



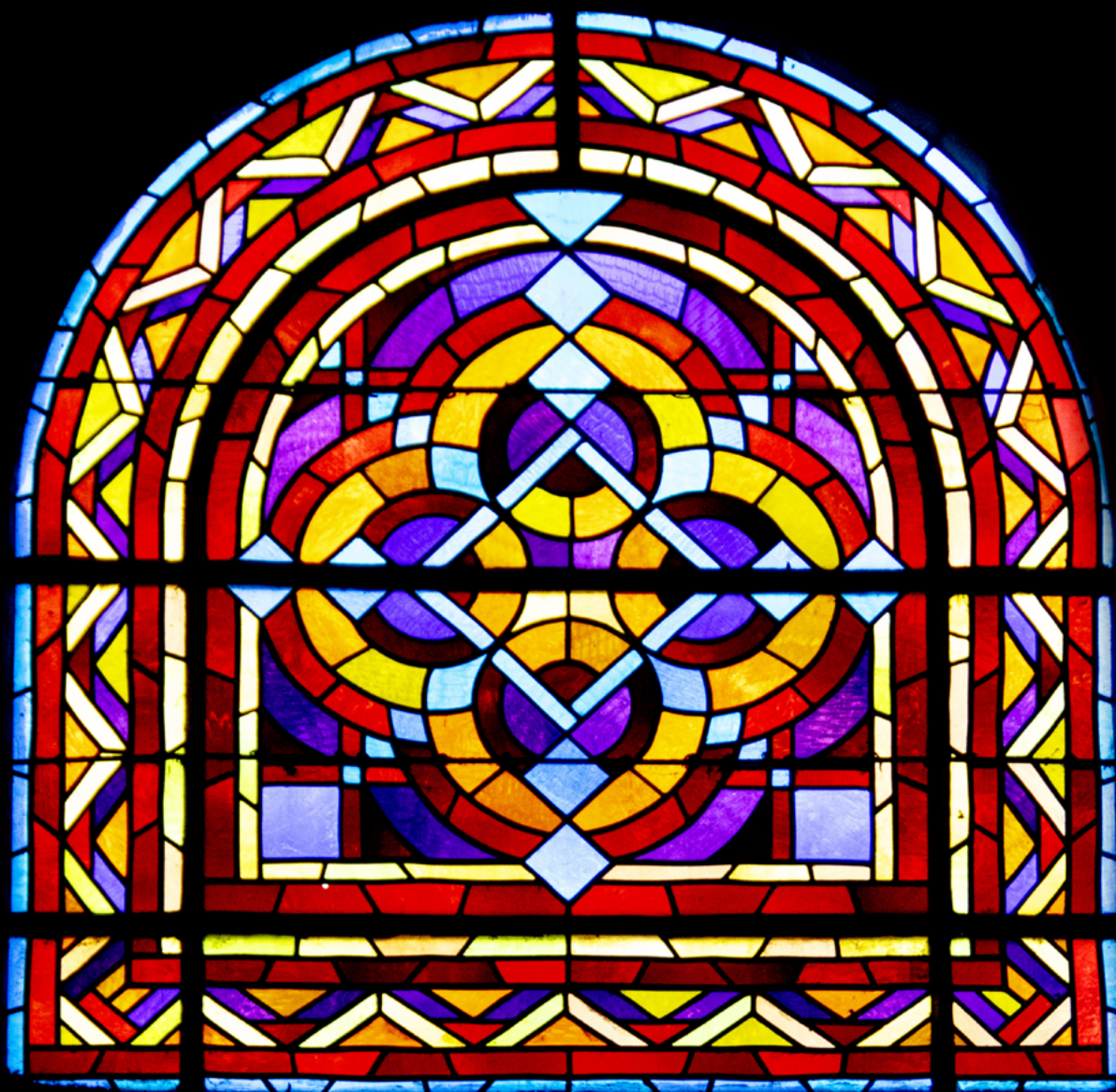
Holidays  
at the Winspear

# Handel's Messiah

presented with Richard Eaton Singers

Friday, December 3, 2021 • 7:30 PM

Saturday, December 4, 2021 • 7:30 PM



# Land Acknowledgement

The Winspear Centre and Edmonton Symphony Orchestra would like to acknowledge that we are on Treaty 6 Territory, a traditional meeting ground, gathering place, and traveling route for many Indigenous Peoples. We honour and recognize the rich artistic, cultural, and musical traditions of the Cree, Nakota Sioux, Metis, Dene, Saulteaux, and the many more Indigenous communities that call this land we share, home.



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## FEATURED MUSICIANS:

**Leonard Ratzlaff**

Conductor

**Sherry Steele**

Soprano

**Catherine Anne Daniel**

Alto

**John Tessier**

Tenor

**Paul Grindlay**

Bass

**Richard Eaton Singers**

(Leonard Ratzlaff, Music Director)

**Frédéric Payant**

ESO Trumpet

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## HANDEL

*Messiah, HWV 56* (Watkins Shaw edition)

(61')\*

### First Part:

1. Overture
2. Recitative: *Comfort ye, my people*
3. Air: *Ev'ry valley shall be exalted*
4. Chorus: *And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed*
5. Recitative: *Thus saith the Lord of hosts*
6. Air: *But who may abide the day of His coming?*
7. Chorus: *And He shall purify*
12. Chorus: *For unto us a Child is born*
18. Air: *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion*
21. Chorus: *His yoke is easy, His burthen is light*

\*indicates approximate performance duration

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## HANDEL

*Messiah, HWV 56* (Watkins Shaw edition)

(61')\*

### Second Part:

- 33. Chorus: *Lift up your heads, O ye gates*
- 38. Aria: *How beautiful are the feet of them*
- 39. Chorus: *Their sound is gone out into all lands*
- 40. Air: *Why do the nations so furiously rage together?*
- 41. Chorus: *Let us break their bonds asunder*
- 42. Recitative: *He that dwelleth in heaven*
- 43. Air: *Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron*
- 44. Chorus: *Hallelujah*

### Third Part:

- 46. Chorus: *Since by man came death*
- 47. Recitative: *Behold, I tell you a mystery*
- 48. Air: *The trumpet shall sound*
- 53. Chorus: *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain - Amen*

\*indicates approximate performance duration

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## ***Messiah, HWV 56***

### **George Frideric Handel**

(b. Halle, 1685 / d. London, 1759)

The German-born master of Italian opera, George Frideric Handel knew German prince George, Elector of Hanover, when both had still lived in Germany. Handel, in fact, received permission from Prince George to “temporarily” travel to England, which he did in 1710. The subsequent success he enjoyed in London persuaded Handel to stay there by 1712; so when the Hanoverian George succeeded Queen Anne to become King George I of Great Britain, while it may have made for an awkward reunion for the German ex-patriots, it did not take long for King George to welcome Handel back into his favour. Many more

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successes came Handel's way in his new home, as did acclaim from all sides. But baroque opera, as a form, began sinking under the weight of its own excesses by the 1730s, and Handel's fortunes waned as a result. As shrewd a businessman as he was a supreme musician, Handel correctly foresaw oratorio as the next popular concert form.

Like opera, oratorio involves soloists, chorus, and orchestra. There is often a story related in the text of oratorio. But while operas of the day leaned more toward classical themes and stories, oratorios tended to lean to more sacred, spiritual texts. Another key difference between the two forms was language; oratorios were usually sung in the native tongue, and thus were perhaps more accessible to a wider, more

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middle-class audience than Italian opera. In short order, Handel showed a deft hand at English oratorio, with works such as *Deborah* (1733), *Saul* (1738), and *Israel in Egypt* (1739). By 1741, he stood once again at the vanguard of British musical life.

It was librettist Charles Jennens who came up with the idea for *Messiah*, presenting Handel with a collection of texts from the Bible. *Messiah* was composed in a blinding flash of creativity of only 25 days. Jennens, however, seemed unimpressed. "His *Messiah* had disappointed me, being set in great haste, tho' he said he would be a year about it, and make it the best of all his Compositions," wrote Jennens. "I shall put no more Sacred works into his hands, thus to be abus'd." One wonders,

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parenthetically, how many other librettists would give their eye teeth to have their words “abus’d” in such a manner! It is also worth noting that Jennens’ comments were made before he had heard the work, and his words softened quite a bit after. He and Handel collaborated on other oratorios (*Saul, L’Allegro and Belshazzar*), and they re-established good terms with each other.

Handel staged a public dress rehearsal of the new work – a move that generated such tremendous anticipation and publicity that hundreds were turned away from the official debut performance on April 13, 1742. Of those that were able to attend, the ladies were asked to remove the hoops from their gowns, and gentlemen were asked not to wear their swords,

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to accommodate the crush of people.

While the first performance – which took place in Dublin, as a benefit for a foundling hospital – was a well-attended affair, *Messiah* was not a hit from the outset. It would take a decade or so of London-based performances for the work to acquire the popularity it has subsequently never relinquished.

As an example of the oratorio form, *Messiah* stands apart from many of its fellows. There are no “character” parts sung by the soloists, and in fact there is, beyond some description of the birth of Christ in Part I, and His Passion in Part II, no story told in the music – there is no narrative line, as such. By 1750, *Messiah* was an unqualified success. Handel himself

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oversaw no less than 36 performances of it before his death in 1759. Handel often made adaptations to the work to suit the needs of particular singers, available instrumentation, and even just to make improvements as he saw fit.

Part I of *Messiah* deals with the prophecies of the coming of both Christ and John the Baptist, taken mostly from the Old Testament books of Isaiah and Malachi. The Christmas story as recounted in Luke comes complete with an exquisite instrumental pastorage, in true baroque Christmas concerto style, leading to a hopeful conclusion with the beautiful and tender aria “He shall feed His flock” and the buoyant choral fugue “His yoke is easy.”

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EDMONTON  
SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA

Part II begins dramatically with the dark chorus “Behold the Lamb of God.” From there, the Passion of Christ is told starkly, though not with texts taken directly from the gospels, but rather as anticipated in Isaiah and the Psalms. An account of the glory of God climaxes in the rousing “Hallelujah,” with words taken from the Book of Revelation. It was an early performance of *Messiah*, attended by King George II, at which began the tradition of rising for this chorus. So taken was he by the music, the King stood, and when he did, everyone else did out of respect. We’ve been doing it since.

The actual resurrection of Christ seems almost skimmed over in Part II, but in *Messiah’s* Part III, the resurrection is meditated upon in great detail,

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beginning with the beautiful “I know that my Redeemer liveth.” Judgment day is looked for in the tense “Why do the nations so furiously rage together?” and the grand “The trumpet shall sound” (complete with a brilliant trumpet obligato part). With appropriate choral flourish, *Messiah* closes with the declamatory Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,” and another grand fugue on the word “Amen.”

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**Program notes © 2021 by D.T. Baker**

***Messiah***

**text assembled from Scripture by Charles Jennens**

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## FIRST PART

### 1. Sinfonia

(Grave – Allegro moderato)

### 2. Recitative:

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*)

### 3. Air:

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

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places plain. (*Isaiah 40: 4*)

## 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*)

## 5. Recitative:

Thus saith the Lord of Hosts: Yet once a little while and I will shake the heavens 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

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Hosts. (*Malachi 3: 1*)

## 6. Air:

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*)

## 7. Chorus:

And He shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.  
(*Malachi 3: 3*)

## 12. 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

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Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace! (*Isaiah 9: 6*)

## 18. Air:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold thy King cometh unto thee. He is the righteous Saviour, and He shall speak peace unto the heathen. (*Zechariah 9: 9-10*)

## 21. Chorus:

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

## SECOND PART

## 33. Chorus:

Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye

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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 the King of Glory?  
The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory. (*Psalm 24:  
7-10*)

## **38. Air:**

How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the  
gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.  
(*Romans 10: 15*)

## **39. Chorus:**

Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words  
unto the ends of the world. (*Romans 10: 18*)

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## 40. Air:

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*)

## 41. Chorus:

Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their yokes from us (*Psalms 2: 3*)

## 42. Recitative:

He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn, the Lord shall have them in derision (*Psalms 2: 4*)

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## 43. Air:

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

## 44. Chorus:

Hallelujah, for the Lord of God Omnipotent reigneth,  
Hallelujah! (*Revelation 19: 6*)

The Kingdom of this world is become the Kingdom of  
our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever  
and ever, Hallelujah! (*Revelation 19: 15*)

King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and he shall reign for  
ever and ever, Hallelujah (*Revelation 19: 16*)

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## THIRD PART

### 46. 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*)

### 47. Recitative:

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*)

### 48. Air:

The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be rais'd incorruptible, and we shall be chang'd. For this

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corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (*1 Corinthians 15: 52-53*)

## **53. Chorus:**

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by His blood, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing. Blessing and honour, glory and pow'r be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. (*Revelation 5: 12-14*)

Amen.

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