

2021–2022 | 122nd Season

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Wednesday, December 22, at 7:00

Thursday, December 23, at 7:00

Julian Wachner Conductor

Sherezade Panthaki Soprano

Reginald Mobley Countertenor

Nicholas Phan Tenor

Douglas Williams Bass-baritone

Philadelphia Symphonic Choir

Joe Miller Director

Handel *Messiah*

Part I

Overture

Tenor Accompagnato: "Comfort ye my people"

Tenor Air: "Ev'ry valley shall be exalted"

Chorus: "And the glory of the Lord"

Bass Accompagnato: "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts"

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

Chorus: "And He shall purify"

Countertenor Recitative: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive"

Countertenor Air and Chorus: "O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion"

Bass Accompagnato: "For behold, darkness shall cover the earth"

Bass Air: "The people that walked in darkness"

Chorus: "For unto us a Child is born"

Pastoral Symphony

Soprano Recitative: "There were shepherds abiding in the field"

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

Soprano Recitative: "And the angel said unto them"

Soprano Accompagnato: "And suddenly there was with the angel"

Chorus: "Glory to God in the highest"

Soprano Air: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion"

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

Countertenor and Soprano Duet: "He shall feed His flock"

Chorus: "His yoke is easy"

(Program continued)

Part II

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

Chorus: "Let us break their bonds asunder"

Tenor Recitative: "He that dwelleth in heaven"

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

Chorus: "Hallelujah"

Part III

Soprano Air: "I know that my Redeemer liveth"

Bass Accompagnato: "Behold, I tell you a mystery"

Bass Air: "The trumpet shall sound"

David Bilger, trumpet

Chorus: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain"

Peter Richard Conte, portative organ; Davyd Booth, harpsichord; Priscilla Lee, cello;

Joseph Conyers, bass

This program runs approximately 1 hour, 30 minutes, and will be performed without an intermission.

Philadelphia Orchestra concerts are broadcast on WRTI 90.1 FM on Sunday afternoons at 1 PM, and are repeated on Monday evenings at 7 PM on WRTI HD 2. Visit www.wrti.org to listen live or for more details.



The Philadelphia Orchestra

The Philadelphia Orchestra is one of the world's preeminent orchestras. It strives to share the transformative power of music with the widest possible audience, and to create joy, connection, and excitement through music in the Philadelphia region, across the country, and around the world. Through innovative programming, robust educational initiatives, and an ongoing commitment to the communities that it serves, the ensemble is on a path to create an expansive future for classical music, and to further the place of the arts in an open and democratic society.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin is now in his 10th season as the eighth music director of The Philadelphia Orchestra. His connection to the ensemble's musicians has been praised by both concertgoers and critics, and he is embraced by the musicians of the Orchestra, audiences, and the community.

Your Philadelphia Orchestra takes great pride in its hometown, performing for the people of Philadelphia year-round, from Verizon Hall to community centers, the Mann Center to Penn's Landing, classrooms to hospitals, and over the airwaves and online.

In March 2020, in response to the cancellation of concerts due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Orchestra launched the Virtual Philadelphia Orchestra, a portal hosting video and audio of performances, free, on its website and social media platforms. In September 2020 the Orchestra announced *Our World NOW*, its reimaged season of concerts filmed without audiences and presented on its Digital Stage. The Orchestra also inaugurated free offerings:

HearTOGETHER, a series on racial and social justice; educational activities; and *Our City, Your Orchestra*, small ensemble performances from locations throughout the Philadelphia region.

The Philadelphia Orchestra's award-winning educational and community initiatives engage over 50,000 students, families, and community members of all ages through programs such as PlayINs, side-by-sides, PopUP concerts, Free Neighborhood Concerts, School Concerts, the School Partnership Program and School Ensemble Program, and All City Orchestra Fellowships.

Through concerts, tours, residencies, and recordings, the Orchestra is a global ambassador. It performs annually at Carnegie Hall, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, and the Bravo! Vail Music Festival. The Orchestra also has a rich touring history, having first performed outside Philadelphia in its earliest days. In 1973 it was the first American orchestra to perform in the People's Republic of China, launching a five-decade commitment of people-to-people exchange.

The Orchestra also makes live recordings available on popular digital music services and as part of the Listen On Demand section of its website. Under Yannick's leadership, the Orchestra returned to recording, with 10 celebrated releases on the prestigious Deutsche Grammophon label. The Orchestra also reaches thousands of radio listeners with weekly broadcasts on WRTI-FM and SiriusXM. For more information, please visit www.philorch.org.

Conductor



Multi-Grammy-nominated conductor, composer, and keyboardist **Julian Wachner** was recently named one of *Musical America's* Top 30 Professionals of the Year. Recent compositional projects include *Here's the Thing*, a choral-orchestral response to Black Lives Matter and the COVID-19 pandemic in collaboration with award-winning poet Samiya Bashir for the 60th anniversary of the Washington Chorus; the critically acclaimed New York premiere of *REV 23* at the 2020 Prototype

Festival; "The Vision of the Archangels" for cornetist Bruce Dickey; "We Two Alone" for chorus and Baroque orchestra, commissioned by the Providence Singers; "Lord, Thou Hast Been Our Dwelling Place" for choir, organ, and solo trumpet commissioned by the Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys; and "My Cathedral" for choir and organ commissioned by the American Guild of Organists for the 2020 National Convention.

Mr. Wachner enjoys an active schedule as a guest conductor. He made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 2008 with Handel's *Messiah*. Orchestral engagements have also included performances with the Kansas City, Montreal, Pacific, Calgary, and Pittsburgh symphonies; the New York and Hong Kong philharmonics; Seraphic Fire; the National Arts Centre and Philharmonia Baroque orchestras; Bang on a Can All-Stars; and Apollo's Fire. As an opera conductor, he has led San Francisco Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, Hawaii Opera Theater, Juilliard Opera Theater, and New York City Opera and has conducted shows for Carnegie Hall Presents, National Sawdust, and the Lincoln Center Festival. He served for nine seasons as music director of the GRAMMY Award-winning Washington Chorus with which he won ASCAP's Alice Parker Award for adventurous programming and Chorus America's Margaret Hillis Award for Choral Excellence. In March 2018 he was appointed artistic director of Michigan's Grand Rapids Bach Festival, where he will lead the 13th biennial festival in April 2022.

As director of music at New York's historic Trinity Church Wall Street since 2010, Mr. Wachner has created a world-renowned performing arts center with an annual season of hundreds of events. Since his professional debut as music director of Boston University's Marsh Chapel in 1990, he has been a pioneer in consistently commissioning, performing, and recording both women and BIPOC artists. This lifelong dedication to diversity has yielded three Pulitzer Prize-winning works (Julia Wolfe's *Anthracite Fields*, Ellen Reid's *Prism*, and Du Yun's *Angel's Bone*) and multiple other projects, festivals, and recordings.

Soloist

David Fung



Soprano **Sherezade Panthaki** is making her Philadelphia Orchestra debut with these performances. She has developed ongoing collaborations with many of the world's leading early-music interpreters including Nicholas McGegan, Mark Morris, Simon Carrington, Matthew Halls, and Masaaki Suzuki, with whom she made her New York Philharmonic debut in a program of works by Bach and Mendelssohn. Her 2019–20 season included returns to the Minnesota Orchestra,

the Houston Symphony, the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, and the Choir and Orchestra of Trinity Wall Street on tour in Montreal, as well as debuts with Voices of Music and the NDR Radiophilharmonie in Hanover, Germany. She also rejoined the Boston Early Music Festival in Bremen, performing and recording Graupner's *Antiochus and Stratonica*; performed the title role in Handel's *Atalanta* with Philharmonia Baroque; and was featured at the Caramoor Music Festival in an operatic recital, "Love and Revenge: The Baroque Diva," with the Helicon Ensemble. She tours frequently with the New York City–based Parthenia Viol Consort and gave a special performance for the closing ceremonies of the 2019 Venice Biennale. She is a founding member of, and artistic advisor to, the newly debuted Kaleidoscope Vocal Ensemble, a one-voice-per-part octet celebrating racial and ethnic diversity in performances and educational programs of early and new music. Since 2018 she has been the vocal music coordinator and featured soprano soloist at the Bach Virtuosi Festival held every summer in Portland, Maine.

Ms. Panthaki's recordings include Handel's oratorio *Joseph and his Brethren* with Mr. McGegan and Philharmonia Baroque and the chamber duets of Agostino Steffani under the direction of Jory Vinikour. She has championed works by women composers of the Baroque on recording and in live performance with La Donna Musicale at the Utrecht Early Music Festival (Holland), the Murten Classics Festival (Switzerland), and the Banco de la República series (Colombia). She is a founding member of the early music vocal quartet Gravitación, with which she has recorded medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque works.

Born and raised in India, Ms. Panthaki began her musical education at an early age. Following intensive study and earning top distinction as a young pianist, she turned to singing and found a more personal and expressive means to connect with audiences. She holds a master's degree in Voice Performance from the University of Illinois and an Artist Diploma from the Yale School of Music and the Yale Institute of Sacred Music.

Soloist



American countertenor **Reginald Mobley** is highly sought after for the Baroque, Classical, and modern repertoire. In March 2020 he became the first-ever programming consultant for Boston's Handel and Haydn Society following several years of leading H+H in his community-engaging Every Voice concerts. He also holds the position of visiting artist for diversity outreach with the Baroque ensemble Apollo's Fire. He is a regular guest with Cantata Collective,

Musica Angelica, Agave Baroque, Bach Akademie Charlotte, Seraphic Fire, Quodlibet Ensemble, Pacific MusicWorks, Bach Collegium San Diego, the San Francisco Early Music Society, and the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra. Recent engagements have included concerts and recordings with organizations such as Opera Lafayette, Blue Heron, Chatham Baroque, and Washington Bach Consort. He makes his Philadelphia Orchestra debut with these current performances.

In the United Kingdom Mr. Mobley has toured with the Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists and performed with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the Academy of Ancient Music. He will make his debut with the City of Birmingham Symphony in June 2022. He has also been invited to perform with the OH! (Orkiestra Historyczna) in Poland and the Vienna Academy in Austria at the Musikverein. He gave a recital of spiritual music at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris and has toured with the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra under Kristian Bezuidenhout, the Balthasar Neumann Choir & Ensemble, and the Bach Society in Stuttgart. Highlights of the current season include the role of Ottone in Monteverdi's *The Coronation of Poppea* with the Budapest Festival Orchestra, Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* with Seraphic Fire, a Bach program with the Orchester Wiener Akademie, Handel's *Messiah* with the Chicago Symphony, and performances at Walt Disney Concert Hall and Carnegie Hall. In 2023 he will tour Australia with the Bach Akademie Australia.

Mr. Mobley's most recent recording is *A Lad's Love* with tenor Brian Giebler on the Bridge Records label, which has been nominated for a GRAMMY Award for Best Classical Solo Vocal Album. He features on several albums with the Monteverdi Choir and John Eliot Gardiner, including a recording of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and *Magnificat*. His own projects include *Peace in Our Time* on VGo Recordings with Agave Baroque. His solo recording debut with Alpha Classics, entitled *Spirituals*, will be released in 2022.

Soloist



American tenor **Nicholas Phan** made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 2011 and performs regularly with the world's leading orchestras and opera companies. Also an avid recitalist, he is artistic director of the Collaborative Arts Institute of Chicago (CAIC), which he co-founded in 2010 to promote art song and vocal chamber music. He began his 2021–22 season with both live and virtual chamber performances focusing on themes of immigration and migration. Highlighting

his exploration of these themes is a tour of the United States with the string quartet Brooklyn Rider for performances of Nico Muhly's new song cycle, *Stranger*, and the 10th Collaborative Works Festival of the CAIC, where he serves as curator and performer for three concerts in the Festival's 2021 iteration, "Strangers in a Strange Land."

Mr. Phan celebrates his first musical holiday season in two years with additional performances of Handel's *Messiah* with the University Musical Society in Ann Arbor, the San Francisco Symphony, and the New York Philharmonic. He caps his calendar year making his debut with the Seattle Symphony for its New Year's Eve concerts. Highlights of the second half of the season include the curation of a series of salon concerts for San Francisco Performances, in which he will also perform; the world premiere of Aaron Jay Kernis's new song cycle, *Earth*, with the Seattle Chamber Music Society; and return visits to the Handel and Haydn Society in Boston, the Nashville Symphony, and the Los Angeles Master Chorale. In the spring of 2022 he will release a new album on the Avie label entirely devoted to the music of Mr. Muhly. Mr. Phan's most recent album, *Clairières*, a recording of songs by Lili and Nadia Boulanger, was nominated for the 2020 GRAMMY Award for Best Classical Solo Vocal Album. His album *Gods and Monsters* was nominated for the same award in 2017. He remains the first and only singer of Asian descent to be nominated in the history of the category. Other solo albums include *Still Falls the Rain*, which was named one of the best classical recordings of 2012 by the *New York Times* and also features Philadelphia Orchestra Principal Horn Jennifer Montone.

Raised in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Mr. Phan is a graduate of the University of Michigan and is the 2012 recipient of the Paul Boylan Distinguished Alumni Award and the 2018 Christopher Kendall Award. He also studied at the Manhattan School of Music and the Aspen Music Festival and School. He is an alumnus of the Houston Grand Opera Studio.

Soloist

Juan Camillo Roa



In the last few seasons, bass-baritone **Douglas Williams** has made a name for himself in leading roles including Figaro in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* with Edo de Waart and the Milwaukee Symphony, the title role in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with Opera Atelier, and Nick Shadow in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* with Barbara Hannigan and the Munich Philharmonic. This year he continues his collaboration with Ms.

Hannigan in Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France and appears in a new production of Jonathan Dove's monodrama *The Other Euridice*. Mr. Williams has also appeared as Sciarone in Puccini's *Tosca* with Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic at the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden and the Priest/Armed Man in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and Yannick Nézet-Séguin, which was recorded for Deutsche Grammophon. He has also collaborated with conductors Nicholas McGegan and Neville Marriner in such prestigious venues as Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, and the Frankfurt Alte Oper. His repertoire reaches over four centuries, making him a sought-after interpreter of works by Monteverdi, Handel, Bach, and Mozart in addition to the Romantic and modern eras.

Mr. Williams has appeared in opera productions directed by distinguished choreographers, including Mark Morris's production of Handel's *Acis and Galatea* for Lincoln Center and Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* with Sasha Waltz for the Dutch National Opera. With choreographer Andreas Heise and pianist Jonathan Ware, he is currently creating a choreographed production of Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* for himself and three dancers. He has appeared with pianist Igor Levit and the JACK Quartet at the Tanglewood Festival in Schoenberg's *Ode to Napoleon*; with the Signal Ensemble in the world premiere of Wuorinen's *It Happens Like This*; with pianist Levi Hammer for a song recital at the Salzburg Mozarteum, presenting the world premiere of a song cycle by British composer Iain Bell; and as a guest recitalist with the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society.

On the concert stage Mr. Williams, who is making his Philadelphia Orchestra debut, has appeared with the National Symphony in Washington, D.C., the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa, the Nashville Symphony, the St. Louis Symphony, the Houston Symphony, the NDR Radiophilharmonie, the Detroit Symphony, and Les Talens Lyriques. He trained at the New England Conservatory and Yale School of Music.

Choir

Jessica Griffin



The **Philadelphia Symphonic Choir** made its debut in December 2016, performing in three programs with The Philadelphia Orchestra that season. Consisting of talented vocalists auditioned from around the country, the ensemble was created to marry gifted and unique voices of Philadelphia and beyond with the legendary Philadelphia Sound. In the 2017–18 season, the Choir appeared in The Philadelphia Orchestra's performances of Haydn's *The Seasons* and Puccini's

Tosca. In the 2018–19 season the ensemble sang in performances of Bernstein's Symphony No. 3 ("Kaddish") and Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, as well as holiday performances of Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. In the 2019–20 season the choir joined the Philadelphians for Handel's *Messiah*.

The Philadelphia Symphonic Choir is directed by Joe Miller, chair of choral studies at the University of Cincinnati. From 2006 to 2020 he served as conductor of two of the most renowned choral ensembles in the United States: the Westminster Choir and the Westminster Symphonic Choir. He has also served as director of choral activities at Westminster Choir College of Rider University. In addition to his responsibilities at Westminster, he has been artistic director of choral activities for the renowned Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston, South Carolina, since 2007. Recent seasons leading the Westminster Choir have included concert tours in Beijing and in Spain, participation in the World Symposium on Choral Music in Barcelona, and groundbreaking performances of Julia Wolfe's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Anthracite Fields* at the historic Roebling Wire Works as part of Westminster's Transforming Space project. Recordings with the Westminster Choir include *The Heart's Reflection: Music of Daniel Elder* and *Martin: Mass for Double Choir*, which includes Anders Öhrwall's arrangement of the Swedish folk tune *Fäbodpsalm från Dalarna* with Philadelphia Orchestra Concertmaster David Kim and Acting Associate Principal Bass Joseph Conyers.

The Philadelphia Symphonic Choir joins The Philadelphia Orchestra later this season for New Year's Celebration performances of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and the world premiere of Composer-in-Residence Gabriela Frank's *Pachamama Meets an Ode* in Philadelphia and at Carnegie Hall; the world premiere of the concert version of Kevin Puts's new opera *The Hours* in Verizon Hall; and for performances of Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* in Philadelphia and at Carnegie Hall.

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Music Director



Xian Zhang
Conductor



New Year's Celebration December 31 and January 2

Welcome in the new year with Beethoven's majestic and inspiring Symphony No. 9. Conductor Xian Zhang leads The Philadelphia Orchestra and the Philadelphia Symphonic Choir in Beethoven's choral masterpiece.

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The Music

Messiah

George Frideric Handel

Born in Halle, Germany, February 23, 1685

Died in London, April 14, 1759

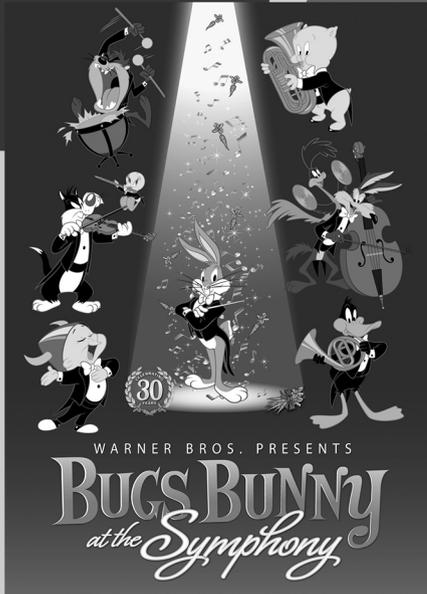


To enter the National Portrait Gallery in London is to take a stroll through the annals of British history, art, drama, and music. Upon reaching the galleries devoted to 18th-century worthies, visitors are often drawn to the large portrait of George Frideric Handel (left) by the great British artist Thomas Hudson (1701–79). Hudson painted Handel dressed in elaborate finery with a copy of his famous oratorio *Messiah*. Viewers who are familiar with other paintings of the composer

will notice a marked difference between those portrayals and this one, however. Earlier portraits invariably emphasize the expressiveness of his eyes, but in Hudson's grand portrait Handel's eyes are staring, blank, and inert. Beneath the grandeur of this painting lies a poignant tragedy. Upon closer inspection, it dawns gradually upon the viewer that Hudson has painted a subject the lavishness of whose attire cannot distract from his blindness. Commissioned by Handel's librettist Charles Jennens (1700–73), this "court portrait" was painted after 1753, by which time Handel's eyesight had been extinguished completely after he had endured a fruitless series of unsuccessful operations.

Drawing upon a remarkable reserve of inner courage, Handel continued to play the organ in public despite his blindness, most notably at the annual benefit performances of *Messiah* that took place in the chapel of the Foundling Hospital, a London orphanage. These concerts, which had begun in 1750, decisively altered the way in which *Messiah* was received by the public, the press, and, especially, the Anglican clergy. During this period, oratorios were advertised as "entertainments," and their presentation was usually restricted to theaters. Indeed, the performances of *Messiah* at the Foundling Hospital's chapel were considered exceptions to the rule, exempt from criticism only because of their charitable purpose.

Initial Controversy Indeed, the first London appearance of *Messiah* in 1743 was highly controversial. An article appeared in the *Universal Spectator* that sharply queried the propriety of taking Christ's life as the subject for a musical "entertainment." At that time, Jennens, the wealthy High Church Anglican clergyman who had compiled the text of *Messiah*, reported "a clamour about Town, said to arise from the B[isho]ps, against performing it." To avoid further protests, *Messiah* was advertised simply as "A New Sacred Oratorio." Jennens



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George Daugherty
Conductor

Jan. 7, 2022, 8:00 PM

Jan. 8, 2022, 2:00 PM

Jan. 9, 2022, 2:00 PM

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"Bugs Bunny at the Symphony" returns to The Philadelphia Orchestra in a sparkling new edition of this critically acclaimed concert. Watch more than a dozen beloved classic *Looney Tunes*, including such favorites as *What's Opera, Doc?*, *The Rabbit of Seville*, *Baton Bunny*, and *Long-Haired Hare*, projected on the big screen while the

Orchestra plays the classical music-infused original Carl Stalling scores. Plus many new additions since the last Philadelphia performances, including *Corny Concerto*, *High Note*, and five brand new shorts from Warner Bros. Animation, including *Dynamite Dance*. Created by George Daugherty and David Ka Lik Wong.

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**The
Philadelphia
Orchestra**

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Music Director

was well aware that he risked charges of blasphemy by creating an oratorio text based on the life and ministry of the Christian Savior. He sought to deflect such pious opprobrium by intermingling passages drawn from 14 books of the King James Version of the Bible with selections from the Book of Common Prayer, the principal service book of the Church of England. Through his selections, Jennens cunningly unfolded the narrative in a manner at once oblique and reverent. Despite his caution and Handel's sublime music, *Messiah* ran for only three performances, a chilly reception that one contemporary writer attributed to "Scruples, some Persons had entertained, against carrying on such a Performance in a Play House."

No such finicky scruples had been evident the year before, however, when *Messiah* was premiered to enormous success in Dublin on April 13. Indeed, a member of the audience in the "New Musick-Hall in Fishamble-street" on that occasion was Edward Synge, the Anglican Bishop of Elphin, who wrote approvingly that the listeners "Seemed indeed thoroughly engag'd from one end to the other. ... Many, I hope were instructed by it and Proper Sentiments inspir'd in a Stronger manner in their Minds." Handel himself may have echoed Synge's comments in his reported reply to Lord Kinnoull, who had complimented him on *Messiah* as a "noble entertainment": "My lord," replied the composer, "I should be sorry if I only entertained them, I wish to make them better."

A Closer Look Following Jennens's text, Handel divided his oratorio into three parts. After a dignified Overture, Part I presents prophecies of the coming of the Messiah and the birth and ministry of Jesus Christ. Part II deals with His passion, death, resurrection, and ascension, concluding with a jubilant chorus, the stirring "Hallelujah." Part III looks forward to the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. As Christopher Hogwood observes, "Most important of all is the clarity and confidence with which Jennens displays the divine scheme, a coherent progress from Prophecy, through Nativity, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension to the promise of Redemption (Part III is based largely on the Anglican Burial Service)." Although now a regular feature of the Christmas season, *Messiah* encompasses all of the festivals of the Christian liturgical year. (Both Jennens and Handel associated *Messiah* with Holy Week and Eastertide.)

To express the sacred text fully, Handel drew upon a wide range of European musical styles for *Messiah*. The severe dotted rhythms of the opening measures proclaim an overture in the French style. The gentle swaying of the *siciliana*, a dance that originated among Sicilian shepherds, permeates both the radiant Pastoral Symphony and "He shall feed his flock." In Part II the tenor soloist becomes a narrator in a manner reminiscent of the Evangelists—also sung by tenors—that play a crucial role in the Lutheran Passions, most famously in Johann Sebastian Bach's St. Matthew Passion.



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The
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Yannick Nézet-Séguin Music Director

Given its iconic status, it is not surprising that legends have accrued around *Messiah*, such as the unsubstantiated tale of an inspired King George II leaping to his feet at the beginning of the "Hallelujah" Chorus. Equally dubious is the story that Handel once exclaimed, "I did think I did see all Heaven before me, and the great God Himself," words which, in Hogwood's trenchant phrase, "ring so false." What is miraculous, however, is the speed with which Handel composed *Messiah*—24 days in August and September of 1741. As was his practice, he drew upon his own works, as well as "borrowing" themes from such contemporaries as Georg Philipp Telemann, Giovanni Porta, and Arcangelo Corelli, to enable him to complete his task on time. In the case of *Messiah*, however, Handel surely made such "borrowings" in the service of a larger purpose: "I wish to make them better."

—Byron Adams

Handel composed Messiah in 1741.

Eugene Ormandy conducted the first official Philadelphia Orchestra performances of Messiah, in October and November of 1958; the soloists were Leontyne Price, Martha Lipton, Davis Cunningham, William Warfield, and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. The series opened on Halloween (!) and was so popular the first year that an extra performance was added. (Actually the Orchestra had performed Messiah much earlier, as far back as 1902, with the now-defunct Choral Society of Philadelphia, but not on its own concert series.) Since 1961, the Orchestra has performed Messiah every year.

The Philadelphians recorded Messiah in 1958 for CBS with the above forces, except Eileen Farrell replaced Ms. Price. This recording earned the Orchestra one of its three gold records. The Orchestra also recorded excerpts from the work twice: the Pastoral Symphony was recorded in 1929 for RCA with Leopold Stokowski, and "For unto us a Child is born" and the "Hallelujah" Chorus were recorded in 1964 for CBS with Ormandy and the Temple University Concert Choir.

The instrumentation in this performance calls for two oboes, bassoon, two trumpets, timpani, harpsichord, organ, strings, mixed chorus, and four vocal soloists.

These performances of Messiah run approximately one hour and 30 minutes.

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Meg Hackney, Senior Manager, Patron Services

Nicole Sikora, Patron Services Supervisor

Dani Rose, Training Manager and Access Services Coordinator

Kathleen Moran, Philadelphia Orchestra Priority Services Coordinator

Dan Ahearn, Jr., Box Office Manager

Michelle Carter Messa, Assistant Box Office Manager

Jayson Bucy, Program and Web Manager

Rachelle Seney, Program and Web Coordinator

Bridget Morgan, Accounting Manager

Monica Song, Staff Accountant

Catherine Pappas, Project Manager