



HANDEL'S GLORIOUS MESSIAH

Sunday, Dec. 3, 2023 @ 3 p.m.

Cosette Justo Valdés, conductor
 Nola Richardson, soprano
 Patrick Terry, countertenor
 James Reese, tenor
 Jesse Blumberg, baritone
 Lori Loftus, harpsichord
 Pacific Chorale—Robert Istad, artistic director
 Kibsaim Escárcega, chorus master
 Pacific Symphony

Handel's Glorious Messiah
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*Performance at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts
 Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall & Lobby*

PROGRAM

Part I

Sinfonia
 Recitative: Comfort ye my people
 Air: Ev'ry valley shall be exalted
 Chorus: And the glory of the Lord
 Recitative: Thus saith the Lord
 Air: But who may abide the day of his coming?
 Chorus: And he shall purify
 Recitative: Behold, a virgin shall conceive
 Air & Chorus: O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion
 Recitative: For behold, darkness shall cover the earth
 Air: The people that walked in darkness
 Chorus: For unto us a child is born
 Pifa ("Pastoral Symphony")
 Recitative: There were shepherds abiding in the field
 Recitative: And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them
 Recitative: And the angel said unto them
 Recitative: And suddenly there was with the angel
 Chorus: Glory to God
 Air: Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion
 Recitative: Then shall the eyes of the blind
 Air: He shall feed his flock
 Chorus: His yoke is easy

-INTERMISSION-

Part II

Chorus: Behold the Lamb of God
 Air: He was despised
 Chorus: Surely he hath borne our griefs
 Chorus: And with his stripes we are healed
 Chorus: All we like sheep have gone astray
 Recitative: All they that see him laugh him to scorn
 Chorus: He trusted in God
 Recitative: Thy rebuke hath broken his heart
 Air: Behold, and see if there be any sorrow
 Recitative: He was cut off out of the land of the living
 Air: But thou didst not leave his soul in hell
 Chorus: Lift up your heads, O ye gates
 Chorus: The Lord gave the word
 Air: How beautiful are the feet
 Air: Why do the nations so furiously rage together?
 Chorus: Let us break their bonds asunder
 Recitative: He that dwelleth in heaven
 Air: Thou shalt break them
 Chorus: Hallelujah

Part III

Air: I know that my redeemer liveth
 Chorus: Since by man came death
 Recitative: Behold, I tell you a mystery
 Air: The trumpet shall sound
 Chorus: Worthy is the Lamb that was slain

ABOUT THE CONDUCTOR



Cosette Justo Valdés has garnered acclaim on both sides of the Atlantic and is a rising star on the world's concert stage. The Cuban-born-and-raised conductor has been recognized for her "incisive presence on the podium," and her ability to be "emotive in her conducting without being in any sense showy" (*Edmonton*

Journal). She is presently Resident Conductor of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra (Canada) where she has won the hearts of musicians and audiences alike. Recent highlights include a "mindblowing" (*Ottawa Citizen*) collaboration with Esperanza Spalding and the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa, and a celebrated *Così fan tutte* with the Edmonton Opera, conducted from the harpsichord.

Justo Valdés maintains strong ties to her native Cuba, where she is celebrated as Honorary Director of the prestigious Orquesta Sinfónica de Oriente in Santiago, Cuba's musical heartland, which she led for nine years. During that time, seconded by an administrator and a librarian, she single-handedly managed and directed the 80-musician ensemble, developing an extensive repertoire of classical and contemporary music, jazz, and pop, while championing both new and traditional Cuban music. A frequent guest conductor of the Orquesta Nacional de Cuba in Havana, she premiered works by Cuba's musical luminaries including Leo Brouwer, Alfredo Diez Nieto, Roberto Valera, and many more.

With the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, Justo Valdés is equally at ease leading programs from the Masters, Pops, or Kids series, garnering praise from critics, audiences, and musicians alike for her "vivacity," and "inspiring, precise, fiery" conducting (*Edmonton Journal*). Her position with the orchestra since 2019 as Assistant Conductor and since March 2022 as Resident Conductor, includes the role of Community Ambassador, through which she has developed an exceptionally warm and rewarding relationship with orchestra patrons as well as the city's arts community. Justo Valdés is also the Artistic Director of the Youth Orchestra of Northern Alberta, the ESO's Sistema-based program that provides free music education to some 200 children from Edmonton's priority neighborhoods and surrounding First Nations.

Justo Valdés holds her bachelor's degree in conducting, with Prof. Jorge López Marín, at the Instituto Superior de Arte (Havana, Cuba) and her master's degree, with Prof. Klaus Arp, at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst (Mannheim, Germany). She has assisted many conductors in Europe and the Americas, including Klaus Arp, Francesco Belli, Alexander Prior, Jean-Marie Zeitouni, Alexander Shelley, Mario Venzagò, and Michael Stern.

ABOUT PACIFIC CHORALE



Robert Istad, the Phillip N. & Mary A. Lyons Artistic Director of Pacific Chorale, is a GRAMMY® Award-winning conductor who "fashions fluent and sumptuous readings" (*Voice of OC*) with his "phenomenal" artistry (*Los Angeles Times*). He was appointed Pacific Chorale's Artistic Director in 2017. Under his leadership, the

chorus continues to expand its reputation for excellence for delivering fresh, thought-provoking interpretations of beloved masterworks, rarely performed gems, and newly commissioned pieces. His artistic impact can be heard on two recent recordings featuring Pacific Chorale, including the 2020 GRAMMY® Award-winning "Mahler's Eighth Symphony" with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Gustavo Dudamel on Deutsche Grammophon (2021), for which he prepared the chorus. It won "Best Choral Performance" and also garnered a GRAMMY® nomination for "Best Engineered Album, Classical." Additionally, Istad conducted the Pacific Chorale's recording "All Things Common: The Music of Tarik O'Regan" released on Yarlung Records (2020). Istad has prepared choruses for such renowned conductors as Esa-Pekka Salonen, John Williams, John Mauceri, Keith Lockhart, Nicholas McGegan, Vasily Sinaisky, Sir Andrew Davis, Bramwell Tovey, Carl St.Clair, Eugene Kohn, Giancarlo Guerrero, Marin Alsop, George Fenton, and Robert Moody. He regularly conducts and collaborates with Pacific Symphony, Musica Angelica Baroque Orchestra, Sony Classical Records, Yarlung Records, Berkshire Choral International, and Long Beach Symphony Orchestra.



Kibsaim Escárcega is the Assistant Conductor for Pacific Chorale, as well as the Chancel Choir Director at Tustin Presbyterian Church. Born and raised in Southern California, he continues to be an active member of the choral community as both a teacher, conductor, and singer. Escárcega holds

degrees in Vocal Performance and Choral Conducting from the University of California, Irvine, and California State University, Fullerton. He studied voice with Dr. Darryl Taylor and Dubravka Zubovic, and conducting with Seth Houston, Stephen Tucker, Robert Istad, and Kimo Furumoto. While at UCI, Escárcega served as conductor for the student-run BATS choir, Assistant Conductor for the Chamber Singers and Concert Choir, and Chorus Master for numerous UCI opera productions. As a graduate student at CSUF, Escárcega served as



the Graduate Assistant Conductor for the Titan Voices, Concert Choir, Opera Theatre, and University Singers. Escárcega has also recently served as Chorus Master for Lyric Opera of Orange County, Orange County's only professional opera company, and has prepared choirs for conductors in and around the SoCal area.

The GRAMMY® Award-winning PACIFIC CHORALE, an Orange County "treasure" with a "fresh viewpoint" that "can sing anything you put in front of it, with polish, poise and tonal splendor" (*Orange County Register*) has "risen to national prominence" (*Los Angeles Times*) since its inception in 1968. Hailed for delivering "thrilling entertainment" (*Voice of OC*), the resident choir at Segerstrom Center for the Arts is noted for its artistic innovation and commitment to expanding the choral repertoire. It has given world, U.S., and West Coast premieres of more than 40 works, including numerous commissions, by such lauded composers as John Adams, Jake Heggie, James Hopkins, David Lang, Morten Lauridsen, Tarik O'Regan, Karen Thomas, Frank Ticheli, András Gábor Virágh, and Eric Whitacre. In addition to presenting its own concert series each season, Pacific Chorale, led by Artistic Director Robert Istad, enjoys a long-standing partnership with Pacific Symphony, with which the choir made its highly anticipated Carnegie Hall debut in 2018. The chorus also regularly appears with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, with which it won the 2022 GRAMMY® Award for Best Choral Performance for its contribution to the live recording of "Mahler: Symphony No. 8, 'Symphony of A Thousand,'" conducted by Gustavo Dudamel, featuring Los Angeles Philharmonic, Los Angeles Children's Chorus, Los Angeles Master Chorale, National

Children's Chorus, and Pacific Chorale. The choir has performed with such leading orchestras as the Boston Symphony, National Symphony, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, San Diego Symphony, and Musica Angelica, among others. In addition to receiving national accolades, Pacific Chorale has garnered tremendous international acclaim. In July 2023, the chorus completed its first international tour in seven years with appearances in Austria, Germany, and the United Kingdom in collaboration with Bath Philharmonia, Free State Orchestra of Bavaria, and Bournemouth Symphony Chorus and Orchestra. Previous tours have taken the choir to 19 countries in Europe, South America, and Asia, including engagements with the London Symphony, Munich Symphony, L'Orchestre Lamoureux and L'Orchestre de St-Louis-en-Île de Paris, National Orchestra of Belgium, China National Symphony, Hong Kong Sinfonietta, Estonian National Symphony, and Orquesta Sinfonica Nacional of Argentina, among others. Deeply committed to making choral music accessible to everyone, the organization has a discography of 14 self-produced recordings and an extensive collection of free digital offerings. Among other artistic highlights, Pacific Chorale's *The Wayfaring Project*, an original concert film conceived and conducted by Istad and produced during the pandemic, will be streamed through Dec. 1, 2024 on pbssocal.org, kcet.org, and the PBS app, reaching audiences around the globe. Pacific Chorale also places significant emphasis on choral music education, providing after-school vocal programs for elementary school students, a choral summer camp for high school students, and an annual community-wide singing event at Segerstrom Center for the Arts. **PacificChorale.org**

Robert Istad • Artistic Director & Conductor
Phillip N. and Mary A. Lyons
Artistic Director Chair

Kibsaim Escárcega • Assistant Conductor
Alex Nelson • Director of Artistic Production

SOPRANO

Rebecca Hasquet
Section Leader
Alexandria Burdick
Ariana Celeste
Chelsea Chaves
Katy Compton
Erika Jackson
Saousan Jarjour
Grace J. Lee
Shannon A. Miller
Melanie Pedro
Jessica Pettygrove
Libby Quam
Joslyn Sarshad
Jacqueline Taylor
Victoria Wu

ALTO

Denean R. Dyson
Acting Section Leader
Shinaie Ahn
Hannah Black
Emily Border
Kathleen Thomsen Gre-
million
Brandon Harris
Stacey Y. Kikkawa
Kathleen Preston
Kaleigh Sanchez
Laurel Sanders
Stephanie Shepson
Sammy Yonjai Sohn
Mya Ujifusa
Marijke van Niekerk
Emily Weinberg

TENOR

Nicholas Preston
Section Leader, Roger W.
Johnson Memorial Chair
Daniel Alvarez
Nate Brown
Christopher Brush
Chris Buttars
Abraham Cervantes
David Evered
Alan Garcia
Dan Haub
Steven M. Hoffman
Zachary Lindquist
Paul Meissbach
Sammy Salvador
Ron Gray Legacy Chair
Yngwie Slassh Zamarippa

BASS

Ryan Thomas Antal
Section Leader, Ron Gray
Legacy Chair
Mac Bright
Michael Fagerstedt
Louis Ferland
Randall Gremillion
Jared Hughes
Matthew Kellaway
Jonathan Krauss
Elliot Z. Levine
Jackson McDonald
Martin Minnich
Kenneth Moore
Raphael Poon

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Soprano Nola Richardson has been making her mark as an “especially impressive” soprano (*The New York Times*). Her repertoire ranges from medieval to contemporary works, including several world premieres. She has been particularly noted for her performances of Bach, Handel, and Mozart and has won First Prize in all three major American competitions

focused on the music of J.S. Bach (Bethlehem Bach, 2016; Audrey Rooney Bach, 2018; and Grand Rapids Symphony Linn Maxwell Keller Award, 2019).

In concert, recent seasons have featured her debuts with the Pittsburgh, Seattle, Kansas City, Helena, and Colorado Symphonies in performances of Handel's *Messiah* in which she was described as “agile and crystalline-voiced...a stand-out” (*Seattle Times*). *Messiah* was also the vehicle for her acclaimed Carnegie Hall debut with Musica Sacra under conductor Kent Tritle. She has performed Mozart's *Exultate Jubilate* with Grand Rapids Symphony, a Sondheim review with the Boston Pops, Haydn's *Creation* with the Akron Symphony, Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with Portland Symphony and Musica Angelica and numerous works of Bach with the Baltimore Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, and the American Classical Orchestra among others. Her debut in Bach's *Coffee Cantata* with Philharmonia Baroque was noted for her “graceful ebullience” (*San Francisco Chronicle*) and performances in Handel's *La Resurrezione* and a program of French Baroque music with the American Bach Soloists drew praise for her “lusciously polished...exemplary impassioned singing” (*San Francisco Classical Voice*).



Countertenor Patrick Terry is winner of the Loveday Song Prize at the 2017 Kathleen Ferrier Awards, Second Prize at the 2019 Handel Singing Competition, and is a Samling Artist. Beseeching readers to “remember his name,” the *London Telegraph* hailed his technique as “excellent” and “virtuosic,” while *The Times* has called his performance of Ruggiero in Handel's

Alcina “stunning” and “absolutely fabulous.”

The countertenor began last season in the title role of *Rinaldo* in his debut at Minnesota Opera and performed Brett Dean's *Elbphilharmonie Visions* in concert with the Elbphilharmonie Orchestra. He also appeared as Rosenkrantz in Brett Dean's *Hamlet* with the Bayerische Staatsoper and joined English National Opera as Akhnaten (cover). This season, Terry joins Opera North for their production of *Masque of Might* and joins the Metropolitan Opera roster for their production of *El Niño*.

Terry joined the Jette Parker Young Artists Programme at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden in the 2018–19 season where he sang Arsace in *Berenice* and Artemis in Hans Werner Henze's *Phaedra*. Additionally, he traveled to Japan to appear in *Le Promesse* (Gala Concert by Young Opera Singers Tomorrow of the World) at the New National Theatre, Tokyo and returned to the Wigmore Hall for *Heroes and Villains*, appeared in *Beyond Jerusalem: The Life and Times of Sir Charles Hubert Parry* at the London Song Festival, and sang Ruggiero in *Alcina* with La Nuova Musica and *The Choice of Hercules* with the London Handel Orchestra.



Tenor James Reese, named “a shining tenor” by the *New York Classical Review*, is a GRAMMY® Award-winner. Last season, James made his Boston Early Music Festival debut in two chamber operas by Lully and Charpentier. He also appears as Mercuré in the Festival's production of Henry Desmarest's *Circé*, recorded under the CPD / Chandos label. James also returned to the Philharmonia Baroque

Orchestra, additionally making solo debuts with the Sebastiani (Bach's *Mass in G Major*) and the American Festival Orchestra (Bach's *St. John Passion*).

Reese is a noted interpreter of Baroque music, giving performances both “splendid” (*San Francisco Chronicle*) and “captivating” (*Broad Street Review*). Describing his Carnegie Hall solo debut in Bach's B minor Mass with the New York Choral Society, the *New York Classical Review* noted “the high, easy tenor of James Reese.” Following a performance of Handel's *Messiah* with the American Bach Soloists, *Classical Sonoma* wrote, “tenor James Reese sang with telling dramatic urgency and effortlessly produced fioritura.” More recently, the *New York Classical Review* wrote, “The most bravura singing was provided by Reese in the ‘Quoniam’ (Bach's *Mass in G Major*),” noting his “shining tenor and forthright delivery.”

A graduate of Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music, Reese holds a master's degree from Yale University's School of Music, where he studied with James Taylor at the Institute of Sacred Music. Reese is the 2018 winner of the Margot Fassler Award for the Performance of Music at Yale, as well as the Career Advancement Award—which recognizes “especially promising young artists”—from the Musical Fund Society. In 2023, he won a GRAMMY® Award as a soloist singing the music of Edie Hill on the record *Born*, released by The Crossing. He lives in Philadelphia.



Baritone Jesse Blumberg enjoys a busy schedule of opera, concerts, and recitals, performing repertoire from the Renaissance and Baroque to the 20th and 21st centuries. He has performed featured roles at Minnesota Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Atlanta Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Boston Early Music Festival, Opera Atelier, and at Château de Versailles Spectacles and London's Royal Festival Hall. He has sung

major concert works with Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, American Bach Soloists, Boston Baroque, Apollo's Fire, Oratorio Society of New York, The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Early Music Vancouver, and on Lincoln Center's American Songbook series.

He has been featured on nearly 30 commercial recordings, including the 2015 GRAMMY®-winning and 2019 GRAMMY®-nominated Charpentier Chamber Operas with Boston Early Music Festival. Blumberg's other albums include *Bach: Cantatas* with Montréal Baroque, *Winterreise* with pianist Martin Katz, Rosenmüller cantatas with ACRONYM, and *St. John Passion* with Apollo's Fire. Recognized in several competitions, he was awarded Third Prize at the 2008 International Robert Schumann Competition in Zwickau, becoming its first American prizewinner in over 30 years.

Blumberg received undergraduate degrees in History and Music from the University of Michigan and a Master of Music degree from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. He is also the founding artistic director of Five Boroughs Music Festival in NYC, and recently served as a guest instructor of voice at the Cleveland Institute of Music.

LIBRETTO

The Words selected from Holy Scripture by Charles Jennens

PART I

Sinfonia

Recitative (Tenor)

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,
saith your God; speak ye comfortably to
Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her
warfare is accomplish'd, that her iniquity
is pardon'd. The voice of him that crieth
in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of
the Lord, make straight in the desert a
highway for our God.

(Isaiah 40:1-3)

Aria (Tenor)

Ev'ry valley shall be exalted, and ev'ry
mountain and hill made low, the crooked
straight, and the rough places plain.

(Isaiah 40:4)

Chorus

And the glory of the Lord shall be
revealed. And all flesh shall see it
together, for the mouth of the Lord hath
spoken it.

(Isaiah 40:5)

Recitative (Bass-Baritone)

Thus saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts; Yet
once, a little while, and I will shake the
heav'ns and the earth; the sea and the
dry land; and I will shake all nations; and
the desire of all nations shall come.

(Haggai 2:6-7)

The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly
come to His temple; ev'n the messenger
of the Covenant, whom ye delight in:
behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of
Hosts.

(Malachi 3:1)

Aria (Countertenor)

But who may abide the day of His coming,
and who shall stand when He appeareth?
For He is like a refiner's fire.

(Malachi 3:2)

Chorus

And He shall purify the sons of Levi, that
they may offer unto the Lord an offering
in righteousness.

(Malachi 3:3)

Recitative (Countertenor)

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear

a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel,
"God with us."

(Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23)

Aria (Countertenor) and Chorus

O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion,
get thee up into the high mountain;
O thou that tellest good tidings to
Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength;
lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities
of Judah, Behold your God! O thou that
tellest good tidings to Zion, arise, shine;
for thy light is come, and the glory of the
Lord is risen upon thee.

(Isaiah 40:9; Isaiah 60:1)

Recitative (Bass-Baritone)

For, behold, the darkness shall cover the
earth, and gross darkness the people: but
the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his
glory shall be seen upon thee. And the
Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings
to the brightness of thy rising.

(Isaiah 60:2-3)

Aria (Bass-Baritone)

The people that walked in darkness have
seen a great light, and they that dwell in
the land of the shadow of death, upon
them hath the light shined.

(Isaiah 9:2)

Chorus

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son
is given; and the government shall be upon
His shoulder; and His Name shall be called
Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The
Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace!

(Isaiah 9:6)

Pifa (Pastoral Symphony)

Recitative (Soprano)

There were shepherds abiding in the field,
keeping watch over their flock by night.

(Luke 2:8)

Recitative (Soprano)

And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon
them, and the glory of the Lord shone
round about them, and they were sore
afraid.

(Luke 2:9)

Recitative (Soprano)

And the angel said unto them: "Fear not,

for behold, I bring you good tidings of
great joy, which shall be to all people. For
unto you is born this day in the city of
David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

(Luke 2:10-11)

Recitative (Soprano)

And suddenly there was with the angel, a
multitude of the heavenly host, praising
God, and saying:

(Luke 2:13)

Chorus

Glory to God in the highest, and peace on
earth, goodwill towards men.

(Luke 2:14)

Aria (Soprano)

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion,
shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold,
thy King cometh unto thee: He is the
righteous Saviour, and He shall speak
peace unto the heathen. Rejoice greatly...
da capo.

(Zechariah 9:9-10)

Recitative (Countertenor)

Then shall the eyes of the blind be open'd,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then
shall the lame man leap as an hart, and
the tongue of the dumb shall sing.

(Isaiah 35:5-6)

Duet (Soprano and Countertenor)

He shall feed His flock like a shepherd,
and He shall gather the lambs with His
arm; and carry them in His bosom, and
gently lead those that are with young.
Come unto Him all ye that labour, come
unto Him that are heavy laden, and He
will give you rest. Take His yoke upon
you, and learn of Him, for He is meek and
lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto
your souls.

(Isaiah 40:11; Matthew 11:28-29)

Chorus

His yoke is easy, and His burthen is light.
(Matthew 11:30)

PART II

Chorus

Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away
the sin of the world.

(John 1:29)

Aria (Countertenor)

He was despised, rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.

(Isaiah 53:3)

He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off His hair: He hid not His face from shame and spitting. He was despised . . . *da capo*.

(Isaiah 53:6)

Chorus

Surely, He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.

(Isaiah 53:4-5)

Chorus

And with His stripes we are healed.

(Isaiah 53:5)

Chorus

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned ev'ry one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

(Isaiah 53:6)

Recitative (Tenor)

All they that see Him, laugh Him to scorn; they shoot out their lips, and shake their Heads, saying:

(Psalm 22:7)

Chorus

He trusted in God that He would deliver Him, let Him deliver Him, if He delight in Him.

(Psalm 22:8)

Recitative (Tenor)

Thy rebuke hath broken His heart; He is full of heaviness: He looked for some to have pity on Him, but there was no man, neither found He any to comfort Him.

(Psalm 69:20)

Aria (Tenor)

Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow!

(Lamentations 1:12)

Recitative (Soprano)

He was cut off out of the land of the

living; for the transgressions of Thy people was He stricken.

(Isaiah 53:8)

Aria (Tenor)

But Thou didst not leave His soul in hell, nor didst Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption.

(Psalm 16:10)

Chorus

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, The Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.

(Psalm 24:7-10)

Chorus

The Lord gave the word; great was the company of the preachers.

(Psalm 68:11)

Aria (Soprano)

How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.

(Romans 10:15)

Aria (Bass-Baritone)

Why do the nations so furiously rage together, and why do the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth rise up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His anointed.

(Psalm 2:1-2)

Chorus

Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their yokes from us.

(Psalm 2:3)

Recitative (Tenor)

He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn, the Lord shall have them in derision.

(Psalm 2:4)

Aria (Tenor)

Thou shalt break them with a rod of

iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

(Psalm 2:9)

Chorus

Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. The Kingdom of this world is become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever. King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. Hallelujah!

(Revelation 19:6; 11:15; 19:16)

PART III**Aria (Soprano)**

I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the Earth. And tho' worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. For now is Christ risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep.

(Job 19:25-26; 1 Corinthians 15:20)

Chorus

Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

(1 Corinthians 15:21-22)

Recitative (Bass-Baritone)

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be chang'd, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

(1 Corinthians 15:51-52)

Aria (Bass-Baritone)

The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be rais'd incorruptible, and we shall be chang'd. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. The trumpet . . . *da capo*.

(1 Corinthians 15:52-53)

Chorus

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by His blood, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing and honour, glory and pow'r be unto Him that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen.

(Revelation 5:12-14)

PROGRAM

George Frideric Handel *Messiah*

Once again, it is time for us to **rejoice greatly!** in the outpouring of inspired melodies and dramatic effects that comprise Handel's *Messiah*. As the darkness of winter closes in and our appreciation of this miraculous oratorio is renewed, our memories from past seasons and observations from past generations—like the music itself—sound fresh. Papa Haydn, always generous praising the merits of other composers, called Handel “*der Meister von uns allen*,” “the master of us all” at a performance of *Messiah*. And Beethoven, who was far more grudging with his approval, used almost the same words—“*der unerreichte Meister aller Meisters*,” “the unequalled master of all masters,” to describe the composer of *Messiah*. Always concerned with dramatic intensity and profound ideas, he added, “Go and learn from him how to achieve vast effects with simple means.” *Messiah* is certainly rich with them, along with beautiful melodies and the insistent rhythms that are characteristic of the Baroque era, easy to love and hard to forget.

Master of both sacred and secular music, Handel was born in 1685, at the height of the Baroque era. He was a native of Germany, but his early travels included Italy, where he assimilated the Italian styles of operatic composition before settling in England. Successful in all vocal and instrumental music forms, he was the English court's go-to composer for the nation's most important ceremonial music. His gifts seem to converge in *Messiah*, with its endlessly expressive melodies and towering drama so perfectly suited to expressing the story and the glory of Christ's birth.

Although *Messiah* was originally composed for performance during Lent, it has been universally adopted as a musical high point of the Advent season. For millions of listeners, it is not only a thrilling entertainment but also a deep expression of religious faith that sounds new no matter times we have heard it. Handel famously described the process of composing the “Hallelujah” chorus as the heavens opening up to him. Yet *Messiah* was also a commercial imperative for him. He composed it at a time when he was in need of a major success: He had enjoyed a hugely successful run writing and producing his own operas, but the public taste for them was fading. Having already written operas on sacred themes, he turned to the unstaged oratorio form. *Messiah* is the foremost example of what became known as the English oratorio, which combines religious texts with elements of intense drama,



sometimes in ways hard to distinguish from opera. Most of them combine biblical and non-biblical texts, though *Messiah* is drawn entirely from the Bible.

Composition of *Messiah* was completed within 24 days, a breakneck pace for so expansive a work. The text was provided by Charles Jennens, drawn mainly from the biblical books of Isaiah and the gospel of St. Matthew—a selection that, according to some sources, reflected Jennens' and possibly even Handel's anti-establishment political leanings. After all, who but a radical egalitarian would so potently emphasize Isaiah's prophecy that “every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low”? Still, a message of straightforward religious inspiration was overriding for Handel and remains so for his audiences. There are many traditional accounts of seemingly divine inspiration as he worked. In one, his assistant walked into the room where he was composing after shouting to him for minutes on end with no response. He supposedly found Handel in tears, pen in hand, and asked what was wrong. “I thought I saw the face of God,” Handel said.

The immediate popularity of Handel's *Messiah* made it an instant tradition in England and elsewhere, and annual performances gradually moved from Eastertide to the Christmas season. By 1784, *Messiah* performances at events such as the Handel Centenary Commemoration were commonplace, often drawing together huge choral and orchestral forces. As an impresario, Handel was accustomed to tailoring his works for specific performers and production circumstances, and various editions of *Messiah* existed even within his lifetime. He also expected soloists to interpolate vocal ornamentations as appropriate, a practice that reappeared during the *bel canto* revival that began during the 1960s.

Whether you are singing along or just listening, *Messiah* is an experience of beauty that is deeply participative. It opens with a stately symphonia with a pace like that of a slow, halting march. This sets a tone of solemn importance that frames even the most joyful passages to come. What follows is a full evening's worth of music in three sections. In all, there are more than 50 separate numbers, typically choral songs alternating with solos for individual soprano, alto, tenor, or bass voice. Together, they present a version of the Christian story of the messiah, or anointed one, from the annunciation and birth through the crucifixion and resurrection. Despite the commercial considerations that were never far from Handel's mind, *Messiah* is first and foremost an expression of faith. By combining majestic beauty and grandeur of scale with humble sincerity, *Messiah* has gained a household familiarity that is rare among classical compositions.