

George F. Handel - Gloria, Dixit Dominus (2001)

Written by bluesever

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Gloria, for soprano & orchestra (discovered in 2001): 1. *Gloria in excelsis Deo* 2. *Et in terra pax hominibus bone voluntatis* 3. *Laudamus te, Benedicimus te* 4. *Gratias agimus tibi* 5. *Domine Deus, Rex coelestis* 6. *Qui tollis peccata mundi* 7. *Quoniam tu solus sanctus* 8. *Cum Sancto Spiritu* Emma Kirkby (Soprano)
Royal Academy of Music Baroque Orchestra Laurence Cummings - conductor Dixit Dominus, hymn for soloists, chorus & orchestra in G minor, HWV 232
9. *Dixit Dominus Domino Meo* 10. *Virgam virtutis tuae emittet Dominus Sion* 11. *Tecum principium in die virtutis tuo* 12. *Juravit Dominus, et non poenitebit eum* 13. *Tu es sacerdos* 14. *Dominus a dextris tuis* 15. *De torrente in via bibet* 16. *Gloria Patri et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto*

Magnus Fagerberg (Bass) Hillevi Martinpelto (Soprano) Anne Sofie von Otter (Mezzo Soprano), Margareta Ljunggren (Soprano) Birgitta Boman (Alto) Jörgen Enecker (Tenor) Drottningholm Baroque Ensemble Stockholm Bach Choir Anders Öhrwall – conductor

Handel made the headlines in March 2001, when London's Royal Academy of Music publicized the rediscovery in its own collection--under the musical world's collective nose, as it were--of a previously unknown work by the composer. The Times got so carried away as to call the piece "the new Messiah." Gloria consists of seven movements scored for solo soprano with two violin parts and basso continuo, lasting about 16 minutes, most likely written before the composer was 22 years old. This does not a mighty masterwork make, however pretty the writing or flashy the coloratura. Some of the writing is quite attractive--the jaunty opening movement, the appropriately gentle "Et in terra pax," and the lilting "Gratias agimus" are a few examples. As for the coloratura, each of the fast movements has some; the final movement is full of it--and just listening to Emma Kirkby whiz through those roulades can leave a listener breathless. The Divine Miss Em is in very fine form here, with clear tone, impressive accuracy in leaps and runs, and phrasing as eloquent and musical as any singer's. The Gloria may not be first-rung, or even second-rung, Handel--it lacks a certain spark that even similar works like *Saeviat tellus* and the *Salve Regina* have--but it's hard to imagine anyone else making a better case for it.

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The world premiere recording of the Gloria was made just several weeks before the release date. In order to hit that deadline, BIS filled out the CD with a 1986 recording of Handel's lively setting of the Psalm Dixit Dominus, also written while the young Handel was in Italy. Any recording featuring the young Anne Sofie von Otter is worth hearing, and soprano Hillevi Martinpelto is a worthy colleague. Perhaps the Stockholm Bach Choir sounds a bit woollier than ideal, and some of conductor Anders Öhrwall's tempos are a tad too moderate for this exuberant Roman music. But this Swedish Dixit Dominus is quite creditable, if not as exciting as those by Andrew Parrott and Marc Minkowski. But then, you're probably not buying this CD for the Dixit Dominus. ---Matthew Westphal, amazon.com

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