

2023–2024 | 124th Season

# The Philadelphia Orchestra

Wednesday, December 20, at 7:00

Thursday, December 21, at 7:00

**Nicholas McGegan** Conductor

**Sherezade Panthaki** Soprano

**Reginald Mobley** Countertenor

**Thomas Cooley** Tenor

**Dashon Burton** Bass-Baritone

**Avi Stein** Harpsichord

**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"

## **Intermission**

Part II

Chorus: "Behold the Lamb of God"

Countertenor Air: "He was despised"

Chorus: "Surely He hath borne our griefs"

Chorus: "And with His stripes we are healed"

Chorus: "All we like sheep have gone astray"

Tenor Accompagnato: "All they that see Him, laugh Him to scorn"

Chorus: "He trusted in God"

Tenor Accompagnato: "Thy rebuke hath broken His heart"

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

Tenor Accompagnato: "He was cut off out of the land of the living"

Tenor Air: "But Thou didst not leave His soul in hell"

Chorus: "Lift up your heads, o ye gates"

Soprano Air: "How beautiful are the feet of Him"

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"

Chorus: "Since by man came death"

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

Bass Air: "The trumpet shall sound"

*Travis Peterson, trumpet*

Chorus: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain"

*Peter Richard Conte, portative organ*

This program runs approximately 2 hours, 20 minutes.

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](http://www.wrti.org) to listen live or for more details.

The  
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Orchestra  
Yannick Nézet-Séguin  
Music and Artistic Director

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## The Philadelphia Orchestra

The world-renowned Philadelphia Orchestra 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 education initiatives, a commitment to its diverse communities, and the embrace of digital outreach, the ensemble is creating an expansive future for classical music, and furthering the place of the arts in an open and democratic society. In June 2021 the Orchestra and its home, the Kimmel Center, united to form The Philadelphia Orchestra and Kimmel Center, Inc., reimagining the power of the arts to bring joy, create community, and effect change.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin is now in his 11th 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, in Verizon Hall and community centers, in classrooms and hospitals, and over the airwaves and online. In response to the cancellation of concerts due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Orchestra launched the Digital Stage, providing access to high-quality online performances, keeping music alive at a time when it was needed most. It also inaugurated free offerings: HearTOGETHER, a podcast

on racial and social justice, and creative equity and inclusion, through the lens of the world of orchestral music, and Our City, Your Orchestra, a series of digital performances that connects the Orchestra with communities through music and dialog while celebrating the diversity and vibrancy of the Philadelphia region.

The Philadelphia Orchestra's award-winning education and community initiatives engage over 50,000 students, families, and community members of all ages through programs such as Play!N's; side-by-sides; PopUP concerts; Our City, Your Orchestra Live; 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 and one of our nation's greatest exports. It performs annually at Carnegie Hall, the Mann Center, 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.

Under Yannick's leadership, the Orchestra returned to recording with 12 celebrated releases on the Deutsche Grammophon label, including the GRAMMY® Award-winning *Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3*. The Orchestra also reaches thousands of radio listeners with weekly broadcasts on WRTI-FM and SiriusXM. For more information, please visit [www.philorch.org](http://www.philorch.org).

# Conductor

Laura Barisonzi



In his sixth decade on the podium, conductor **Nicholas McGegan** is recognized for his probing and revelatory explorations of music of all periods. He is music director laureate of the San Francisco–based Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Chorale and principal guest conductor of Hungary’s Capella Savaria. He is best known as a Baroque and Classical specialist and his approach has led to appearances with many of the world’s major orchestras. He made his Philadelphia

Orchestra debut in 2002. In addition to these current performances, his recent and upcoming orchestral appearances include the Aspen Music Festival and School; leading the Cleveland Orchestra at the 2023 Blossom Music Festival; a return to the Hollywood Bowl in a “Mozart Under the Stars” concert with the Los Angeles Philharmonic; two programs with the Bay Area’s Cantata Collective; engagements with the Detroit Symphony, the Sarasota Orchestra, and the Rhode Island Philharmonic; and performances of Handel’s *Messiah* with the Calgary Philharmonic and the Grand Rapids, Edmonton, and New Jersey symphonies. He also conducts Handel operas at the Curtis Institute of Music and at the Blackwater Valley Opera Festival in Lismore, Ireland.

Mr. McGegan’s prolific discography includes more than 100 releases spanning five decades. Having recorded over 50 albums of works by Handel, two of which received the prestigious *Gramophone* Award, he has explored the depths of the composer’s output with a dozen oratorios and close to 20 of his operas. Since the 1980s he has released more than 20 recordings with Capella Savaria on the Hungaroton label, including repertoire by Monteverdi, Scarlatti, Telemann, and Vivaldi. His extensive discography with Philharmonia Baroque includes two GRAMMY nominations, for Handel’s *Susanna* and Haydn’s Symphony Nos. 88, 101, and 104. Recent releases include an album of Mozart violin concertos with Gil Shaham and the SWR Symphonieorchester and two of Mozart’s serenades with violinist Zsolt Kalló and Capella Savaria.

Mr. McGegan is committed to the next generation of musicians, frequently conducting and coaching students in residencies and engagements at Yale and Harvard universities, the Juilliard School in New York City, and the Colburn School in Los Angeles. Born in England, he was educated at Cambridge and Oxford. He was made an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire “for services to music overseas.” Other awards include the Halle Handel Prize and a declaration of Nicholas McGegan Day by the mayor of San Francisco. For more information visit [nicholasmcgegan.com](http://nicholasmcgegan.com).

# Soloist

David Fung



Soprano **Sherezade Panthaki** is making her Philadelphia Orchestra debut with these performances. She enjoys ongoing international collaborations with many of the world's leading early-music interpreters including Nicholas McGegan, Masaaki Suzuki, Martin Haselböck, Nicholas Kraemer, Matthew Halls, Stephen Stubbs, and Gary Wedow. Recent seasons have included performances with the New York, Los Angeles, and Calgary philharmonics; Bach Collegium Japan;

the Orchester Wiener Akademie; the NDR Radiophilharmonie; the Boston Early Music Festival; the Minnesota, Philharmonia Baroque, and Tafelmusik Baroque orchestras; the St. Louis, Houston, and Seattle symphonies; the Mark Morris Dance Group; St. Thomas Church in New York City; the Choir and Orchestra of Trinity Wall Street; and Voices of Music. She is in high demand for her interpretations of works by Mozart, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Poulenc, and Orff and has given numerous new-music premieres. She has also appeared in various programs with the New York City-based Parthenia Viol Consort.

Ms. Panthaki's discography includes a recently released recording of Handel's *Joseph and His Brethren* with Mr. McGegan and Philharmonia Baroque, solo Bach cantatas with the Cantata Collective, and Graupner's *Antiochus und Stratonica* with the Boston Early Music Festival. She is a founding member of, and artistic advisor to, the Kaleidoscope Vocal Ensemble, a octet of artists of color, celebrating racial and ethnic diversity in performances and educational programs of early and new music. In addition to headlining arts festivals, international music conferences, and concert series, the ensemble fosters in-depth conversations on issues of diversity and inclusion in classical music and arts education. A frequent guest clinician and masterclass leader across the United States, she has taught voice to graduate music students at Yale University and currently heads the vocal program at Mount Holyoke College.

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 an artist diploma with top honors from the Yale School of Music and the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, where she was the winner of multiple awards of distinction including the prestigious Phyllis Curtin Career Entry Prize. She earned a master's degree from the University of Illinois and a bachelor's degree from West Virginia Wesleyan College. For more information, visit [www.sherezadepanthaki.com](http://www.sherezadepanthaki.com).

# Soloist



GRAMMY-nominated American countertenor **Reginald Mobley**, who is making his Philadelphia Orchestra debut, is globally renowned for his interpretation of Baroque, Classical, and modern repertoire and leads a prolific career on both sides of the Atlantic. An advocate for diversity in music and its programming, he became the first-ever programming consultant for Boston's Handel and Haydn Society following several years of leading that ensemble in his community-

engaging Every Voice concerts. He holds the position of visiting artist for diversity outreach with the Baroque ensemble Apollo's Fire and is also leading a research project in the United Kingdom funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to uncover music by composers from diverse backgrounds.

This season Mr. Mobley's American concert schedule includes solo recitals in New York at the Miller Theatre and in Chicago at the Collaborative Arts Institute; Handel's *Messiah* with the Pittsburgh Symphony and the Minnesota Orchestra; Orff's *Carmina burana* with the Chicago Symphony; and appearances with the most prestigious Baroque ensembles, including the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Early Music Vancouver, Collegium San Diego, and Seraphic Fire. Recent and future highlights include his debuts with the Boston Symphony and Andris Nelsons at Tanglewood and with Montreal's Orchestre Métropolitain and Masaaki Suzuki. In Europe he has performed with the Orchester Wiener Akademie, the Balthasar Neumann Choir & Ensemble, the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra, I Barocchisti, the International Bach Academy in Stuttgart, Holland Baroque, the Netherlands Bach Society, the Monteverdi Choir, English Baroque Soloists, the City of Birmingham Symphony, and the Budapest Festival Orchestra for a series of performances as Ottone in Monteverdi's *The Coronation of Poppea*. He has also engaged in projects with the Academy of Ancient Music in Cambridge, singing the role of Deceit in Handel's *The Triumph of Time and Truth* and devising a new program, *Sons of England*, supported by the AHRC, which reflects his research under its umbrella and tours in April 2024. He gave a Purcell, Handel, and Ignatius Sancho program for his solo debut recital in Paris, which he repeated as part of the Bayreuth Baroque Opera Festival in September 2023.

Mr. Mobley's first solo album with Alpha Classics was released in June 2023 to coincide with a series of concerts with pianist Baptiste Trotignon in Paris, York, and Liverpool as well as at the Aix-en-Provence and BBC Proms festivals. He is also featured on several albums with the Monteverdi Choir, Agave Baroque, and the International Bach Academy.

# Soloist

Paul Foster Williams



Tenor **Thomas Cooley** makes his Philadelphia Orchestra debut with these performances. A singer of great versatility, expressiveness, and virtuosity he is in demand internationally for a wide range of repertoire in concert, opera, and chamber music and performs regularly with major orchestras and Baroque ensembles worldwide.

Mr. Cooley is known particularly as an interpreter of the works of Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and Britten.

He was the tenor soloist for the Carmel Bach Festival for more than a decade and in 2015 was named artist-in-residence for Music of the Baroque.

Mr. Cooley's recent engagements include the role of Grimoaldo in Handel's *Rodelinda* at the Göttingen International Handel Festival; Don Ottavio in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* on tour with the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century; Telemann's *Der Tag des Gerichts* in the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam; a recording of the Evangelist in Bach's St. John Passion with Nicholas McGegan and the Cantata Collective; Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the New York Philharmonic and the Phoenix Symphony; Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with the Milwaukee Symphony and the Nashville Symphony; Handel's *Theodora* with Philharmonia Baroque; Haydn's *The Creation* with the Fort Worth Symphony; Britten's *War Requiem* in Carnegie Hall; and Acis in Handel's *Acis and Galatea* with the Mark Morris Dance Group. A program of Handel arias and duets entitled "As Steals the Morn" with San Francisco's Voices of Music was selected as the best Early/Baroque performance in the Bay Area in 2019, a selection from which has received close to three million views on YouTube.



# Soloist

Tatiana Daubek



Bass-baritone **Dashon Burton** is making his Philadelphia Orchestra debut with these performances. Additional highlights of his 2023–24 season include multiple appearances with Michael Tilson Thomas, including Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* with the San Francisco Symphony; Copland's *Old American Songs* with the New World Symphony; and selections from Tilson Thomas's own *Meditations on Rilke* with the San Diego Symphony. He also performs Bach's Christmas

Oratorio with the Washington Bach Consort, Handel's *Messiah* with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and the title role in Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* at Vanderbilt University. With the Cleveland Orchestra he participates in a semi-staged version of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, and he joins the Milwaukee Symphony and Ken-David Masur for three subscription weeks as that ensemble's artistic partner.

Last season Mr. Burton returned to the Cleveland Orchestra for Schubert's *Mass No. 6* with Franz Welser-Möst in Cleveland and at Carnegie Hall; to the Houston Symphony for Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* with Juraj Valčuha; and to the New York Philharmonic for Tilson Thomas's *Meditations on Rilke*, led by the composer. Debut appearances included Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with the Milwaukee Symphony led by Mr. Masur, the world premiere of Chris Cerrone's *The Year of Silence* with the Louisville Orchestra led by Teddy Abrams, and Dvořák's *Requiem* with the Richmond Symphony. In summer 2023 he appeared at the Tanglewood and Caramoor festivals in Handel's *Acis and Galatea* with Philharmonia Baroque. He continues his relationship with San Francisco Performances as an artist-in-residence with appearances at venues and educational institutions throughout the Bay Area.

A multiple award-winning singer, Mr. Burton won his second GRAMMY Award in March 2021 for Best Classical Solo Vocal Album for his performance in Ethyl Smyth's *The Prison* with the Experiential Orchestra (Chandos). As an original member of the groundbreaking vocal ensemble Roomful of Teeth, he won his first GRAMMY for its inaugural recording of all new commissions. Other recordings include *Songs of Struggle & Redemption: We Shall Overcome* (Acis), the GRAMMY-nominated recording of Paul Moravec's *Sanctuary Road* (Naxos); *Holocaust 1944* by Lori Laitman (Acis); and Caroline Shaw's *The Listeners* with the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra. He received a Bachelor of Music degree from Oberlin College and Conservatory and a Master of Music degree from Yale University's Institute of Sacred Music. He is an assistant professor of voice at Vanderbilt University's Blair School of Music.

# Harpsichord



**Avi Stein** is the organist and chorumaster at Trinity Church Wall Street in New York City and a faculty member at the Juilliard School, where he teaches continuo accompaniment, vocal repertoire, and chamber music. The *New York Times* described him as “a brilliant organ soloist” in his Carnegie Hall debut. He is the artistic director of the Helicon Foundation and has directed the International Baroque Academy of the Musiktheater Bavaria and the young artists’ program at

the Carmel Bach Festival.

Mr. Stein has conducted a variety of ensembles including Tafelmusik, the Portland Baroque Orchestra, the Bang on a Can All-Stars, and the Opéra Français de New York. He led Henry Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* at Juilliard in a production that toured to London’s Holland Park and the Royal Opera House at the Palace of Versailles. His most recent production at Juilliard, Luigi Rossi’s *Orfeo*, was named one of the best performances of 2021 by the *New York Times*. He performed on the 2015 GRAMMY Award–winning recording for Best Opera Recording, Charpentier’s *La Descente d’Orphée aux enfers* with the Boston Early Music Festival. Mr. Stein studied at Indiana University, the Eastman School of Music, and the University of Southern California, and he was a Fulbright Scholar in Toulouse, France.

# 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. Last season the Choir appeared in The Philadelphia Orchestra's performances of Handel's *Messiah*, Bruckner's "Christus factus est" and

Te Deum, and Holst's *The Planets*. Other recent highlights with the Orchestra include the world premiere of the concert version of Kevin Puts's opera *The Hours* in Verizon Hall and performances of Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* in Philadelphia and at Carnegie Hall. The ensemble has also sung in performances of Haydn's *The Seasons*, Puccini's *Tosca*, Bernstein's Symphony No. 3 ("Kaddish"), and Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, as well as holiday performances of Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.

The Philadelphia Symphonic Choir is directed by **Joe Miller**, professor of conducting and director of choral studies at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (CCM). He is also artistic director of choral activities for the Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston, South Carolina. He has served as conductor of the Philadelphia Symphonic Choir since 2016 and made his conducting debut with The Philadelphia Orchestra in 2021 leading Handel's *Messiah*. Featured concerts in the 2023–24 CCM season include Bach's St. Matthew Passion featuring stage direction by James Alexander, Gregory Spears's *The Tower and the Garden*, and collaborations with Gallicantus. Mr. Miller closes the season with the world premiere of Layale Chaker and Lisa Schlesinger's *Ruinous Gods* at the Spoleto Festival USA and Ralph Vaughan Williams's *Sea Symphony* with Berkshire Choral International. From 2006 to 2020 he served as professor of conducting and director of choral activities at Westminster Choir College of Rider University. His debut recording with the Westminster Choir, *Flower of Beauty*, received four stars from *Choir & Organ* magazine and earned critical praise from *American Record Guide*.

This season marks the premiere of the film *Maestro*, a collaboration with Bradley Cooper and Netflix featuring the Philadelphia Symphonic Choir and the music of Leonard Bernstein.

**Philadelphia Symphonic Choir**  
**Joe Miller** Director

**Sopranos**

Hayley Abramowitz  
Elise Brancheau  
Katharine Burns  
Abigail Chapman  
Marisa Curcio  
Christina Han  
Jina Jang  
Madeline Meier  
Blythe Quelin  
Sophia Santiago  
Pei Ying Wang

**Altos**

Robin Bier  
Marissa Chalker  
Michaela Gleason  
Alyson Harvey  
John Irving  
Eva Kastner-Puschl  
Kelsey Lewis  
Meghan McGinty  
Heather Mitchell  
Natasha Nelson  
Rebecca Roy

**Tenors**

Samuel Barge  
Brendan Barker  
Noah Donahue  
Joshua John  
Colin Kase  
William Lim  
Max Marquez  
Jacob Nelson  
Kevin Schneider  
Tyler Tejada  
Shane Thomas

**Basses**

Graham Bier  
Gordon Blodgett  
Greg Boatman  
Sam Duffey  
Matthew English  
Mark Hightower  
Scott Koven  
Matthew Lee  
Alexander Nguyen  
John Scherch  
Kirby Traylor

# 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 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.

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, contrabassoon, two trumpets, timpani, harpsichord, organ, strings, mixed chorus, and four vocal soloists.*

*These performances of Messiah run approximately two hours and 20 minutes.*

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**PreConcert Conversations:** PreConcert Conversations are held prior to most Philadelphia Orchestra subscription concerts, beginning one hour before the performance. Conversations are free to ticket-holders, feature discussions of the season's music and music-makers, and are supported in part by the Hirschberg-Goodfriend Fund in memory of Adolf Hirschberg, established by Juliet J. Goodfriend.

**Lost and Found:** Please call 215.670.2321.

**Late Seating:** Late seating breaks usually occur after the first piece on the program or at intermission in order to minimize disturbances to other audience members who have already begun listening to the music. If you arrive after the concert begins, you will be seated only when appropriate breaks in the program allow.

**Accessible Seating:** Accessible seating is available for every performance. Please call Patron Services at 215.893.1999 or visit [philorch.org](http://philorch.org) for more information.

**Assistive Listening:** With the deposit of a current ID, hearing enhancement devices are available at no cost from the House Management Office in Commonwealth Plaza. Hearing devices are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

**Large-Print Programs:** Large-print programs for every subscription concert are available in the House Management Office in Commonwealth Plaza. Please ask an usher for assistance.

**Fire Notice:** The exit indicated by a red light nearest your seat is the shortest route to the street. In the event of fire or other emergency, please do not run. Walk to that exit.

**No Smoking:** All public space on the Kimmel Cultural Campus is smoke-free.

**Cameras and Recorders:** The taking of photographs or the recording of Philadelphia Orchestra concerts is strictly prohibited, but photographs are allowed before and after concerts and during bows. By attending this Philadelphia Orchestra concert you consent to be photographed, filmed, and/or otherwise recorded for any purpose in connection with The Philadelphia Orchestra.

**Phones and Paging Devices:** All electronic devices—including cellular telephones, pagers, and wristwatch alarms—should be turned off while in the concert hall.