

## **YET ANOTHER MUSICAL HIGH POINT**

### **Moving performance of Handel's Messiah in the Frauenkirche**

Handel's oratorio "The Messiah" had a liberating effect on its composer, and was a source of comfort in the face of shattered visions of London opera. The public reacted euphorically to the portrait of Christ in sound and is still captivated today by the catchy numbers of this work, which lasts a good two hours. When performed, as at the week-end, by a german-english ensemble in the Dresden Frauenkirche, destroyed in the war, now re-consecrated and completely sold out, it has its own symbolism.

To perform Messiah with small forces using old instruments would not perhaps have been right for the occasion, and the members of the 100-strong Bach choir, at the same time strong-voiced and splendid-toned as they sang the Hallelujah chorus, could not have been accommodated. Accompanying the choir was the brilliant Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra and excellent soloists. David Hill on the conductors' rostrum did not tax the performers with his tempo requirements and gave the performance space. Eva Kirchner (soprano) and in particular the tenor James Gilchrist blossomed out to great effect in their solos. Iestyn Davies (countertenor) was gracefully colourful, the bass Georg Zeppenfeld was convincing with his clear-cut voice and phrasing.

Barely six weeks have passed since the consecration of the church and many of the most shimmering and popular classical highlights, both sacred and profane, have been heard. And now Messiah too. There is still a festival atmosphere, euphoria, now and then more than is good for concerts. It was certainly the Christmas market bustle on the third week-end of Advent which blew restlessness into the building. It will disperse.

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