

George Frideric Handel, 1685–1759

# MESSIAH

1742

**Handel Choir of Baltimore**

**Handel Period Instrument Orchestra**

Abigail Raiford *soprano*

Keith Wehmeier *countertenor*

Matthew Newhouse *tenor*

Dorian McCall *bass*

Brian Bartoldus *conductor*

**Saturday, December 9, 2023**

**7:30 pm**

*Grace United Methodist Church*

*5407 North Charles Street*

*Baltimore, MD 21210*

**Sunday, December 10, 2023**

**3:00 pm**

*Christ Lutheran Church*

*701 South Charles Street*

*Baltimore, MD 21230*



# **MESSIAH**

## **TEXT AND TRANSLATIONS**

### **LIBRETTO**

#### **MESSIAH: A SACRED ORATORIO**

*Text compiled by Charles Jennens*

#### ***From Part the First***

##### **1. Sinfonia (Overture)**

##### **2. Recitative (Tenor)**

Comfort ye, 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. (Isaiah 40: 1-3)

##### **3. Air (Tenor)**

Ev'ry valley shall be exalted, and ev'ry mountain and hill made low; the crooked straight and the rough places plain. (Isaiah 40: 4)

##### **4. Chorus**

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord have spoken it. (Isaiah 40: 5)

##### **5. Recitative (Bass)**

Thus saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts: Yet once a little while and I will shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dryland. And I will shake all nations; and the desire of all nations shall come. (Haggai 2: 6-7)

##### **6(a). Air (Alto)**

But who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire. (Malachi 3: 2)

##### **7. Chorus**

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

##### **8. Recitative (Alto)**

Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Emmanuel, God with us. (Isaiah 7: 14; Matthew 1: 23)

##### **9. Air and Chorus (Alto)**

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; Isaiah 60:1)

### **10. Recitative (Bass)**

For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. (Isaiah 60: 2-3)

### **11. Air (Bass)**

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; and they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. ((Isaiah 9: 2)

### **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 Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9: 6)

### **13. Pifa**

#### **14(a). Recitative (Soprano)**

There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. (Luke 2: 8)

#### **14(b). Recitative (Soprano)**

And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. (Luke 2: 9)

#### **15. Recitative (Soprano)**

And the angel said unto them: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2: 10-11)

#### **16. Recitative (Soprano)**

And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying: (Luke 2: 13)

#### **17. Chorus**

"Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men."  
(Luke 2: 14)

#### **18(a). Aria (Soprano)**

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, they King cometh unto thee; He is the righteous Saviour, and He shall speak peace unto the heathen. (Zachariah 9: 9-10)

#### **21. Chorus**

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

## **INTERMISSION**

## *From Part the Second*

### **23. Aria (Alto)**

He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. (Isaiah 53: 3)

### **24. Chorus**

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)

### **29. Recitative (Tenor)**

Thy rebuke hath broken his heart: He is full of heaviness. He looked for some to have pity on Him, but there was no man, neither found He any to comfort him. (Psalms 69: 20)

### **30. Arioso (Tenor)**

Behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow! (Lamentations 1: 12)

### **31. Recitative (Soprano)**

He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgressions of Thy people was He stricken. (Isaiah 53: 8)

### **32. Aria (Soprano)**

But Thou didst not leave His soul in hell, nor didst Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption. (Psalms 16: 10)

### **33. 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. (Psalms 24: 7-10)

### **34. Recitative (Tenor)**

Unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee? (Hebrews 1: 5)

### **35. Chorus**

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

### **36(a). Aria (Alto)**

Thou art gone up on high; Thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, yea, even for Thine enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among them. (Psalms 68: 18)

### **38(a). Aria (Soprano)**

How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things. (Isaiah 52: 7; 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)

### **40(a). Aria (Bass)**

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 counsels together against the Lord and His anointed. (Psalms 2: 1,2)

### **42. Recitative (Tenor)**

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

### **43(a). Aria (Tenor)**

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

### **44. Chorus**

Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, Hallelujah! 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, and He shall reign for ever and ever, Hallelujah! (Revelation 19: 6; 11: 15; 19: 16)

### *From Part the Third*

### **45. Aria (Soprano)**

I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And tho' worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.  
(Job 19: 25-26)

### **47. Recitative (Bass)**

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be chang'd in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. (I Corinthians 15: 51-52)

### **48. Aria (Bass)**

The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be rais'd incorruptible, and we shall be chang'd. (I Corinthians 15: 52)

### **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)

### **54. Chorus**

Amen.

# MESSIAH

## PROGRAM NOTES

George Frideric Handel's sacred oratorio *Messiah* is without question one of the most popular works in the choral/orchestral repertoire today. In what has become an indispensable Christmas tradition, amateur and professional musicians in almost every city and town throughout the country perform this work as a seasonal entertainment and are rewarded with the satisfaction of taking part in one of the great communal musical events.

The text for *Messiah* was selected and compiled from the Authorized (King James) Version of the Bible by Charles Jennens, an aristocrat and musician/poet of modest talent and exceptional ego. With *Messiah*, Jennens seems to have outdone himself in compiling a libretto with profound thematic coherence and an acute sensitivity to the inherent musical structure. Handel began setting it to music on August 22, 1741 and completed it 24 days later. He was certainly working at white-hot speed, but this didn't necessarily indicate he was in the throes of devotional fervor, as legend has often stated. Handel composed many of his works in haste, and immediately after completing *Messiah* he wrote his next oratorio, *Samson*, in a similarly brief timespan.

The swiftness with which Handel composed *Messiah* can be partially explained by the musical borrowings from his own earlier compositions. For example, the melodies used in the two choruses "And He shall purify" and "His yoke is easy" were taken from an Italian chamber duet Handel had written earlier in 1741, "Quel fior che all' alba ride." Another secular duet, "Nò, di voi non vo' fidarmi," provided material for the famous chorus "For unto us a Child is born," and the delightful "All we like sheep" borrows its wandering melismas from the same duet. A madrigal from 1712, "Se tu non lasci amore," was transformed into a duet-chorus pair for the end of the oratorio, "O Death, where is thy sting," and "But thanks be to God." In each instance, however, Handel does more than simply provide new words to old tunes. There is considerable re-composition, and any frivolity that remains from the lighthearted secular models is more than compensated for by the new material Handel masterfully worked into each chorus.

Overenthusiastic "Handelists" in the 19th century perpetuated all sorts of legends regarding the composition of *Messiah*. An often-repeated story relates how Handel's servant found him sobbing with emotion while writing the famous "Hallelujah Chorus," and the composer claiming, "I did think I did see all Heaven before me and the great God Himself." Supposedly Handel often left his meals untouched during this compositional period, in an apparent display of devotional fasting and monastic self-denial. Present-day historians more familiar with Handel's life and religious views tend to downplay these stories. It's been suggested that if Handel did indeed have visions of Heaven while he composed *Messiah*, then it was only in the same manner in which he visualized the Roman pantheon of gods while he composed his opera *Semele*. Handel's

religious faith was sincere, but tended to be practical rather than mystical.

The tradition of performing *Messiah* at Christmas began later in the 18th century. Although the work was occasionally performed during Advent in Dublin, the oratorio was usually regarded in England as an entertainment for the penitential season of Lent, when performances of opera were banned. *Messiah's* extended musical focus on Christ's redeeming sacrifice also makes it particularly suitable for Passion Week and Holy Week, the periods when it was usually performed during Handel's lifetime. But in 1791, the Cæcilian Society of London began its annual Christmas performances, and in 1818 the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston gave the work's first complete performance in the U.S. on Christmas Day—establishing a tradition that continues to the present.

Following the pattern of Italian baroque opera, *Messiah* is divided into three parts. The first is concerned with prophecies of the Messiah's coming, drawing heavily from messianic texts in the Book of Isaiah, and concludes with an account of the Christmas story that mixes both Old and New Testament sources. The second part deals with Christ's mission and sacrifice, culminating in the grand "Hallelujah Chorus." The final, shortest section is an extended hymn of thanksgiving, an expression of faith beginning with Job's statement "I know that my Redeemer liveth" and closing with the majestic chorus "Worthy is the Lamb" and a fugal "Amen." In its focus on Christ's sacrifice, *Messiah* resembles the great Lutheran Passions of Schütz and Bach, but with much less direct narrative and more meditative commentary on the redemptive nature of the Messiah's earthly mission. Handel scholar Robert Myers suggested that "logically Handel's masterpiece should be called Redemption, for its author celebrates the idea of Redemption, rather than the personality of Christ." For the believer and nonbeliever alike, Handel's *Messiah* is undoubtedly a majestic musical edifice.

*Program Notes by Luke Howard, 2009.*





## ABIGAIL RAIFORD

Lyric coloratura Soprano Abigail Raiford has been noted for her “powerful, luxurious Soprano voice, as well her wonderfully comic way of weeping as the woebegone Elvira” in Tulsa Opera’s 2022 production of Rossini’s *L’Italiana in Algeri*. In 2023 she was a District Winner of the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition for the Tulsa District, received an Incentive Award from the 2022 SAS Performing Arts Company Vocal Competition, and was a finalist in the Emerging Artist Division of the MI Opera

Vocal Competition. That same season she joined Central City Opera as a Bonfils-Stanton Studio Artist, performing Krysia in Heggie’s *Two Remain* and Ida in *Die Fledermaus*. Abigail was also awarded the prestigious Central City Opera Guild’s McGlone Award. A resident and apprentice Artist for multiple seasons with Sarasota Opera, highlights included Second Witch in their 2021 production of *Dido & Aeneas* and the role of Belinda for family audiences. A former Studio Artist with St. Petersburg Opera, she covered Despina in *Così fan tutte* and sang Olympia in Davies’ *Pinocchio*.

A noted interpreter of the operas of Mozart, signature roles include the Queen of the Night and First Lady in *Die Zauberflöte* and Despina in *Così fan tutte*. Other credits are Rose Murrant in *Street Scene*, Anicasia in *La Dolorosa*, and Yum-Yum in *The Mikado*. Her vocalism has thrilled audiences on the concert stage as well, especially in Milhaud’s *Chansons de Ronsard* with the Mannes Orchestra, *Carmina Burana* with Emory University Symphony and Choir, and John Mackey’s *Songs From the End of the World* with the University of Tulsa Wind Ensemble. Upcoming performances include her debut with Handel Choir of Baltimore in *Messiah*. She earned a Master of Music degree from the Mannes School of Music as a student of Amy Burton, and received her Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Tulsa, under the tutelage of her mother, Judith Pannill Raiford.



## KEITH WEHMEIER

American countertenor **Keith Wehmeier** is a native of St. Louis and an up-and-coming singer on the concert and operatic stage. Praised for his “bright, agile vocal technique” by the San Diego Story, he is quickly carving out a niche for himself in the bravura roles written by Handel. The South Florida Classical Review said of his performance, “Keith Wehmeier’s countertenor voice was both strong and dulcet and he phrased the text with subtlety.” Other festival credits include Polinesso in Handel’s *Ariodante*, Oberon in the Miami Music Festival production of Britten’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and roles

with the Amherst Early Music Festival, as well as the Haymarket Opera Summer Course in Chicago.



This coming season, Keith will sing Farnace in Mozart's *Mitridate* at Opera Neo in San Diego and will also make several concert appearances. First, in St. Louis, he sings a concert of Handel works with the Kingsbury Ensemble. Following this, he will sing with the American Bach Soloists Academy program in August and will make his debut with the Handel Choir of Baltimore in their *Messiah*. Keith has sung locally with the St. Louis Symphony where he has had the opportunity to be a soloist on Bernstein's *Chichester Psalm*, a principal singer, and cover soloist. Among his opera performances, Keith has appeared in the world premiere of *Champion*, an opera in Jazz by Terrence Blanchard, as well as *Carmen* at Opera Theatre of St. Louis.



## MATTHEW NEWHOUSE

Texas-born tenor **Matthew Newhouse** brings power, tenderness and evocative storytelling to the concert stage. Matthew is a proud alumnus of the prestigious Virginia Best Adams Masterclass at the Carmel Bach Festival. As a soloist, Matthew recently made his Evangelist debut in J.S. Bach's *Weihnachtsoratorium* with Yale's Schola Cantorum. Other soloist highlights include J.S. Bach's *Magnificat* (TENET Vocal Artists), Haydn's *Die Schöpfungsmesse* (Juilliard 415), Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang* (Norfolk Chamber Music Festival) and Schütz's *Weihnachtshistorie* (Harmonium Stellarum).

Matthew's professional ensemble singer engagements have included collaborations with Apollo's Fire, The Thirteen, TENET Vocal Artists, VOCES8, Evergreen Ensemble, The Carmel Bach Festival and Emmanuel Music. Matthew has had the privilege to sing for and work with esteemed conductors Grete Pederson, Masaaki Suzuki, Nic McGegan, David Hill, Richard Bado, Steven Stubbs, Craig Hella Johnson, and Jeanette Sorrel. Matthew is an avid proponent of Icelandic vocal repertoire, and strives to incorporate Icelandic works into the classical music canon. Matthew holds a Master of Music in Early Music Voice from Yale School of Music and a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from Baylor University.



## DORIAN McCALL

**Dorian McCall**, Bass-baritone, has been mentioned by the New York Times for "his rich lows" and by Musical America as "[benefitting] from his freely produced Bass-baritone and his winning stage presence." Noted for his vibrant and robust timbre, the dexterity of McCall's instrument also lends itself well to Baroque and Bel Canto.

Hot on the heels of a charged reception at Teatro Nuovo as Fabrizio in Ricci's *Crispino e la comare*, upcoming engagements include a return to Haymarket Opera's production of *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina* and Cedar Rapids Opera's Lift Every Voice as

Resident Teaching Artist. This season also brings a premier with Chicago Chamber Choir as soloist for Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem*, chamber work with Chicago's Unity Temple (Lieberson's *The Coming of Light*), and Baltimore debuts with Handel Choir of Baltimore (*Messiah*) and Bel Cantanti Opera (*La sonnambula*).

Last season, McCall performed with Haymarket Opera as comprimari in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, workshopped an opera premier with Chicago Fringe Opera, and debuted with UIC Choirs as a soloist for Handel's *Messiah*. Spring had surprise debuts with Music of the Baroque as a soloist for Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion* and Big Spring Symphony for a concert celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> season as well as placing 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Classical Young Artist/Emerging Pro division of the 2022 CS Vocal Competition. 2021-2022 season appearances include Leonidas in a filmed production of Adamo's *Lysistrata*, Doctor in Young's *Death of Ivan Ilych*, Bass soloist for Saint Saëns' *Christmas Oratorio* and Handel's *Messiah*. He has performed for several seasons with the Chicago Symphony, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Grant Park Music Festival choruses.

## HANDEL PERIOD INSTRUMENT ORCHESTRA

### **Violin I**

June Huang, concertmaster  
Margaret Humphrey  
Epongue Ekille  
Ava Avanti

### **Violin II**

Asa Zimmerman  
Angela Chew  
Daphne Benichou  
Carolyn Foulkes

### **Viola**

Christof Heubner  
Renata Falkner

### **Cello**

Amy Domingues  
Katerina Kotar

### **Violone**

Sarah Wines

### **Bassoon**

Charles Wines

### **Trumpet**

Mariio Correa  
Nathan Lyle

### **Timpani**

Barry Dove

### **Harpsichord**

Paula Maust

### **Continuo Organ**

Thomas Hetrick



We hope you've enjoyed this performance of *Messiah* featuring the instruments and performance values familiar to Handel!



Thank you for gifting us with your presence, your applause, and your ticket purchase! If you'd like to further support our music-making, particularly with high quality guest artists, please consider making a further donation.



# BALTIMORE BETTER *together*

## MADE IN BALTIMORE, TOO

**MARCH 9, 2024 | 7:30PM**

Grace United Methodist Church  
5407 N Charles St, Baltimore

Virtuoso BSO pianist Lura Johnson performs Grieg, Sibelius, and Liszt, as well as a world premiere work for chorus and piano by Daniel Sabzghabaei.

Joined by jazz singer and Baltimore native Keith Snipes, Handel Choir's biennial celebration of Baltimore composers, writers, and musicians features lyrics from Frederick Douglass to Ogden Nash: a choral celebration of our great city!

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OF BALTIMORE



Brian Bartoldus  
*Artistic Director*

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