

The first movement is in D major, on the king's joy in God's power. This is full of festive pomp and fanfares, with a long ritornello of the introduction, using the full force of the choir and orchestra. The second is in A major and gentler, using no trumpets and drums. It is played on a three-time cadence and uses the highest and lowest string sections in a playful conversation, resulting in a triplet. It then enjoys long chains of suspensions on the phrase "thy salvation". The third movement begins with a radiant D major chord by the chorus and is a brief outburst of triumphalism with an extraordinary harmonic surprise, telling of the king's coronation with a crown of pure gold and ending in a B minor fugue. This links it directly to the fourth movement, which is again in three-time but this time counterpointed with a fugue. Handel builds the passion by adding instruments one by one—first the strings, then the oboes and finally the trumpets and drums. The final movement is an exuberant D major double fugue (a fugue with two melodies simultaneously played against each other right from the start), ending in a closing 'Alleluia' that was to be played at the precise moment the king was crowned.

My Heart is Inditing (HWV 261) is thought to have been composed between 9 September 1727 and 11 October 1727.

This piece sets a text developed by Henry Purcell for the 1685 coronation, consisting of a shortened adaptation of verses from Psalm 45 (verses 1, 10, 12) and Book of Isaiah (chapter 49, verse 23). In 1727, it was sung at the end of the coronation of queen Caroline, with adaptations by Handel to make its words more appropriate for a queen. The music is in four sections and characterised by a more refined and distinguished air than the other anthems.

The overture to its first movement is not a flamboyant trumpet fanfare but a three-time andante. The first section is in D major, begun by the soloists (originally 2 singers from each group to balance against the full breadth of the orchestra) before alternating between soloists and full choir. The second section is in A major and is also an elegant andante and sets up a charming base line which is taken up by the orchestra, and the melody begins with a long note followed by a casual dotted rhythm pointing out the words "King's daughters". The third movement in E major is yet again an andante, keeping up the graceful and feminine air until the joyous dotted rhythm reappears on the words "and the King shall have pleasure". Handel then keeps up the allegro until the end and the orchestra begins the final movement in D major (after Isa. 49.23) with a virtuoso ritornello before the choirs enter with all the solemn ceremonial pomp of the other anthems. Handel kept the trumpets back in reserve throughout the piece right until the end, where they add another triumphal dimension to the finale.



G. F. Handel

CORONATION ANTHEMS

ZADOK THE PRIEST
MY HEART IS INDITING
LET THY HAND BE STRENGTHENED
THE KING SHALL REJOICE

*Choir Of King's College,
Cambridge
English Chamber Orchestra*

Thurston Dart

David Willcocks

Many composers have written coronation anthems. However the best known were composed by George Frideric Handel. Handel's four coronation anthems use text from the King James Bible and were designed to be played at the coronation of the British monarch. They are Zadok the Priest, Let Thy Hand Be Strengthened, The King Shall Rejoice, and My Heart Is Inditing. Each was originally a separate work but they were later published together.

Although part of the traditional content of British coronations, the texts for all four anthems were picked by Handel—a personal selection from the most accessible account of an earlier coronation, that of James II of England in 1685. One of George I of Great Britain's last acts before his death in 1727 was to sign an "Act of naturalisation of George Frideric Händel and others". Handel's first commission as a newly naturalised British subject was to write the music for the coronation of George II of Great Britain and Queen Caroline which took place on 11 October the same year. Within the coronation ceremonies Let thy hand be strengthened was played first, then Zadok, then The King shall rejoice, and finally My heart is inditing at the coronation of the Queen. (In modern coronations the order is Zadok, Let thy hand be strengthened, The King shall rejoice and My heart is inditing, with the order of Let thy hand be strengthened and The King shall rejoice sometimes reversed.)

Right from their composition the four anthems have been popular and regularly played in concerts and festivals even during Handel's own lifetime. He re-used substantial extracts from them in many of his oratorios without many changes (other than to the text), notably Esther and Deborah. Two of the anthems were played at the 1742 inauguration of the Holywell Music Room in Oxford, a hall dedicated to chamber music. Their success perhaps contributed to the popular image of Handel as a composer whose music required a huge number of singers and musicians (the more the better)—in other words, the character criticised by Berlioz as "a barrel of pork and beer". In practice, Handel often adapted his music to the occasion and to the skill of those for whom he was writing, and no occasion could be grander than a coronation. The ceremonial style of the anthems differs from his music for the theatre just as his Music for the Royal Fireworks (the latter designed for open-air performance) differs from his instrumental concertos. The anthems show a completely extrovert tone, managing massed forces and important contrasts rather than delicate colours—with the wide spatial reverberation in Westminster Abbey, he did not waste time and effort trying to show small points of detail.

The means he had at his disposal were the most important of the era—the choir of the Chapel Royal was augmented by 47 singers, with an orchestra which reached perhaps 160 people. The chorus was divided into 6 or 7 groups (with the tenors kept together) and a large string section, made up of three groups of violins (rather than the two which were

usual).

Zadok the Priest (HWV 258) is thought to have been composed between 9 September and 11 October 1727.

The text of Zadok the Priest is derived from the biblical account of the anointing of Solomon by Zadok and Nathan and the people's rejoicing at this event. These words have been used in every English coronation since that of King Edgar at Bath Abbey in 973, and Handel's setting has been used at every British coronation since 1727. It is traditionally performed during the sovereign's anointing and its text is after 1 Kings (1:38–40). Its duration is just over five minutes. It is written in D major for: two sopranos, two altos, tenor, two basses, choir, and orchestra (two oboes, two bassoons, three trumpets, timpani, strings, and continuo). The music prepares a surprise in its orchestral introduction via the use of static layering of soft string textures, followed by a sudden rousing forte tutti entrance, augmented by three trumpets.

The middle section "And all the people rejoic'd, and said" is an imitative dance in 3/4 time, mainly with the choir singing in a homophonic texture and a dotted rhythm in the strings.

The final section "God save the King, ..." is a return to common time (4/4), with the "God save the King" section in homophony, interspersed with the "Amens" incorporating long semiquaver runs which are taken in turn through the six voice parts (SAATBB) with the other parts singing quaver chords accompanying it. The chorus ends with a largo plagal cadence on "Allelujah".

Let Thy Hand Be Strengthened (HWV 259) is thought to have been composed between 9 September 1727 and 11 October 1727.

The text of the second hymn is from Psalm 89 (verses 13–14). It is divided into three parts: a cheerful light beginning in G major, a melancholy, slow middle section in E minor and a closing Alleluia part again in G major.

The King Shall Rejoice (HWV 260) is thought to have been composed between 9 September 1727 and 11 October 1727.

Taking a text from Psalm 21 (verses 1–3, 5), Handel splits this work into separate sections.

Handel Coronation Anthems

Directed by David Willcocks

The Choir Of King's College, Cambridge

English Chamber Orchestra

- 1 Zaddok The Priest 5:55
 - 2 My Heart Is Inditing 12:45
 - 3 Let Thy Hand Be Strengthened 9:25
 - 4 The King Shall Rejoice 12:05
- Total Time: 40:10

Recorded by Argo (Decca)

Producer: Andrew Raeburn Engineer: Gordon Parry

Recorded 30 July - 1 Aug 1963 King's College, Cambridge



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