

Hallelujah from Handel's Messiah: A Soulful Celebration

Hallelujah is the final movement of *Handel's Messiah: A Soulful Celebration*, composed by George Frideric Handel in 1741, and arranged by Mervyn Warren, Michael O. Jackson, and Mark Kibble, with choral arrangement by Teena Chinn – in 1992. The project was produced, conducted and recorded by Quincy Jones.

This report is divided into the following sections (no information could be found on Michael O. Jackson, Mr. Warren's assistant who arranged the vocals):

Lyrics

- I. 3 articles on *Handel's Messiah: A Soulful Celebration*, including the Hallelujah Chorus
- II. Mervyn Warren
- III. Mark Kibble and Take 6
- IV. Teena Chinn
- V. Quincy Jones
- VI. Handel's Messiah, including the Hallelujah Chorus
- VII. George Frideric Handel

Audio Links and Discography

References

Lyrics

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

The kingdom of this world
Is become the kingdom of our Lord,
And of His Christ, and of His Christ;
And He shall reign for ever and ever,
For ever and ever, forever and ever,

King of kings, and Lord of lords,

King of kings, and Lord of lords,
And Lord of lords,
And He shall reign,
And He shall reign forever and ever,
King of kings, forever and ever,
And Lord of lords,
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

And He shall reign forever and ever,
King of kings! and Lord of lords!
And He shall reign forever and ever,
King of kings! and Lord of lords!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!

I. Handel's Messiah: A Soulful Celebration, including the Hallelujah Chorus

Handel's Messiah: A Soulful Celebration was composed by George Frideric Handel (1685-1759), arranged by Mark Kibble, Mervyn Chinn, Michael O. Jackson, Teena Chinn. Quincy Jones' contemporary treatment of Handel's MESSIAH has become a classic in the ten years since its inception. Teena Chinn has captured all the original drive and excitement in her choral setting of the "Hallelujah" Chorus from that work.

The project *Handel's Messiah: A Soulful Celebration*, which appeared in 1992, is ambitiously drawn from a complex of musical, social, and ideological sources. *A Soulful Celebration* essentially sets Handel's composition *Messiah* in the modes of jazz, rhythm and blues, and gospel. Although set in three varied styles, the project was marketed under the label "gospel." Dorsey's axiom is apparently true: it's still the gospel being sung. Thus, the project is grounded in flaunting the juxtaposition of gospel music and Handel's *Messiah*, written at a time when chattel slavery was settling into high gear in the American colonies. On the one hand, gospel music reigns as a powerful sign of ethnicity among African Americans. Faithful Christian believers and nonbelievers alike have long recognized the genre as an important cultural symbol, loaded with both social and eschatological meaning. On the other hand, Handel's *Messiah* has virtually no musical parallel in the history of American concert life. The composition formed an important part in this country's establishment of a "classical" repertory and became an important tool in American "musical evangelism."

From its pastiche "Overture" representing "a partial history of black music" to its finale – a brassy, percussive, techno-funked, piano-slamming rendition of the "**Hallelujah! Chorus**," *A Soulful Celebration* is a postmodern wonder. The duets, airs, small group pieces, choruses, and accompaniments of *A Soulful Celebration* provide a window into the specific traditions of black

gospel composition, arranging, and performance practice. Moreover the theory of “repetition and difference,” an idea taken from black literary studies and recent musical studies, helps to highlight the cultural dialogism standing not only at the heart of this work but in African American music making in general.

I find two aspects of *A Soulful Celebration* compelling. First, this project stands a stellar example of Signifyin(g), a term that originated in black vernacular speech but has been engrafted into the world of literary criticism by the critic Henry Louis Gates, Jr., in his important book *The Signifying Monkey (1988)*.” Music scholars have responded to Gates’ work enthusiastically. Scholars who work on jazz and popular forms, such as David Brackett, Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., Ingrid Monson, and Robert Walser, have contributed persuasive arguments for the value of Gates’ Signifyin(g) theory. Indeed, the notion of Signifyin(g) explains the cultural relevance of *A Soulful Celebration* even before the first downbeat sounds. The other aspect I’ll discuss is how some of the pieces work well as examples of gospel composition and performance practice. I argue that, despite the commercial profile of the project, in form and practice many of these pieces conform to the ideals of gospel music and to the cultural imperatives of what is considered “the core culture” black church.

Matthew Baumer has provided a descriptive history of the *Soulful Celebration* project, heavily based on interviews with Mervyn Warren, one of the co-producers of the work. Conceived with popular and widespread success in mind, the project was ensured of public interest through its corporate backing and performer name recognition. *A Soulful Celebration* was a collaborative recording; that is, many artists from both the secular and sacred worlds contributed as performers, arrangers, and producers. The stellar lineup includes Mervyn Warren and Cedric Dent of the a cappella group Take Six, Stevie Wonder, Quincy Jones, Vanessa Bell Armstrong, Al Jarreau, Tramaine Hawkins, George Duke, Richard Smallwood, Tevin Campbell, Patti Austin, and a host of others.

The project consists of sixteen discrete pieces. According to the liner notes, each is considered an “arrangement” rather than a composition. As Baumer has shown, the new arrangements vary in the degree to which they follow the formal plan of the original work on which each is based. Some, like the “**Hallelujah! Chorus**” Arranged by Mervyn Warren, Michael O. Jackson, and Mark Kibble, adhere to Handel’s basic outline, despite their create re-harmonization. Other pieces, such as George Duke’s arrangement of “Behold, a Virgin Shall Conceive” and Robert Sadin’s “Glory to God,” take considerable liberties with the materials. Both of these practices are typical in the practice of gospel composition, especially among contemporary musicians.

A Soulful Celebration represents one of the latest musical installments of a cultural dialogue begun in the nineteenth-century America. The *Messiah*’s historical role as an important symbol of musical, political, moral, and civil health has been documented in the histories of American music. The composition was a favorite of the Boston Handel and Haydn society, founded in 1815. In its mission statement, the society pronounced its members’ desire that the “science” of music would excite the feelings and exercise the powers “to which it was accustomed in the Old World.” While many of the meanings once generated in this context by the *Messiah* have vanished, others remain intact. Numerous annual Christmas performances of the work are offered by community groups,

churches, and other organizations that seem to inspire the same sense of musical well-being and accomplishment.

And it is important to note here that many African American congregations in particular present the *Messiah* with zeal, enthusiasm, and the same sense of ownership. As cultural historian Bernice Johnson Reagon has noted of a black Methodist congregation in the Eastern Shore region of Maryland:

“Music of all kinds was performed at Tindley temple, and behaviors toward music and worship service were not stratified. The church that sang Handel’s *Messiah* at Christmas and Rossini’s “Inflamatus” on Sunday morning also held Eastern Shore – style, all-night tarrying services and testimonials and expressed a strong belief Holiness. Each member could receive it all in his or her own way, shouting or getting happy or being more quietly stirred.”

A Soulful Celebration, I would argue, presents an interesting twist on all these sentiments. The writers and musicians represented on this project “Signified” on the symbolic American origins of the *Messiah*, and they did so with a cogent “black” difference. The result provides listeners with the feelings and power of the Old World, indeed, but not solely the world that the Handel and Haydn Society longed to emulate. These worlds are both African and European provenance. Of course, as part of African American traditions, black gospel music represents a synthesis and consolidation of sensibilities that can be traced to both Europe and Africa. Thus *A Soulful Celebration* is work of western European origin, appropriated by a nineteenth-century American audience for its own purposes, and then transformed, in this case, by musical techniques and practices that themselves represent an aesthetic complex from both Europe and Africa but that symbolize something quite specific for the audiences that it has reached. Samuel Floyd’s work suggests generally, and I concur about the specific case presented here, that this project represents an extension of the syncretism and synthesis that created African American music itself. Floyd writes:

“From my examination of the syncretic process as it occurred in nineteenth-century America, I conclude that the emerging African-American genres were not formed by the insertion of African performance practices into the formal structures of European music, as the conventional wisdom would have it, but were molded in a process that superimposed European forms on the rich and simmering foundation of African religious beliefs and practices. The foundation of the new syncretized music was African, not European.”

The Bible is the basic lyric source both for Handel's works and for black gospel music. Some of the fast-changing notation of Handel tunes fit great to syncopation, funk beat, and urban dance; at other places, it's sticky. *Handel's Messiah: A Soulful Celebration* starts with an overture, an ode to black musical history that's too fleeting, and is the kind of thing done better on Sounds of Blackness albums. Daryl Coley and Vanessa Bell Armstrong prove to be the album's strongest vocalists, as they build up and cut loose on "Comfort Ye My People"; VBA hasn't sung this well since her days on Onyx Records. Mike E does a sterling rap plus guitar on "Every Valley", making it shimmer with a tough-pop edge.

Dianne Reeves puts a Caribbean feel to "And The Glory Of The Lord". Patti Austin switches back and forth between a jazzy semi-classical sound and a slowly chugging dance groove on "But Who May Abide"; the transition is not seamless, but Austin patches it together in style. Tramaine takes too long to catch fire in "And He Shall Purify", only being soaringly Tramaine-ish in the last minute or so. Howard Hewitt reemerges with "Behold a Virgin Shall Conceive". The aforementioned Sounds of Blackness have a track, too, with an English-to-African version of "For Unto Us", done with their usual seamlessness and senses of fun and awe. Richard Smallwood takes on "Rejoice Greatly" (well, rejoice *somewhat*, at least), and the jazz sultans of smooth the Yellowjackets do an instrumental "Behold the Lamb", with ivory-tickler Richard Ferrante in his best form.

"Lift Up Your Heads" is handled by two vocal groups which in different ways bear the legacy of COGIC gospel matron Mattie Moss Clark, the Commissioned and the Clark Sisters; it gently swings out with a light danceability common on their records. Tevin Campbell sings a tepid "I Know My Redeemer Liveth". "Why Do the Nations So Furiously Rage" goes big band and bebop with a vengeance, but somehow seems too stiff, despite Jarreau on lead vox and Whalum on lead sax.

One highlight is when Stevie Wonder and Take 6 take their mutual fanship into their all-voice "O Thou That Tellest Good Things". The combination of a rough Stevie flying his voice all over the place and a smooth Take 6 acting like the non-leads in a quartet gospel group, as a 'platform' to work off of and a 'home' to bring it back to -- but in a truly Take 6 big-bandish fashion. If this isn't an instant Christmas classic, it sure has me fooled. The next-best is the Boys Choir of Harlem doing "Glory To God" to a hip-hop/house rhythm; The Leaders of the New School add a sharp rap with a keen gospel message.

Handel's *Messiah* ends with the all-time ultimate rouser. Botch it, and those at hand will wag their head in bitter disappointment. Do it great, and you'll be applauded all night long. On this album's "**Hallelujah**", Quincy Jones takes the baton, and Warren associate Michael O. Jackson took vocal arrangement chores. The result is an in-between, good but not great. In this one, everyone's in the mix, including (according to the credits) the late Thomas Whitfield. Such it is with the Dude.

II. Mervyn Warren

Mervyn Warren (born [February 29, 1964](#) in [Huntsville, Alabama](#)) is an American film composer, record producer, lyricist, songwriter, music arranger, pianist and vocalist. A five-time Grammy Award winner, he began his career as a [gospel](#) and [jazz](#) pianist, arranger, and singer, in his hometown [Huntsville, Alabama](#). He formed his first vocal group, The Symbolic Sounds, at the age of 10. The Symbolic Sounds performed both Mervyn's original material, as well as his arrangements of well-known gospel songs.

In 1980 Mervyn became a member of the [a cappella](#) sextet [Take 6](#) which achieved worldwide fame in 1988. He produced or co-produced their first two albums and with them won his first four

[Grammy Awards](#). In 1991 he left Take 6 to become a full-time record producer and film composer.

Already in 1989, when he was still with Take 6, he became a composer and lyricist of songs for film. His first song written specifically for a film was *Don't shoot me*, co-written for the [Spike Lee](#) film *Do The Right Thing*.

He received his fifth Grammy Award in 1992 for producing the album, **Handel's Messiah: A Soulful Celebration**, featuring a literal "who's who" of recording artists. This album was the coming-out party for Mervyn Warren. Warren left Take 6 after their second album, and I'm sure there were a lot of friends wondering, "are you *nuts*, giving up a gig like that to become a *producer*?" His work had been a mixed bag until now. This album's sound was his baby more than anyone's, and with the likes of the Q and Stevie close at hand cheering him on, Warren stepped forward into prime-time. His coordination of this swelter (with Take 6 manager Gail Hamilton) was masterful, and the tracks that were directly in his hands were sharp.

III. Mark Kibble – Take 6

With its roots in gospel, doo wop, and the sophisticated jazz-influenced singing groups of mid-century America like the Hi-Los, the a cappella vocal group Take 6 is both a throwback to an earlier, more genteel era of American music and a precursor for a number of black male pop groups of the '90s (most notably Boyz II Men). Its members include David Thomas, Alvin Chea, Cedric Dent, Mark Kibble, Claude V. McKnight III, and Joey Kibble (who replaced Mervyn Warren). McKnight and **Mark Kibble** caught the a cappella bug at Alabama's Oakwood College in the early '80s, forming a vocal group that solidified into Take 6 when singer/arranger Warren joined up in 1985.

IV. Teena Chinn

Teena Chinn's strength as a stylist has made her well known in the pop choral field. Her abilities as a keyboardist and her music theory background from Indiana University have added to her rapid growth as a pop arranger. She is equally comfortable in pop/show choir or vocal jazz music. From the 20's to the 90's, her choral music is sensitive, strong, and dynamic. Currently Teena is a full-time minister of music at Fenton United Methodist Church in Fenton, Michigan.

V. Quincy Jones

Quincy Delight Jones, Jr., also known as Q was born in Chicago on March 14, 1933 and started playing the trumpet at the age of twelve. As a musician, producer, arranger, composer, entertainer, and entrepreneur extraordinaire, he stands today as one of the most successful and admired artists in the entertainment world.

From meeting and playing with all his jazz heroes including Charles Mingus, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, and Count Basie...through producing his first number one record and working on many albums and film and TV scores, to producing Michael Jackson's record-breaking album *Thriller* which sold 50 million copies, and producing and conducting the charity song "We Are the World," Quincy Jones has had an incredible career.

He is the most nominated Grammy artist, with a total of 76 nominations, has won 26 Grammy Awards (the second highest amount) and several Oscar nominations. During his fifty-year career, he has picked up hundreds of awards and accolades and has worked with many of the major influential musical artists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

"Q" (Quincy Jones) recorded *Handel's Messiah: A Soulful Celebration, (including the Hallelujah Chorus)* a contemporary version of the famous classical work in 1991. Released in 1992, the album featured Patti Austin, Andrae Crouch, Sandra Crouch, Clifton Davis, Charles Dutton, Kim Fields, Edwin Hawkins, Tramaine Hawkins, Linda Hopkins, Al Jarreau, Chaka Khan, Gladys Knight, Johnny Mathis, Marilyn McCoo, Stephanie Mills, Jeffrey Osborne, Phylicia Rashad, Joe Sample, Take 6, Vanessa Williams, Patti LaBelle, Stevie Wonder, and Vanessa Bell Armstrong.

VI. Handel's Messiah, including the Hallelujah Chorus

Messiah (HWV 56) is an [oratorio](#) by [George Frideric Handel](#) based on a [libretto](#) by [Charles Jennens](#). Composed in the summer of 1741 and premiered in Dublin on the [13 April 1742](#), *Messiah* is Handel's most famous creation and is among the most popular works in Western choral literature. The very well-known "[Hallelujah](#)" chorus is part of Handel's *Messiah*.

The most famous movement is the "**Hallelujah**" **chorus**, which concludes the second of the three parts. The text is drawn from three passages in the [New Testament](#) book of [Revelation](#):

And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, *Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.* ([Revelation 19:6](#))

And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.* ([Revelation 11:15](#))

And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, *KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.* ([Revelation 19:16](#))

In many parts of the world, it is the accepted practice for the audience to stand for this section of the performance. Tradition has it that [King George II](#) rose to his feet at this point. As the first

notes of the triumphant Hallelujah Chorus rang out, the king rose. Royal protocol has always demanded that whenever the monarch stands, so does everyone in the monarch's presence. Thus, the entire audience stood too, initiating a tradition that has lasted more than two centuries.

There is a story told (perhaps apocryphally) that Handel's assistant walked in to Handel's room after shouting to him for several minutes with no response. The assistant reportedly found Handel in tears, and when asked what was wrong, Handel held up the score to this movement and said, "I have seen the face of God."

Because this piece is so often heard separately from the rest of *Messiah*, it has become popularly known as "The Hallelujah Chorus", which, like "The Messiah", is not entirely correct usage. "(the *Hallelujah* chorus" or "'Hallelujah' chorus from *Messiah*" is more appropriate.

VII. George Frideric Handel

George Frideric Handel (Friday, 23 February 1685 – Saturday, 14 April 1759) was a German-born [Baroque](#) composer who is famous for his [operas](#), [oratorios](#) and [concerti grossi](#). Born as **Georg Friedrich Händel** (IPA: [ˌgɔ̃ ɦɛ̃ ndəl]) in [Halle](#), he spent most of his adult life in England, becoming a subject of the British crown on 22 January 1727.^[1] His most famous works are [Messiah](#), an oratorio set to texts from the [King James Bible](#); [Water Music](#); and [Music for the Royal Fireworks](#). Strongly influenced by the techniques of the great composers of the Italian Baroque and the English composer [Henry Purcell](#), his music was known to many significant composers who came after him, including [Haydn](#), [Mozart](#), and [Beethoven](#).

Audio Links and Discography

Youtubes

Quincy Jones <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITI3sVYWknE>
Chorus and Orchestra <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=phhqYXTA5dA>

If you subscribe to iTunes, BuyMusic, Rhapsody or a similar service, keyword in “Hallelujah from Handel’s Messiah: A Soulful Celebration” and then you can listen to a sample from each artist.

These recordings can be purchased online:

http://search.sheetmusicplus.com/store/smp_fastresults.html?cart=34325852073061528
<http://shopping.yahoo.com/p:Handel%27s%20Messiah:%20A%20Soulful%20Celebration:1921058571>
http://www.gracenote.com/search/?query=hallelujah%20a%20soulful%20celebration&search_type=track

References:

The above article about the song “Hallelujah from Handel’s Messiah: A Soulful Celebration” was taken from these websites and books. For more information, please read the articles:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hallelujah_Chorus#Hallelujah

<http://www.singers.com/women/successful.html>

<http://www.activemusician.com/item--WB.WBCH9309>

<http://alfred.com/img/authors/chinn.html>

<http://tinyurl.com/42fymp>

http://www.cmt.com/artists/az/take_6/bio.jhtml

<http://www.gospel.it/take6/biography.html>

http://delafont.com/music_acts/take-6.htm

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mervyn_Warren

http://www.quincyjones.com/?page_id=2

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quincy_Jones

<http://www.powerhouseradio.com/cgi-bin/phrbooks/phrbooks.pl?record=13>

http://blog.blackhistorypeople.com/index.php/site/comments/hallelujah_for_quincy_jones_at_75/

<http://users.aol.com/rlongman1/soulfulm.html>

Book: *Race Music, Black Cultures from BeBop to HipHop*, Ramsey & Ramsey