

## *What is an Oratorio?*

An oratorio is a sacred composition in which the theme is told through song and voice, without actual acting or scenery. Many would say that it has come to mean, through several centuries of usage, a musical work from a particular era, although this work denies that altered definition.

The word probably derives from the original Latin, an "orator" being one who spoke, always in public places, and often in the defence of another, perhaps one accused of behaviour contrary to the "Pax Romana". An orator gradually became a professional vocation as those gifted in speech would be sought out by those in need.

When one speaks of oratoria, many of us immediately think back a couple of hundred years or so to a work such as Handel's "Messiah" and the musical sounds of that era. In this particular work we see a modern up-to-date approach, yet the composition still obeys the "rules" of the classical oratorio. The work has tremendous variations in style, and the range of different moods the listener encounters is just as effective as in a far older work. The message is presented in an understandable way, in a manner acceptable to audiences of a wide age grouping.

## *The Goal of Performances*

The oratorio as an historic musical form originated in the sixteenth century (or perhaps earlier) church service, where the scripture texts were "orated" in song by soloists ("recitative"), with the congregation joining in the chorales. The course of musical history has shifted the oratorio to the concert setting, where it has been performed and appreciated for its own sake, and not for its spiritual significance.

The presentation of this recently inspired work in the concert hall setting, constitutes something of a restoration of the power of the Holy Spirit's voice in music, and a restoration of the role of singers and musicians in announcing this call to the people of God.

While preserving the integrity of the classical concert setting, it is nevertheless sought to present the living presence of Christ through a ministry in song and music that transcends the mere performance.

The presentations of "*The Jerusalem Passion*" aim to bring the inspired and anointed presentation of the gospel message to the concert hall arena. The worship of Christ takes centre stage, the message of salvation is given the bold expression it demands, and the passion of Christ for His people in all ages becomes a life-changing experience.