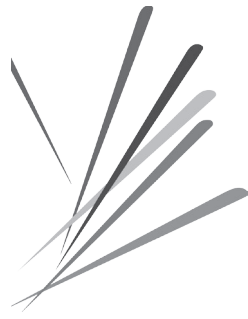


HOLIDAY • 2015/16



MESSIAH

COLORADO SYMPHONY

DUAIN WOLFE, conductor

MARY WILSON, soprano

CORRIE STALLINGS, mezzo-soprano

DEREK CHESTER, tenor

ANDREW GARLAND, baritone

COLORADO SYMPHONY CHORUS, DUAIN WOLFE, chorus director

THIS WEEKEND OF CONCERTS IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED TO
LLOYD J. KING AND ELEANOR R. KING FOUNDATION

FRIDAY'S CONCERT IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED TO LT. COL. AND MRS. ROBERT W. RIEGEL
SATURDAY'S CONCERT IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED TO THOMAS JIRAK AND SUSAN GRABER

Friday, December 18, 2015 at 7:30 pm

Saturday, December 19, 2015 at 7:30 pm

Boettcher Concert Hall

HANDEL *Messiah*

Part One

Overture (Sinfonia)

Comfort ye, my people

Ev'ry valley shall be exalted

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed

Thus saith the Lord

But who may abide the day of his coming?

And he shall purify

Behold! A virgin shall conceive

O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion

For behold, darkness shall cover the earth

The people that walked in darkness

For unto us a child is born

Pifa (Pastoral Symphony)

There were shepherds abiding in the field

And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them

And the angel said unto them

continued next page



HOLIDAY • 2015/16



And suddenly there was with the angel
Glory to God
Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion
Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened
He shall feed his flock
Come unto him
His yoke is easy

— INTERMISSION —

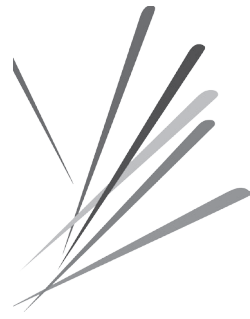
Part Two

Behold the Lamb of God
He was despised
Surely, he hath borne our griefs
And with his stripes we are healed
All we, like sheep, have gone astray
All they that see him laugh him to scorn
He trusted in God
Thy rebuke hath broken his heart
Behold, and see if there be any sorrow
He was cut off out of the land of the living
But thou didst not leave his soul in hell
Let all the angels of God worship him
How beautiful are the feet of them
Why do the nations so furiously rage together?
Let us break their bonds asunder
He that dwelleth in heaven
Thou shalt break them
Hallelujah

Part Three

I know that my redeemer liveth
Since by man came death
Behold, I tell you a mystery
The trumpet shall sound
Worthy is the Lamb
Amen

HOLIDAY • 2015/16



MESSIAH SING-ALONG

COLORADO SYMPHONY

DUAIN WOLFE, conductor

MARY WILSON, soprano

CORRIE STALLINGS, mezzo-soprano

DEREK CHESTER, tenor

ANDREW GARLAND, baritone

COLORADO SYMPHONY CHORUS, DUAIN WOLFE, chorus director

THIS WEEKEND OF CONCERTS IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED TO
LLOYD J. KING AND ELEANOR R. KING FOUNDATION

Sunday, December 20, 2015 at 1:00 pm
Boettcher Concert Hall

HANDEL *Messiah*

Part One

Overture (Sinfonia)

Comfort ye, my people

Ev'ry valley shall be exalted

And the glory of the Lord shall be exalted

Behold! A virgin shall conceive

O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion

For unto us a child is born

Pifa (Sinfonia)

There were shepherds abiding in the field

And lo, the angel of the Lord

And the angel said unto them

And suddenly there was with the angel

Glory to God

He shall feed his flock/Come unto him

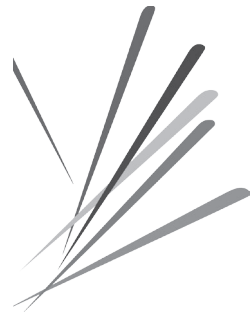
His yoke is easy

— INTERMISSION —

continued next page



HOLIDAY • 2015/16



Part Two

Surely, he hath borne our griefs

And with his stripes we are healed

All we, like sheep, have gone astray

All they that see him laugh him to scorn

He trusted in God

Thy rebuke hath broken his heart

Let all the angels of God worship him

Why do the nations so furiously rage together?

Let us break their bonds asunder

Hallelujah

Part Three

I know that my redeemer liveth

Since by man came death

Behold, I tell you a mystery

The trumpet shall sound

Worthy is the Lamb

Amen

MESSIAH TEXT

PART I

Overture (Sinfonia)

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.

ARIA – Tenor

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

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.

RECITATIVE – Bass

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. 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.

ARIA – 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.

CHORUS

And He shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

RECITATIVE – Alto

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

ARIA – 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 you God! Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

RECITATIVE – Bass

For Behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall rise 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.

ARIA – 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.

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.

Pifa (Pastoral Symphony)

RECITATIVE – Soprano

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

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.

RECITATIVE – Soprano

And the angel said unto the, 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.

RECITATIVE – Soprano

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

CHORUS

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

MESSIAH TEXT

ARIA – Soprano

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.

RECITATIVE – Alto

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.

ARIA – Alto

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.

ARIA

Come unto Him, all ye that labour and 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.

CHORUS

His yoke is easy and His burthen is light.

— INTERMISSION —

PART II

CHORUS

Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

ARIA – Alto

He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

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.

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.

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.

ARIA – Tenor

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

RECITATIVE – Tenor

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

ARIA – Tenor

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

RECITATIVE – Tenor

Unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee?

CHORUS

Let all the angels of God worship Him.

ARIA – Soprano

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

ARIA – Bass

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.

CHORUS

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

RECITATIVE – Tenor

He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn; the Lord shall have them in derision.

MESSIAH TEXT

ARIA – Tenor

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

CHORUS

Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. The kingdom of this world has 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. Hallelujah!

PART III

ARIA – Soprano

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.

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.

RECITATIVE – Bass

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

ARIA – Bass

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

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. Amen.



**Mussorgsky Pictures
At An Exhibition**

JAN 29-30 FRI-SAT 7:30

Jayce Ogren, conductor
Claude Sim, violin

coloradosymphony.org
303.623.7876

BOX OFFICE
MON-FRI 10 AM - 6 PM ~ SAT 12 PM - 6 PM

HOLIDAY BIOGRAPHIES

DUAIN WOLFE, conductor, Colorado Symphony Chorus, director



Recently awarded two Grammys® for *Best Choral Performance* and *Best Classical Recording*, Duain Wolfe is founder and Director of the Colorado Symphony Chorus and Music Director of the Chicago Symphony Chorus. This year marks Wolfe's 31st season with the Colorado Symphony Chorus. The Chorus has been featured at the Aspen Music Festival for over two decades. Wolfe, who is in his 21st season with the Chicago Symphony Chorus has collaborated with Daniel Barenboim, Pierre Boulez, Bernard Haitink, Riccardo Muti, and the late Sir George Solti on numerous recordings including Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*, which won the 1998 Grammy® for *Best Opera Recording*. Wolfe's

extensive musical accomplishments have resulted in numerous awards, including an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts from the University of Denver, the Bonfils Stanton Award in the Arts and Humanities, the Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts, the Mayor's Award for Excellence in an Artistic Discipline and the Michael Korn Award for the Development of the Professional Choral Art. Wolfe is also founder of the Colorado Children's Chorale, from which he retired in 1999 after 25 years; the Chorale celebrated its 40th anniversary last season. For 20 years, Wolfe also worked with the Central City Opera Festival as chorus director and conductor, founding and directing the company's young artist residence program, as well as its education and outreach programs. Wolfe's additional accomplishments include directing and preparing choruses for Chicago's Ravinia Festival, the Bravo!Vail Festival, the Berkshire Choral Festival, the Aspen Music Festival, and the Grand Teton Music Festival. He has worked with Pinchas Zuckerman as Chorus Director for the Canadian National Arts Centre Orchestra for the past 13 years.

MARY WILSON, soprano



Soprano Mary Wilson is acknowledged as one of today's most exciting young artists. Cultivating a wide-ranging career singing chamber music, oratorio and operatic repertoire, she has appeared with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Los Angeles Master Chorale, and at Carnegie Hall and the Hollywood Bowl. In Baroque repertoires she has joined Philharmonia Baroque, Musica Angelica, American Bach Soloists, Boston Baroque, Florida Bach Festival, Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Casals Festival, and the Carmel Bach Festival. She is noted for her portrayals of Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Susannah in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and Gilda in *Rigoletto*, and has appeared most recently with Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Minnesota Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Dayton Opera, Arizona Opera, Tulsa Opera, Southwest Opera, the Brooklyn Academy of Music and the Goodman Theatre.

CORRIE STALLINGS, mezzo-soprano



Corrie Stallings is a second-year Resident Artist at Pittsburgh Opera. In their 2014-15 season, she appeared as Bertarido in Handel's *Rodelinda* and Mercedes in Bizet's *Carmen*. In 2015-16, she is slated to sing Jo in *Adamo's Little Women* and Rosina in the student matinee of *Rossini's Il barbiere di Siviglia*. Ms. Stallings will make her debut with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra as the alto soloist in Mozart's *Coronation Mass* under the baton of Maestro Hoenick in December 2015 and will spend the summer of 2016 as an Apprentice Artist at the Santa Fe Opera. In Summer 2015, Ms. Stallings was a young artist at the Glimmerglass Festival and appeared as Jazz Trio Girl in Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti* as well as in the ensemble of Bernstein's *Candide*. Corrie will be a

HOLIDAY BIOGRAPHIES

part of the remounted production of *Candide* in Toulouse and Bordeaux, France in the winter of 2016/2017. Ms. Stallings was a Festival Artist with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis in 2013 and 2014, where she performed as Third Lady in *The Magic Flute* under the baton of Jane Glover, and covered Stephanie Blythe in the role of Gertrude Stein in Ricky Ian Gordon's *27*. In 2013, Ms. Stallings was a soloist in Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Christmas production, *Welcome, Yule!* as well as the alto soloist cover in Bach's *Mass in B Minor* under the baton of Maestro Muti. A native of the San Francisco Bay Area, Ms. Stallings holds a B.A. in Vocal Performance and Art History from Cal Poly State University and a M.M. in Opera Performance from Northwestern University. She currently lives in Pittsburgh, PA with her eight year old pup, Millie.

DEREK CHESTER, tenor



Praised by the *New York Times* for his “beautifully shaped and carefully nuanced singing,” tenor Derek Chester has quickly established himself as a preeminent singer in the field of concert and early music repertoire. He is a graduate of the University of Georgia and holds a master's degree in early music performance from the Yale School of Music and a doctorate in performance and opera studies from the University of North Texas. As a Fulbright Scholar, he spent a year in Germany working as a freelance musician and furthering his training under Helmuth Rilling and tenor Christoph Prégardien. Recent concert appearances include

Haydn's *Creation* with the Fort Worth Symphony, Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610* with Boston Baroque; Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* at the Berkshire Choral Festival; Britten's *War Requiem* with the Korean Broadcasting System Symphony Orchestra; Mendelssohn's *Symphony No.2* the “Lobgesang” with the Buffalo Philharmonic; and all of the major works of Bach with American Bach Soloists. Recent operatic work includes Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*, Belmonte in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore*, Peter Quint in *Turn of the Screw*, Oronte in *Alcina*, and Acis in *Acis and Galatea*. He currently serves on the voice faculty at the University of Northern Colorado and continues his worldwide career as a sought after interpreter of concert and operatic repertoire.

ANDREW GARLAND, baritone



American baritone Andrew Garland has been praised for his “coloratura [which] bordered on the phenomenal as he dashed through the music's intricacies with his warm baritone, offering plenty of elegance and glamour in his smooth acting.” His latest recording, *Andrew Garland: American Portraits* (2013) debuted at # 1 on Amazon.com. Recent highlights include his Carnegie Hall recital with Warren Jones, as well as performances with Seattle Opera as Schaunard in *La Bohème*, Boston Lyric Opera as Papageno in *The Magic Flute*, Cincinnati Opera as Galileo in *Galileo Galilei* (Philip Glass) and Mercurio in *La Calisto* (Cavalli), Atlanta Opera as Schaunard in *La Bohème*

and Arizona Opera as Ping in *Turandot*. He sang the title role in *Don Giovanni* with Opera New Jersey, Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with Knoxville Opera and Dayton Opera, and Dandini in *La Cenerentola* with Opera Company of Philadelphia and Fort Worth Opera. Concert highlights include performances with the Atlanta Symphony, National Philharmonic, Boston Baroque, New York Festival of Song, New York City Opera, Washington Chorale at the Kennedy Center, DCINY at Lincoln Center and the Cleveland Art Song Festival with Warren Jones. Future engagements include Seattle Opera - *Harlekin in Ariadne auf Naxos* - The Colorado Bach Ensemble and a future season with Boston Lyric Opera.

COLORADO SYMPHONY CHORUS

2015/16 Colorado Symphony season marks the 32nd year of the Colorado Symphony Chorus. Founded in 1984 by Duain Wolfe at the request of Gaetano Delogu, then the Music Director of the Colorado Symphony, the chorus has grown over the past three decades into a nationally respected ensemble. This outstanding chorus of 180 volunteers joins the Colorado Symphony for numerous performances (more than 25 this year alone), and radio and television broadcasts.

The Chorus has performed at noted music festivals in the Rocky Mountain region, including the Colorado Music Festival, the Grand Teton Music Festival and the Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival, where it has performed with the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Dallas Symphony. For over two decades, the Chorus has been featured at the world-renowned Aspen Music Festival, performing many great masterworks under the baton of notable conductors Lawrence Foster, James Levine, Murry Sidlin, Leonard Slatkin, Robert Spano and David Zinman.

The Colorado Symphony Chorus is featured on a recent Hyperion release of the Vaughan Williams *Dona Nobis Pacem* and Hough's *Missa Mirabilis*. In 2009, in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the chorus, Duain Wolfe conducted the chorus on a three-country, two-week concert tour of Europe, presenting the Verdi *Requiem* in Budapest, Vienna, Litomysl and Prague. The Chorus will return to Europe in 2016 for concerts in Paris, Strasbourg and Munich. The Colorado Symphony continues to be grateful for the excellence and dedication of this remarkable all-volunteer ensemble. For an audition appointment, call 303.308.2483.

One Singular Sensation: A Tribute to Marvin Hamlisch

JAN 23 SAT 7:30

Donna McKechnie, Jodi Benson, Doug LaBrecque, vocals
Colorado Symphony Chorus, Mary Louise Burke, associate director



coloradosymphony.org

303.623.7876

BOX OFFICE

MON-FRI 10 AM - 6 PM ~ SAT 12 PM - 6 PM

COLORADO SYMPHONY CHORUS

**Duain Wolfe, Founding Director and Conductor; Mary Louise Burke, Associate Conductor;
Travis Branam, Assistant Conductor; Taylor Martin, Staff Conductor;
Eric Israelson, Chorus Manager; Barbara Porter, Associate Manager
Brian Dukeshier, Joshua Sawicki, Danni Snyder, Accompanists**

Soprano I

Jamie Brown
Lauren Cage
Lindsay R. Campbell
Denelda Causey
LeEtta H. Choi
Kaylin E. Daniels
Sarah Dirksen
Laura Dukeshier
Kate A. Emerich
Jenifer D. Gile
Lori C. Gill
Susan Graber
Jennifer Harpel
Elizabeth Hedrick
Lynnae C. Hinkley
Angela M. Hupp
Erika Jensen
Shelley E. Joy
Mary E. Kirschnr
Krista Kuhn
Marina Kushnir
Cathy Look
Anne Maupin
Stephanie Medema
Wendy L. Moraskie
Barbara A. Porter
Lori A. Ropa
Kelly G. Ross
Roberta A. Sladovnik
Stephanie A. Solich
Kelly Sowell
Nicole J. Stegink
Judy Tate
Courtney Williams
Cara Young

Soprano II

Jude Blum
Alex S. Bowen
Margot L. Brauchli
Athanasia Christus
Ruth A. Coberly
Gretchen Colbert
Kerry H. Cote
Claudia Dakkouri
Esther J. Gross
Lisa D. Kraft
Ilene L. Nova
Christine M. Nyholm

Jeannette R. O'Nan
Donneve S. Rae
Rebecca E. Rattray
Shirley J. Rider
Nancy C. Saddler
Camille S. Smith
Lynne M. Snyder
Stacey L. Travis
Susan K. Von Roedern
Marcia L. Walker
Sherry L. Weinstein
Kirsten Wells
Sandy Woodrow

Alto I

Priscilla P. Adams
Lois F. Brady
Emily M. Branam
Kimberly Brown
Amy Buesing
Allison Carlisle
Clair T. Clauson
Jayne M. Conrad
Jane A. Costain
Sheri L. Daniel
Aubri K. Dunkin
Dana Edwards
Kirsten D. Franz
Sharon R. Gayley
Gabriella D. Groom
Pat Guittar
Emily Haller
Melissa J. Holst
Kaia M. Hoopes
Carol E. Horle
Annie Kolstad
Deanna Kraft
Susan McWaters
Leah Meromy
Ginny Passoth
Mary B. Thayer
Pat Virtue
Sara Wise
Heather Wood
Judith Wyatt

Alto II

Kay A. Boothe
Cass Chatfield
Martha E. Cox

Barbara Deck
Joyce Dominguez
Carol A. Eslick
Daniela Golden
Hansi Hoskins
Olivia Isaac
Brandy H. Jackson
Ellen D. Janasko
Janice Kibler
Carole A. London
Joanna Maltzahn
Barbara Marchbank
Kelly T. McNulty
Beverly D. Mendicello
Jane B. Moore
Cassandra Murray
Leslie M. Nittoli
Deborah N. Norris
Kali Paguirigan
Pamela R. Scooros
Lisa Townsend
Ginny Trierweiler

Tenor I

Andrew K. Banks
James DeMarco
Dustin Dougan
Brian Dukeshier
Joel C. Gewecke
Frank Gordon, Jr.
Forrest Guittar, Jr.
David K. Hodel
Richard A. Moraskie
Garvis J. Muesing
Timothy W. Nicholas
William J. O'Donnell
William G. Reiley
Ryan Waller
Kenneth A. Zimmerman

Tenor II

Gary E. Babcock
Mac Bradley
Dusty R. Davies
Stephen C. Dixon
Roger Fuehrer
John H. Gale
Kenneth E. Kolm
Taylor S. Martin
Brandt J. Mason

Stephen J. Meswarb
Tom A. Milligan
Ronald L. Ruth
Jerry E. Sims
Jeffrey P. Wolf
Daniel L. Wyatt

Bass I

John G. Adams
Travis D. Branam
Grant H. Carlton
George Cowen
Robert E. Drickey
Benjamin Eickhoff
Matthew Gray
Douglas D. Hesse
Donald Hume
Thomas J. Jirak
Nalin J. Mehta
Kenneth Quarles
Trevor B. Rutkowski
Benjamin A. Smith
David R. Struthers
Duane White
Benjamin Williams
Brian W. Wood

Bass II

Bob Friedlander
John A. Gallagher
Dan Gibbons
Chris Grossman
Eric W. Israelson
Terry L. Jackson
Roy A. Kent
Mike A. Kraft
Robert F. Millar, Jr.
Kenneth Moncrieff
Greg A. Morrison
Eugene J. Nuccio
John R. Phillips
Russell R. Skillings
Wil W. Swanson
Chad J. Thofson
Tom G. Virtue

HOLIDAY PROGRAM NOTES

HANDEL: *Messiah*

Scored for SATB vocal soloists, SATB chorus, two oboes, bassoon, two trumpets, timpani, continuo, and strings. Duration is two hours and 20 minutes. Last performance by the Colorado Symphony was on December 13 & 14, 2014, with Scott O'Neil conducting.

American audiences are accustomed to hearing the great oratorio *Messiah* of George Frideric Handel (1685-1759) at the Christmas season, and supporters of this timing like to point out that one of its most popular choruses sets the Biblical text "For Unto Us a Child is Born." However, Handel would be surprised by such notions. Indeed, the work begins with Christmas, but rather as what Hollywood would call a back story, before proceeding to Easter, the Resurrection, and ultimately Judgment Day. Moreover, the work was first performed during the Easter season, so it is not specifically a Christmas piece. But as long as one listens, Handel would not have minded one's timing. He once remarked to the English king that through his music, he hoped to make people better, and one can be made better at any season.

Early in 1741, Handel was invited by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland to come to Dublin for a series of subscription concerts. Then, around the same time, he received a libretto for a sacred oratorio, a compilation of Old and New Testament verses concerning Christmas and Easter. The text was assembled by the composer's friend, Charles Jennens, a rather conceited, but extremely wealthy supporter of the arts. Jennens had previously prepared the book for *Saul*, one of those works that had recently failed, but Handel apparently held no grudges, for he set aside all other projects to write *Messiah*. Typically a quick composer, in this instance Handel exceeded any possible expectation. He began the new oratorio August 22, 1741, and finished the entire score — all 259 pages — in 22 days. Shortly thereafter, he was on the boat to Ireland.

Messiah's premiere took place in Dublin the following spring, after Handel's twelve subscription concerts had attracted sufficient attention. Publicity for the impending event would draw the admiration of any Broadway producer today. Handel craftily announced the new piece before the end of his preceding concert series, so as to capitalize on his popularity. Then, he revealed that all those buying advance tickets would be admitted to a rehearsal. The masterful touch, though, was a newspaper ad placed the day of the performance, asking ladies to not wear hoops and gentlemen to leave their swords at home, so as to make room for anticipated crowds. That first performance, on April 13, 1742, was standing room only, a stunning success. Dublin insisted on, and received, a second performance. At last, Handel had another masterwork with which to tackle the fickle London stage.

Londoners had always been skeptical of religious works being staged in popular theaters. That concern was part of the reason for the earlier failure of *Saul*. The piece was viewed as scandalous and sacrilegious, and the Bishop of London was not prepared to forgive a work just because its music was marvelous. At first, this conservative faction had the upper hand against *Messiah*. The first London performance, in 1743, was a miserable failure, and presentations in '45 and '49 were also financial losers. Not until the Bishop's death in 1749 could Handel overcome his opposition. *Messiah* was performed three times in the spring of 1750, repeatedly to sell-out houses, and the work was staged twice yearly in London until Handel's own death nine years later.

Handel's score calls for a typical Baroque orchestra of a few dozen players, along with a small, though skillful, chorus. Not until after his death did spectacular stagings become popular. As early as 1784, in a festival commemorating the composer's centenary (a year premature, as it turns out), Westminster Abbey offered a performance featuring 60 sopranos, 48 counter-tenors, 83 tenors, 84 basses, six flutes, 26 oboes, 26 bassoons, one double-bassoon, 12 horns, 12 trumpets, six trombones, 157 strings, assorted percussion and an organ. Grandeur was yet to come. Some 19th century performances brought thousands to the stage, frequently prompting observers, not to mention participants, to complain that the whole experience gave them headaches. The power and impact of such mass stagings cannot be argued, and Handel himself was such a showman that he might well have enjoyed the spectacle. Still, there is much to be said for the original scoring. With a Baroque-sized orchestra and a skilled conductor, *Messiah* shines with the clarity of a Christmas morning. It doesn't need a crowd to have an impact.

All program notes © Betsy Schwarm, author of "Classical Music Insights"