

Messiah

Saturday, December 14, 2019 • 2:00 p.m. • Plymouth Congregational Church

Sunday, December 15, 2019 • 2:00 p.m. • Bastyr Chapel

Orchestra Seattle • Seattle Chamber Singers

William White, conductor and harpsichord

Linda Tsatsanis, soprano • **Nerys Jones**, mezzo-soprano

Brendan Tuohy, tenor • **Michael Drumheller**, baritone



GEORG FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685–1759)

Messiah, HWV 56

Symphony

Accompagnato: "Comfort Ye"

Air: "Every valley shall be exalted"

Chorus: "And the glory of the Lord"

Accompagnato: "Thus saith the Lord"

Air: "But who may abide"

Chorus: "And He shall purify"

Recitative: "Behold, a Virgin shall conceive"

Air and Chorus: "O thou that tellest"

Accompagnato: "For behold, darkness"

Air: "The people that walked in darkness"

Chorus: "For unto us a child is born"

Pastoral Symphony

Recitative: "There were shepherds"

Accompagnato: "And lo, the angel"

Recitative: "And the angel said unto them"

Accompagnato: "And suddenly there was with the angel"

Chorus: "Glory to God in the highest"

Air: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion"

Recitative: "Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened"

Air: "He shall feed His flock"

Chorus: "His yoke is easy"

— intermission (15 minutes) —

Chorus: "Behold the Lamb of God"

Air: "He was despised"

Chorus: "Surely He hath borne our griefs"

Chorus: "And with His stripes"

Chorus: "All we, like sheep"

Accompagnato: "All they that see Him"

Chorus: "He trusted in God"

Accompagnato: "Thy rebuke hath broken His heart"

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

Accompagnato: "He was cut off"

Air: "But Thou didst not leave"

Chorus: "Lift up your heads"

Recitative: "Unto which of the angels"

Chorus: "Let all the angels"

Air: "Thou art gone up on high"

Chorus: "The Lord gave the word"

Air: "How beautiful are the feet"

Chorus: "Their sound is gone out"

Air: "Why do the nations"

Chorus: "Let us break their bonds asunder"

Recitative: "He that dwelleth"

Air: "Thou shalt break them"

Chorus: "Hallelujah"

— intermission (10 minutes) —

Air: "I know that my Redeemer liveth"

Chorus: "Since by man came death"

Accompagnato: "Behold, I tell you a mystery"

Air: "The trumpet shall sound"

Recitative: "Then shall be brought to pass"

Duet: "O death, where is thy sting?"

Chorus: "But thanks be to God"

Air: "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Chorus: "Worthy is the Lamb"

Please silence cell phones and other electronics, and refrain from the use of cameras and recording devices during the performance.

OSSCS wishes to thank Diane Jacobson and Plymouth Congregational Church, Emma James and Bastyr Chapel, and Moc Escobedo for making these performances possible. Special thanks to Wanda Griffiths for the use of the Fisk organ at Plymouth and Rene Marceau for the use and transportation of his positivo organ at Bastyr.

Refreshments will be available during the first intermission.

Orchestra Seattle • Seattle Chamber Singers

William White, music director • George Shangrow, founder

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Soprano

Barb Anderson
Ann Bridges
Sue Cobb
Abigail Owens Cooper
Cinda Freece
Peggy Kurtz §
Wini Leung
Markéta Milerová
Claire Nieman
Veena Ramakrishnan
Nancy Shasteen
Cassie Van Pay

Alto

Cheryl Blackburn
Jennifer Chung
Deanna Fryhle
Nori Heikkinen
Pamela Ivezić
Ellen Kaisse
Jan Kinney
Lorelette Knowles
Theodora Letz
Laurie Medill §
Annie Thompson

Violin

Lauren Daugherty
Dean Drescher
Stephen Hegg
Maria Hunt
Fritz Klein**
Gregor Nitsche
Jean Provine
Theo Schaad
Janet Showalter
Kenna Smith-Shangrow*

Viola

Deborah Daoust
Katherine McWilliams
Stephanie Read
Sam Williams*

Cello

Peter Ellis
Matthew Wyant*

Bass

Steven Messick

Tenor

Dan Charlson
Ralph Cobb
Tyler Freeman
Suzanne Grant
Aaron Keyt
Jon Lange §
German Mendoza Jr.
Tom Nesbitt
Jerry Sams
Scott Shawcroft
David Zapolsky

Bass

Timothy Braun
Andrew Danilchik
Douglas Durasoff
Kai Hedin
Patrick Hoye
Stephen Keeler
Walter Knowles
Dennis Moore
Glenn Ramsdell
Steven Tachell
Skip Viau
William Willaford
Richard Wyckoff §

Oboe

Rebecca Salmon*
Margaret Siple

Bassoon

Jeff Eldridge

Trumpet

Rabi Lahiri
Janet Young*

Timpani

Daniel Oie

Organ

Sheila Bristow

Harpichord

Robert Kechley
William White

** concertmaster

* principal

§ section leader

Maestro's Prelude

Dear listeners,

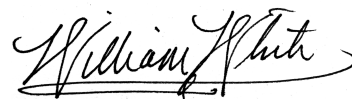
This season we mark the 50th anniversary of OSSCS, and we're celebrating with all sorts of new initiatives: a spate of world premieres, guest artists galore, and performances at big-name venues—see you at Benaroya in May! While innovation is crucial, so is tradition—and if there's one thing that's a tradition at OSSCS, it's our annual presentation of Handel's *Messiah*.

Viewed one way, tradition can seem stultifying: same old, same old. But from my vantage point as an artist, it's quite the opposite. The knowledge that we will return to *Messiah* every year inspires in me a tremendous sense of freedom. If I want to try some outlandish interpretative flourish, I feel free to do so—this isn't my only shot. It might work out great, and if it doesn't, I can jettison it next year (and try a whole new outlandish interpretive flourish!).

I think this general principle writ large is what has allowed OSSCS to do so many interesting projects over the decades. We're firm in our foundation: the commitment of our musicians, our audiences and our donors. In fact, it's these very stakeholders who expect us to take risks and provoke their thought, whether that be in the context of a brand new work or one such as *Messiah* that we've performed dozens upon dozens of times.

One thing that makes performing *Messiah* particularly fun for me is that I get to conduct and perform at the harpsichord. This may be the closest I come all year long to participating in what you might call a "sport." And to make it even more sporting, this year we're reinstating a long-time OSSCS tradition of having both of our harpsichords on stage for a Baroque Battle of the Ornaments. Sitting at the keyboard opposite me is one of OSSCS's founding members, Bob Kechley. (Remember that Benaroya concert I mentioned above? We'll be performing one of Bob's compositions—along with one of mine—at that event!)

No doubt many of you reading this are first-time attendees at our concerts, drawn in by this beloved holiday classic. I'd encourage you to take a gander at the back of your program jacket before you leave today, because we'd love to see you again this season as we present other monuments of the choral and orchestral literature (including *The Rite of Spring* and *Daphnis et Chloé*) so that you too can become part of our tradition and our evolution.



P.S. For those of you who are joining us today because of a particular love for lengthy Baroque oratorios: I'd be remiss if I didn't draw your attention to our upcoming performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* on Friday, March 20. OSSCS has had much company in presenting *Messiah* over the past four decades, but no ensemble in the region has performed *St. Matthew Passion* as often as we have—this will be our 13th time, and an event that you won't want to miss.

Solo Artists

Hailed as “ravishing” by *The New York Times* and possessing “sheer vocal proficiency, a bright, flexible voice, big but controlled, shaded with plentiful color” (*The Boston Globe*), Canadian soprano **Linda Tsatsanis** enjoys a career that spans the concert hall, opera stage, movies and television, performing with groups such as the Tallis Scholars, Toronto Symphony,



Seattle Baroque Orchestra, Pacific Baroque Orchestra, Early Music Seattle, Pacific MusicWorks, Auburn Symphony and Seattle Opera. Holding a master’s degree from Indiana University specializing in historical performance, she has collaborated with the country’s most prominent early-music chamber ensembles. Her performance of William Bolcom’s *Let Evening Come* brought her to Carnegie Hall in 2016 and to Merkin Hall in 2018 in celebration of Mr. Bolcom’s 80th birthday. *Gramophone* described her debut solo album with Origin Classical, *And I Remain: Three Love Stories*, as a “seductive recital of the darker sides of 17th-century love.” Her past collaboration with the Mark Morris Dance Group inspired her most recent recording, *Beethoven alla Britannia*, released on Centaur Records in 2016. She can also be heard in the Emmy-nominated PBS documentary *When Seattle Invented the Future* and on various recordings by the CBC and Naxos. Ms. Tsatsanis is currently a Visiting Scholar at the University of Washington.

Praised for her “focused mezzo, real presence, pearly clean sound and crystal-clear diction” (*The Times*), mezzo-soprano **Nerys Jones** gained huge success during her time at English National Opera (ENO) in London, perfecting her talent for playing “pants roles.” These included Hansel, Cherubino, Despina, Garcias, Zerlina, Mercedes, Kitchen Boy, Flower Maiden, 2nd Lady, Proserpina, Flora, Melissa, Sister Mathilde and Pitti Sing. She also performed with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Scottish Early Music Consort and the National Youth Orchestra of Wales. Other roles include Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*; Dorabella in *Così fan Tutte*; Dryad in *Ariadne Auf Naxos*; Stewardess in *Flight*; and Angelina in *La Cenerentola*. More recently, Ms. Jones made her Seattle Opera debut as Inez in *Il Trovatore*, returning as Giovanna in *Rigoletto*. Since moving to Seattle, she has also enjoyed a busy concert schedule, working with Pacific Northwest Ballet, Seattle Chamber Music Society, Philharmonia Northwest and Northwest Sinfonietta. A native Welsh speaker

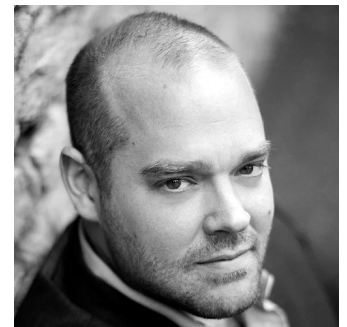


growing up in the heart of Wales and surrounded by music from a very young age, Ms. Jones feels blessed to have been born in the country known as the “Land of Song.”

Mezzo-soprano **Laura Beckel Thoreson**, praised by *Oregon ArtsWatch* as “one of the loveliest voices in the Northwest,” enjoys a singing career spanning opera, oratorio, recital and ensemble performances. She has appeared as a solo artist with Portland Opera, Eugene Opera, Utah Festival Opera, Indianapolis Opera, Augusta Opera, Early Music Vancouver, Oregon Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony and Cincinnati Symphony, among others. An avid proponent of both early and new music, Ms. Thoreson frequently participates in world-premiere performances and appears on Billboard Top Ten recordings. Upcoming and recent engagements include Pergolesi’s *Stabat Mater* with the Ensemble of Oregon, *Pluviosity* by Northwest composer Stacey Phillips, Bernstein’s “Jeremiah” Symphony with Portland Youth Philharmonic, Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* with Willamette Master Chorus, Mahler’s Symphony No. 4 with Oregon Sinfonietta, Rossini’s *La Cenerentola* with Portland Opera, and Handel’s *Messiah* with Portland Baroque Orchestra, the Naples (Florida) Philharmonic and OSSCS. A native of Vancouver, Washington, and a graduate of Indiana University’s Jacobs School of Music, Ms. Thoreson currently teaches at Clark College.



Tenor **Brendan Tuohy** has been praised by *The Cincinnati Post* for his “big, bold tenor edged with silver.” He recently returned to the Grant Park Music Festival to sing Haydn’s *Theresienmesse*, following a 2017 performance of Beethoven’s Ninth. Other engagements have included Rachel Portman’s *The Little Prince* with Opera Theater Oregon, Haydn’s *The Seasons* with OSSCS, Britten’s *War Requiem* at the University of Washington, and the iSing International Music Festival in Suzhou, China. Recent operatic roles include Tony in Bernstein’s *West Side Story*, Aeneas in Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* and Bénédic in Berlioz’ *Béatrice et Bénédic*, all with Eugene Opera, Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* with City Opera Bellevue, the Chevalier in *Dialogues des Carmélites* with Vashon Opera, and Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* with the Berlin Opera Academy. In France, he has sung Mozart with Opéra Orchestre National de Montpellier and Diomede in Cavalli’s recently rediscovered *Elena* with l’Opéra d’Angers-Nantes and l’Opéra de Rennes. Mr. Tuohy completed his academic training at



the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music with a master's degree in vocal performance. In 2008, he had the honor of singing and competing in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Semi-Finals in New York City.

Bass-baritone **Michael Drumheller** has appeared on opera and concert stages across the nation, making solo appearances with the Seattle Symphony, Boston Lyric Opera, Tacoma Opera, Pacific Northwest Opera, Seattle Gilbert & Sullivan Society, Cleveland Orchestra and OSSCS, and working



with such renowned conductors as Robert Spano, Gerard Schwarz and Leonard Slatkin. As a recitalist, he is especially interested in Russian vocal music and has been an invited performer of that repertoire at the Icicle Creek Music Festival and Wellesley College. Mr. Drumheller holds a master's degree in vocal performance from Boston University, where he was a student of Phyllis Curtin, and has studied with Armen Boyajian, Robert Honeysucker and Julian Patrick, among other notable teachers. An alumnus of the Tanglewood Music Center, he also holds BS and MS degrees in engineering and science from MIT. His diverse background includes playing timpani in symphony orchestras and drumming and singing for his own rock bands.

Vocal Text

Part the First

Symphony

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.

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

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.
Isaiah 40:1–5

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 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, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.

But who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire.

And He shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. *Malachi 3:1–2*

Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Emmanuel, "God with us."
Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23

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!
Isaiah 40:9

Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

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 60:1–3

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

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*

Pifa (Pastoral Symphony)

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

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.

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 Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

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

Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men.
Luke 2:8–14

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee.

He is the righteous Savior and He shall speak peace unto the heathen.
Zechariah 9:9–10

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

He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.
Isaiah 40:11

Come unto Him, all ye that labor 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.

His yoke is easy, His burthen is light. *Matthew 11:28–30*

Part the Second

Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.
John 1:29

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

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 50:6

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.

And with His stripes we are healed.

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*

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

He trusted in God that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, if He delight in Him. *Psalms 22:7-8*

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*

Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow. *Lamentations 1:12*

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

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

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*

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

Let all the angels of God worship Him. *Hebrews 1:5-6*

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

The Lord gave the word: great was the company of the preachers. *Psalms 68:11*

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

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

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 counsel together against the Lord, and against His anointed.

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

He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn: the Lord shall have them in derision. *Psalms 2:1-4*

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

Hallelujah, for the Lord 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 11:15*

King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and He shall reign for ever and ever, Hallelujah! *Revelation 19:16*

Part the Third

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. *Job 19: 25-26*

For now is Christ risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep.

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 15:20-22*

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.

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.

Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. *I Corinthians 15:51-57*

If God be for us, who can be against us? *Romans 8:31*

Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is at the right hand of God, who makes intercession for us. *Romans 8:33-34*

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 honor, and glory, and blessing.

Blessing and honor, glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen. *Revelation 5:12-13*

Program Notes

Georg Frideric Handel

Messiah, HWV 56

Handel was born in Halle, Germany, on February 23, 1685, and died in London on April 14, 1759. He composed Messiah between August 22 and September 14 of 1741. The oratorio was first performed in Dublin on April 13, 1742, under the direction of the composer. In addition to SATB soloists and choir, the work calls for 2 oboes, bassoon, 2 trumpets, timpani, strings and continuo.

Handel, renowned in his day as an organist and as a highly prolific writer of Italian operas and English oratorios, was born in Germany in 1685 about a month before J.S. Bach. He received his musical training in Italy, and later became 18th-century England's "national composer." Between February and November 1741, Handel—suffering at the age of 56 from various ailments, both financial and physical—withdraw increasingly from public life. At some point that year, the composer received from the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and the governors of Dublin's three major charitable institutions an invitation to travel to that city to aid the charities through the performance of his music. Handel was well known in Dublin as a church-music composer, and his works were often played there to benefit charities. It may thus have been this invitation that provided the incentive for Handel to compose "a new sacred Oratorio." In July of 1741, Charles Jennens, who was responsible for the texts of Handel's oratorios *Israel in Egypt* and *Saul*, gave the struggling Handel the libretto of *Messiah*, a compilation of biblical texts from both the Old and New Testaments.

On August 22, Handel began to set Jennens' text to music. He finished the first part of his new oratorio (which deals with the prophecy of Christ's coming and his nativity) in six days, the second part (which describes Jesus' suffering, death, resurrection and ascension, the spread of his gospel, the resistance of the heathen, and the vision of the ultimate triumph of the gospel in the establishment of God's kingdom) in nine days, and the third part (which celebrates the gift of resurrection and eternal life offered to all through Christ's victory over death) in six more days, with two or three additional days for completing the orchestration. Regarding Handel's state of mind during *Messiah's* composition, biographer Jonathan Keates observes in his 1992 book *Handel: The Man and Music* that "etherealized visions of the elderly master refusing food, weeping into the semiquavers and having angelic hallucinations are mostly moonshine."

In the autumn of 1741, Handel accepted the invitation to visit Dublin, arriving on November 18 with the completed score of *Messiah* in his traveling bags, but it was not until April 13, 1742, that the oratorio received its premiere. Seven hundred people squeezed into Dublin's Musick Hall in Fishamble-street to hear the work performed by the choirs of Dublin's two cathedrals (totaling fewer than 40 men and boys) and the string band (reinforced occasionally by trumpets and timpani—oboe and bassoon parts were added later), all directed from the keyboard by Mr. Handel himself. The work created a sensation: "Words are wanting

to express the exquisite Delight it afforded to the admiring crouded Audience," exulted *Faulkner's Journal*. "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." Handel divided his share of the proceeds (about £400), as did the other performers, among Dublin's three most important charities.

Messiah is unique among Handel's works, being his only biblical oratorio using texts from the New Testament, and his only "Christian-contemplative" oratorio. Although the text is not a dramatic narrative but an epic-lyric poem celebrating Christian redemption, Handel's musical approach in setting Jennens' libretto was decidedly dramatic. The work's three parts recall the three acts of Italian operas, and the oratorio is indeed a piece designed by a seasoned operatic professional to "entertain," in the best sense of the word, listeners in a concert room, not chiefly to instruct or edify a congregation or to be used in any sort of worship.

Handel synthesizes the best elements of the three musical traditions in which he was steeped: the Italian, the German and the English. He makes use of Italian forms of musical expression, borrowing, rearranging and transforming into "duet-choruses" (such as "And he shall purify") some passages from his own Italian love duets. In the "Pastoral Symphony" (entitled *Pifa*) that introduces the shepherds, Handel alludes to the music of the *pifferari*, the country bagpipers who descend the Italian mountains during the Christmas season to play in village streets. Handel employs German musical ideas, particularly in the music describing Jesus' suffering and death, where the jagged dotted rhythms and forceful harmonies have a particularly German expressive quality. In that great "coronation march," the "Hallelujah Chorus," melodic fragments echoing the German chorale "Wachet auf" may be heard in "The kingdom of this world" and in "And he shall reign for ever and ever." Handel's melodic shapes, vocal treatment, grand anthem-like choruses, and text-setting display the "English character" that has ensured *Messiah's* unchallenged supremacy in the English choral repertoire: in such arias as "He was despised" and "I know that my Redeemer liveth," the rhythms of the music grow out of the natural speech rhythms of the words, so that the music expresses the text directly and powerfully, and then illustrates it almost visually (e.g., "Every valley shall be exalted," "The people that walked in darkness," and "All we, like sheep").

The easy accessibility and glorious variety of the music that results from the confluence of these elements (and which often conceals the exalted art underlying it) has helped to guarantee *Messiah's* survival, through a seeming infinitude of "arrangements," versions and types of presentation, as one of the most popular pieces ever composed. As R.A. Streatfeild observes, "*Messiah*, if not Handel's greatest work, is undoubtedly the most universal in its appeal" because it continues to sing to "high and low, rich and poor, wise and foolish alike" a magnificent song of salvation, fresh, vital and full of aesthetic and spiritual grace.

— Lorelette Knowles

OSSCS and *Messiah*

The Seattle Chamber Singers first presented (the Christmas portion of) *Messiah* in December 1970, on a holiday program that included the world premiere of a cantata by OSSCS founder George Shangrow. In those early years George led annual sing-along *Messiahs* at University Unitarian Church, a tradition that began in 1969. And in 1975 he played harpsichord (“superbly,” according to *The Seattle Times*) in a Seattle Symphony performance of the work.

The following year George (described as a “young man of much hair” by a *Times* reviewer) conducted the first complete SCS *Messiah*, billed as “almost a duplicate of the first performance of *Messiah* as Handel first heard the work” and the Seattle premiere of this “Dublin version” of the score. KUOW-FM broadcast the concert live from Meany Hall and the *Times* critic praised the “crisp, clean, good sound, a chorus together in joyous harmony.”

George and OSSCS presented *Messiah* almost every season that followed — except for 1983, 1985 (the Bach Year), 1993 and 1996 — until George’s death in 2010. OSSCS performed it that year in tribute to its founder, but took a break for the next two seasons, returning to the work during Clinton Smith’s first year as music director. Will White continued this tradition last season (his first with OSSCS).

One decision the conductor of any Baroque oratorio must make is which keyboard instrument(s) to use for the continuo section of the orchestra: organ, harpsichord, both? The earliest SCS performances generally featured a single harpsichord, invariably played by composer and keyboardist Robert Kechley, a founding member of the Seattle Chamber Singers. In 1984 he was joined by a second harpsichordist, but then continued solo until 1990, when George began playing and conducting from a second harpsichord, much as Handel himself would have done.

In 1998, OSSCS (with support from the PACCAR Foundation, King County Arts Commission, Visio Corporation

and generous individual donors) commissioned Michael Reiter of Tacoma to build a pair of instruments for use in *Messiah* and other Baroque works. Starting from kits made by Hubbard Harpsichords of Massachusetts, he created two instruments modeled on the French double-keyboard harpsichords of the 18th century. One contains three choirs of strings, while another has four sets of jacks instead of three. The first made its debut at the 1999 OSSCS *Messiah* concerts, and was joined by its companion the following year.

George and Bob played these harpsichords for *Messiah* thereafter until George’s death, when this practice subsided. Orchestra Seattle continued to employ one of the instruments for Baroque works, while the other has resided at Benaroya Hall in recent years, used by the Seattle Symphony and distinguished guest artists for many of their Baroque performances (along with some 20th- and 21st-century works requiring harpsichord).

Earlier this year, Seattle-based harpsichord builder David Calhoun overhauled both instruments to his exacting specifications. OSSCS is pleased to welcome Bob Kechley back to the keyboard for our *Messiah* concerts, sitting opposite Will White at the second harpsichord. We are also grateful to Jeffrey Cohan, who has overseen the care, transportation and tuning of these instruments for many years.

Save the date!
**Annual Auction Gala:
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Join us for peace, love and flower power at this groovy celebration of the year of OSSCS’s founding.

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Nicole Tsong • Robert Weltzien
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