

 THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY CHORAL SOCIETY

presents

# ELIJAH

An Oratorio by Felix Mendelssohn



Friday, April 24, 1992 - 8:00 pm  
Lehman Auditorium  
Eastern Mennonite College



# THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY CHORAL SOCIETY

presents

## Mendelssohn's ELIJAH

Gretchen W. Welch, Conductor  
John W. Fast, Organ

Featuring  
**William Riley** as ELIJAH

with

**Kathryn Gardner** - Soprano, The Angel, The Youth  
**Susan Gutshall** - Mezzo-soprano, The Queen, The Angel  
**John Bellemer** - Tenor, Obadiah, Ahab  
**Ned Van Dyck** - Bass

### Program Notes

Completed in 1846, ELIJAH was Mendelssohn's last great work. It was first performed in August of 1846 at the Birmingham Music Festival and was a fantastic success. "No other work of mine ever went so admirably at the first performance," Mendelssohn wrote that evening, "or was received with such enthusiasm by both musicians and public."

The work tells the very dramatic story of Elijah, a prophet of the 9th century, B.C., during the reign of Ahab in Israel. He fought against the worship of Baal and the unjust actions of the king. He caused a great drought to come upon the land to punish the people for their false worship. He demonstrated the power of the true God by calling on him to light a fire under an altar and consume the offering upon it. He then brought the water back to the land. The Queen, fearing the prophet, ordered the people to slaughter him. Elijah fled, and pleaded with the Lord to help him. The Lord sent him to Mt. Horeb where he took Elijah away amidst a whirlwind in a fiery horse and chariot.

— K.N.

Special thanks to :

**Harrisonburg Church of the Brethren** for rehearsal facilities;  
**Shenandoah Productions** for posters and programs.

# ELIJAH

## PART I

### Introduction - ELIJAH

As God the Lord of Israel liveth,  
before whom I stand:  
there shall not be dew nor rain these years,  
but according to my word.

### Overture

### Chorus - THE PEOPLE

Help, Lord! Help, Lord! Help, Lord!  
Wilt Thou quite destroy us?  
The harvest now is over, the summer days are  
gone,  
and yet no power cometh to help us!  
Will then the Lord be no more God in Zion?

### Recitative

The deep affords no water!  
And the rivers are exhausted!  
The suckling's tongue now cleaveth for thirst  
to his mouth! The infant children ask for  
bread!  
And there is no one breaketh it to feed them!

### Duet with Chorus - THE PEOPLE

Lord, bow Thine ear to our prayer!

### TWO WOMEN

Zion spreadeth her hands for aid,  
and there is neither help nor comfort.

### Recitative - OBADIAH

Ye people, rend your hearts and not your  
garments  
for your transgressions: even as Elijah hath  
sealed  
the heavens through the word of God!  
I therefore say to ye:  
Forsake your idols, return to God;  
for He is slow to anger, and merciful, and  
kind,  
and gracious, and repenteth Him of the evil.

### Aria - OBADIAH

"If with all your hearts ye truly seek me,

ye shall ever surely find me."  
Thus saith our God.  
Oh! that I knew where I might find Him,  
that I might even come before His presence!

### Chorus - THE PEOPLE

Yet doth the Lord see it not,  
He mocketh at us!  
His curse hath fallen down upon us.  
His wrath will pursue us till he destroy us.  
For He is the Lord our God,  
He is a jealous God,  
and He visiteth all the fathers' sins  
on the children to the third and the fourth  
generation  
of them that hate Him.  
His mercies on thousands fall on all them  
that love Him and keep His commandments.

### Recitative with Chorus

#### ELIJAH

As God the Lord of Sabaoth liveth, before  
whom I stand,  
three years this day fulfilled,  
I will shew myself unto Ahab; and the Lord  
will then send rain again upon the earth.

#### AHAB

Art thou Elijah! Art thou he that troubleth  
Israel?

#### THE PEOPLE

Thou art Elijah, thou he that troubleth Israel!

#### ELIJAH

I never troubled Israel's peace:  
it is thou, Ahab,  
and all thy father's house.  
Ye have forsaken God's commands,  
and thou hast follow'd Baalim.  
Now send, and gather to me  
the whole of Israel  
unto Mount Carmel;  
There summon the prophets of Baal,  
and also the prophets of the groves  
who are feasted at Jezebel's table.  
Then we shall see whose God is the Lord.

#### THE PEOPLE

And then we shall see whose God is the Lord.

## **ELIJAH**

Rise then, ye priests of Baal;  
select and slay a bullock, and put no fire  
under it;  
uplift your voices and call the God ye  
worship;  
and I then will call on the Lord Jehovah:  
and the God who by fire shall answer, let him  
be God.

## **THE PEOPLE**

Yea, and the God who by fire shall answer,  
let him be God.

## **ELIJAH**

Call first upon your God, your numbers are  
many,  
I, even I only remain  
one prophet of the Lord.  
Invoke your forest gods, and mountain  
deities!

## **Chorus - PROPHETS OF BAAL**

Baal, we cry to thee,  
hear and answer us!  
Heed the sacrifice we offer!  
Let thy flames fall and devour the foel

## **Recitative and Chorus**

### **ELIJAH**

Call him louder, for he is a God!  
He talketh; or he is pursuing, or he is in a  
journey;  
or, peradventure, he sleepeth: so awaken  
him!  
Call him louder, call him louder!

## **PROPHETS OF BAAL**

Hear our cry, O Baal, now arise!  
Wherefore slumber?

## **Recitative and Chorus**

### **ELIJAH**

Call him louder! He heareth not.  
With knives and lancets cut yourselves  
after your manner.  
Leap upon the altar ye have made,  
call him and prophesy!  
Not a voice will answer you;  
none will listen, none heed you.

## **PROPHETS OF BAAL**

Baal! Baal! Hear and answer, Baal!  
Mark how the scorner derideth us!

## **ELIJAH**

Draw near, all ye people, come to me!

## **Aria - ELIJAH**

Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel,  
this day let it be known that Thou art God,  
and I am thy servant!  
Lord God of Abraham!  
Oh shew to all this people that I have done  
these things according to Thy word.  
O hear me, Lord, and answer me!  
Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel,  
oh hear me and answer me,  
and shew this people that Thou art Lord God.  
And let their hearts again be turned!

## **Chorus**

Cast thy burden upon the Lord,  
and He shall sustain thee.  
He never will suffer the righteous to fall:  
He is at thy right hand.  
Thy mercy, Lord, is great, and far above the  
heav'ns.  
Let none be made ashamed, that wait upon  
Thee!

## **Recitative with Chorus**

### **ELIJAH**

O Thou, who makest Thine angels spirits;  
Thou, whose ministers are flaming fires:  
let them now descend!

## **THE PEOPLE**

The fire descends from heav'n!  
The flames consume his off'ring!  
Before Him upon your faces fall!  
The Lord is God!  
Oh Israel hear! Our God is one Lord,  
and we will have no other gods before the  
Lord.

## **ELIJAH**

Take all the prophets of Baal,  
and let not one of them escape you.  
Bring them down to Kishon's brook,  
and there let them be slain.

## THE PEOPLE

Take all the prophets of Baal, and let not one of them escape us: bring all and slay them!

### Aria - ELIJAH

Is not His word like a fire,  
and like a hammer that breaketh the rock  
into pieces?  
For God is angry with the wicked ev'ry day,  
And if the wicked turn not, the Lord will whet  
His sword; and He hath bent His bow, and  
made it ready.

### Arioso

Woe, woe unto them who forsake Him!  
Destruction shall fall upon them,  
for they have transgressed against Him.  
Though they are by Him redeemed,  
yet they have spoken falsely against Him.  
Though they are by Him redeemed,  
even from Him they have fled.  
Woe unto them! Woe unto them!

## Recitative with Chorus

### OBADIAH

O man of God, help thy people!  
Among the idols of the Gentiles,  
are there any that can command the rain,  
or cause the heav'ns to give their showers?  
The Lord, our God, alone can do these things.

### ELIJAH

O Lord, Thou hast overthrown Thine enemies  
and destroy'd them.  
Look down on us from heaven, O Lord;  
regard the distress of Thy people.  
Open the heavens and send us relief.  
Help, help Thy servant now, O God!

## THE PEOPLE

Open the heavens and send us relief.  
Help, help Thy servant now, O God!

### ELIJAH

Go up now child, and look toward the sea.  
Hath my prayer been heard by the Lord?

## THE YOUTH

There is nothing. The heav'ns are  
as brass above me.

## ELIJAH

When the heavens are closed up,  
because they have sinned against Thee;  
yet if they pray and confess Thy name,  
and turn from their sin, when Thou didst afflict  
them:  
then hear from heav'n, and forgive the sin.  
Help, send Thy servant, help, O God!

## THE PEOPLE

Then hear from heav'n, and forgive the sin.  
Help, send Thy servant, help, O God!

## ELIJAH

Go up again, and still look towards the sea.

## THE YOUTH

There is nothing. The earth is as iron under me.

## ELIJAH

Hearst thou no sound of rain?  
Seest thou nothing arise from the deep?

## THE YOUTH

No: there is nothing.

## ELIJAH

Have respect to the pray'r of Thy servant,  
O Lord, O Lord, my God!  
Unto Thee will I cry, Lord, my rock,  
be not silent to me!  
And Thy great mercies remember, Lord.

## THE YOUTH

Behold, a little cloud ariseth now from  
the waters: it is like a man's hand!  
The heavens are black with cloud and with  
wind;  
the storm rusheth louder and louder!

## THE PEOPLE

Thanks be to God for all His mercies.

## ELIJAH

Thanks be to God! For He is gracious;  
and His mercy endureth for ever!

## **Chorus - THE PEOPLE**

Thanks be to God! He reviveth the thirsty land.

The waters gather, they rush along,  
they are lifting their voices.

The stormy billows are high, their fury is mighty.

But the Lord is above them and almighty.

## **PART II**

### **Aria**

Hear ye, Israel, hear what the Lord speaketh:

"Oh, hadst thou heeded my commandments!"

Who hath believed our report:

to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

### **Recitative**

Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel,  
and his Holy One to him  
oppressed by tyrants,  
thus saith the Lord:

### **Aria**

"I am He that comforteth.

Be not afraid, for I am thy God!

I will strengthen thee!

Say, who art thou, that thou art afraid  
of a man that shall die; and forgettest the  
Lord,

thy Maker, who hath stretched forth the  
heavens,

and laid the earth's foundations?

Say, who art thou?"

### **Chorus**

Be not afraid, saith God the Lord,  
be not afraid, thy help is near!

### **Recitative with Chorus**

#### **ELIJAH**

The Lord hath exalted thee from among the  
people:

and o'er his people Israel hath made thee  
king.

But thou, Ahab, hast done evil to provoke him  
to anger above all that were before thee  
as if it had been a light thing for thee  
to walk in the sins of Jeroboam.

Thou hast made a grove and an altar to Baal,

and serv'd him and worshipp'd him.

Thou hast killed the righteous, and also taken  
possession. And the Lord shall smite all Israel,  
as a reed is shaken in the water. And He shall  
give Israel up, and thou shalt know He is the  
Lord.

### **THE QUEEN**

Have ye not heard he hath prophesied  
against all Israel?

### **THE PEOPLE**

We heard it with our ears.

### **THE QUEEN**

Hath he not prophesied also against the king  
of Israel?

### **THE PEOPLE**

We heard it with our ears.

### **THE QUEEN**

And why hath he spoken in the name of the  
Lord?

Doth Ahab govern the kingdom of Israel,  
while Elijah's pow'r is greater than the king's?  
The gods do so to me, and more,  
if, by tomorrow about this time, I make not  
his life as the life of one of them  
whom he hath sacrific'd at the brook of  
Kishon.

### **THE PEOPLE**

He shall perish!

### **THE QUEEN**

Hath he not destroyed Baal's prophets?

### **THE PEOPLE**

He shall perish!

### **THE QUEEN**

Yea, by the sword he destroy'd them all!

### **THE PEOPLE**

He destroy'd them all!

### **THE QUEEN**

He also closed the heavens!

## THE PEOPLE

He also closed the heavens!

## THE QUEEN

And called down a famine upon the land.

## THE PEOPLE

And called down a famine upon the land.

## THE QUEEN

So go ye forth, and seize Elijah,  
for he is worthy to die.  
Slaughter him, do unto him as he hath done!

## Chorus - THE PEOPLE

Woe to him! He shall perish!  
He closed the heavens,  
And why hath he spoken in the name of the  
Lord?  
Let the guilty prophet perish!  
He hath spoken falsely against our land and  
us,  
as we have heard with our ears.  
So go ye forth: take ye him! he shall die!

## Recitative - OBADIAH

Man of God,  
now let my words be precious in thy sight.  
Thus saith Jezebel: "Elijah is worthy to die."  
So the mighty gather against thee,  
and they have prepared a net for thy steps:  
that they may seize thee, and slay thee.  
Arise then, and hasten for thy life:  
to the wilderness journey.  
The Lord, thy God doth go with thee:  
He will not fail thee, not forsake thee.  
Now begone and bless me also!

## ELIJAH

Though stricken, they have not grieved!  
Tarry here my servant: the Lord be with thee.  
I journey hence to the wilderness.

## Aria - ELIJAH

It is enough! O Lord, now take away my life,  
for I am not better than my fathers!  
I desire to live no longer:  
now let me die,  
for my days are but vanity.  
I have been very jealous

for the Lord God of Hosts,  
for the children of Israel  
have broken Thy covenant,  
and thrown down Thine altars,  
and slain all Thy prophets with the sword.  
And I, even I only am left:  
and they seek my life to take it away!  
Now let me die, Lord,  
take away my life!

## Recitative

See, now he sleepeth beneath a juniper tree  
in the wilderness: and there the angels of the  
Lord  
encamp round about all them that fear Him.

## Trio - THREE ANGELS

Lift thine eyes to the mountains, whence  
cometh help.  
Thy help cometh from the Lord,  
the Maker of heaven and earth.  
He hath said, thy foot shall not be moved,  
thy Keeper will never slumber.

## Chorus

He, watching over Israel, slumbers not, nor  
sleeps.  
Shouldst thou, walking in grief, languish.  
He will quicken thee.

## Recitative - AN ANGEL

Arise, Elijah, for thou hast a long journey  
before thee. Forty days and forty nights  
shalt thou go, to Horeb, the mount of God.

## ELIJAH

O Lord, I have labour'd in vain!  
Yea, I have spent my strength for naught,  
and in vain! Oh that Thou wouldst rend  
the heavens, that Thou wouldst come down!  
That the mountains would flow down  
at Thy presence, to make Thy Name known  
to Thine adversaries,  
through the wonders of Thy works!  
O Lord, why hast Thou made us to err  
from Thy ways? And hardened our hearts,  
that they do not fear Thee?  
Oh that I now might die!

## **Aria - AN ANGEL**

Oh rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him,  
and He shall give thee thy heart's desires.  
Commit way unto Him, and trust in Him,  
and fret not thyself because of evil-doers.

## **Chorus**

He that shall endure to the end, shall be saved.

## **Recitative - ELIJAH**

Night falleth round me, O Lord!  
Be Thou not far from me! Hide not Thy face,  
O Lord, from me; my soul is thirsting for Thee,  
as a thirsty land.

## **THE ANGEL**

Arise now, get thee without,  
stand on the mount before the Lord:  
for there His glory will appear, and shine on thee!  
Thy face must be veiled, for He draweth near.

## **Chorus**

Behold, God the Lord passed by! And a mighty wind  
rent the mountains around, brake in pieces  
the rocks, brake them before the Lord.  
But yet the Lord was not in the tempest.  
Behold, God the Lord passed by!  
And the sea was upheaved, and the earth  
was shaken.  
But yet the Lord was not in the earthquake.  
And after the earthquake there came a fire.  
But yet the Lord was not in the fire.  
And after the fire there came a still small  
voice.  
And in that still voice onward came the Lord.

## **Recitative - ELIJAH**

I go on my way in the strength of the Lord.  
For Thou art my Lord: and I will suffer for thy sake.  
My heart is therefore glad, my glory  
rejoiceth,  
and my flesh shall also rest in hope.

## **Arioso - ELIJAH**

For the mountains shall depart, and the hills  
be removed; but Thy kindness shall not  
depart  
from me, neither shall the covenant  
of Thy peace be removed.

## **Chorus**

Then did Elijah the prophet break forth like  
a fire; his words appeared like burning  
torches.  
Mighty kings by him were overthrown.  
He stood on the mount of Sinai and heard the  
judgements of the future, and in Horeb its  
vengeance.  
And when the Lord would take him away to  
heaven,  
lo! there came a fiery chariot with fiery  
horses,  
and he went by a whirlwind to heaven.

## **Aria**

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun  
in their heav'nly Father's realm  
Joy on their head shall be for ever lasting,  
and all sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

## **Quartet**

Oh come ev'ryone that thirsteth,  
oh come to the waters, oh come unto Him!  
Oh hear, and your souls shall live for ever.

## **Final Chorus**

And then shall your light break forth  
as the light of morning breaketh;  
and your health shall speedily spring forth  
then:  
and the glory of the Lord ever shall reward  
you.  
Lord our Creator,  
how excellent Thy Name is in all the nations!  
Thou fillest heav'n with Thy glory.  
Amen.

