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SEASO

Music Director and Conductor, A. Dennis Sparger

HANDEL'S MESSIAH SUNDAY, MARCH 5, 2023 | 3 PM First Presbyterian Church of Kirkwood



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Music Director and Conductor A. Dennis Sparger was critically acclaimed as "a conductor equipped with insight as well as craftsmanship" already in his second



season. In the past three and a half decades he has received even more praise for his musical leadership with the Bach Society Chorus and Orchestra, conducting them in more than 175 performances of major works by Bach and other composers.

Under his leadership the Bach Society was presented with the *Excellence in the Arts* award by the Arts & Education Council of Greater St. Louis, the first chorus to be so honored. It was also a driving force in the Christmas Candlelight Concerts being hailed by BBC Music magazine as "one of the top 20 live Christmas events in North America."

In 1989 he introduced a Young Artists scholarship program for singers under the age of thirty to cultivate future soloists. He also established a professional core of paid Principal Singers and designated a position for Composer-in-Residence to promote the creation of new works.

He was awarded a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in choral conducting by the University of Illinois and earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Eastern Illinois University where he was named one of the *50 Outstanding Graduate Alumni* of the Graduate School. In 2013, in recognition of his work with the Bach Society, he was presented with the *Lifetime Achievement* award by the University of Missouri-St. Louis. He has also received awards from St. Louis Cathedral Concerts, the St. Louis chapter of the American Guild of Organists, and the Illinois chapter of the American Choral Directors Association.

Dr. Sparger is a member of the American Bach Society, American Choral Directors Association, Chorus America, the National Society of Arts & Letters, and is a past board member of Artist Presentation Society.



Stephen Eros Assistant Conductor

Stephen Eros graduated from Webster University with faculty bestowed honors in music. While there, he served as Assistant Conductor of the Webster University Choirs and completed a Master of Arts in Choral Conducting and

Bachelor of Music in Organ Performance; studying conducting and choral music with Trent Patterson, organ with William Partridge, and voice with Robert Ayllón.

Stephen has been Assistant Conductor of The Bach Society of St. Louis since 2013 and has worked in the field of sacred music for over a decade, serving in parishes in the Diocese of Belleville, Springfield (IL), and Archdiocese of St. Louis. Since 2015, he has held the position of Director of Liturgy and Music at St. Clare of Assisi Catholic Church in O'Fallon, IL, where he is responsible for the formation and training of over 400 liturgical ministers, and conducts five different choirs. On the diocesan level, he has served as organist and choirmaster for pontifical liturgies at the Cathedral of St. Peter, and currently serves on the music committee of the diocesan liturgical commission.

As a collaborative pianist, Stephen has served as music director for solo cabarets and musicals in the St. Louis area, and has worked for the Muny St. Louis as a rehearsal pianist. He is a member of the St. Louis Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, having served as Sub Dean, Program Committee Chair, and a member of the Executive Committee. He is also a proud union member of the American Federation of Musicians Local 2-197.

His biggest accomplishment to date is being the husband of Jamie Eros, step-father of George and Jon, and father of Samuel and Viola.



Sandra Geary, Accompanist

Sandra Geary is a native of County Cork, Ireland and has received piano performance diplomas from the Royal Schools of Music, Trinity College, London; the Cork School of Music, Ireland and a Bachelor of Music degree from the St. Louis Conservatory of Music. Her teachers have included

John O'Conor, Joseph Kalichstein and Carole Tafoya.On the piano faculty of Washington University, Sandra also accompanies the WU Chamber and Concert choirs.

She has been the Bach Society of Saint Louis accompanist for the past 26 years and also is the accompanist for Webster University Opera studio.She is a vocal coach for the OTSL Artistin-Training program and Union Avenue Opera's 'Crescendo' Young Artist program.She has collaborated in Voice Masterclasses given by Nathan Gunn, Stanford Olsen, Kevin Short, Erie Mills, Christine Brewer, Mary Ann McCormack and Jennifer Johnson Cano.

Sandra regularly accompanies recitals, auditions and competitions in the St Louis area.



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Photography & video recording during the performances is prohibited.

All of our concerts are professionally recorded, so please do your best to minimize excess noise. You will know it's time to applaud when the conductor lowers their arms after the final chord of a piece. This may not happen after every piece, because sometimes songs are grouped together to create an emotional experience.

Thank you and enjoy the concert.

THE BACH SOCIETY OF SAINT LOUIS A. Dennis Sparger, Music Director and Conductor

Presents

George Frideric Handel

Abridged

GUEST ARTISTS



Michele Kennedy, Soprano



Don Frazure, Tenor



Kimberly Leeds, Mezzo-soprano



David Rugger, Baritone

Sponsored in part by Bill and Jane Doub

SUNDAY, MARCH 5, 2023 | 3 PM First Presbyterian Church of Kirkwood

And without Controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness: God was manifested in the Flesh, justified by the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory. In whom are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge. I Timothy 3: 16; Colossians 2: 3

These words, selected by Charles Jennens, the librettist, formed a preface to the word-book of the first performance in April, 1742, at Dublin. They were repeated on the word-books published in London, 1749-59, and later.

PART ONE The prophecy and coming of Messiah

Sinfonia

Isaiah's prophecy

Ev'ry valley shall be exalted

Ev'ry valley shall be exalted, and ev'ry mountain and hill made low: the crooked straight, and the rough places plain. Isaiah xl: 4

And the glory of the Lord

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 xi:5

The coming judgment

Thus saith the Lord of hosts

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:

The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

Haqqai ii: 6, 7; Malachi iii: 1

Tenor Aria

Bass Arioso

Chorus

Orchestra

But who may abide the day of His coming

But who may abide the day of His coming and who shall stand when he appeareth?

For he is like a refiner's fire, and who shall stand when he appeareth? Malachi iii: 2

And he shall purify the sons of Levi

And he shall purify the sons of Levi,

that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Malachi iii: 3

The prophecy of Messiah's birth

Behold, a virgin shall conceive

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel. God with us. Isaiah vii: 14; Matthew i: 23

O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion Mezzo-soprano Aria 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! Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. Isaiah xi: 9: ix 1

For behold, darkness shall cover the earth

Bass Arioso

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 ix: 2,3

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light Bass Aria 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 ix: 2

Chorus

Mezzo-soprano Aria

Mezzo-soprano Recitative





The birth of Messiah

For unto us a child is born

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, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Isaiah ix: 6

The annunciation to the shepherds

Pastoral Symphony

There were shepherds abiding in the field

Soprano Recitatives

There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. *Luke ii: 8*

And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them

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 ii: 9*

And the angel said unto them

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 ii: 10, 11

And suddenly there was with the angel

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heav'nly host praising God, and saying, *Luke ii: 13*

Glory to God in the highest

Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth. Goodwill toward men. Luke ii:14 Chorus

Chorus

Orchestra



Messiah's healing and redemption

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is the righteous Savior, and he shall speak peace unto the heathen. Zechariah ix: 9, 10

His yoke is easy, and his burthen is light

His yoke is easy, and his burthen is light. *Matthew xi: 30*



INTERMISSION

PART TWO Messiah's Passion

Introduction to the Passion

Behold the Lamb of God

Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. John 1: 29

His trial and suffering

He was despised

Mezzo-soprano Aria

He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: He hid not his face from shame and spitting. *Isaiah 53: 3; 50: 6*

Atonement: theology of Messiah's suffering

Surely he hath borne our griefs

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

Soprano Aria

Chorus

Chorus

Chorus

And with his stripes we are healed

And with his stripes we are healed. *Isaiah 53: 5*

All we like sheep have gone astray

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

The mocking crowd

All they that see him laugh him to scorn

All they that see him laugh him to scorn: they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying, *Psalm 22: 7*

He trusted in God

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

The Messiah's isolation on the cross

Thy rebuke hath broken his heartTenor RecitativeThy 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: 21

Behold, and see if there be any sorrow

Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto his sorrow. Lamentations 1: 12

The Messiah's death

He was cut off out of the land of the living

He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of thy people was he stricken. Isaiah 53: 8 Chorus

Tenor Aria

Soprano Recitative

Chorus

Chorus

Tenor Recitative

Messiah's Resurrection

Introduction to the resurrection

But thou didst not leave his soul in hell

But thou didst not leave his soul in hell: nor didst thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. Psalm 16: 10

The resurrection

Lift up your heads, o ye gates

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? Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts Psalm 24: 7-10

Messiah's vindication

Unto which of the angels said he at any time

Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? Hebrews 1:5

Let all the angels of God worship him

Let all the angels of God worship him. Hebrews 1:6

The gospel is proclaimed

How beautiful are the feet

Soprano Aria How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! Romans 10: 15



Chorus

Chorus

Tenor Recitative

Messiah's Ultimate Victory

The gospel is rejected

Why do the nations so furiously rage together?

Why do the nations so furiously rage together: 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

Let us break their bonds asunder

Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their yokes from us. *Psalm 2: 3*

God's judgment and wrath

He that dwelleth in heaven

He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn: the Lord shall have them in derision. *Psalm 2: 4*

Thou shalt break them

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a pottter's vessel. *Psalm 2: 9*

Messiah is crowned

Hallelujah

The audience is invited to stand and sing

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. *Rev. 19: 6; 11: 15; 19: 16*

Chorus

Bass Aria

Chorus

Tenor Recitative

Tenor Aria

.

PART THREE Anthem of Hope and Praise

The promise of eternal life

I know that my redeemer liveth

I know that my redeemer liveth,

and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though 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; Cor. 15: 20

Theology of salvation

Since by man came death

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.

I Cor. 15: 21-22

The resurrection of the church

Behold, I tell you a mystery

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. I Cor. 15: 51-52

The trumpet shall sound

The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

I Cor. 15: 52

Victory over death

Then shall be brought to pass

Mezzo-soprano Recitative Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallow'd up in victory.

I Cor. 15: 54

Bass Recitative

Soprano Aria

Chorus

Bass Aria



O death, where is thy sting?

Mezzo-soprano/Tenor Duet 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. I Cor. 15: 55-57

But thanks be to God

Chorus

Chorus

But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. l Cor. 15: 57

The acclamation of the Messiah

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain

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.

Rev. 5: 12-13

The performing edition prepared by Watkins Shaw (Novello & Company Ltd. © 1992) is used for this performance.

The structural designations in the printed program were provided by Dr. Wayne Barrett of Sam Houston State University and used by permission.

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MICHELE KENNEDY, SOPRANO

SOPRANO MICHELE KENNEDY is a versatile specialist in early classical and new music. Praised by *The Washington Post* as "a fine young soprano with a lovely voice," whose "excellent and engaging soprano" possesses "a graceful tonal clarity that is a wonder to hear" (*San Francisco Chronicle*), Michele's recent venues include Carnegie Hall, Davies Symphony Hall, The Getty Museum, Lincoln Center, *Powell Symphony Hall*, and Washington National Cathedral.

Michele's recent highlights include the Bach *Magnificat* and *St. John Passion* with San Francisco Symphony Chorus, Handel *Messiah* with Trinity Wall Street, NYC, Poulenc *Gloria* with The Bach Society of Saint Louis, and Undine Smith Moore's *Scenes from the Life of a Martyr* at UC Berkeley. She's performed *The Monteverdi Vespers of 1610* with Dark Horse Consort & The Thirteen Choir, selected Bach Cantatas w/ American Classical Orchestra, and works by Barbara Strozzi and Francesca Caccini with Folger Consort, alongside Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with the San Francisco Ballet and the Orchestra of Saint Luke's. This past season she debuted with Agave Baroque in a feministic *In Her Hands* recital (soon to debut in Seattle), and with Shenandoah Bach Festival, Berkeley Early Music Festival, and Portland Baroque Orchestra in June of 2022 for some delightful Handelian Fireworks.

Michele's new music adventures include Aaron Siegel's *I Will Tell You The Truth About This* at NYC's Schomburg Center and Florence Price and Dina Shilleh's art songs in recital with Mimesis Ensemble at Carnegie Hall. She debuted in Carnegie's Stern Auditorium in 2019 under the baton of Maestro Joe Hisaishi and The Hollywood Film Orchestra with featured works from the Studio Ghibli films. Most recently, she debuted with NYC's Five Boroughs Music Festival in a spring 2022 Songbook premiere of contemporary art songs. And after singing Julia Wolfe's *Fire In My Mouth* with The Crossing & New York Philharmonic in 2019, Michele is joining Lorelei Ensemble for a '22-23 world premiere tour of Wolfe's *Her Story* with The Nashville, San Francisco, Boston, Chicago, and National Symphony Orchestras.

A summa cum laude graduate of Yale University and NYU, Michele is committed to working toward greater equity and representation for BIPOC, LGBTQ, and female voices across the field. Michele lives in Oakland, where she enjoys redwood forests and bay vistas with her husband, visual artist Benjamin Thorpe, and their daughter, Audra May.



KIM LEEDS, MEZZO-SOPRANO

With her "vivid, deeply satisfying sound" and "rich, smooth mezzo-soprano", Kim Leeds engages audiences in her exploration of life's essence through music. As a soloist, she has appeared with the Bach Akademie Charlotte, Apollo's Fire, Les Délices, American Bach Soloists Academy, L'Akadémie du Roi Soleil, Ad Astra Musical Festival, Handel Society of Dartmouth, Bach Society of St. Louis, the Tafelmusik Baroque Chamber Orchestra and Choir, the Oregon Bach Festival Discovery Series,

GRAMMY® nominated True Concord Voices and Orchestra, and Gramophone award winning ensemble Blue Heron. Over the years, Ms. Leeds has garnered multiple accolades including winning the Tafelmusik Vocal Competition in 2016, attending the Carmel Bach Festival as a Virginia Best Adams Fellow in 2017, was a finalist for the American Prize in Art Song in 2019, and that summer worked with Philippe Herreweghe as a Britten-Pears Young Artist in their Bach Cantata programme.

Ms. Leeds enjoys performing a wide range of repertoire from Zelenka and Barbara Strozzi, to Janacek, Irving Fine, and Poulenc as well as sung premieres of works by James MacMillan, Richard Danielpour, James Kallembach, and Julia Wolfe. As a choral artist, Ms. Leeds has toured with Helmuth Rilling in Eastern Germany as a member of the Weimar Bach Academy and toured Northern Italy and Southern Germany with the Junges Stuttgart Bach Ensemble under the direction of Hans Christoph Rademann. In the US, she has performed with the Oregon Bach Festival, Handel and Haydn Society, GRAMMY® nominated ensemble Seraphic Fire, GRAMMY® winning ensemble the Crossing, and this season joins Musica Sacra, the GRAMMY® nominated Clarion choir and GRAMMY® winning ensemble Apollo's Fire.

In her hometown of Boston, Ms. Leeds has appeared as a soloist with the Commonwealth Chorale, Cantata Singers, Music at Marsh Chapel, and can be heard on the 2017 Boston Modern Orchestra Project's recording of Jeremy Gill's *"Before the Wresting Tides"*. Ms. Leeds holds degrees from Mannes College of Music and the Boston Conservatory



DON FRAZURE, TENOR

Conductor and Tenor, Don Frazure, is his currently serving in his third year as director of the Greenville University Choir and the Greenville Choral Union. In addition to *Messiah*, Don has conducted major works by Bach, Vivaldi, Haydn, Mozart, Brahms, and Rutter. Don is also an adjunct music faculty member at Greenville University teaching Applied Voice, Conducting, and Introduction to Worship. As conductor of the GU Choir, he has led them on successful tours of St. Louis, Indianapolis, and will be taking the choir to England and Northern Ireland on tour in March 2023.

As a professional vocalist, Don has performed with many opera companies and orchestras throughout the United States. In 2001, the Mississippi native made his New York City Opera debut as Tamino in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, and debuted with the Metropolitan Opera in Wagner's *Parsifal* in 2003. He has also performed with Arizona Opera (Nemorino, *L'Elisir d'Amore*), Opera Carolina (Tamino, *Magic Flute*), Opera Omaha (Fenton, *Falstaff* and Don Ottavio, *Don Giovanni*), Palm Beach Opera (Chaplain, *Dialogues of the Carmelites*), Seattle Opera (Ferrando, *Cosi fan tutte*) and Spoleto Festival USA (Steuermann, *The Flying Dutchman*).

He has garnered critical acclaim as soloist with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Boston Baroque, and the symphonies orchestras of Alabama, Atlanta, Baltimore, Nashville, National, and New Jersey. He is the tenor soloist for Bach's *Magnificat* recorded by the Boston Baroque Orchestra (Telarc, 2005). Don has appeared with the Bach Society of St. Louis in performances of Haydn's Lord Nelson Mass, Beethoven's Mass in C, Bach's Mass in b, Goodall's Eternal Light, along with Bach's Christmas Oratorio and Handel's Messiah at their annual Christmas concert at Powell Hall. He is honored to be joining BSSL again this spring for Messiah.

Don Frazure is the winner of the 2003 Sullivan Award for Vocal Excellence and the 1999 Licia Albanese-Puccini Foundation International Voice Competition. Other competition awards include the MacAllister Awards, Opera Index and the Liederkranz Foundation of New York. A graduate of the Juilliard Opera Center, Dr. Frazure holds the B.M. and M.M. degrees in vocal performance from William Carey University and the University of Southern Mississippi respectively. In 2017, Don was named a Borchert Scholar at the Webber Institute for Worship Studies in Jacksonville, FL, where he also earned the Doctor of Worship Studies degree in June 2018. Dr. Frazure has served as the Pastor of Worship Arts at Christ Church of Fairview Heights, Illinois, since 2006.



DAVID RUGGER, BARITONE

With a voice praised for its "dark-hued splendor" (San Francisco Gate), baritone David Rugger enjoys a blossoming career in oratorio, early music, and ensemble singing. This season will feature appearances with the Washington Bach Consort, Zenith Ensemble, Bach Collegium San Diego, the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra, Bach Society of St. Louis, and Alchymy Viols. Other recent highlights include solo appearances with Bourbon Baroque, Indianapolis Baroque Orchestra, Bach Society of Dayton, Bach Akademie Charlotte, Mountainside

Baroque, and several Bach cantata series. David has also performed as an ensemble musician with Vocal Arts Ensemble (Cincinnati), Seraphic Fire, and Conspirare. David is an alum of the American Bach Soloists Academy and was a Virginia Best Adams Fellow at the Carmel Bach Festival.

A scholar as well as a performer, David earned his PhD in Musicology from Indiana University, where he also studied voice and was active in the Historical Performance Institute. In his scholarship, David explores the relationship between vocal sound, the body, and identity from the nineteenth century through to the present day, especially in England and America.

He is currently working on two book projects. The first is a guide to singing Bach's vocal music for the non-specialist, and the second is a biography of Klaus Nomi. David has taught at University of Indianapolis, Butler University, and Indiana University; and his scholarship is currently supported by a Visiting Research Fellowship from Harvard University. When he is not singing and researching, David spends his days learning to make raw milk cheddar near his home in the Green Mountains of Vermont.



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The Bach Society Chorus

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Erica Ancell* Samantha Arten Rachel L.S. Jones Karen Lohrman Debbie Mann

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Kurtis Heinrich Ryan Lupka Avi Mazzeo Scott Meidroth Darrell Steinbach

TENOR II

Peter Hensel Duane L. Olson Carlos Flores Ramirez Zachary Singer

BASS I

Dan Denner Stephen A. Eros Greg Finch Ron Klemm Scott MacDonald Adrian K. Mason Matt McEuen Jack McFarling

BASS II

Aaron Allison Nicholas D. Bashaw David Cox Warren Frye Kersten Horn Shawn Neace Allen Schwamb

* Young Artist

Samantha Arten, Chorus Librarian David T. Cox, Stage Manager

A. Dennis Sparger, Music Director and Conductor Stephen A. Eros, Assistant Conductor Sandra Geary, Accompanist

Auditions for the Bach Society Chorus will be held on May 22nd, 23rd and 30th. Auditions for Young Artists will be held on May 24th.

> Experienced choral singers interested in auditioning are invited to visit bachsociety.org/audition for more information and to request an audition.

> > Rehearsal space is graciously provided by the Episcopal Church of St. Michael & St. George.



The Bach Society Orchestra

VIOLIN I Lenora-Marya Anop, concertmaster Holly Huelskamp Adrian Walker Alicia Bont

VIOLIN II

Manuela Topalbegovic Joseph Kaminsky Mary Sweetin Twinda Murry

VIOLA

Deberah Haferkamp Joshua Rockers **CELLO** Kenneth Kulosa Catherine Lehr Ramos

DOUBLE BASS Anita Hagerman

OBOE Eileen Burke Mark Pye

BASSOON Donita Bauer

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If you enjoyed today's performance we think you will also enjoy ...

March 19	Sun	2:30	Cathedral Concerts, Msgr Telthorst Memorial Concert,
			Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis
April 16	Sun	3:00	St. Louis Chamber Chorus, Despair to Hope ,
			Immanuel Lutheran Church, St. Charles
April 19	Wed	8:00	Cathedral Concerts, The Tallis Scholars,
			Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis
May 28	Sun	3:00	St. Louis Chamber Chorus, Death to Life ,
			St. Margaret of Scotland



"I did think I did see all Heaven before me, and the great God himself."

With these words Handel acknowledged the Divine inspiration he believed to be guiding his hand in creating the masterpiece he little knew would touch countless millions of listeners since it was first performed 282 years ago. Today we become one with all those before us who have been inspired and uplifted by this great oratorio.

Although the roots of the oratorio can be traced back to prayer services in the middle of the 16th century, by the time of Handel it had become quite similar to opera. Both are dramatic works that tell a story through music, however there are some major differences. In oratorio, for example, the subject matter is generally Biblical in nature, the words are sung in the vernacular, there is no scenery, no costumes, no stage action, and the chorus–the voice of the people–plays a much larger role.

In all, Handel composed about 22 oratorios. But *Messiah* is unique from the other oratorios in three distinct ways: it contains no characters or narrative, its text is drawn from the New Testament as well as the Old Testament, and it is more contemplative than dramatic in nature. Despite this meditative approach Handel's own considerable operatic background is present in many passages. His theatrical sense, according to music historian Stanley Sadie, can be found in "the music announcing Christ's birth (with distant trumpets and the effect of a choir of angels), in the drama of the Passion music, [and] above all in the grandeur of the most famous number, the Hallelujah chorus."

The noted Handel scholar Jens Peter Larsen describes Messiah as not a number of scenes from the life of Jesus linked together to form a dramatic whole, but "a representation of the fulfillment of Redemption through the Redeemer, Messiah." Messiah is divided into three Parts, summarized by Larsen as:

- 1. The prophecy and realization of God's Plan to redeem mankind by the coming of the Messiah;
- II. The accomplishment of redemption by the sacrifice of Jesus, mankind's rejection of God's offer and mankind's utter defeat when trying to oppose the power of the Almighty;
- III. A Hymn of Thanksgiving for the final overthrow of Death.

Today's performance offers an opportunity to celebrate the birth of the Messiah and meditate on Jesus' sacrifice and our own victory over death and final redemption.

Handel's Life

George Frideric Handel was born in Halle, Germany, on February 23, 1685, the second son of Georg, a barber-surgeon to the court of Saxe-Weissenfels, and his second wife Dorothea. Although he demonstrated "extraordinary musical gifts" as a child, his father intended for him a career in civil law. Notwithstanding, while accompanying his father on a visit to the court at Weissenfels, the 7-year old was



heard playing the organ by the Duke who then urged the father to provide his son with musical training. How could he refuse? Soon instructions began with Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow, who taught Handel organ, harpsichord, violin, oboe, counterpoint and composition. By the time he was a teenager Handel was considered a virtuoso organist and oboist, as well as a promising composer.

At the age of seventeen Handel entered the University of Halle to study law. A month later he was appointed organist at the cathedral. Now faced with a choice of the law or the church, Handel traded both to pursue his love of opera. He moved to Hamburg, the principal center of German opera the following year and, for the next three years, played violin and harpsichord in the opera orchestra. He composed his first two operas and produced them there with great success.

In 1706, Handel accepted an invitation from Gian Gastone d'Medici to visit Florence where, surrounded by the leading musicians of the day, he completed his musical training and absorbed all he could learn about Italian opera. He also traveled to Rome, Naples and Venice.

Four years later the 25-year old Handel accepted a position in Hanover as court Kapellmeister to Elector Georg Ludwig. Within just a few months he was granted permission for an extended visit to London where he presented his opera *Rinaldo* to enthusiastic acclaim. Anxious to pursue his future in this cosmopolitan city where Italian operas were the latest rage, he requested a second leave of absence in 1712. This time he left for London and never returned!

After composing the *Utrecht Te Deum* in 1713 for Queen Anne, Handel was granted a yearly income by Her Majesty. But it was his operas (he wrote over 40) that attracted a wide following in London and brought him international fame. Melvin Berger, in his *Guide to Choral Masterpieces*, states that these works attracted "huge throngs of fervent admirers among the nobility, the intellectuals, and the growing middle class." In a fickle world this connection with the middle class would prove to be a boon to Handel in the decades to come.

For almost 20 years Handel enjoyed tremendous financial and musical success. An astute businessman as well as a musician, he invested in his own operas, both earning and losing several fortunes. The wide success of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* in 1728, however, confirmed that London was ripe for a major change. Within just a few years the public's passion for Italian operas based on mythology and filled with florid arias was replaced by English operettas filled with backstreet characters singing common street songs. "By 1737," writes Berger, "Handel's opera company was out of business."



In April of that year Handel suffered an apparent stroke which left his right arm temporarily paralyzed. Bankrupt and unable to perform, he was written off by the public. He withdrew into seclusion, prompting his librettist Charles Jennens to write,

Handel says that he will do nothing next winter, but I hope I shall persuade him to set another Scripture collection I have made for him. I hope he will lay out his whole Genius and Skill upon it, that the composition may excel all his former Compositions, as the Subject excels every other Subject. The Subject is Messiah.

Before the year was out Handel was back!

Handel's oratorios

Already in the early part of the 1730s, Handel recognized that interest in Italian opera was fading and began to compose oratorios for the expanding middle class. In 1732 he presented a revised version of *Esther* and, in 1736, *Alexander's Feast*. Both *Saul* and *Israel in Egypt* were presented in 1739, with the composer improvising at the organ during the intermissions.

Handel wisely presented his oratorios during Lent when the performance of operas was prohibited by law. And within a short time, his oratorios launched a tradition of choral singing that still exists in England and many other parts of the world as well. While his oratorios follow the structure of Italian opera with recitatives, arias and dramatic scenes, Handel placed a greater emphasis on the chorus, and "it is in these mighty choral ensembles," proclaims Anthony Hopkins, "that he produced his greatest music."

Music historian Donald Grout offers some insight on Handel's astute perception of the public's need for identification, as well as his good fortune for being in the right place at the right time. First, the subject matter in many of his oratorios had an appeal that extended beyond the familiarity with the Biblical stories:

It was impossible for English audiences in an era of prosperity and expanding empire not to feel a kinship with the chosen people of old whose heroes triumphed by the special favor of Jehovah.

And second, he describes Handel as a completely international composer who settled in just the right country:

His music has German seriousness, Italian suavity, and French grandeur. These qualities were matured in England, the soil then most favorable to the development of such a cosmopolitan style; and England furthermore provided the choral tradition which made possible Handel's oratorios.

Various authors credit Handel with anywhere from 18 to 29 works in this genre, but a more likely number is about 22. His oratorios fall into three categories. The majority is based on scriptural texts dealing with events or individuals: *Esther, Deborah, Saul, Israel in Egypt, Joshua, Samson, Solomon, Jephtha,* and others. Another group deals with mythological figures: *Hercules, Semele,* and *Acis and Galatea;* and a few are allegorical in nature: *L'Allegro* and *The Triumph of Time and Truth.*



Messiah

Messiah, however, stands alone. It has no story and no characters. It is meditative rather than dramatic in character. But it continues to attract listeners in each new generation with its message of man's redemption.

Working at a feverish pace-his usual manner of composing-Handel composed the entirety of Messiah in just 24 days in late summer, 1741. Charles Jennens, who compiled the libretto, later suggested that Handel might have done a better job with his words! *Messiah* was first heard on April 13, 1742, in Dublin, with the composer conducting. The concert took place at the New Music Hall on Fishamble Street, and was given as a benefit for the Society for Relieving Prisoners, the Charitable Infirmary, and Mercer's Hospital.

Anticipating a strong response to ticket sales, the city newspapers encouraged gentlemen to not wear swords and ladies to not wear hoops. The performance was attended by 700 people, crowded in a room that could hold 600. A reporter attending that first performance wrote,

words are wanting to express the exquisite delight it afforded to the admiring crouded audience. The sublime, the grand, and the tender, adapted to the most elevated, majestick and moving words, conspired to transport and charm the ravished heart and ear.

Messiah was performed in London the following season and it soon became a regular feature of the Lenten performances there, with Handel conducting until his death in 1759. Its popularity has never faded and, since 1749, there has been a continuous tradition of Messiah performances in England. Its popularity is also quite strong in this country where, oddly, it is more often performed in December.

Handel's Final Years

While returning from a trip to Germany in the summer of 1750, Handel was seriously injured in a carriage accident between the Hague and Haarlem in the Netherlands. The following year one eye started to fail due to a cataract. A surgery performed by "the great charlatan Chevalier Taylor" (the same oculist who blinded Bach) led to uveitis and subsequent loss of vision.

Handel's final public appearance was on April 6, 1759, when he played harpsichord at a performance of *Messiah*. He returned home and went to bed. A few days later he said, "I wish I may die on Good Friday, in the hope of meeting my dear Lord and Saviour on the day of His Resurrection." Apparently, the Heavenly Choir needed an extra day of rehearsal, as he left this world on Holy Saturday, April 14, at the age of 74. More than 3,000 mourners attended Handel's funeral, and he was buried in Westminster Abbey.





Erica Ancell, soprano, is excited to be joining The Bach Society of St. Louis as a Young Artist. Under the instruction of Martha Hart, Erica earned a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from Webster University. She was the 1st place winner of Union Avenue Opera's Crescendo! Program 2022, which earned her a chorus role in UAO's recent production of Falstaff. Formerly a Scholar Singer at Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Erica has a long history as a liturgical singer in several Churches and choruses. She had her start as a choral singer in the St. Louis Children's Choirs and as a solo singer in Opera Theatre of St. Louis' Artists in Training Program. Erica is looking forward to continuing her studies and to learning from the talented musicians of The Bach Society.

YOUNG ARTISTS



Theresa Flores, mezzo-soprano, is grateful to have been accepted for a second season with The Bach Society of St. Louis as the Alto Young Artist. A St. Louis native, Theresa holds a Bachelor of Music in Music Theory from the University of Missouri - St. Louis, where she studied piano, voice, and choral conducting. She is currently studying voice with Alison Neace. She was a cantor and choral scholar at the Cathedral Basilica for several years under the remarkable instruction of Dr. Horst Buchholz and sang for two seasons under his direction in St. Louis' only early music ensemble at the time: Pro-Arte. Theresa, a cradle Catholic and professional musician since the age of 16, has been passionate about and employed in the field of liturgical music for all her young professional life. She currently holds her dream job as the Director of Sacred Music at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Alton, IL, where she directs the choirs, plans and plays music for all church events, and a little bit of everything else. Despite her love of liturgical music and polyphony, her true love is jazz; her vocal inspirations include Rosemary Clooney, Eydie Gormé, Keely Smith, and Diana Krall, and she would probably drop everything to become a jazz singer or studio singer if given the opportunity. She has been off the stage for several years, but her favorite role to date was playing Sandy in Grease. Theresa was married in November 2022 to another amazing member of The Bach Society, she is the big sister to two and godmother to one, and they are her life's greatest joys.

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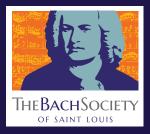
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