

Handel - Israel in Babylon (Fontaine) [2005]

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Cast: Julia Gooding - soprano (Pharez). Sabine von Blohn - soprano (Israelite I). Jonathan Peter Kenny - countertenor (Israelite II). Joseph Cornwell - tenor (Zorobabel). Adolph Seidel - bas (Darius). Ekkehard Abele - bas (Salathiel). Kantorei Saarlouis Ensemble UnaVolta Joachim Fontaine - conductor

Handel wrote no such work as Israel in Babylon, and this what is known as a pasticcio - a piece assembled from pre-existing material, either by the original composer or by other hands. Handel prepared several pasticcios of his own, though Israel in Babylon was put together after his death by one Edward Toms to a ramshackle anonymous libretto based on the biblical book of Ezra. Serse's famous Ombra Mai Fu also turns up, on its way to becoming "Handel's Largo".

The performance is fantastic, with thrilling choral work from the Kantorei Saarlouis, expert solo singing Julia Gooding, Jonathan Peter Kenney and Joseph Cornwell, and spirited playing from the Ensemble UnaVolta under Joachim Fontaine. Huge fun, and highly recommended. ---Tim Ashley, theguardian.com

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