

HANDEL'S MESSIAH

December 8 & 9, 2023 • 7:30 PM

Co-production with the Richard Eaton Singers

Featuring:

Nicholas McGegan, Conductor – see *bio on page 9*.

Claire de Sévigné, Soprano

Georgia Burashko, Mezzo-soprano

Isaiah Bell, Tenor

Tyler Duncan, Baritone

Richard Eaton Singers (Timothy Shantz, Artistic Director) – see *bio on page 10*.

To read the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra roster, see page 11.

HANDEL

Messiah, HWV 56 (Bärenreiter Edition) – text on page 4.

(111)*

Part One

Overture: Grave - Allegro moderato

Recitative: "Comfort ye, my people"

Air: "Ev'ry valley shall be exalted"

Chorus "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed"

Recitative: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts"

Air: "But who may abide the day of His coming?"

Chorus: "And He shall purify"

Air: "O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion"

Recitative: "For behold, a virgin shall conceive"

Air: "The people that walked in darkness"

Chorus: "For unto us a Child is born"

Pifa: Pastorale Symphony

Recitative: "There were shepherds abiding in the field"

Recitative: "And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them"

Recitative: "And the angel said unto them"

Recitative: "And suddenly there was with the angel"

Chorus: "Glory to God in the highest"

Air: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion"

Recitative: "The shall the eyes of the blind be open'd"

Air: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd"

Chorus: "His yoke is easy, His burthen is light"

INTERMISSION (20 minutes)

Part Two

Chorus: "Behold the Lamb of God"

Air: "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: "All they that see Him laugh him to scorn"

Chorus: "He trusted in God that He would deliver Him"

Recitative: "Thy rebuke hath broken His heart"

Air: "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow"

Recitative: "He was cut off out of the land of the living"

Air: "But Thou didst not leave His soul in hell"

Chorus: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates"

Aria: "How beautiful are the feet of them"

Air: "Why do the nations so furiously rage together?"

Chorus: "Let us break their bonds asunder"

Recitative: "He that dwelleth in heaven"

Air: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron"

Chorus: "Hallelujah!"

Part Three

Air: "I know that my Redeemer liveth"

Chorus: "Since by man came death"

Recitative: "Behold, I tell you a mystery"

Air: "The trumpet shall sound"

Chorus: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain"

Chorus: "Amen"

Program subject to change.

*indicates approximate performance duration

Messiah, HWV 56

George Frideric Handel

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

First performed: April 13, 1742, in Dublin

Last ESO performance: December 2022

German-born composer George Frideric Handel came to England in 1710 at the invitation of an impresario, to present a new Italian opera for the British public. He had great success with it, so much so that he came back to England for good in 1712. For the next few years, he ruled the British opera scene, winning many admirers, but also attracting a scorn born largely of jealousy by British musicians who regarded him as an imported upstart.

So, when the taste for opera began to wane, it appeared as if Handel's fortunes had turned for the worse. Fortunately for him, he soon found his way back into public favour through his oratorios. In many ways, oratorios are similar to operas. They often tell a story, through the use of recitatives, solo arias, choruses, and instrumental music. Frequently, the solo singers have roles to play. But oratorios are not acted out, nor are there sets and costumes – rather, they are presented as concert performances. Not only that, but oratorios are (usually) written in the native language of the audience, rather than in what was the principal language of opera at the time: Italian. And often, the subjects chosen for oratorios are religious in nature. Handel wrote his first oratorios long before arriving in England, so when he saw which way the tide was turning for the music-loving English audience, he produced his first sacred work in English, the ode *Alexander's Feast*, in 1736, then the oratorio *Saul* in 1738. It was the latter which brought him in contact with librettist Charles Jennens.

It was Jennens who provided texts taken from scripture to Handel for *Messiah*. Busy with other works, Handel raced through the music for *Messiah*, completing it in less than four weeks. Friends describe Handel as working on the music as though possessed, and Jennens at first expressed displeasure that Handel did not spend more time on the composition, as he felt the words deserved.

In 1741, Handel came to Ireland at the invitation of the Duke of Devonshire, who was at that time the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. While Dublin was a major city, it was not London, so Handel was not sure of the exact nature of the musicians who would be available to him. Because of that, in preparation for the first performances of *Messiah*, Handel scored the work for a modest orchestra – strings, trumpets, and timpani (other instruments would be added later). Handel's presence in the Dublin arts scene was certainly one of the highlights of the season there, and word spread quickly about the new work – so much so that rehearsals were open to the public, and at its first ticketed performances, gentlemen were asked to come without their swords, and ladies without hoops in their dresses, so as to allow more people to be seated.

The six-performance premiere, presented in a theatre in Fishamble Street, was given as a series of benefit performances, raising funds for prisoners' debt relief, the Mercer's Hospital, and the Charitable Infirmary. The work received glowing reviews in the Irish press – though when the work was first performed in London (at Covent Garden on March 23, 1743), reviews there comparatively tepid. Among the objections stated was the idea that so sacred a text should not be performed in a theatre, but rather a church. Within a few years, however, *Messiah* established itself as a favourite, a position it has never relinquished since.

Unlike oratorios, which tell a story, *Messiah* is a reflection on the life and mission of Jesus Christ. Part One begins with excerpts from Old Testament, promising the coming of the saviour. The only real narrative portion of the work is the story of the first Christmas as told in the gospel of Luke. Part Two of *Messiah* dwells on the suffering of Christ, and what his sacrifice means to the Christian world. Part Two ends with the famous Hallelujah chorus, with words taken from the book of Revelation. Part Three puts the death and resurrection in a more direct message for humanity, that Christ's triumph over death means hope for salvation.

At Jennens' urging, Handel did make some revisions to *Messiah* before the work was presented in London. During Handel's lifetime, he continued to change things to suit new performances, taking advantage of particular singers to transpose an aria or two, or even change an aria from one voice part to another. "Their sound has gone out," for example, began as an aria, but is now a chorus. Before the end of the century, *Messiah* had been presented in one form or another all over Europe, and even in North America. More and more grander orchestrations were made of it, bloating the work out of any proper sense of proportion, though fortunately today, it is rare to hear the work in any guise other than one which Handel himself would have conducted. *Messiah* is now an established Christmas tradition in many parts of the world – though it was never intended as a Christmas work – its first performances were closer to Easter.

Program note © 2023 by D.T. Baker

Text

Part I

Recit

Comfort ye, my people, saith your God; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned. 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.

Aria

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low: the crooked straight and the rough places plain.

[Isaiah 40:1-4]

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]

Recit

Thus saith the Lord of Hosts: Yet once a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea and the dry land, and I will shake all nations, and the desire of 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.

[Haggai 2:6-7; Malachi 3:1]

Aria

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]

Recit

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel, God with us.

[Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23]

Aria/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 40:9; 60:1]

Recit

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]

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 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]

Recit

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

Recit

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.

Recit

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.

Recit

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

[Luke 2:8-11,13]

Chorus

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

[Luke 2:14]

Aria

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]

Recit

Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, 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]

Aria

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, that are heavy laden, and He will give you rest. Take His yoke upon you, and learn of Him, for he is meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

[Isaiah 40:11; Matthew 11:28-29]

Chorus

His yoke is easy, and his burthen is light.

[Matthew 11:30]

Part II

Chorus

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

[John 1:29]

Aria

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]

Chorus

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

Chorus

And with His stripes we are healed.

Chorus

All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way. And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

[Isaiah 53:4-6]

Recit

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

[Psalms 22:8]

Chorus

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

[Psalms 22:9]

Recit

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]

Recit

Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow.

[Lamentations 1:12]

Recit

He was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of Thy people was He stricken.

[Isaiah 53:8]

Aria

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

[Psalms 16:10]

Chorus

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

[Psalms 24:7-10]

Aria

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

[Romans 10:15]

Aria

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 His Anointed.

[Psalms 2:1-2]

Chorus

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

[Psalms 2:3]

Aria

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

[Psalms 2:4,9]

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.

[Revelation 19:6; 11:15; 19:16]

Part III

Aria

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; I Corinthians 15:20]

Chorus

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

[I Corinthians 15:21-22]

Recit

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

Aria

The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

[I Corinthians 15:51-53]

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 power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.

[Revelation 5:12-13]

Chorus

Amen.

Biographies

Nicholas McGegan, Conductor

In his sixth decade on the podium, Nic McGegan — long hailed as “one of the finest baroque conductors of his generation” (The Independent) and “an expert in 18th-century style” (The New Yorker) — is recognized for his probing and revelatory explorations of music of all periods. Following a 34-year tenure as Music Director of Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Chorale, he is now Music Director Laureate. He is also Principal Guest Conductor of Hungary’s Capella Savaria. At home in opera houses, McGegan shone new light on close to twenty Handel operas as the Artistic Director and conductor at Germany’s Göttingen Handel Festival for 20 years (1991-2001), and the Mozart canon as Principal Guest Conductor at Scottish Opera in the 1990s. He was also Principal Conductor of Sweden’s Drottningholm Court Theatre from 1993-1996.

Best known as a baroque and classical specialist, McGegan’s approach — intelligent, infused with joy and never dogmatic, along with an ability to engage players and audiences alike — has made him a pioneer in broadening the reach of historically informed practice beyond the world of period ensembles to conventional symphonic forces. His guest-conducting appearances with major orchestras — including the New York, Los Angeles, and Hong Kong Philharmonics; the Chicago, Dallas, Milwaukee, Toronto, Sydney, and New Zealand Symphonies; the Philadelphia Orchestra; the Royal Northern Sinfonia and Scottish Chamber Orchestras; and the Amsterdam Concertgebouw — often feature Baroque repertoire alongside Classical, Romantic, 20th-century and even brand-new works. He has led performances of Mendelssohn, Sibelius, Britten, Bach and Handel with the Utah Symphony; Poulenc and Mozart with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra; and the premiere of Stephen Hough’s *Missa Mirabilis* with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, paired with Haydn, Brahms and Mendelssohn. He collaborates frequently with the Mark Morris Dance Group, including the premiere productions of Rameau’s *Platée* and Handel’s *Acis and Galatea*.

Highlights of his 21/22 guest bookings in North America include appearances with the National Symphony Orchestra at both the Kennedy Center and the new Capital One Hall; the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra; a string of Messiah engagements with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, and *Apollo’s Fire*; the Santa Barbara Symphony; Pasadena Symphony; a return to St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, which he’s guest conducted for decades; and the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in the all-Mozart semi-final round, which he led at the last competition in 2017. In Europe, he appears with the NDR Radio Philharmonie in Handel’s *Acis and Galatea* HWV 49 (Mendelssohn’s version); the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra; and several performances with Capella Savaria.

McGegan’s prolific discography includes more than 100 releases spanning five decades. Having recorded over 50 albums of Handel, McGegan has explored the depths of the composer’s output with a dozen oratorios and close to twenty of his operas. Since the 1980s, more than twenty of his recordings have been with Hungary’s Capella Savaria on the Hungaroton label, including groundbreaking opera and oratorio recordings of repertoire by Handel, Monteverdi, Scarlatti, Telemann and Vivaldi. Recently, the collaboration has produced albums of Kraus, Mendelssohn, Schubert, a 2-CD set of the complete Mozart violin concerti, and Haydn’s Symphonies 79, 80, and 81. McGegan has also released two recent albums with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra under the BIS label: Josef Mysliveček’s *Complete Music for Keyboard* with soloist Clare Hammond and an album of early horn concertos with soloist Alec Frank-Gemmill. His extensive discography with Philharmonia Baroque includes two GRAMMY nominees, Handel’s *Susana* and Haydn’s Symphonies 104, 88, and 101.

Mr. McGegan is committed to the next generation of musicians, frequently conducting and coaching students in residencies and engagements at Yale University, the Juilliard School, Harvard University, the Colburn School, Aspen Music Festival and School, Sarasota Music Festival, and the Music Academy of the West. He has been awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Music by the San Francisco Conservatory of Music; an honorary professorship at Georg-August University, Göttingen; and in 2016 was the Christoph Wolff Distinguished Visiting Scholar at Harvard. McGegan's fun and informative lectures have delighted audiences at Juilliard, Yale Center for British Arts, American Handel Society, and San Francisco Conservatory.

English-born, Nic McGegan was educated at Cambridge and Oxford. He was made an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) "for services to music overseas." Other awards include the Halle Handel Prize; the Order of Merit of the State of Lower Saxony (Germany); the Medal of Honour of the City of Göttingen, and a declaration of Nicholas McGegan Day, by the Mayor of San Francisco in recognition of his work with Philharmonia.

For more information, visit nicholasmcgegan.com or visit his Facebook page at facebook.com/nicholasmcgegan.

Richard Eaton Singers (Timothy Shantz, Artistic Director)

RES performances have included Edmonton premieres of many choral masterpieces such as the Bach St. John and St. Matthew Passions, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem*, Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* and Vaughan Williams' *A Sea Symphony*.

RES has commissioned and produced many other world premiere performances by Canadian composers, including Imant Raminsh's *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, Mark Sirett's *In Praise of Music*, Christos Hatzis' *The Sepulcher of Life*, John Estacio's *The Houses Stand Not Far Apart*, Ruth Watson Henderson's *A Song of the Seasons* (text by Ted Blodgett) to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Dr Ratzlaff's artistic leadership of RES, and Estacio's *branche*, in memory of former choir member Frieda Haliburton.

The choir has traveled extensively across Canada, to the Netherlands, Germany, and most recently across the UK. They have exchanged with other choirs, including the Calgary Philharmonic Choir and Vancouver Bach Choir. RES also regularly performs with other Edmonton area choirs, most recently with Kappella Kyrie in a concert of sacred music of the Eastern Orthodox tradition.

As partners with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra RES has created many memorable choral events in our city, including the performance of Mahler's *Symphony of a Thousand* to celebrate the opening of the Francis Winspear Centre for Music, and many Christmas performances of Handel's *Messiah* and Lighter Christmas Classics.

RES has also joined forces with the Alberta Baroque Ensemble to perform Handel oratorios *Israel in Egypt* and *Solomon*, several sacred works of Mozart and Haydn, and Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, *St. John* and *St. Matthew Passions*, and *Mass in B Minor*.

Meet the Musicians

Michael Stern, Artistic Advisor

Cosette Justo Valdés, Resident Conductor and Community Ambassador

William Eddins, Music Director Emeritus, Conductor

Violin I

Robert Uchida, Concertmaster

The John & Barbara Poole Family Concertmaster Chair

Eric Buchmann, Associate Concertmaster

Broderick Olson

Ewald Cheung

Joanna Ciapka-Sangster

Laura Veeze

Anna Kozak

Aiyana Anderson-Howatt

Anita Walsh

Violin II

Dianne New – Principal

Susan Flook – Assistant Principal

Heather Bergen

Yue Deng

Danielle Greene

Buon Park

Yeeun Ha

Zoë Sellers (on leave)

Viola

Keith Hamm – Principal

Ethan Filner – Assistant Principal

Clayton Leung

Rhonda Henshaw

Stefan Jungkind

Cello

Rafael Hoekman – Principal

The Stuart & Winona Davis Principal Cello Chair

Julie Hereish – Assistant Principal

Ronda Metzies

Meran Currie-Roberts

Victor Pipkin

Bass

Hilda Cowie – Principal

Chris Jones – Acting Assistant Principal

Janice Quinn

Rob Aldridge

Chantel Leung

Douglas Ohashi (on leave)

*The ESO works in proud partnership with the AF of M
(American Federation of Musicians of the United States
and Canada) Local 390.*

Flute

Elizabeth Koch – Principal

Sarah Pollard – Assistant Principal

Oboe

June Kim – Principal

Paul Schieman – Assistant Principal

The Steven & Day LePoole Assistant Principal Oboe Chair

Clarinet

Julianne Scott – Principal

David Quinn – Assistant Principal

Bassoon

Bianca Chambul – Principal

Edith Stacey – Assistant Principal

Horn

Allene Hackleman – Principal

Megan Evans – Assistant Principal

Ryan Garbett – Assistant Principal

Donald Plumb – Assistant Principal

Trumpet

Robin Doyon – Principal

Frédéric Payant – Assistant Principal

Trombone

John McPherson – Principal

Kathryn Macintosh – Assistant Principal

Bass Trombone

Tyler Cairns – Principal

Tuba

Scott Whetham – Principal

Timpani

Barry Nemish – Principal

Percussion

Martin Bui – Principal

Harp

Nora Bumanis – Principal