain on Music' and 'Musicophilia' by Oliver Sacks.

### ORATORIO: HANDEL'S MESSIAH – 'AMEN' CHORUS.



**G.F. Handel: Messiah (Watkins Shaw) Paperback Edition  
Vocal Score: Choral  
Edition 1999. ISBN-13: 978-0853602118.**

Handel's Messiah was first performed in Dublin in 1742 and is now one of the most commonly performed choral works. The opening section of this wonderful oratorio was part of my 'O' level music

core curriculum back in the 1970's. Most people will be familiar with the 'Hallelujah' chorus - indeed, as a sixth former at school, I played the viola in my school's performance of this work. Although there are many wonderful choruses in this piece, I recommend that you listen to the final 'Amen' chorus.

### MASS: JS BACH'S MASS IN B MINOR – 'GLORIA, ET IN TERRA PAX HOMINIBUS BONAE VOLUNTATIS' SECTION.



**Thomaskirche, Leipzig (where Bach worked for many years). Courtesy of Pixabay.**

For many, Bach is considered the greatest ever composer. There is something utterly profound about his music, in that he manages to tap into the whole range of human emotion. Considering how prolific he was in writing so many cantatas and other religious works, it was difficult to choose just one piece. However, this is the piece to which I keep returning!

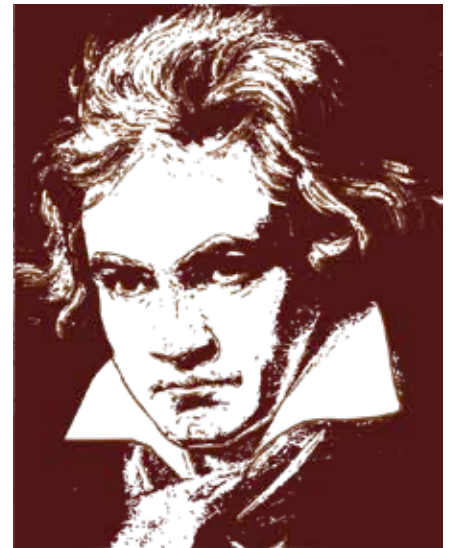
### REQUIEM: MOZART – 'LACRIMOSA DIES ILLA' SECTION



**Statue of Mozart in the eponymous Mozart Square in Salzburg.**

Mozart was a child prodigy but died at the age of 35 in 1791 whilst working on this Requiem. It is thought that Mozart only managed to write the opening bars of this movement and that the whole piece was completed by a contemporary called Süssmayr. This section of the Requiem is so beautifully written and consoling. Many will be familiar with it from having watched the Milos Forman movie 'Amadeus'.

### OPERA: BEETHOVEN'S FIDELIO – PRISONER'S CHORUS



**Beethoven. Courtesy of Pixabay.**

There are composers with many operatic outputs and yet Beethoven only wrote one opera. As with most operas, there is a complex story of love and personal sacrifice. However, in this opera, there is also a very clear message about freedom and justice. Both the music and libretto are wonderfully redemptive. In this particular chorus, the prisoners sing: *O welche Lust, in freier Luft, den Atem leicht zu heben (Oh what joy, in the open air, freely to breathe again).* It's a suitable reflection on current world events!

**SONG: MORTEN LAURIDSEN –  
SURE ON THIS SHINING NIGHT**

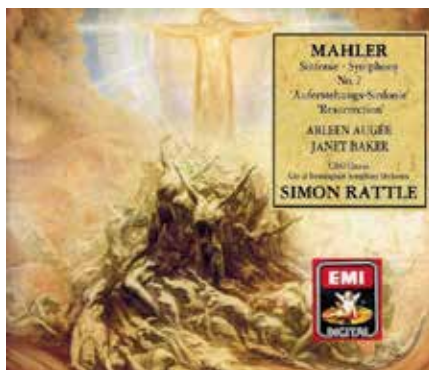


Morten Lauridsen was born in 1943 (<http://www.mortenlauridsen.net/MortenLauridsen.html>). I have only recently become aware of his music and am enthralled by Lauridsen's sympathetic musical interpretation of James Agee's poem (unfortunately, Agee died of a heart attack in 1955 at the age of 45).

*Sure on this shining night  
Of star made shadows round,  
Kindness must watch for me  
This side the ground.*

*The late year lies down the north.  
All is healed, all is health.  
High summer holds the earth.  
Hearts all whole.  
Sure on this shining night I weep for  
wonder wand'ring far alone  
Of shadows on the stars.*

**SYMPHONY: MAHLER NO.  
2 - RESURRECTION (5<sup>TH</sup>  
MOVEMENT - AUFERSTEHUNG).**



**Compact Disc, EMI/Warner Classics**

I had the privilege of singing this piece with the Irish Doctors Choir and the European Doctors Orchestra in the Ulster Hall in November 2017. My introduction to this piece was in 1987 (with the amazing performance by Simon Rattle and the City of Birmingham Chorus and Orchestra) and it has been a firm favourite since then. [If listening to Mahler Symphony No. 2 whets your appetite, do have a listen to the final 10 minutes of Mahler's Symphony No. 8 (the 'Chorus Mysticus - Alles Vergangliche' section onwards), which we sang in Ely Cathedral in July 2018!]

Please note that it is possible to access all these works free of charge online (YouTube) so I do hope that you enjoy listening to these pieces!



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