

HANDEL'S
MESSIAH

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2019 AT 8 PM
WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL

GRANT GERSHON
Kiki & David Gindler Artistic Director

LOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE
LOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE ORCHESTRA

GRANT GERSHON, conductor
APRIL AMANTE, soprano
CALLISTA HOFFMAN-CAMPBELL, mezzo-soprano
TODD STRANGE, tenor
CHUNG UK LEE, baritone

MESSIAH

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685-1759)

Part the First

01. Sinfonia (Overture)
02. Recitative (Mr. Strange)..... Comfort ye my people
03. Aria (Mr. Strange) Ev'ry valley shall be exalted
04. Chorus..... And the glory of the Lord
05. Recitative (Mr. Lee)..... Thus saith the Lord
06. Aria (Mr. Lee) But who may abide
07. Chorus And He shall purify
- 07a. Recitative (Ms. Hoffman-Campbell) Behold, a virgin shall conceive
08. Aria/Chorus (Ms. Hoffman-Campbell and Chorus)..... O Thou that tellest good tidings to Zion
09. Recitative (Mr. Lee)..... For Behold, Darkness Shall Cover the Earth
10. Aria (Mr. Lee) The People Who Walked in Darkness
11. Chorus For unto us a child is born
12. Pifa Pastoral Symphony
- 12a. Recitative (Ms. Amante) There were shepherds abiding in the field
13. Recitative (Ms. Amante) And lo, the angel of the Lord
- 13a. Recitative (Ms. Amante) And the angel said unto them
14. Recitative (Ms. Amante) And suddenly, there was with the angel
15. Chorus..... Glory to God in the highest
16. Recitative (Ms. Amante) Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion
- 16a. Recitative (Ms. Hoffman-Campbell) Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened
17. Aria (Ms. Hoffman-Campbell) He shall feed his flock
Aria (Ms. Amante)..... Come unto Him
18. Chorus His yoke is easy

INTERMISSION

Part the Second

19. Chorus Behold the Lamb of God
20. Aria (Ms. Hoffman-Campbell) He was despised
21. Chorus Surely He hath borne our griefs
22. Chorus And with His stripes
23. Chorus All we like sheep
24. Recitative (Mr. Strange) All they that see Him laugh Him to scorn
25. Chorus He trusted in God
26. Recitative (Mr. Strange) Thy rebuke hath broken His heart
27. Aria (Mr. Strange) Behold, and see if there be any sorrow
28. Recitative (Mr. Strange) He was cut out of the land of the living
29. Aria (Mr. Strange) Why do the nations so furiously rage together
30. Chorus Let us break their bonds asunder
36. Aria (Mr. Lee) Why do the nations so furiously rage together
37. Chorus Let us break their bonds asunder
37a. Recitative (Mr. Strange) He that dwelleth in heaven
38. Aria (Mr. Strange) Thou shalt break them
39. Chorus Hallelujah
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Part the Third

40. Aria (Ms. Amante) I know that my Redeemer liveth
41. Chorus Since by man came death
42. Recitative (Mr. Lee) Behold, I tell you a mystery
43. Aria (Mr. Lee) The trumpet shall sound
47. Chorus Worthy is the Lamb
Chorus Amen

MESSIAH: HANDEL'S ATYPICAL MASTERPIECE

by Thomas May



Early in his career, the well-traveled, cosmopolitan Handel tried his hand at various forms of sacred music, including both the German Passion and the Italian oratorio. But it was to the opera stage that he directed much of his creative energy during his prime—above all to the genre of tragic opera set to Italian librettos (opera seria), with its story lines drawn from mythological or historical figures and its call for dazzling vocal display. *Messiah* actually belongs to a later period of transition, when Handel needed to reinvent himself. Despite his earlier successes writing opera for the London stage, by the late 1730s taste and fashion in his adopted country had shifted significantly. Poor box office sales, increasingly nasty competition and the elaborate sets and pricey singers that were all part of the enterprise eventually made opera an unsustainable business model.

Handel had meanwhile been experimenting with a new brand of oratorio set to English texts—an approach that was rooted to some extent in another significant source of his success in England: his choral music and anthems for British patrons. He developed the English oratorio into a thrilling substitute for opera. Although Handel still had a few more operatic projects up his sleeve, by the time he composed *Messiah* in 1741, he had ceased writing Italian operas altogether and was channeling his muse into oratorios; these he continued to produce over the next decade until blindness overtook the composer.

A handy definition of Handel's English variation on the pre-existing oratorio format appears in the preface to *Samson* (on which he embarked just two weeks after completing *Messiah* and which is often considered its "twin"). An oratorio, writes

Samson's librettist Newburgh Hamilton, who used Milton's poetic drama *Samson Agonistes* as his source, is "a musical drama, whose subject must be Scriptural, and in which the Solemnity of Church-Musick is agreeably united with the most pleasing Airs of the Stage"—a genre, in other words, that has it both ways. A sense of moral uplift is juiced along by the entertainment value of opera (but without the expense, costumes, and fussy, overpaid egos). Oratorio had an additional appeal in that it was more acceptable for emerging middle-class audiences wary of the scandal-tinged world of opera.

A CONTROVERSIAL CLASSIC

Messiah's success over the ensuing centuries caused it to eclipse Handel's other works of music drama—operas and oratorios alike—and even gave it a reputation as the quintessential English oratorio. Yet Handel and his librettist, Charles Jennens, took a risk by shaping *Messiah* as they did: in many ways it swerves away from the norm. Indeed, the oratorio initially touched off a controversy that raged for several years back in London, despite the acclaim *Messiah* received when it was first introduced to Dublin audiences at the conclusion of the 1741-42 season. (Handel had been invited to spend that year in Ireland.) The composer seems to have anticipated the resistance it would face when he brought *Messiah* to London in 1743, and so he billed the work simply as a "New Sacred Oratorio."

Messiah's method of setting actual scriptural texts and its evocation of Jesus within a secular genre that could be performed "for diversion and amusement" even triggered charges of blasphemy—although these were leveled against the secular

context of the performances rather than Handel's music itself. Thereafter, the only times Handel led *Messiah* in a non-secular space were in his last years, when he gave midday performances in the newly built chapel of the Foundling Hospital. (The fact that the composer donated proceeds from *Messiah* concerts to charitable causes added to the work's allure.) In any case, this was a short-lived cultural skirmish, and annual performances of *Messiah* during the composer's final decade became a highlight of the season. These always took place in the spring, at Eastertide. It was only after Handel's death that the association of *Messiah* with the Christmas season became firmly embedded.

MESSIAH'S STRUCTURE AND MUSIC

Charles Jennens—a wealthy patron who was nevertheless alienated from contemporary English politics—juxtaposes extracts from both the Old and New Testaments to represent the basic narrative of Christian redemption. Rather than a biographical sketch of the life of Jesus, *Messiah* concerns the very idea of divinity becoming manifest in human history (hence the lack of the definite article—*Messiah*, not “*The Messiah*”—in the title).

There is very little dramatic impersonation of characters: the narrative is indirect and suggestive — and, as has been often noted, downright confusing to anyone not familiar with the implied events involving the life of Jesus. Jennens divides the libretto into three acts (although he calls them “parts”), much like the organization of a Baroque opera. Part One centers around prophecy and the nativity of Jesus, ending with his miracles. This is the part of the oratorio that is most closely tied to the Christmas season. Following its evocation of hope comes a concise retelling of the Passion story of sacrifice in Part Two. Part Three concludes with the implications of Christ's redemption of humanity from the fall of Adam.

Handel was above all a man of the theater, and his operatic genius for establishing the mood to suit a given situation is everywhere apparent. Overall, his musical choices zoom in on the universal emotions that underlie each stage of the Christian redemption narrative. Whereas he typically accomplishes this in the operatic arena through a chain of richly expressive arias, *Messiah* makes use of greater structural diversity. Part One establishes a basic pattern of recitative, aria and chorus, which then allows for further variation in the other two parts. Handel moreover freely avails himself of the full spectrum of international styles,

with which his experience had made him well acquainted. *Messiah* draws on an encyclopedic variety of choral textures, interspersing these with a profusion of individually characterized arias. Highly elaborate counterpoint is juxtaposed with homophonic choruses as solid as granite, while majestic French postures and soulful Italianate lyricism further enliven the score. And what an astonishing range of colors Handel's palette contains. Though the actual instrumentation is remarkably economical, Handel uses it with a characteristic genius for reinforcing the pacing of the drama. For example, in Part One he withholds the trumpets until “Glory to God” but then keeps them in the wings again until the “Hallelujah!” chorus at the end of Part Two (which refers not to the moment of Christ's resurrection, as is sometimes mistakenly thought, but to the triumph of redemption).

Handel moreover reveals his mastery of a range of psychological expression that transcends stereotypical Baroque “affects” or moods. In Part One alone, he paints the fathomless darkness of the sense of universal waiting for a savior but also includes the tranquil oasis of the instrumental “Pastoral Symphony” (“Pifa” refers to the music of shepherds) as well as the dancingly exuberant gestures of “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion.” Over and over, Handel finds freshly inventive ways to add to the venerable tradition of “painting” words (and their subtexts) through music. One of the pleasures of hearing *Messiah* repeatedly is to discover subtler surprises within the familiar patterns. We immediately sense the “straying” lines of “All we like sheep”—but the same chorus also shifts from a cheerful demeanor into the minor mode to deepen the sense of pathos when the consequences of human failure are depicted.

Amid all this variety, by the end of Part Three Handel has taken us on a journey that will later become familiar—and re-secularized—in the symphonies of Beethoven and his followers: the passage from darkness to enlightenment and final victory. Of course the “Hallelujah!” chorus introduces one of the most remarkable musical challenges a composer could face, which is to avoid a sense of anti-climax in what follows. Yet that's exactly what Handel accomplishes, pressing his inspiration further in the simple, direct affirmation of “I know that my Redeemer liveth” and the soaring certainty of “The trumpet shall sound.” And in the choral finale, as the voices weave their threads together in Handel's fugal setting of “Amen,” this final word acquires an all-encompassing resonance—a serenely chanted, transporting “Om.”

Thomas May, program annotator for the Los Angeles Master Chorale, writes about the arts and blogs at memeteria.com.

LOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE AND ORCHESTRA

SOPRANO

Tamara Bevard
Christina Bristow
Alannah Garnier
Kelci Hahn
Ayana Haviv
Marie Hodgson
Karen Hogle Brown
Virenia Lind
Caroline McKenzie
Courtney Taylor
Rebecca Tomlinson
Sunjoo Yeo

ALTO

Rose Beattie
Aleta Braxton
Monika Bruckner
Michele Hemmings
Sharmila G. Lash
Adriana Manfredi
Julia Metzler
Alice Kirwan Murray
Laura Smith Roethe
Jessie Shulman
Niké St. Clair
Ilana Summers

TENOR

Bradley Chapman
Adam Faruqi
Timothy Gonzales
Blake Howard
Dermot Kiernan
Shawn Kirchner
Bryan Lane
Charles Lane
Michael Lichtenauer
Matthew Miles
Robert Norman
Anthony Ray

BASS

Derrell Acon
Michael Barnett
Michael Blanchard
David Castillo
Scott Graff
James Hayden
David Dong-Geun Kim
David Kress
Scott Lehmkuhl
Brett McDermid
Steve Pence
Adrien Redford

VIOLINS I

Joel Pargman,
Concertmaster
Carrie Kennedy
Associate Concertmaster
Margaret Wooten
Assistant Concertmaster
Leslie Katz
Liliana Filipovic
Nicole Bush

VIOLINS II

Elizabeth Hedman
Principal
Cynthia Moussas
Associate Principal
Linda Stone
Steve Scharf
Anna Kostyuchek
Mui Yee Chu

VIOLAS

Shawn Mann
Principal
Andrew Picken
Associate Principal
Brett Banducci
Diana Wade

CELLOS

Dane Little
Principal
Delores Bing
Nadine Hall
Margaret Edmondson

BASSES

Don Ferrone,
Principal
Peter Doubrovsky

OBOES

Leslie Reed
Principal
Joseph Stone

BASSOON

William May
Principal

TRUMPETS

Ryan Darke
Principal
Steve O'Connor

TIMPANI

Theresa Dimond
Principal

HARPSICHORD

Lisa Edwards
Principal

ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL

MANAGER
Brady Steel

LIBRARIAN

Mark Fugina
KT Somero

*The singers of the Los Angeles Master Chorale are represented by the American Guild of Musical Artists, AFL-CIO, Elyse Willis, AGMA Delegate.
The players of the Los Angeles Master Chorale Orchestra are represented by the American Federation of Musicians.*

GUEST ARTISTS

APRIL AMANTE
 SOPRANO


A native of Southern California, soprano April Amante is a versatile professional singer, regularly performing solo and ensemble repertoire ranging from early music to contemporary musical theater. She was most recently the soprano soloist for the Los Angeles Master Chorale's *Messiah* Sing-Along at Walt Disney Concert Hall in December 2018. She has performed and covered mainstage roles with

Pittsburgh Festival Opera, Opera San Luis Obispo, Pacific Opera Project, and the Los Angeles Opera Outreach Program. Favorite roles performed include Laurey (*Oklahoma*), Johanna (*Sweeney Todd*), Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Frasquita (*Carmen*), and Lauretta (*Gianni Schicchi*).

In addition to her performance credits, Amante was a semi-finalist in the 2019 Loren Zachary Opera Competition, the 2018 Lyra New York Mozart Vocal Competition (Opera Category), the 2018 James Toland Vocal Arts Competition, and in the 29th International Nuits Lyriques de Marmande Competition in Marmande, France. April received a Bachelor of Music magna cum laude in Vocal Performance from California State University-Northridge and a Master of Music from the University of Arizona. She currently studies with Isabel Bayrakdarian.

TODD STRANGE
 TENOR


Lyric tenor Todd Strange is a well-rounded performing artist specializing in opera, solo concert work, musical theater, and professional choral work. Strange is currently a roster member of the Los Angeles Master Chorale and the LA Opera, and is a soloist with many regional opera companies and orchestras. Professional highlights include both leading and supporting roles with Long Beach Opera, New York

City Opera, Arizona Opera, Ohio Light Opera, Utah Festival Opera, Stockton Opera, and San Diego Opera. Strange has performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and has been featured on various recordings with the orchestra and the Master Chorale; he can be heard performing several lead roles with Ohio Light Opera on Albany Records. Strange has sung on various film scores, including *Sing, Us*, *The Lion King*, *Frozen*, *Star Wars: Rogue One*, and *Minions*. Strange had the privilege of working with John Williams on *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*.

CALLISTA HOFFMAN-CAMPBELL
 MEZZO-SOPRANO


An accomplished soloist and choral singer, this year will mark Hoffman-Campbell's ninth season as a member of the Los Angeles Master Chorale. She has most recently been touring domestically and internationally as a member of their production of *Lagrime di San Pietro*, directed by Peter Sellars. She has also sung with the Enlightenment Chamber Music Group, Horizon Group, and Golden

Bridge. Solo work includes Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Handel's *Messiah*, Bach B-Minor Mass and *St. Matthew Passion* with the Los Angeles Master Chorale, and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the South Bend Symphony Orchestra. She has been a featured artist with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, singing as the alto soloist in Mozart's Requiem under the baton of Maestro Helmut Rilling, and with the Fresno Philharmonic, singing the same work. She can be heard on such films as *Big Hero 6*, *Minions*, *Creed*, *Jumanji*, *A Wrinkle in Time*, *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, and others.

CHUNG UK LEE
 BASS


Korean-born conductor and bass-baritone Chung Uk Lee holds a Bachelor of Music in Composition and Music Theory from Yonsei University in Seoul and a Master of Music in Choral Music from the University of Southern California. In Los Angeles, he has studied orchestra conducting with Hans Beer, voice with Bard Suverkrop, and choral music with Dr. William Dehning. During

his period of study at USC, he was awarded a full scholarship, was assistant conductor of the University Chorus, and taught choral conducting.

As a singer, Lee has precise pitch and a warm, rich voice. He sang the role of Kezal in Smetana's *Bartered Bride* with USC Opera, and Handel's *Messiah*, Kodály's *Budavári Te Deum*, two late Haydn masses, J.S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, and Verdi's Requiem at USC. He is a member of the Los Angeles Master Chorale and has sung bass solo for Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, and Fauré's Requiem.

He is currently the music director of the Los Angeles Chamber Choir and California Children's Choir.
