

# *Messiah*

*George Frideric Handel*

A Special YouTube Premiere  
Saturday December 19 2020  
5:00 p.m. Pacific (UTC-8)

[AmericanBach.org/Messiah](https://AmericanBach.org/Messiah)

# Program

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## AMERICAN BACH SOLOISTS • AMERICAN BACH CHOIR

Mary Wilson, soprano • Eric Jurenas, countertenor

Kyle Stegall, tenor • Jesse Blumberg, baritone

Jeffrey Thomas, conductor

## George Frideric Handel (1685-1759) Messiah (Foundling Hospital version, 1753)

These performances are generously sponsored in part by Drs. Jose & Carol Alonso,  
Jan Goldberg, Marie Hogan & Douglas Lutgen, and Kim & Judith Maxwell.

Mary Wilson's appearance is generously sponsored by Jan Goldberg & Ken Hoffman.  
Eric Jurenas's appearance is generously sponsored by John & Lois Crowe.  
Kyle Stegall's appearance is generously sponsored by Marie Hogan & Douglas Lutgen.  
Jesse Blumberg's appearance is generously sponsored by Hugh Davies & Kaneez Munjee.

### PART THE FIRST

#### SINFONY

#### SCENE I

RECITATIVE, accompanied – Tenor - Comfort ye, comfort ye my People

ARIA – Tenor - Ev'ry Valley shall be exalted

CHORUS - And the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed

#### SCENE II

RECITATIVE, accompanied – Bass - Thus saith the Lord of Hosts

ARIA – Alto - But who may abide the Day of his coming?

CHORUS - And he shall purify the Sons of Levi

#### SCENE III

RECITATIVE – Alto - Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son

ARIA – Alto & CHORUS - O thou that tellest good Tidings to Zion

RECITATIVE, accompanied – Bass - For behold, Darkness shall cover the Earth

ARIA – Bass - The People that walked in Darkness have seen a great Light

CHORUS - For unto us a Child is born

#### SCENE IV

PIFA

RECITATIVE – Soprano - There were Shepherds abiding in the Field

ARIOSO – Soprano - And lo, the Angel of the Lord came upon them

RECITATIVE – Soprano - And the Angel said unto them, Fear not

RECITATIVE, accompanied – Soprano - And suddenly there was

with the Angel a Multitude

CHORUS - Glory to God

#### SCENE V

ARIA – Soprano - Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Sion

RECITATIVE – Alto - Then shall the Eyes of the Blind be open'd

ARIA – Alto & Soprano - He shall feed his Flock like a shepherd

CHORUS - His Yoke is easy

—INTERMISSION—

### PART THE SECOND

#### SCENE I

CHORUS - Behold the Lamb of God

ARIA – Alto - He was despised and rejected of Men

CHORUS - Surely he hath borne our Griefs

CHORUS - And with His Stripes we are healed

CHORUS - All we, like Sheep, have gone astray

RECITATIVE, accompanied – Tenor - All they that see him laugh him to scorn

CHORUS - He trusted in God, that he would deliver him

(Scene I continued)

RECITATIVE, accompanied – Tenor - Thy Rebuke hath broken his Heart

ARIA – Tenor - Behold, and see

#### SCENE II

RECITATIVE, accompanied – Soprano - He was cut off out of the Land of the Living

ARIA – Soprano - But Thou didst not leave his Soul in Hell

#### SCENE III

SEMICHORUS - Lift up your Heads, O ye Gates

#### SCENE IV

RECITATIVE – Tenor - Unto which of the Angels said He at any time

CHORUS - Let all the Angels of God worship Him

#### SCENE V

ARIA – Alto - Thou art gone up on High

CHORUS - The Lord gave the Word

ARIA – Soprano - How beautiful are the Feet of them

CHORUS - Their Sound is gone out into all Lands

#### SCENE VI

ARIA – Bass - Why do the Nations so furiously rage together?

CHORUS - Let us break their Bonds asunder

#### SCENE VII

RECITATIVE – Tenor - He that dwelleth in Heaven shall laugh them to scorn

ARIA – Tenor - Thou shalt break them with a Rod of Iron

CHORUS - Hallelujah!

### PART THE THIRD

#### SCENE I

ARIA – Soprano - I know that my Redeemer liveth

CHORUS - Since by Man came Death

#### SCENE II

RECITATIVE, accompanied – Bass - Behold, I tell you a Mystery

ARIA – Bass - The trumpet shall sound

#### SCENE III

RECITATIVE – Alto - Then shall be brought to pass

DUET - Alto and Tenor - O Death, where is thy Sting?

CHORUS - But Thanks be to God

ARIA – Alto - If God is for us, who can be against us?

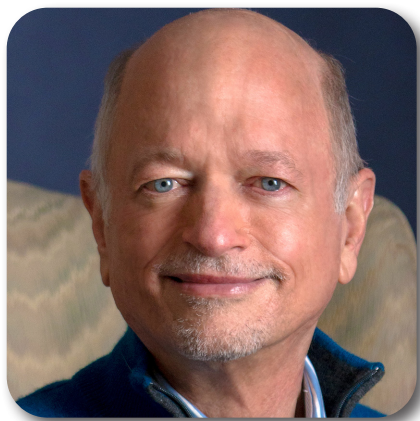
#### SCENE IV

CHORUS - Worthy is the Lamb that was slain

CHORUS - Amen.

## Artist Biographies

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**JEFFREY THOMAS** (conductor) has brought thoughtful, meaningful, and informed perspectives to his performances as Artistic and Music Director of the American Bach Soloists for more than 30 years. Recognized worldwide as one of the foremost interpreters of the music of Bach and the Baroque, he continues to inspire audiences and performers alike through his keen insights into the passions behind musical expression. He has directed and conducted recordings of more than 20 Bach cantatas, the Mass in B Minor, *Brandenburg Concertos*, *Saint Matthew Passion*, Orchestral Suites, various concertos, motets for double chorus, and works by Beethoven, Corelli, Gluck, Handel, Haydn, Pergolesi, Schütz, and Vivaldi. *Fanfare Magazine* has praised his series of Bach recordings, stating that “Thomas’ direction seems just right, capturing the humanity of the music ... there is no higher praise for Bach performance.” Educated at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, Manhattan School of Music, and the Juilliard School of Music, with further studies in English literature at Cambridge University, he has taught at the Amherst Early Music Workshop, Oberlin College Conservatory Baroque Performance Institute, San Francisco Early Music Society, and Southern Utah Early Music Workshops; presented master classes at the Eastman School of Music, the New England Conservatory of Music, San Francisco Conservatory of Music, SUNY at Buffalo, Swarthmore College, and Washington University; and served on the faculties of Lehigh University in Pennsylvania and the University of California, where he was artist-in-residence and is now professor emeritus of music (Barbara K. Jackson Chair in Choral Conducting) in the Department of Music at UC Davis, having been named a UC Davis Chancellor’s Fellow from 2001 to 2006. The Rockefeller Foundation awarded him a prestigious Residency at the Bellagio Study and Conference Center at Villa Serbelloni.



**MARY WILSON** has been hailed as one of today’s most exciting artists, receiving critical acclaim for a voice that is “lyrical and triumphant, a dazzling array of legato melodies and ornate coloratura” (*San Francisco Chronicle*). *Opera News* heralded her first solo recording (on the American Bach Soloists label), *Mary Wilson Sings Handel*, stating “Wilson’s luminous voice contains so much charisma,” they dubbed her recording one of their “Best of the Year.” In consistently high demand on the concert stage, she has appeared with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Detroit Symphony, National Symphony of Costa Rica, among many others, and at Carnegie Hall and the Hollywood Bowl. She has frequently worked with conductors Jeffrey Thomas, Nicholas McGegan, Martin Pearlman, Martin Haselböck, Robert Moody, Carl St. Clair, JoAnn Falletta, Giancarlo Guerrero, John Sinclair, Anton Armstrong, and Leonard Slatkin. With the IRIS Chamber Orchestra, she sang the World Premiere of the song cycle *Songs Old and New* written especially for her by Ned Rorem. An exciting interpreter of Baroque repertoire, “with a crystal clear and agile soprano voice perfectly suited to Handel’s music” (*Early Music America*), she has repeatedly appeared with American Bach Soloists, Philharmonia Baroque, Musica Angelica, Boston Baroque, Portland Baroque Orchestra, Grand Rapids Bach Festival, Bach Society of St. Louis, Chatham Baroque, Musica Sacra Festival de Quito Ecuador, Baltimore Handel Choir, Florida Bach Festival Society of Winter Park, Colorado Bach Festival, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Casals Festival in Puerto Rico, and the Carmel Bach Festival. Equally at home on the opera stage, she is especially noted for her portrayals of Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Susannah in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and Gilda in *Rigoletto*. A National Finalist of the 1999 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, she has created leading roles in North American and World Premiere performances of Dove’s *Flight*, Glass’ *Galileo Galilei*, and Petitgirard’s *Joseph Merrick dit L’Elephant Man*, and appeared with leading U.S. opera companies. An accomplished pianist, Ms. Wilson holds vocal performance degrees from St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, and Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. She is an Assistant Professor of Voice at the University of Memphis, and resides in Bartlett, Tennessee, with her husband, son, and two dogs.

## Artist Biographies

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**ERIC JURENAS** (countertenor), declared by the *New York Times* as an artist with “beautiful, well-supported tone and compelling expression,” and defined as having an “exceptionally clear tone with vocal flexibility,” (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*), is quickly making a name for himself in both the opera and concert scene. After a brief stint as a baritone in his first years of university studies, he made the switch to the opposite side of the vocal spectrum. He has worked with several groups as a featured artist, including The Wiener Staatsoper, Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, Komische Oper Berlin, Theater an der Wien, The Colorado Symphony, Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, The Santa Fe Opera, The Glimmerglass Festival, Opera Philadelphia, Innsbruck Early Music Festival, Opera Lafayette, Wolf Trap Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, the American Bach Soloists, among others. He was recently seen on Broadway as ‘The Voice of Farinelli’ in the Tony-nominated play, *Farinelli and the King*. Highlights of this season include productions with Oper Frankfurt, Bayerische Staatsoper, Komische Oper Berlin, and concerts with Boston Baroque, American Bach Soloists, Göttingen Handel Festival, and a tour of Handel’s *Rinaldo* in Europe. Future engagements include new productions at Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, The Wiener Staatsoper, and Dutch National Opera. An avid competitor around the country and the world, Mr. Jurenas has received awards from several vocal competitions, including a prestigious award from The Sullivan Foundation, 1st place in The Renata Tebaldi International Competition, 2nd place in the Corneille International Competition, 3rd place in the Cesti Competition for Baroque Opera, 1st place in the Handel Aria Competition, The International Competition ‘s-Hertogenbosch, 1st place in the Hal Leonard Online Vocal Competition, Dayton Opera Guild Competition, Kentucky Bach Choir Competition, and the Bel Canto Chorus of Milwaukee Competition. He is a proud recipient of a Novick Career Advancement Grant. He received his Master’s degree from The Juilliard School in New York City and his Bachelor’s degree from the College-Conservatory of Music (CCM) at the University of Cincinnati. He is a student of Dr. Robert White Jr., William McGraw, and George Gibson.



**KYLE STEGALL** (tenor), an alumnus of the 2013 ABS Academy, has been praised for his “lovely tone and ardent expression” (*New York Times*), as well as his “lively and empathetic delivery” (*San Francisco Classical Voice*). His career has taken him around the world as a specialist in music of the Baroque. An artist who communicates equally well on concert, opera, and recital stages, his performances are characterized by an unfailing attention to style and detail. Mr. Stegall’s successful solo debuts in Japan, Australia, Vienna, Italy, Singapore, and Canada as well as on major stages across America have been in collaboration with many of the world’s most celebrated conductors including Jeffrey Thomas, William Christie, Joseph Flummerfelt, and Manfred Honeck among others. Heard frequently as Evangelist and tenor soloist in the passions and cantatas of J.S. Bach, Mr. Stegall made his Lincoln Center debut as the Evangelist in the *St. John Passion* under the direction of Masaaki Suzuki. Other concert work also figures prominently in Mr. Stegall’s seasons including the oratorios of Handel and Haydn, the great masses of Mozart and Beethoven, and choral-orchestral works from the bel canto and 20th-century canon. Mr. Stegall’s “ability to absorb viewers into the action, something which is rarely achieved in opera” (*San Francisco Classical Voice*), has made him a popular choice for leading lyric tenor roles in stage repertoire spanning the entire Western Music tradition. Upcoming performances include the Evangelist in Bach’s “Christmas Oratorio” with The Bach Society of St. Louis, recital appearances in Melbourne, Sonoma, and the role of Endimione in West Edge Opera’s summer festival production of Martin y Soler’s *L’abore di Diana*. Mr. Stegall holds degrees from the universities of Missouri, Michigan, and Yale, and maintains a schedule of private teaching and guest masterclasses throughout each season.

## Artist Biographies

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**JESSE BLUMBERG** (baritone) enjoys a busy schedule of opera, concerts, and recitals, performing repertoire from the Renaissance and Baroque to the 20th and 21st centuries. His performances have included the world premiere of *The Grapes of Wrath* at Minnesota Opera, Bernstein's *MASS* at London's Royal Festival Hall, various productions with Boston Early Music Festival, and featured roles with Atlanta Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Opera Atelier, and Boston Lyric Opera. He has made concert appearances with American Bach Soloists, Boston Baroque, Apollo's Fire, Oratorio Society of New York, Montréal Baroque Festival, Arion Baroque, Early Music Vancouver, Pacific Music Works, and on Lincoln Center's American Songbook series. His recital highlights include appearances with the Marilyn Horne Foundation and New York Festival of Song, and performances of *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise* with pianist Martin Katz. He has given the world premieres of Ricky Ian Gordon's *Green Sneakers*, Lisa Bielawa's *The Lay of the Love and Death*, Conrad Cummings' *Positions 1956*, and Tom Cipullo's *Excelsior*, and works closely with several other renowned composers as a member of the Mirror Visions Ensemble. In 2018 Mr. Blumberg returned to American Bach Soloists, Opera Atelier, TENET, New York Festival of Song, Berkshire Choral Festival and Oratorio Society of New York, and debuted with Portland Baroque Orchestra, Voices of Music, and The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. He also collaborated with the Diderot String Quartet for concerts in New Hampshire, New York and Washington, D.C., and performed recitals in Iowa, Minnesota, Connecticut, and Paris. Mr. Blumberg has been featured on nearly twenty commercial recordings, including the 2015 Grammy-winning Charpentier Chamber Operas with Boston Early Music Festival. His recent releases include Bach cantatas with Montréal Baroque, *Winterreise* with pianist Martin Katz, Rosenmüller cantatas with ACRONYM, and Bach's *St. John Passion* with Apollo's Fire. He has been recognized in several competitions, and was awarded Third Prize at the 2008 International Robert Schumann Competition in Zwickau, becoming its first American prizewinner in over thirty years. Mr. Blumberg received a Master of Music degree from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and received undergraduate degrees in History and Music from the University of Michigan. He is also the founder and artistic director of Five Boroughs Music Festival, which brings chamber music of many genres to every corner of New York City.



**JOHN THIESEN** (trumpet & horn) began his journey as a brass player on the modern valve trumpet, and he was introduced to the baroque trumpet as a young man in his native Ontario, Canada. Following his undergraduate degree in performance at the Eastman School of Music, where he studied 17th- and 18th-century music with lutenist Paul O'Dette and cultural historian Peter Kountz, John chose to specialize in period performance, training in the UK with renowned soloists Michael Laird and Crispian Steele-Perkins, and completing a master's degree in musicology at King's College, University of London. While living in the UK, he performed with the Academy of Ancient Music, Monteverdi Orchestra, Taverner Players, and Amsterdam Baroque. In 1990, he returned to Canada where he was Principal Trumpet with Tafelmusik, and now also holds that position with the American Bach Soloists, Trinity Baroque, Philharmonia Baroque, and the Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra. On the modern trumpet, he has recently appeared as soloist with the San Francisco Symphony and as principal with the St Luke's Orchestra. Highlights of past seasons include J. S. Bach's "Brandenburg" Concerto No. 2 in New York and San Francisco, numerous cantatas with Trinity Baroque in New York, and Magnificat with Tafelmusik in Leipzig; as well as productions of Handel's *Messiah*, *Saul*, *Israel in Egypt*, and *Samson* throughout North America. John teaches at the Juilliard School of Music, and has presented master classes throughout the United States and Canada. He has recorded extensively for Sony Classical Vivarte, Telarc, EMI, BMG, Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, London Decca, Analekta, CBC, Tafelmusik Media, and Denon, including major works by Bach, Handel, Purcell, Vivaldi, Biber, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert.

# The Musicians

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## AMERICAN BACH SOLOISTS & THEIR INSTRUMENTS

### VIOLIN

Elizabeth Blumenstock (leader) \*\*  
*Andrea Guarneri, Cremona, 1660.*

Jude Ziliak (principal 2<sup>nd</sup>) \*  
*Anonymous Italian, circa 1730.*

Tatiana Chulochnikova \*  
*Joseph Hollmayr, Freiburg, Germany, circa 1760.*

Karin Cuellar \*  
*Jean-Baptiste Salomon, Paris, circa 1760.*

Daria D'Andrea  
*Anonymous, Neapolitan school, circa 1760.*

Andrew Davies  
*Augustine Chauppy, Paris, 1749.*

Joseph Edelberg  
*Jacob Stainer, Absam bei Innsbruck, 1673.*

Katherine Kyme  
*Johann Gottlob Pfrezschner,  
Markneukirchen, 1791.*

Andrew McIntosh \*  
*Anonymous, Saxony, mid 18<sup>th</sup> century.*

Mishkar Núñez-Mejía \*  
*Lu-Mi Workshop, Beijing, China; after 17<sup>th</sup>-  
century Italian models, 2010.*

Lindsey Strand-Polyak \*  
*Carlos Moreno, Madrid, Spain, 2012; after  
"Lady Stretton" Bartolomeo Giuseppe  
Guarneri del Gesù, Cremona, 1726.*

Janet Worsley Strauss  
*Matthias Joannes Koldiz, Munich, 1733.*

Noah Strick \*  
*Celia Bridges, Cologne, 1988; after Nicolò  
Amati, Cremona, circa 1640.*

David Wilson  
*Timothy Johnson, Hewitt, TX, 2007; after  
Stradivari, Cremona, 18<sup>th</sup> century.*

### VIOLA

Clio Tilton (principal) \*  
*Eric Lourme, Le Havre, France, 2009; after  
Brothers Amati, Cremona, 17<sup>th</sup> century.*

Vijay Chalasani \*  
*Anonymous, 19<sup>th</sup> century; Baroque  
conversion, Devin Hough, Davis, CA, 2011.*

Jason Pyszkowski \*  
*Jay Haide, El Cerrito, CA, 2008; after  
Giovanni Paolo Maggini, Brescia, circa  
1580.*

Ramón Negrón Pérez \*  
*Arthur Richardson ~ R.T. Model, Crediton,  
Devon, England, 1948.*

## VIOLONCELLO

William Skeen (principal, continuo) \*\*  
*Anonymous, The Netherlands, circa 1680.*

Gretchen Claassen \*  
*Anonymous, German, 18<sup>th</sup> century.*

Laura Gaynon \*  
*Jay Haide, El Cerrito, CA, 2011; after  
Stradivari, Cremona, 18<sup>th</sup> century.*

Andreas Vera \*  
*Anonymous Italy, circa 1685.*

## CONTRABASS

Steven Lehning (principal, continuo) \*\*  
*Anonymous, Austria, circa 1830.*

Jessica Powell Eig \*  
*Anonymous, German, 19<sup>th</sup> century.*

Joshua Lee  
*John Pickering, Greenmont, NH, 1783.*

## ORGAN

Steven Bailey  
*John Brombaugh & Associates, OR, 1980.*

## HARPSICHORD

Corey Jamason \*\*  
*Willard Martin, Bethlehem, PA, 1990; after  
François Blanchet, Paris, circa 1730.*

## OBOE

John Abberger  
*H. A. Vas Dias, Decatur, GA, 2003; after  
Thomas Stanesby, Sr., London, circa 1700.*

Debra Nagy \*\*  
*Randall Cook, Basel, 2004; after Jonathan  
Bradbury, London, circa 1720.*

## BASSOON

Charles Koster  
*Paul Hailperin, Zell im Wiesental, Germany,  
circa 1990; after M. Deper, Vienna, circa  
1725.*

Dominic Teresi \*\*  
*Guntram Wolf, Kornach, Germany, 2003  
after "HKICW" (maker's mark), Germany,  
circa 1700.*

## TRUMPET

John Thiessen (solo) \*\*  
*Keavy Vanryne, London, 1987; after Johann  
Wilhelm Haas, Nuremberg, circa 1710-1720.*

William Harvey  
*Keavy Vanryne, London, 2003; after Johann  
Wilhelm Haas, Nuremberg, circa 1710-1720.*

## TIMPANI

Kent Reed  
*Anonymous, England, circa 1840.*

## VOCAL SOLOISTS

Mary Wilson, soprano  
Eric Jurenas, countertenor \*  
Kyle Stegall, tenor \*  
Jesse Blumberg, bass

## AMERICAN BACH CHOIR

### SOPRANOS

Jennifer Brody  
Cheryl Cain  
Michelle Clair  
Tonia D'Amelio  
Clare Kirk  
Rita Lilly  
Allison Zelles Lloyd  
Diana Pray  
Brett Ruona  
Cheryl Sumsion  
Helene Zindarsian

### ALTOS

Jesse Antin  
James Apgar  
Dan Cromeenes \*  
Elisabeth Eliassen  
Ruth Escher  
William Sauerland \*  
Gabriela Estephanie Solis \*  
Meghan Spyker  
Amelia Triest  
Celeste Winant

### TENORS

Edward Betts  
Mark Bonney \*  
Michael Desnoyers  
Michael Jankosky \*  
Andrew Morgan  
Mark Mueller  
John Rouse  
Sam Smith

### BASSES

John Kendall Bailey  
Hugh Davies  
Thomas Hart  
Jefferson Packer  
Daniel Pickens-Jones  
Chad Runyon  
David Varnum

\* ABS Academy Alumnus

\*\* ABS Academy Faculty

## Program Notes

Within the decade that followed Handel's composition of *Messiah* in 1741, nearly a dozen different casts and configurations of vocal soloists were employed by the composer during those first ten years of what would become a never-ending history of performances worldwide. In each case, and for the remaining years of Handel's life, he made revisions to his score in order to best utilize the particular talents of the solo singers on hand. While it is certainly true that Handel's arrangements and transcriptions of arias that were employed for the work's premiere in Dublin (1742) were due to the inadequacy of some of the singers at his disposal there, all subsequent revisions sought to show both the artists and the work in their best light. Customizing a musical work for the sake of the performers was not uncommon. In fact, it was not unheard of for an operatic vocalist (of necessarily considerable reputation) to carry along his or her favorite arias from city to city, insisting that they be incorporated into otherwise intact and singularly composed musical works for the stage. This indulgence was not as unreasonable as one might first assume.

The operatic style during Handel's day has since become known as *opera seria*, a term that literally means "serious" opera and that was devised to mark the differences between those works and *opera buffa*, comic operas that were the outgrowth of *commedia dell'arte*. There were strict conventions within *opera seria*, including the utilization of the *da capo*, or A-B-A, format for arias. *Secco* recitatives, accompanied only by *continuo* (usually harpsichord with violoncello), were used to reveal plot details and to introduce the arias (or, rarely, duets) that would illuminate the emotions of whichever character would sing them. But there were also non-musical conventions of equally practical importance. In most cases the singer would exit at the end of an aria; hence the term "exit aria." Of course, one of the primary reasons for this theatrical device was to solicit applause from the audience for the singer (although some of the approval might just as well have been intended for the composer). And each principal singer would fully expect to sing a number of arias in a variety of moods; lamentation, revenge, defiance, melancholy, anger, and heroic virtue were common sentiments. The texts of the arias were rarely longer than four or eight lines, and rather generic, so it was more or less reasonable that a singer could substitute a favorite aria from another work so long as the general emotion was appropriate.

### HANDEL'S PLIANT SCORE

Other traditions further supported this kind of expected artistic license. In most cases, final arias within any opera of the period were always awarded to the most important singer, not necessarily the most important character. This sort of deference to the talent made a great deal of sense as, during Handel's day, the singers themselves were as much of an attraction to the audience, if not more so, as the composers and their works might have been. So, in Handel's implementations of various casts of *Messiah* soloists, he made redistributions of the workload to be fair or, in some cases, to be flattering to the members of any particular roster. When surveying all of the versions of *Messiah*, it is very interesting to look first at the assignment of the final aria, "If God be for us." Although originally composed for soprano, even for the premiere he altered the key so that it could be sung by the contralto, Susanna Cibber, a singing actress that Handel found to be tremendously compelling. Over the next few years he continued to assign that "status" aria to her until 1749, the year before the first performance of *Messiah* as a charity event for London's Foundling Hospital. In this case it was awarded to a *treble*, or boy soprano, perhaps as a prescient indication of discussions that were underway to bring the oratorio into that venue, a home for abandoned or orphaned children. And the following year, in 1750, it was again transposed down a few keys so that it could be sung by the most recently arrived operatic star,



Susanna Cibber by Thomas Hudson

the great Italian castrato, Gaetano Guadagni (1728-1792). Only for the last performance of *Messiah* conducted by Handel in 1754 was the final aria heard as it was first composed, for soprano.

### AN EPOCH OF CHARITY

London's Foundling Hospital, a home "for the maintenance and education of exposed and deserted young children," was established in 1739 in the Bloomsbury area. Its founder, Thomas Coram (1668-1751), was a sea captain and had spent a number of his early years in the American colonies. Following a career as a successful London merchant, he turned his attention to philanthropy and, in particular, rescuing homeless, abandoned children. At that time, charity and philanthropy had become not only critically essential to the survival of Londoners as a whole, but it had also gained an oddly self-serving functionality as part of the



Thomas Coram by William Hogarth

# Program Notes



London's Foundling Hospital

fantastic expansion of London and the greater English empire. The rate of growth of London during the 18<sup>th</sup> century was exponential. About three fourths of Londoners had been born elsewhere. Its culture was as diverse as the most modern 21<sup>st</sup>-century city. London offered opportunities and wealth to the industrious and ambitious, as well as a thriving underworld, anonymity, and meager subsistence to criminals and the unskilled. Its hierarchical systems of social status were engrained, accepted, and treasured, despite the fact that the 18<sup>th</sup> century offered all Londoners the chance to upgrade their places and stations within that cosmopolis. Ironically, though, even those who were able to buy into higher levels of society through their success as merchants were as eager as the blue-blooded aristocracy to maintain whatever distinctions of social status could be maintained. The wealthy typically lived in five-story townhouses while the lower classes (those not housed as servants in the top floors of the elite's homes) often lived in terribly unhealthy and cramped hovels. During most of the 1700s, Londoners were subjected to dreadful pollution, reprehensibly unsanitary conditions, and mostly unbridled crime.

Many of those poor conditions were the result of the preponderance of manufacturing industries within London's commercial organism. About a third of London's population were employed by manufacturing ventures, and the resulting pollution had turned the Thames River into, literally, a sewer. Still, this flourishing business culture helped increase overseas trade at least threefold during the century, and the spoils were global political power and domestic wealth. But the victims of all this were the children. Many lived only a few short years, and still others were abandoned to live on their own in the filth, smoke, and mire of London's poorer quarters.

In the face of such undeniable misery, the wealthy could hardly turn a blind eye. During an era of destitution, depravity, and victimization, the beliefs of the Latitudinarian branch of the Church of England were timely assertions that benevolent and charitable deeds, rather than (or at least in addition to) the formalities of church worship, were essential to the quality of the moral state of the individual. Only by engaging in acts of compassion and by the establishment of a supporting relationship with the less fortunate could their plights, their suffering, and the terrible waste of human life be acceptably mitigated and tolerated.

Thus, charity became fashionable. Merchants supported charities that in turn supported the working class. They needed healthy workers in great numbers to keep their machines well-oiled and their industries thriving. Consumers were needed on the other side of the coin, so to speak, so the maintenance of the lower classes was in the best interest of those entrepreneurs. The kingdom itself

needed to be defended at sea and abroad, so healthy battalions had to be provided. By supporting the less fortunate and encouraging their strength and independence, to a degree, those who had newly acquired wealth could gain prestige and propriety while nurturing their economic self-interests. To have a "bleeding heart" was especially in vogue among London's upper-class women. Their ever-increasing opportunities to fashion socially relevant activities led quite naturally to their involvement in charities, which in turn substantiated their refinement, respectability, and moral rank. William Hogarth (1697-1764), the great English painter, satirist, and cartoonist, called this transformative time "a golden age of English philanthropy" and one of the greatest results of it was the Foundling Hospital.

In 18<sup>th</sup>-century London, the term "hospital" was applied to institutions for the physically ill as well as for the mentally ill, and to organizations that, through hospitality, supported particular factions of London's population including sailors, refugees, penitent prostitutes, and destitute children. To a great degree, the efforts of Coram, assisted by Hogarth and Handel, firmly established the Foundling Hospital as one of England's most long-lived and admirable benevolent institutions. Even before the buildings were completed—a process that took ten years from 1742 to 1752—children were first admitted to temporary housing in March, 1741. No questions were asked, but overcrowding quickly led to the establishment of rules for acceptance. The requirement that children be aged no more than two months was relaxed by the House of Commons in 1756 so that children up to twelve months would be accepted. During the next few years, more than 15,000 infants were left at its doors. Even within the Hospital, though, more than two thirds of them would not survive long enough to be apprenticed during their teenage years.

## THE GENESIS, FIRST PERFORMANCES, AND EVOLUTION OF *MESSIAH*

In the same year that the Foundling Hospital accepted its first charges, Handel composed *Messiah*. Charles Jennens, the librettist for *Messiah*, had probably made the suggestion to Handel that the premiere of the work might take place in Dublin as a charity event. In fact, on March 27, 1742, *Faulkner's Dublin Journal* published an announcement that:

"For Relief of the Prisoners in the several Gaols, and for the Support of Mercer's Hospital in Stephen's Street, and of the Charitable Infirmary on the Inns Quay, on Monday the 12<sup>th</sup> of April, will be performed at the Musick Hall in Fishamble Street, Mr. Handel's new Grand Oratorio, call'd the *Messiah*..."

The previous decade or so had been quite unpleasant for Handel. He had begun to suffer financial difficulties, and by the early 1730s his professional life was simply unraveling. He was nearly bankrupt and had fallen very much out of the critical favor of the aristocratic public for whom he had composed his Italian operas. They were expensive to produce and not accessible enough for his audience. But, in fact, Handel himself was the object of what must have felt like brutal betrayal by his patrons, his audience, and even his musicians.

For the first half of his life, Handel had led a charmed existence. He seems to have waltzed into one happy situation after another, in which he enjoyed the patronage of royalty, the aristocracy, and the culture-seeking population at large. He was unexaggeratedly a national hero, despite his non-domestic origins. He had lived in extravagant estates, kept the most celebrated artists, writers, and musicians in his closest circles, and profited—although, not necessarily financially—from the tremendous favor that was

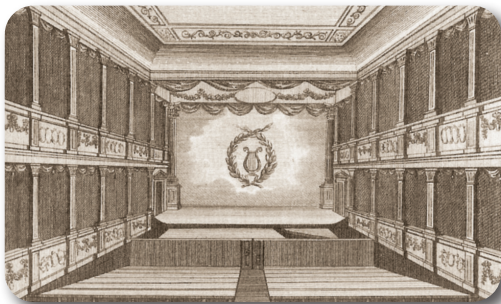
# Program Notes

bestowed upon him by an entire empire. His unprecedented success was so irreproachable that he was, without a doubt, completely unprepared for what amounted to a staggering fall from grace. But what emerged in 1741-42 was a work that would transcend the boundaries of musical forms, subject matter, social and cultural expectations, and, eventually, the bitterness of his rivals. And it would restore “the great Mr. Handel” to the revered status that he had enjoyed decades before.



Neale's Music Hall on Fishamble Street in Dublin

The first performance of *Messiah* took place on April 13, 1742 in Dublin's newest concert hall, which was built by the Charitable Music Society. Alternatively named the Great Music Hall on Fishamble Street, the New Music Hall, or Mr. Neale's Hall (named after William Neale, the music publisher who led the Charitable Music Society), it was a stately building, designed by the Dublin architect Richard Castle, featuring two rows of boxes, a slanted parterre, lovely ornamental details including fluted columns and pilasters on the raised performance platform, and an arched ceiling that created a fine acoustic. Mirrors were also incorporated into the trimmings, so that Dublin's finest could view themselves approvingly. The hall had opened only a few weeks before Handel arrived to present his season of concerts.



Interior of Neale's Music Hall in Dublin

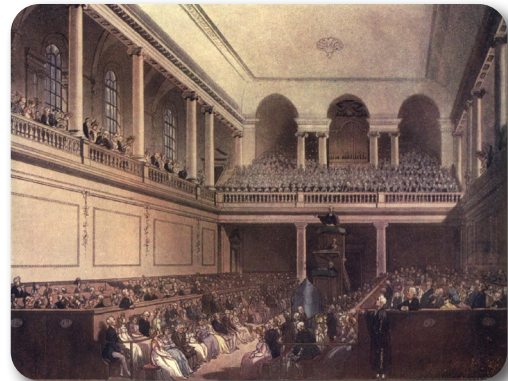
The premiere of *Messiah* was a tremendous success. The review that appeared in *Faulkner's Dublin Journal* proclaimed:

“Words are wanting to express the exquisite Delight it afforded to the admiring crowded Audience. The Sublime, the Grand, and the Tender, adapted to the most elevated,

majestic and moving Words, conspired to transport and charm the ravished Heart and Ear.”

Performances in subsequent years took place in London, but those were met with less enthusiastic receptions. *Messiah* had blurred the distinctions between opera, oratorio, passion, and cantata, and perhaps some Londoners found this to be a fundamental fault. So it is fascinating to note that when the function of *Messiah* was returned to that of a work presented for the benefit of charities, and when the venue became an ecclesiastical structure rather than a theater, the oratorio took hold of its permanent place in the hearts of audiences, then in London and now throughout the world.

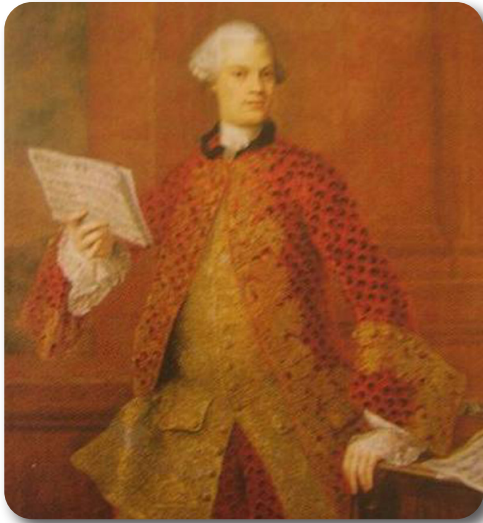
For at least one year before the first Foundling Hospital performance of *Messiah* in 1750, Handel was involved with the charity, probably drawn to it through his associations with Hogarth and the music publisher John Walsh (1709-1766) who had been elected a governor in 1748. On May 4, 1749, Handel had made an offer, which was gratefully accepted, to present a benefit concert of vocal and instrumental music to help in the completion of the hospital's chapel. The hospital reciprocated with an invitation to Handel, which he initially declined, to become one of its governors. On May 27<sup>th</sup>, Handel directed a performance (in the unfinished chapel) of excerpts from his *Fireworks Music*, *Solomon*, and the newly composed *Foundling Hospital Anthem*, “*Blessed are they that considereth the poor and needy.*” (The *Foundling Hospital Anthem* was Handel's last work of English church music.) The “Hallelujah” chorus from *Messiah* was the final work, a premonition of what was in store for the following year. Royalty were in attendance.



Chapel of London's Foundling Hospital

Nearly one year later, on May 1, 1750, Handel performed *Messiah* in the (still not quite finished) chapel. That day marked what could be seen as the most significant day in Handel's career. The benefit concert's success was extraordinary. More than 1,000 people crowded into the space, and more were turned away. Massive public attention to the event, coupled with unequivocal approbation for the oratorio, served Handel well and generated new commitment on the part of the London audience to uphold Handel and his oratorios as the great beacons of English music that they are. He became a governor of the hospital; since more than £1,000 had been raised by his performances, the fee required of governors was waived. Due to the overcrowded conditions on May 1, a second performance was offered on May 15, especially to those who were turned away a fortnight before, that resulted in the first documentation of an entire audience standing for the “Hallelujah” chorus.

## Program Notes



Gaetano Guadagni (anonymous painter)

The most noteworthy musical aspect of the 1750 Foundling Hospital version of *Messiah* is the reworking of the aria, "But who may abide." In this year, Handel employed the castrato, Gaetano Guadagni, who had arrived in London as part of an Italian opera company two years before, in 1748, at the age of twenty. The music historian Charles Burney (1726-1814) wrote about Guadagni:

"His voice was then a full and well toned counter-tenor; but he was a wild and careless singer. However, the excellence of his voice attracted the notice of Handel, who assigned him the parts in his oratorios of the *Messiah* and *Samson*, which had been originally composed for Mrs. Cibber..."

Handel composed a new middle section of the aria, taking advantage of Guadagni's bravura vocal technique as well as his apparently considerable low notes. Two other arias were also reworked for Guadagni: "Thou art gone up on high" and "How beautiful are the feet." Recent research seems to indicate that the alto arrangement of "How beautiful are the feet" was only an afterthought. For the May 1, 1750, performance, Handel had seven soloists (female soprano, boy treble, female contralto, male castrato, countertenor, tenor, and bass). But two weeks later, on May 15, when the work was offered for a second time especially to those who were turned away a fortnight before, the soprano must have fallen ill. Emergency reassignments were put in place, and the alto arrangement of "How beautiful are the feet" was one of them. In all fairness, however, it might have been that Handel was so pleased with Guadagni's singing that he took that opportunity to give the singer another one of the oratorio's "gem" arias.

### TOTAL ECLIPSE

In subsequent years, the Foundling Hospital continued to rely upon annual performances of *Messiah* for significant income. But Handel's life was approaching its very real twilight. The great colleague whom Handel never met, Johann Sebastian Bach, had undergone two operations on his eyes, both unsuccessful, the second of which led within months to Bach's death in 1750. By the next year, Handel's own eyesight was deteriorating rapidly. By March 1751, he was blind in one eye but nevertheless directed two performances of *Messiah* (in the still unfinished chapel) and even played voluntaries on the organ. 1752 brought more performances of *Messiah*, still under the composer's direction, but his eyesight continued to deteriorate despite various treatments and an

operation. On August 17 a London newspaper reported that Handel had been "seiz'd a few days ago with a Paralytick [*sic*] Disorder in his Head which has deprived him of Sight," and in March of 1753 Handel's dear and longtime friend, Lady (Susan) Shaftesbury, reported that (at a performance) "it was such a melancholy pleasure, as drew tears of sorrow, to see the great though unhappy Handel, dejected, wan and dark, sitting by, not playing on the harpsichord, and to think how his light had been spent by *being overplied in music's cause*."

Soon, though, the Foundling Hospital Chapel was due for its official opening. *Messiah* was performed in April of 1753 in the Covent Garden Theatre, and three days later the Chapel was officially dedicated at a performance of the *Foundling Hospital Anthem*. The last report of any public performance conducted by the blind Handel comes from the May 1 revival of *Messiah* for the benefit of the Hospital. For this performance, the configuration of soloists was somewhat conventional for that era: one soprano, one male alto, one tenor, and one bass. The celebrated castrato Guadagni returned to London to sing his last performance of *Messiah* on this occasion, and Handel, although debilitated by blindness, played a voluntary and an organ concerto for the Foundling Hospital audience. Annual performances to benefit the charity continued until his death in 1759 and beyond, leading to more than 250 years of performances throughout the world, having reached millions upon millions of listeners.

Handel was a man of quiet yet firm religious convictions. Almost certainly nudged to embrace Catholicism during his years in Rome, and having been presented with the idea of converting to the Church of England especially during the years of rather significant monarchical patronage in London, he remained a rather staunch Lutheran. Ecclesiastics were prevalent in his mother's family, and his Evangelical-Lutheran identity may very well have stemmed partially from a desire to retain a life-long connection to his Saxon background and heritage. It follows then that, while *Messiah* is certainly considered by any audience to be a "Grand Musical Entertainment"—as it was sometimes called in Handel's day—the composer is purported to have said, "I should be sorry if I only entertained them; I wished to make them better."

© Jeffrey Thomas, 2014



Handel—blind and with his score to *Messiah* on the desk—by Thomas Hudson, 1756

# Libretto

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The following libretto is adapted from the printed word-book for the first London performances of *Messiah* in 1743, and incorporates Handel's own designations of part headings, scenes, and movement headings.

## MESSIAH AN ORATORIO

Set to Musick by George-Frideric Handel, Esq.

### PART THE FIRST

SINFONY

SCENE I

*RECITATIVE, accompanied - 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*)

*SONG - 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*)

SCENE II

*RECITATIVE, accompanied - Bass*

Thus saith 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*)

*SONG - Alto*

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*)

SCENE III

*RECITATIVE - Alto*

Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his Name Emmanuel, GOD WITH US. (*Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23*)

*SONG - Alto  
& 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 and 60:1*)

*RECITATIVE, accompanied - Bass*

For behold, 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*)

*SONG - Bass*

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*)

SCENE IV

*PIFA*

*RECITATIVE - Soprano*

There were Shepherds abiding in the Field, keeping Watch over their Flock by Night. (*Luke 2:8*)

*ARIOSO - 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, accompanied - Soprano*

And suddenly there was with the Angel a Multitude of the heav'nly Host, praising God, and saying ... (*Luke 2:13*)

*CHORUS*

Glory to God in the Highest, and Peace on Earth, Good Will towards Men. (*Luke 2:14*)

SCENE V

*SONG - Soprano*

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Sion, shout, O Daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is the righteous Saviour; and He shall speak Peace unto the Heathen. (*Zechariah 9:9-10*)

*RECITATIVE - Alto*

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*)

*SONG - Alto & Soprano*

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 all ye 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, his Burthen is light. (*Matthew 11:30*)

# Libretto

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## PART THE SECOND

### SCENE I

#### CHORUS

Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the Sin of the World. (*John 1:29*)

#### SONG - Alto

He was despised and rejected of Men, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief. He gave his Back to the Smilers, and his Cheeks to them that plucked off the Hair: He hid not his Face from Shame and Spitting. (*Isaiah 53:3 and 50:6*)

#### CHORUS

Surely he hath borne our Grievings 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, accompanied - Tenor

All they that see him laugh him to scorn; they shoot out their Lips, and shake their Heads, saying ... (*Psalms 22:7*)

#### CHORUS

He trusted in God, that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, if he delight in him. (*Psalms 22:8*)

#### RECITATIVE, accompanied - 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. (*Psalms 69:21*)

#### SONG - Tenor

Behold, and see, if there be any Sorrow like unto his Sorrow! (*Lamentations 1:12*)

### SCENE II

#### RECITATIVE, accompanied - Soprano

He was cut off out of the Land of the Living: For the Transgression of thy People was He stricken. (*Isaiah 53:8*)

#### SONG - Soprano

But Thou didst not leave his Soul in Hell, nor didst Thou suffer thy Holy One to see Corruption. (*Psalms 16:10*)

### SCENE III

#### SEMICHORUS

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. (*Psalms 24:7-10*)

### SCENE IV

#### RECITATIVE - Tenor

Unto which of the Angels said He at any time, Thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten thee? (*Hebrews 1:5*)

#### CHORUS

Let all the Angels of God worship Him. (*Hebrews 1:6*)

### SCENE V

#### SONG - Alto

Thou art gone up on High; Thou has led Captivity captive, and received Gifts for Men, yea, even for thine Enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among them. (*Psalms 68:18*)

#### CHORUS

The Lord gave the Word: Great was the Company of the Preachers. (*Psalms 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*)

#### CHORUS

Their Sound is gone out into all Lands, and their Words unto the Ends of the World. (*Romans 10: 18*)

### SCENE VI

#### SONG - Bass

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. (*Psalms 2:1-2*)

#### CHORUS

Let us break their Bonds asunder, and cast away their Yokes from us. (*Psalms 2:3*)

### SCENE VII

#### RECITATIVE - Tenor

He that dwelleth in Heaven shall laugh them to scorn; the Lord shall have them in Derision. (*Psalms 2:4*)

#### SONG - Tenor

Thou shalt break them with a Rod of Iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a Potter's Vessel. (*Psalms 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, and 19:16*)

## PART THE THIRD

### SCENE I

#### SONG - 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*)

# Libretto

## 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)

## SCENE II

RECITATIVE, accompanied - Bass

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)

SONG - Bass

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. (1 Corinthians 15:52-54)

## SCENE III

RECITATIVE - Alto

Then shall be brought to pass the Saying that is written; Death is swallow'd up in Victory. (1 Corinthians 15:54)

DUET - Alto and Tenor

O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory? The Sting of Death is Sin, and the Strength of Sin is the Law. (1 Corinthians 15:55-56)

## CHORUS

But Thanks be to God, who giveth Us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:57)

SONG - Alto

If God is for us, who can be against us? Who shall lay anything to the Charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth; Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again; who is at the Right Hand of God, who maketh intercession for us. (Romans 8:31 and 33-34)

## SCENE IV

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. (Revelation 5:12-14)

CHORUS

Amen.

## Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" – To Stand or Not To Stand...

Perhaps the best-known and widely accepted concert "tradition" is standing for the *Hallelujah* chorus. Legend has it that King George II leapt to his feet when he heard it during one of the work's performances in London. Because no person could remain seated while the King stood, the entire audience rose with him. Some credit this anecdote as the origin of the "standing ovation".

But a closer look at the facts reveals that there is no evidence that the King ever attended such a performance. The first written account of the story appeared in 1780, more than 35 years after the cited performance, and it was written by someone who admits to not having witnessed the King's presence himself. However, the King was known to attend such events incognito. So he, in fact, at least *might* have been there.

If he was in attendance, there is much speculation as to why he stood at all. Theories range from the reverent to the simply unflattering: he might have been stretching his legs to relieve symptoms of gout, or perhaps he was suddenly awakened by the *forte* entrance of the chorus, trumpets, and timpani. But the general opinion is that his own sense of obeisance compelled him to stand upon hearing the majestic and undeniably enthralling music of the *Hallelujah* chorus.

The custom is common in English speaking countries, but essentially unknown in all others. Many have objected, in more contemporary eras, to the imperialistic implications of following the King's lead in this manner. After all, the general audience only stood because they had to do so. But others are quick and well justified to point out that Handel's *Messiah* is certainly the most well known and universally enjoyed major work in the Baroque oratorio genre—if not among all "classical" music works—and that standing as a group, in the name of tradition, unites the audience with the performers for a few minutes in a most energizing way.

No matter how convincingly some can argue that this "tradition" is rooted in hearsay, you have only to look at the performers when you stand at that wondrous, thrilling moment: you will see their smiles and their spirits lifted even higher, knowing that millions upon millions of people have stood at that very same moment in music, and in virtually every corner of the world. Even Haydn stood with the crowd at a performance in Westminster Abbey. It is said that he wept and proclaimed of George Frideric Handel, "He is the master of us all."



George II by Thomas Hudson, 1744

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### American Bach Soloists gratefully acknowledge the following for their generosity:

The Rt. Rev. Marc Handley  
Andrus, Bishop of California  
The Vestry and Staff of Grace  
Cathedral, San Francisco  
St. Stephen's Episcopal Church,  
Belvedere  
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Gas Lamp Productions  
Second Unit Photography

Equipment provided by  
First Camera  
Lighting by Steinheimer

With assistance from  
Jeremy Ranharter, Head of  
Media Services, Grace  
Cathedral

Special thanks to  
Zamacona Productions  
Securitas  
The Lunch Box  
Kate Harvey  
Michael Lampen  
Charles Shipley

American Bach Soloists are  
Artists-in-Residence at St.  
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