



THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
CHAMBER SINGERS PRESENT

MENDELSSOHN IN THE WILDERNESS

SUNDAY, MARCH 23
5:00PM

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH SPARTANBURG

PROGRAM

The Lord is my Shepherd
Lillie Kimbrell, soloist

Howard Goodall (b. 1958)

Hear my Prayer
Sarye Glenn, soloist

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

SELECTIONS FROM *Elijah*

Felix Mendelssohn

Overture

Help, Lord!

Lord, Bow Thine Ear to our Prayer
Kay Maddox, soprano; Mary Dixon, alto

If With All Your Hearts
Reel Robertson, tenor

For He Shall Give His Angels Charge
Kellie Pifer, Diane O'Connell, Tweetie Bowman, Lisa Cunningham,
Maddox Cox, Landon Hammett, Lonnie Myers, Lee Hagglund

What Have I to Do With Thee?
Valerie MacPhail, soprano; Paul MacPhail, baritone

Blessed are the Ones Who Fear Him

It is Enough
Paul MacPhail

Lift Thine Eyes

He, Watching Over Israel

Arise, Elijah
Lisa Cunningham, alto; Paul MacPhail

O Rest in the Lord
Lisa Cunningham

He That Shall Endure to the End

And Then Shall Your Light Shine

IN THE WILDERNESS

In the Bible, a lot happens in the wilderness! It is a place of trial (all those years for the Israelites following their deliverance from Egypt), a place of exile (the story of Hagar in Genesis 16), but at times also a place for rest and renewal (Luke 5:16). Our concert highlights these themes, leaning heavily on music from the great Romantic era composer Felix Mendelssohn.

We open with perhaps the best-known passage in all scripture, Psalm 23, which places us squarely “in the valley of the shadow of death.” This winsome setting by Howard Goodall also serves as the theme for the popular BBC television series “The Vicar of Dibley.”

In *Hear My Prayer* the wilderness is seen as a refuge. It is a setting of Psalm 55:1-7, which is attributed to King David. The music is continuous but has three distinct sections. It begins with a lyrical prayer for God's ear to be inclined towards the writer, who we learn in the second tumultuous section is under siege from the wicked. In the concluding portion the psalmist longs “for the wings of a dove” to be able to flee to the wilderness, build a nest and live there under God and far from trouble.

In Mendelssohn's epic oratorio *Elijah*, the prophet's relationship with the wilderness is...complicated. Depending on where we are in the story it is a place of triumph, a place of healing, a place of hiding, a place of desolation...and more besides. In its entirety the piece is nearly two and a half hours long; this evening we're offering two sections that together run about 45 minutes.

In the first section we learn from the chorus that there is a drought and a famine has fallen upon the land and Elijah has told the people it is because of their unfaithfulness. A soloist implores them to turn their hearts back to God. The chorus laments God's wrath but acknowledges grace and mercy for those who keep God's commandments. An angel sends Elijah away from the people to the wilderness, first to a stream, and then to a widow for food and water. Upon meeting the widow, Elijah discovers that her son has a sickness unto death. She asks what sin she has committed that this should befall him. Elijah takes the boy and prays. He is healed. The section ends with the chorus extolling the blessings that come upon they who fear God.

In the second section, we find Elijah in a different wilderness, alone and bereft. He prays for God to take his life. Angels exhort him to lift his eyes to the mountains, from whence cometh his help, and the chorus joins in, reminding him that God neither slumbers nor sleeps but watches over him and all Israel. An angel again urges him to rise, but he is still distraught and continues to long for death. The angels persist, telling him to “rest in the Lord,” and “wait patiently for Him.” The chorus joins in, urging Elijah to endure to the end. We then skip to the conclusion of the work, a rousing chorus of praise to God who has, just as promised, made all things new.

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHAMBER SINGERS

HOLT ANDREWS, DIRECTOR

MARCIA ANDREWS, ACCOMPANIST

SOPRANO

Martha Bean

Debra Brock

Patricia Foy

Pattyann Hevener

Debbie Keiser

Debbie Kocisko

Kay Maddox

Diane O'Connell

Kellie Pifer

Ginger Shuler

Mary Lorick Thompson

ALTO

Tweetie Bowman

Janet Cann

Lisa Cunningham

Mary Dixon

LeAnne Holcombe

March Moody

Juli Robertson

Gloria Underwood

TENOR

Maddox Cox

Landon Hammett

Max Lefebvre

John Moody

Reel Robertson

BASS

Lu Diehl

Lee Hagglund

Craig Kocisko

Kevin Marsh

Lonnie Myers

ORCHESTRA

VIOLIN I

Mary Irwin, concertmaster

Benji Larrieau

Libby Miller

Ann Buttimer

VIOLIN II

Stacy Wiley

Allison Key

Tina Pulley

Cortney Dial

VIOLA

Zoe Harbison

Michael Weaver

CELLO

Katherine Foster

Ben Smith

BASS

John Kvasnicka

FLUTE

Kristen Gill

OBOE

Gary Stroupe

CLARINET

Karen Hill

BASSOON

Manuel Roncero

HORN

Darien Washington

TRUMPET

Matthew Gill

TROMBONE

Jeff Kuntz

TIMPANI

Patrick Lowery