

## Max Bruch - Odysseus (Oratorio)

Written by bluesever  
Sunday, 28 July 2013 15:31 -

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CD1 1. *Orchestral Introduction* 2. *Odysseus On Calypso's Island* 3. *Odysseus In The Underworld* 4. *Odysseus And The Sirens* 5. *The Tempest At Sea* 6. *Penelope's Lament* 7. *Nausicaa* 8. *The Banquet With The Phaiakes* CD2 1. *Penelope Weaving A Garment* 2. *The Return* 3. *Pause* 4. *Feast In Ithica* 5. *Final Chorus*

Penelope - Cornelia Kallisch (mezzo-soprano) Odysseus - Wolfgang Schone (baritone)  
Nausicaa - Anja Vincken (soprano) + Franziska Hirzel (soprano) Martina Borst  
(mezzo-soprano) Claudia Rohrbach (soprano) Reuben Wilcox (baritone) Tschechischer  
Chor Prag Orchester der Beethoven-Halle Bonn Marc Soustrout - conductor Beethovenfest  
Bonn sept. 22, 2001 Radio Broadcast

Bruch's life-time fame rested mainly on choral works, among them *Odysseus* written in 1871. These were turbulent days of German unification to which the composer proudly ascribed and this work strongly emphasises love for the homeland. His careful selection from the saga leaves much to the listener's imagination, while the chorus alternates as participants and narrators. The conventional structures of oratorio disappear with innovative choral recitatives and a cohesive shape emerges from the blurring of formal boundaries. *Odysseus* was hugely popular (Brahms a noted fan) and it brought Bruch to Liverpool for three years. It dropped from the repertoire this century (I revived it in 1988) but it deserves far better, for *Odysseus* abounds in sumptuous melody, strikingly beautiful sections and powerfully dramatic moments. ---  
Christopher Fifield, classical-music.com

After the famous G-Minor Violin Concerto, *Odysseus* was Bruch's most successful work.

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Wagnerian expectations need to be set aside. Free from the prejudices of early modernist criticism, we can encounter in this work a richness of musical invention, a powerful sense of drama, and a moving late-romantic evocation of the traditions of Handel and Mendelssohn. It is one of the many works in the overlooked genre of secular choral music of the late nineteenth century that demands a rehearing.

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