



CHRISTOPHER WARREN-GREEN,
CONDUCTOR

British conductor Christopher Warren-Green is music director of the London Chamber Orchestra as well as conductor laureate and artistic adviser to the Charlotte Symphony, following 12 years as its music director. He is also chair of the Foundation for Young Musicians, and in 2022 he celebrated a professional career spanning 50 years. Warren-Green has conducted eminent orchestras around the world, including the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Orchestre National de Belgique, Beethoven Orchestra Bonn, Orchestre national de Montpellier and Hong Kong Philharmonic, as well as the Iceland, Detroit, Houston, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Toronto, Seattle, Vancouver and Singapore symphony orchestras. He has led the Minnesota Orchestra's performances of Handel's *Messiah* four times before: in 2002, 2006, 2008 and 2014. Highlights of his 2023-24 season include returns to the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Macau Orchestra, as well three visits with Romanian Radio Chamber Orchestra and performances with the Charlotte Symphony and London Chamber Orchestra. Warren-Green has recorded extensively for Sony, Philips, Virgin, EMI, Chandos, Decca and Deutsche Gramophone, and records with London Chamber Orchestra for Signum Classics. More: harrisonparrott.com.



GEORGIA JARMAN,
SOPRANO

American soprano Georgia Jarman's numerous successes span lyric and bel canto repertoire alongside a growing reputation in 20th-century works and new commissions. Of those which hold special significance are the landmark operas of Sir George Benjamin—*Written on Skin* and *Lessons in Love and Violence*—which Jarman debuted at Venice Biennale Musica under the composer's baton. She recently returned to the role of Isabel in *Lessons in Love and Violence*, joining the Mahler Chamber Orchestra on a European tour. During the 2023-24 season she joins the Orchestre de Paris in the same work under the baton of Benjamin, and sings Agnes in *Written on Skin*, making her debut at Deutsche Oper Berlin under Marc Albrecht. Jarman's breakthrough performance and debut at the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden came as Roxana in Kasper Holten's spectacular production of Szymanowski's *Król Roger*. She made her BBC Proms debut in 2019 singing the same composer's *Love Songs of Hafiz* alongside BBC Scottish Orchestra. This season she debuts with the Boston Symphony as Solveig in Grieg's *Peer Gynt*, joins the Charlotte Symphony in Vaughan William's *A Sea Symphony* and performs Dvořák's *Te Deum* with the Naples Philharmonic. More: harrisonparrott.com, georgiajarman.com.



REGINALD MOBLEY,
COUNTERTENOR

Grammy-nominated American countertenor Reginald Mobley is renowned for his interpretation of Baroque, Classical and modern repertoire, and leads a prolific career on both sides of the Atlantic. An advocate for diversity in music and its programming, he became the first ever programming consultant for the Handel & Haydn Society following several years of leading its community engaging Every Voice concerts. He holds the position of visiting artist for diversity outreach with the Baroque ensemble Apollo's Fire, and is leading a research project in the U.K. to uncover music by composers from diverse backgrounds. This season he also performs Handel's *Messiah* with the Pittsburgh Symphony and Philadelphia Orchestra. Recent and future highlights include performing Orff's *Carmina burana* with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and debuts with the Boston Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra and Orchestre Métropolitain de Montreal, as well as a tour of his new program *Sons of England* and a solo recital as part of the Bayreuth baroque opera festival. His first solo album with ALPHA Classics was released to great acclaim last June to coincide with a major series of concerts with pianist Baptiste Trotignon. In addition, he is featured on albums with the Monteverdi Choir, Agave Baroque and Stuttgart Bach Society. More: clbmanagement.co.uk, reginaldmobley.com.



TOBY SPENCE, TENOR

British tenor Toby Spence has sung with renowned orchestras such as the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, London Symphony, London Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic and Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia. He has appeared as a guest soloist at the Easter Festival in Salzburg and the Edinburgh International Festival. On the opera stage he has appeared at such venues as Teatro alla Scala, Teatro Real and the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, and with companies such as the Frankfurt Opera, Metropolitan Opera and English National Opera. His 2023-24 season includes a return to the Royal Opera House for Erik in *Der Fliegende Holländer*, as well as house debuts as Alonso in *The Tempest* for the Wiener Staatsoper and as the title role in *Idomeneo* for Opéra National de Lorraine. On the concert stage this season he sings Mortimer in *Lessons in Love and Violence* with Orchestre de Paris, *The Bells* with the Bergen Philharmonic and the Mozart Requiem with the Tampere Philharmonic. He also returns in recital to the Oxford Lieder Festival. He was the winner of the Royal Philharmonic Society 2011 Singer of the Year award. More: askonasholt.com.



JORDAN BISCH, BASS

American bass Jordan Bisch, a graduate of the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, made his Metropolitan Opera debut as the Second Knight in *Parsifal*. His career includes notable roles in productions such as *The Barber of Seville*, *La Sonnambula*, *Aida*, *Idomeneo* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Bisch has also graced stages in Japan with Don Carlos and has performed with renowned opera companies including the San Francisco Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Washington National Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Seattle Opera, Dallas Opera and Florida Grand Opera. In the realm of concert performances, he has performed at prestigious venues including the Hollywood Bowl with Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Tanglewood Festival with Michael Tilson Thomas, and the Charlotte Symphony with Christopher Warren-Green. He is featured on the Los Angeles Philharmonic's recording of Shostakovich's *Orango* on the Deutsche Grammophon label, conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen. A native of Vancouver, Washington, Bisch has earned accolades including a second-place win in the 2009 Operalia competition, a triumph in the 2005 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions Grand Final, a 2005 Sara Tucker Study Grant, and Richard Tucker Career Grants in both 2006 and 2009. More: jordanbisch.com.

MINNESOTA CHORALE

KATHY SALTZMAN ROMEY,
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

BARBARA BROOKS,
ACCOMPANIST AND
ARTISTIC ADVISOR

The Minnesota Chorale, principal chorus of the Minnesota Orchestra since 2004, this month marks the 50th anniversary of its first appearance with the Orchestra. The Chorale performed Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* with the Orchestra this past September and will collaborate again in two works next April: Eleanor Alberga's *Rise Up, O Sun!* and Johannes Brahms' *Schicksalslied*. Founded in 1972 and led since 1995 by artistic director Kathy Saltzman Romey, the Chorale is Minnesota's preeminent symphonic chorus and ranks among the foremost professional choruses in the U.S. More: mnchorale.org.

SOPRANO

Alyssa Breece*
Cathy Crosby-Schmidt*
Monica deCausmeaker*
Deyhdra Dennis-Weiss *
Laurel E. Drevlow*
Elizabeth Longhurst*
Amy Madson
Pamela Marentette*
Sara Payne*
Elizabeth Pemberton*
Adriana Pohl
Kristin Schmitz*
Jennifer Sylvester*
Maya A. Tester

ALTO

Susan Druck*
Debra Gilroy*
Heather A. Hood*
Laura Horner*
Patricia Kent*
Claire M. Klein
Celia McCoy
Barbara Prince*
Deborah E. Richman
Joy E. Roellinger
Mitra Sadeghpour*
Elizabeth Sullivan*

TENOR

Sam Baker*
Daniel Borup*
Jared Campbell*
Ryan Cogswell*
Chris Crosby-Schmidt
Thomas Jermann
Tom Knabel
Jeffrey Nielsen
Bill Pederson*
Josh R. Pritchett*
Jeffrey J. Raehl*
Patrick Romey*
Luke Slivinski

BASS

Matthew Abbas
Peder Bolstad
Mark Garner*
David Goudzwaard-Vaught*
Jim Hild
Jon Nordstrom*
Nathan Oppedahl
Bob Peskin*
Nathan Petersen-Kindem*
Benjamin Shermock*
Russ Vander Wiel
Rick Wagner*

* section leader



GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

B: February 23, 1685
Halle, Germany

D: April 14, 1759
London, England

Messiah

PREMIERED: April 13, 1742

George Frideric Handel was perhaps the first classical musician to find stardom in numerous European countries. Born in Germany, he studied music in Italy before moving to England, where he remained for the rest of his life. Handel's mature music, particularly his choral works, reflects a skillful blend of these three countries' styles of classical music.

For over 260 years, *Messiah* has been Handel's most popular and beloved oratorio, and it continues to give pleasure to audiences around the world, whether in mammoth extravaganzas with 3,000-plus singers; ever-popular *Messiah* "sing-alongs"; gospel and country versions; or performances in Baroque style with small choruses and chamber orchestras playing instruments of Handel's time period. While *Messiah* concerts have become a Christmas tradition in North America, the oratorio was originally written for performance during Passion Week, the holiest week of the Christian year leading up to Easter Sunday.

A MUSICAL TRIUMPH, WITH A COMPLEX LEGACY

Today *Messiah* is considered Handel's greatest musical achievement, but its popularity was not immediate. Written during a three-week span in the summer of 1741 and premiered in Dublin the following spring, *Messiah* was

composed for a charity benefit advertised "For the relief of the Prisoners in the several Gaols" and several other worthy causes. *Messiah* received warm reviews at its premiere, but its enduring popularity did not begin until after Handel's death. During his lifetime it was regarded as simply one of his many successful oratorios.

Although Handel was associated with charitable causes in Europe, the legacy of his music is complicated by what we know today—that some of Handel's patrons were closely linked to the trading and transportation of enslaved Africans, either as slave owners or major investors. Recent research has revealed that Handel himself was sometimes paid through the sale or ownership of shares in the Royal African Company, an English trading institution that is believed to have shipped more enslaved Africans to the Americas than any other company.

The years immediately preceding the composition and premiere of *Messiah* were artistically and financially disastrous for Handel. In 1737, he suffered a debilitating stroke, although he eventually recovered enough to resume work. The grandiose style of Italian *opera seria*—noble or "serious" opera—for which Handel was best known was dwindling in popularity, so much so that after 1741 he stopped composing operas altogether. In the 1730s, Handel himself had experienced the bankruptcy and failure of two of his own opera companies, and by 1740, the city of London could not support its remaining two opera companies vying for an ever-shrinking audience accepting of non-English languages in its entertainments. Both shrewd and practical, Handel accepted the public's waning interest in *opera seria*, and started composing something new—oratorios in English—that he hoped audiences would prefer.

ESTABLISHING AN ENDURING FORMAT

Handel's oratorios are cornerstones of the genre, and several took hold quickly in the European classical canon.

ONE-MINUTE NOTE

Handel: *Messiah*

In the month of December, we often associate gracious acts of charity with the joyful holiday season. Thus it seems appropriate that Handel's great oratorio, *Messiah*, has become an integral part of Christmas celebrations, because it was written for inclusion in a series of Dublin concerts benefiting public causes; the first performance of *Messiah* in 1742 raised an impressive £400 for charity. Beginning in 1750, he

led popular annual performances of the work for the benefit of London's Foundling Hospital Chapel, to which he donated a pipe organ in addition to bequeathing a copy of the score and parts to *Messiah*.

The German composer had spent most of his later years in London and was well known for his operatic and courtly compositions. Handel may not have considered himself a composer of sacred music, but it is

reported that *Messiah* so moved him that after completing the "Hallelujah Chorus"—with tears streaming down his face—he declared: "I did think I did see all Heaven before me and the great God himself." Over the next 250 years *Messiah* secured a place as one of the most beloved compositions in the entire orchestral and choral repertoire, and as one of Handel's most enduring and endearing works.

He wrote many of them; *Messiah* was his ninth. Although other composers had written oratorios, and the genre dates back to the early 1600s, Handel's innovations established the oratorio format that classical music listeners know best today.

The oratorio is best understood as an unstaged opera with a sacred plot, typically from the Christian Bible, juxtaposing the drama of opera with the profundity of religious themes—thereby appealing to both theater lovers and followers of that faith tradition. Like operas, oratorios were written in several parts that focused on the dramatic elements of the libretto. Handel's oratorios satisfied his intended audience's desire for dramatic musical works in cities where opera was banned and during the Lenten season that precedes Easter, when opera houses were closed.

A COLLABORATION FOR THE AGES

An oratorio's text, particularly a sacred oratorio, was of equal importance to the music. For *Messiah*, Handel partnered with Charles Jennens, a collaborator as gifted with words as Handel was with music. One does not need to be either a musical or Biblical expert to appreciate the care with which Jennens chose and arranged the texts of *Messiah*'s libretto. Jennens' selection of texts is masterful, drawing on both well-known and obscure passages from the Bible.

Jennens' libretto contains almost no direct narrative; it is a contemplative rather than dramatic portrayal of the life, Passion and resurrection of Christ. Jennens outlined the three parts of *Messiah* accordingly: Part I presents the biblical prophecies of the Messiah, who would offer salvation; this section also presents prophecies of the Virgin birth and Christ's many miraculous and benevolent acts. Part II recounts Jesus' suffering and the rejection of his teachings by the people, his agony on the cross and subsequent resurrection, the knowledge spread among the Christian populace of his identity as the Son of God and the spreading of the Gospel. In Part III, the texts deal with the promise of bodily resurrection after the Day of Judgment, Jesus' victory over death and his ultimate deification.

Messiah's lasting reputation is also due to Handel's skillful rendering of Biblical texts, which would have been as familiar to the Christian audiences of his day as commercial jingles and pop song lyrics are to today's listeners. Handel was a master of *Affektenlehre*, the Baroque aesthetic also known as text painting, which, as it suggests, audibly portrays words using musical devices. A few examples: the chorus, "All we like sheep," features an ending with a melisma—one syllable stretched across many pitches—on the word "astray," concluding in the line "All we like sheep have gone astray," with the word itself going astray from the phrase. In the opening tenor aria "Ev'ry valley," Handel sets the word "crooked" with a variety of bouncy dotted

rhythmic figures, and the word "straight" with strong single beats. In the bass aria "The people that walked in darkness," the opening phrase meanders as if lost through the darkness of a minor key, which abruptly changes into a triumphant major with the words "have seen a great light." This same technique of juxtaposing minor with major can be heard in the chorus "Since by man came death." The opening lines begin in a somber minor key, which then bursts into the joyous relative major on the words "By man came also the resurrection of the dead."

DISPELLING THE MYTHS

A number of myths regarding *Messiah* have persisted over the years. Some accounts describe Handel refusing food and drink as he wrote *Messiah* in a white-hot religious fever. Others describe the composer's emotional state, weeping or gazing raptly into the distance, lost in an ecstasy of pious thought. The fact that Handel wrote *Messiah* in just 24 days has been taken as proof of his religious inspiration, but in fact Handel often composed quickly, especially during the summer months when he was readying operas for the upcoming theatrical season. Handel completed Part I in six days, Part II in nine, and Part III in another six, with three more days for fleshing out the orchestration. Although Handel was a sincere Christian, the speed at which he produced such transcendent and enduring music owes more to his gifts as a composer rather than to the passion of his religious beliefs.

Messiah received warm reviews in the Dublin newspapers even before its premiere. One reviewer, after attending a rehearsal, wrote that "Handel's new sacred Oratorio... far surpasses anything of that Nature, which has been performed in this or any other Kingdom." Another review said of the actual performance, "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."

Instrumentation: soprano, countertenor, tenor and bass soloists, mixed chorus and orchestra comprising 2 oboes, bassoon, 2 trumpets, timpani, harpsichord (doubling organ), theorbo and strings

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