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**“Their Sound is gone out into all Lands”: period-instrument recordings of *Messiah*, 1980–2020**

Since the first commercial recordings of *Messiah* played on period instruments were released in 1980, the classical music industry has continued to issue new historically-informed performances (‘HIP’) at a steady pace throughout the intervening forty years; there are now over fifty different accounts of Handel’s oratorio played on historical instruments. As one expects, British ensembles, and to a lesser extent North Americans, dominate the discography – but noteworthy interpretations have proliferated by Austrian, Czech, Dutch, French, German, Japanese, Norwegian, Spanish, Swedish and Swiss groups. Indeed, there has not been a recording of the oratorio by a British period-instrument orchestra since 2009, although nearly twenty made elsewhere have been issued since then. Modern ‘HIP’ *Messiah* recordings have become unambiguously international.

My examination of the large discography shall yield a critical understanding of diverse approaches to ideas about performance practices and research-informed artistic ideas. The paper will appraise varying levels of consideration that performers pay to the composer’s intentions and expectations, and assess their divergent attitudes to Handel’s authentic performing versions of the score (some recordings aim to reconstruct a specific version, and others prefer to pick and mix). I shall explain how period-instrument recordings of *Messiah* chart the development, reactiveness, and consolidation of the modern ‘early music’ industry. Performers’ artistic priorities and choices from 1980 until 2020 will be assessed. Contrary to the epigram on the title-page of the oratorio’s original wordbook, historically-informed ways of performing *Messiah* are not “without Controversy”.