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## A History of the Oratorio: Vol. 4: The Oratorio in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

By Howard E. Smither



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With this volume, Howard Smither completes his monumental *History of the Oratorio*. Volumes 1 and 2, published by the University of North Carolina Press in 1977, treated the oratorio in the Baroque era, while Volume 3, published in 1987, explored the genre in the Classical era. Here, Smither surveys the history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century oratorio, stressing the main geographic areas of oratorio composition and performance: Germany, Britain, America, and France.

Continuing the approach of the previous volumes, Smither treats the oratorio in each language and geographical area by first exploring the cultural and social contexts of oratorio. He then addresses aesthetic theory and criticism, treats libretto and music in general, and offers detailed analyses of the librettos and music of specific oratorios (thirty-one in all) that are of special importance to the history of the genre.

As a synthesis of specialized literature as well as an investigation of primary sources, this work will serve as both a springboard for further research and an essential reference for choral conductors, soloists, choral singers, and others interested in the history of the oratorio.

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### **Review**

This book completes one of the most important historical surveys that has been offered to musical scholarship in this generation. Nicholas Temperley, University of Illinois

### **Review**

With this massive volume Howard Smither brings to a triumphant conclusion his masterly history of a notoriously problematic genre. . . . [He] must be congratulated on this major contribution to historical scholarship.--*Music and Letters*

Smither is to be congratulated that this huge project--a quarter-century in the undertaking--has led to a final volume which, like its predecessors, combines wide-ranging scholarly research with a style that is both accessible and enjoyable. No one with a passion for oratorio should miss it: no one with even a vague interest in the subject can fail to have that interest stimulated further. . . . A splendid final volume to a series which I am sure will remain a valuable source of information and reference for decades to come.--*The Musical Times*

Smither brings to a triumphant conclusion his survey of the oratorio. . . . Smither's treatment of this large and sprawling topic is exemplary. . . . All in all, this volume is an outstanding achievement, both in its own right and as the final installment of *The History of the Oratorio*. The four volumes together stand as an invaluable survey of the oratorio genre over five centuries, to be read with profit and pleasure by musicologists, music students, social historians, and the general musical public. Smither and his publisher, the University of North Carolina Press, are to be congratulated on the successful completion of one of the most important musicological projects of recent times.--*Music Library Association Notes*

This book completes one of the most important historical surveys that has been offered to musical scholarship in this generation. Smither has maintained the high levels of research and writing established in the other volumes. His selection of works for detailed treatment amounts to a historical judgment of value which he alone is qualified to make.--Nicholas Temperley, University of Illinois

Howard Smither has written what will no doubt become the standard reference work on the history of the oratorio. His painstaking research sheds new light on the social contexts, aesthetic theory, and stylistic development of the genre. The rise and fall of the oratorio is meticulously examined through probing discussions of the familiar masterworks and extended treatments of the various national traditions. All in all, a splendid achievement.--R. Larry Todd, Duke University

From the Inside Flap

The final volume of an essential musical reference. Howard Smither surveys the history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century oratorio, stressing the main geographic areas of oratorio composition and performance: Germany, Britain, America, and France.

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