### Listening Guide

**Handel: Messiah, Nos. 1, 14–18, 44**

**DATE OF WORK:** 1742  
**GENRE:** Oratorio, in 3 parts  
**PARTS:**  
I—Christmas section  
II—Easter section  
III—Redemption section

**WHAT TO LISTEN FOR:**  
- Opening orchestral overture, in 2 parts (French style): slow with dotted rhythms, then fast and imitative.  
- Alternation of unaccompanied (free) and accompanied recitative (in time), telling the birth of Christ.  
- Chorus (“Glory to God”), in alternating textures (homorhythmic vs. imitative).  
- Lyrical soprano aria (“Rejoice greatly”), with long melismas on “rejoice”; set in 3-part form (A-B-A), with shortened last section.  
- Famous chorus ("Hallelujah"), set in contrasting textures with interjections of "Hallelujah."

(Shorter recordings include Nos. 18 and 44 only)

#### PART I: CHRISTMAS SECTION

1. **Overture**

   **Form:** French overture, 2 parts (slow-fast), the first part repeated (A-A-B)

   **A section—Grave.** E minor, played twice; stately, dotted rhythms:

   ![Grave](image)

   **B section—Allegro moderato.** E minor, imitative polyphony in 3 voices; opening subject introduced by oboes and first violins:

   ![Allegro moderato](image)

   **TEXT**  
   **DESCRIPTION**

   | 14a. Recitative (secco) | There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. | Sustained chords in harpsichord. |

   | 14b. Recitative (accompagnato) | And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. | String accompaniment, with arpeggiated chords. |
15. Recitative (secco)
And the angel said unto them, fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.
Sustained chords.

16. Recitative (accompagnato)
And suddenly there was with the angels a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying:
Allegro, with rippling string figure.

17. Chorus
Glory to God in the highest
and peace on earth,
good-will toward men.
(All text lines repeated )
4-voices, homorhythmic, with moving string accompaniment. Tenors and basses alone, descending octave leap in basses, homophonic. Imitative, polyphonic treatment: fugue built from lowest to highest voice; antiphonal exchange of “good-will.”
Orchestral closing.

18. Soprano aria (A-B-A’)
Instrumental ritornello, vocal theme presented in violins in Bb major.

A
Rejoice greatly, Disjunct rising line, melismas on “rejoice”; melody exchanged between soprano and violin.

O daughter of Zion, Begins in G minor, slower and lyrical; modulates to Bb major.

behold, thy King cometh unto thee.

A’
Rejoice greatly . . .

Opens in F major.

B
He is the righteous Saviour and he shall speak peace unto the heathen.

Abridged instrumental ritornello: new melodic elaborations; longer melismas on “rejoice.”

Extended melisma on “rejoice” from last section:
PART II: EASTER SECTION

44. Chorus

TEXT

Hallelujah!
For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.
The kingdom of this world
is become the Kingdom of our Lord
and of His Christ;
and He shall reign for ever and ever.
King of Kings
and Lord of Lords.
Hallelujah!

DESCRIPTION

Short instrumental introduction.
4 voices, homorhythmic at opening.
Textural reductions, leading to imitation and overlapping of text, builds in complexity.
imitative entries.
Homorhythmic treatment, simple accompaniment.
Imitative polyphony, voices build from lowest to highest.
Women’s voices introduce the text, punctuated by “Hallelujah”; closes in homorhythmic setting with trumpets and timpani.

Opening of chorus, in homorhythmic style:

Soprano
Alto
Tenor
Bass