

HARMONIA

ORCHESTRA & CHORUS



2024–2025 SEASON

PINNACLES

[HARMONIASEATTLE.ORG](https://harmonia-seattle.org)

WELCOME TO THE 2024–2025 SEASON OF HARMONIA!

Join Harmonia as we scale the peaks of the choral and orchestral repertoire, tackling some of the most inspiring, challenging and beloved music written over the last 300 years. From stone-cold classics (Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra and Beethoven's seventh symphony) to lesser-known delights (Handel's *Dixit Dominus* and Mendelssohn's *Die erste Walpurgisnacht*) to the uncontested Everest that is Bach's Mass in B minor, this is a season that ascends to high altitude and dances at the top of the world.

PHOTO: John Cornello



WILLIAM WHITE
Music Director

The 2024–2025 season marks William White's seventh as Harmonia's music director. Maestro White is a conductor, composer, teacher, writer and performer whose musical career has spanned genres and crossed disciplines. For four seasons (2011–2015) he served as assistant conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, working closely with music director Louis Langrée and an array of guest artists, including John Adams, Philip Glass, Jennifer Higdon, Itzhak Perlman and James Conlon. A noted pedagogue, he has led some of the nation's finest youth orchestra programs, including Portland's Metropolitan Youth Symphony and the Cincinnati Symphony Youth Orchestra.

Mr. White has long-standing associations with a number of musical organizations, including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Pierre Monteux School for Conductors and the Interlochen Academy.

In addition, Mr. White maintains a significant career as a composer of music for the concert stage, theater, cinema, church, radio and film. His music—which includes a symphony, an oratorio, chamber music of all varieties, and several works intended for young audiences—has been performed throughout North America as well as in Asia and Europe. Several of his works have been recorded on the MSR Classics, Cedille and Parma record labels. Recordings of his music can be heard at www.willcwhite.com, where he also maintains a blog and publishing business.

Mr. White earned a master's degree in conducting from Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music, studying symphonic and operatic repertoire with David Efron and Arthur Fagan. He received a Bachelor of Arts in Music from the University of Chicago, where his principal teachers were composer Easley Blackwood and conductor Barbara Schubert. In 2004, he began attending the Pierre Monteux School for Conductors under the tutelage of Michael Jinbo, later serving as the school's conducting associate, and then as its composer-in-residence.

Hailing from Bethesda, Maryland, Mr. White began his musical training as a violist. (You can keep any jokes to yourself.) He is active as a clinician, arranger and guest conductor, particularly of his own works. Mr. White is editor of *Tone Prose*, a weekly Substack newsletter about the ever-changing world of classical music. From 2020 to 2022, he produced and co-hosted a podcast, *The Classical Gabfest*, and he has dabbled in the world of educational YouTube videos with *Ask a Maestro*.

On May 3, 2018, William White was named the third music director of Orchestra Seattle and the Seattle Chamber Singers, now known as Harmonia.

Messiah

Saturday, December 14, 2024 • 2:30 p.m. • First Free Methodist Church

Sunday, December 15, 2024 • 2:30 p.m. • Bastyr Chapel

Harmonia Orchestra and Chorus

William White, conductor and harpsichord

Ellaina Lewis, soprano • **Soon Cho**, mezzo-soprano

Andrew Etherington, tenor • **José Rubio**, baritone



GEORGE 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.

Harmonia Orchestra and Chorus

William White, music director • George Shangrow, founder

1916 Pike Pl. Ste 12 #112, Seattle WA 98101 • 206-682-5208 • www.harmoniaseattle.org

Soprano **Ellaina Lewis** demonstrates an extensive range of vocal and dramatic ability. Originally from Washington, D.C., she now makes her home in Seattle. In addition to Seattle Opera, where she sang the roles of Girlfriend II in *Blue* and Strawberry Woman in *Porgy and Bess*, Ms. Lewis has performed with numerous other arts organizations across the region, including Puget Sound Opera, Tacoma Opera, Seattle Choral Company, Everett Philharmonic, Sammamish Symphony, ArtsWest, Northwest New Works Festival, Northwest Opera in Schools, Etc., Ladies Musical Club, Cascade Symphony and Pacific Northwest Ballet School. Her principal opera roles include Violetta in *La Traviata*, Amina in *La Sonnambula*, Monica in *The Medium*, the title role in *Treemonisha*, Erzulie in Flaherty's *Once on This Island*, Pamina in *The Magic Flute* and Gertrude in *Hansel and Gretel*. On the concert stage, her repertoire ranges from Haydn's *Creation* and Mozart's *Exsultate Jubilate* to Villa Lobos' *Bachianas Brasileiras* No. 5 and Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*. Recent orchestral performances include Mahler's Symphony No. 4 with Philharmonia Northwest and the title role (created expressly for her) in the world premiere of William White's opera-oratorio *Cassandra* with Harmonia.



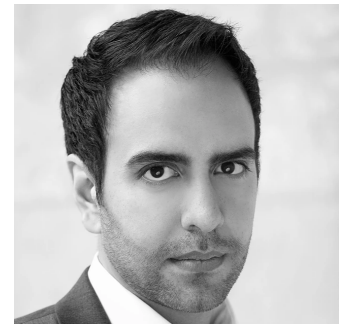
Praised by *Opera News* for her "potent presence" and as "regal in bearing, with vocal endowments to match" by *The Cincinnati Post*, lyric mezzo-soprano **Soon Cho** has gained recognition for her sensitive artistry and winning execution on the recital, concert and opera stages, and has performed across the United States and in Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, France, Great Britain, Italy, New Zealand and South Korea. She has been featured as a soloist in works by Bach (*St. John Passion* with the Vocal Arts Ensemble), Mozart (Requiem at the Forbidden City Concert Hall in China), Beethoven (Choral Fantasy with the Cincinnati Symphony and May Festival Chorus), Dvořák (*Stabat Mater* with the Honolulu Symphony) and Mahler (*Kindertotenlieder* with the Breckenridge Music Festival). On the operatic stage, she has sung leading roles in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Così fan tutte*, *Dido and Aeneas*, *Norma*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* and *Dialogues of the Carmelites*. An associate professor of voice at Pacific Lutheran University, Dr. Cho received a D.M.A. and Artist Diploma from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, an M.M. from the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, and a B.A./B.M. from the University of Washington.



Tenor **Andrew Etherington**, a native of Overland Park, Kansas, began his studies at Ole Miss, followed by time honing his singing and stage skills with Bill Hall's American Opera Studio. While pursuing his masters in performance and pedagogy at the Peabody Institute, he performed with Lyric Opera Baltimore, Baltimore Concert Opera and Washington National Opera. In 2015, he joined the voice faculty of Olympic College in Bremerton, where he currently lectures, teaches applied voice and directs. At Seattle Opera, Mr. Etherington has been a regular opera chorister since 2017 and occasionally covers roles and performs *comprimario* parts. He has also performed with the Bremerton Symphony, Tacoma Opera, Vashon Opera, Pacific Northwest Opera and Puget Sound Concert Opera, and has been artistic director of Kitsap Opera since 2023, where recent productions have included Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and Rossini's *La Cenerentola*.



Internationally acclaimed baritone **José Rubio** has garnered attention performing at major and regional venues around the world. Recent international operatic engagements include debuts in Germany at the Berlin Staatsoper, the famed Elbphilharmonie concert hall in Hamburg, and in Vienna at the historic Ronacher Theater. He is among the first westerners to sing leading roles in contemporary Chinese operas, leading to his debuts at the most important opera houses in China. Mr. Rubio's operatic credits include title roles in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Don Giovanni*, *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Gianni Schicchi*. He has sung principal roles for Cincinnati Opera, Seattle Opera, Portland Opera, Nashville Opera, Alamo City Opera, Asheville Lyric Opera, Tacoma Opera, Vashon Opera, Juneau Lyric Opera and Pacific Northwest Opera, among many others. On the concert stage, he has given recitals at Carnegie Hall, recently made his solo debuts at Lincoln Center and the Kennedy Center, and appeared as soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra, The Orchestra Now, Shenzhen Symphony, Suzhou Symphony, Albany Symphony, Evansville Philharmonic, Bellingham Symphony, Philharmonia Northwest and Rogue Valley Symphony. Recent and upcoming performances include multiple world premieres (among them the opera *Tres Minutos* with Music of Remembrance in Seattle and San Francisco), a cantata based on the *New York Times* bestseller *A Wolf Called Romeo* with the Juneau's Orpheus Project, and a Chinese-language chamber piece (*Fantasy on Tang Poetry*).



Violin

Susan Beals
 Dean Drescher
 Jason Forman
 Stephen Hegg
 Jason Hershey
 Maria Hunt
 Ellyn Liu
 Gregor Nitsche
 Susan Ovens
 Stephen Provine**
 Chris Sheehy
 Janet Showalter
 Kenna Smith-Shangrow*

Viola

Colleen Chlastawa
 Cristina Cruz-Uribe
 Grant Hanner*
 Stephanie Read

Cello

Katie Sauter Messick
 Valerie Ross
 Matthew Wyant*

Bass

Jo Hansen
 Steven Messick*

Oboe

Yuh-Pey Lin
 Margaret Siple*

Bassoon

Jeff Eldridge

Trumpet

Patrick Hunninghake*
 Janet Young

Timpani

Daniel Oie

Harpichord

Sheila Bristow
 William White

Organ

Wyatt Smith

Theorbo

Daniel Frizzell

** concertmaster

* principal

Soprano

Barb Anderson
 Ann Bridges
 Abigail Cooper
 Karen Dunstan
 Susanna Erber
 Peggy Hudson
 Alivia Jones
 Peggy Kurtz §
 Veena Ramakrishnan
 Kyla Roberts
 Nancy Shasteen
 Cassie Van Pay
 Jennylynn Vidas

Alto

Cee Adamson
 Sharon Agnew
 Janelle Burris
 Elyse Christensen
 Jennifer Chung
 Emily Crawford
 Deanna Fryhle
 Pamela Ivezic
 Natalia Johnson
 Ellen Kaisse
 Jan Kinney
 Theodora Letz §
 Esther Ranjbar

Tenor

Dan Charlson §
 Sixing Chen
 Jeremy Edelstein
 William Ekstrom
 Steve Kauffman
 Aaron Keyt
 Geoffrey Lambeth
 Rick Thompson
 Jon White

Bass

Juan Pablo Bustos
 Stephen Carl
 Rory Flannery
 Rabi Lahiri
 Jeremy Pfister Schneider
 Glenn Ramsdell
 Steve Tachell
 Derrick White
 William Willaford §
 Rick Wyckoff

§ section leader

Maestro's Prelude

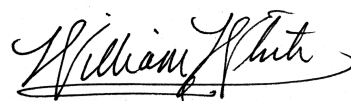
Dear Listeners,

I am delighted to welcome you all to today's performance of Handel's *Messiah*, and if this is your first time attending a Harmonia concert, I bid you an extra special welcome indeed.

Our organization first performed music from *Messiah* in 1970 and has been mounting productions of the complete work nearly every December since 1976, meaning that we've been presenting this piece for almost half a century. That's nothing to sniff at, but when you consider that *Messiah* is the oldest piece of music with a continuous performing tradition (dating back to 1741), it's humbling. Our half-century of *Messiah* doesn't even cover one-fifth of the 283-year lifespan of this most extraordinary work.

This weekend's performances represent my sixth time conducting *Messiah*. I'll admit that when I started as Harmonia's music director in 2018, I was a bit taken aback that I was expected to lead performances of the oratorio in its complete form. You see, with very few exceptions, every other organization that presents *Messiah* makes cuts to the score. The general wisdom in the music industry is that a concert that lasts three and a half hours (and that has two intermissions) is a bridge too far. I can't blame them—I used to feel the same way!

During the course of my first *Messiah* performances in 2018, I had my Damascene conversion, and now I can't imagine doing this piece any other way. Yes, it's a gargantuan work, but Handel has paced it with a dramatic logic that is irresistible. When I conduct it, I feel like one of those surfers who ride 30-foot mega waves off the coast of Portugal. It's Baroque music as extreme sport, and with a team of musicians who embrace the piece so fully, it's hard to imagine anything quite as thrilling.



P.S. If bracing Baroque oratorios are your jam, then let me extend a personal invitation to join Harmonia on Saturday, March 29 for our performance of Bach's Mass in B minor. If any piece can give *Messiah* a run for its money in terms of magisterial delight, it's Bach's mass. Plus, it's about an hour shorter (if you care about that sort of thing).

P.P.S. If you're reading this in Bastyr Chapel, we invite you to rejoin us eight weeks hence, just down the road at the new Northshore Concert Hall. Much as Bastyr is a perfect environment for Handel's *Messiah*, the modern concert facility now located nearby will greatly enhance the program we have in store for you: a Weber overture, Shostakovich's epic fifth symphony and a Mahler song cycle featuring an extraordinary American vocalist, Katherine Goforth.

P.P.P.S. If you're reading this at FFMC and witnessed Katherine's 2023 Harmonia debut there on a moment's notice, you already know that the drive north will be well rewarded. If you weren't there, ask someone who was.

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

George 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.

—Lorette Knowles

Harmonia 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 the group's 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."

The group presented *Messiah* almost every season that followed — except for 1983, 1985 (the Bach Year), 1993 and 1996 — until George's death in 2010. The ensemble 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.

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 group. 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, the organization (with support from the PAC-CAR Foundation, King County Arts Commission, Visio Corporation, Dana Durasoff, Jon Lange and Alan Middleton) 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 our 1999 *Messiah*, joined by its companion the next year.

George and Bob played these harpsichords for *Messiah* thereafter until George's death, when this practice subsided. Our orchestra continued to employ one of the instruments for Baroque works, while the other resided at Benaroya Hall for many 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).

In 2019, Seattle-based harpsichord builder David Calhoun overhauled both instruments to his exacting specifications and we welcomed Bob Kechley back to the keyboard that year for our *Messiah* concerts, sitting opposite Will White at the second harpsichord. These days, Will is joined by Sheila Bristow at the harpsichords, with additional support from a portable organ and a theorbo.

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MUSIC OF HANDEL & PURCELL

FEBRUARY 28 & MARCH 1, 7:30 PM



TICKETS

Featuring G. F. Handel's *Birthday Ode for Queen Anne* and Henry Purcell's *Birthday Ode for Queen Mary* (Come, ye sons of art), this concert will satisfy whatever wish you have. Splashy and celebratory choruses? Present. Lighthearted duets? Present. Stunningly beautiful solo lines? Present. So beautiful, in fact, that the first movement of Handel's ode, *Eternal Source of Light Divine*, has been sung at numerous royal occasions, including most recently at the wedding of Meghan Markle and Prince Harry.



Danielle Ruetter-Harrah
soprano



Jay Carter
countertenor



José Luis Muñoz
countertenor

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About Harmonia

Harmonia Orchestra and Chorus is a vocal-instrumental ensemble unique among Pacific Northwest musical organizations, combining a 75-member orchestra with a 55-voice chorus to perform oratorio masterworks alongside symphonic and a *cappella* repertoire, world premieres and chamber music.

Founded by George Shangrow in 1969 as the Seattle Chamber Singers, from its inception the group performed a diverse array of music—works of the Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque periods to contemporary pieces and world premieres—accompanied by an ad hoc group of instrumentalists for Bach cantatas and Handel oratorios (many of which received their first Seattle performances at SCS concerts). Over the past five decades, the ensemble has performed all of the greatest choral-orchestral masterpieces, from Beethoven's Ninth and *Missa Solemnis* to Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* to Brahms' *German Requiem*, and Haydn's *The Seasons* to Britten's *War Requiem*. Meanwhile, the orchestra, partnering with world-class soloists, has explored the symphonic repertoire, programming beloved warhorses alongside seldom-performed gems.

After George Shangrow lost his life in a car crash in 2010, the volunteer performers of Harmonia partnered with a number of distinguished guest conductors to carry on the astounding musical legacy he had created. Clinton Smith served as the ensemble's second music director, a period that saw musical growth, new partnerships and increased engagement in the community.

Support Harmonia

As with any performing-arts organization, ticket proceeds provide only a fraction of our operating costs. In order to continue our mission of bringing great music to Seattle-area audiences, we depend on financial support from individuals, foundations and corporations. Every gift, no matter what size, enables us to perform more music and reach more people. Donors are acknowledged in our concert programs (unless they prefer to remain anonymous) and receive special benefits, including invitations to exclusive events.

Harmonia accepts gifts in many forms beyond one-time cash donations, including **financial instruments** such as stocks, properties and annuities. We also encourage donors to consider a recurring monthly contribution as part of our **Ostinato Giving Program**. Our planned-giving program, the **George Shangrow Society**, is named in honor of our founder, and accepts gifts in wills, trusts or beneficiary designations. And our **Commissioning Club** sponsors the creation of new works, including some you will hear this season.

To contribute, visit harmoniasattle.org/support or visit the lobby during intermission or after the concert.

Land Acknowledgement

Harmonia acknowledges that our performances take place on Indigenous land: the traditional territory of Coast Salish peoples, specifically the dxʷdəwʔabš (Duwamish), "The People of the Inside." Harmonia is proud to participate in the Duwamish Real Rent program. (Visit realrentduwamish.org for more information.)

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SALVATION

Saturday * October 5, 2024 * 7:30 P.M.

Shorecrest Performing Arts Center • Shoreline

Harmonia Orchestra & Chorus

Cassandra Willock *soprano*

Béla Bartók composed his final masterpiece in poor health, yet he produced a work of striking power that calls upon every musician to display virtuoso talents. The Harmonia Chorus takes the lead in Samuel Barber's *Prayers of Kierkegaard*, which draws on choral traditions from several styles and centuries. Grażyna Bacewicz's exultant overture, composed in 1943 amid the terrors of WWII, opens the program.

Grażyna Bacewicz *Overture*

Samuel Barber *Prayers of Kierkegaard*

Béla Bartók *Concerto for Orchestra*

MAJESTY

Saturday * November 9, 2024 * 7:30 P.M.

First Free Methodist Church • Seattle

Harmonia Orchestra & Chorus

This program of beloved favorites presents two aspects of Handel's art—the majestic and the groovy—side by side, followed by Beethoven's Seventh, a work in which he captured the majesty and the grooviness of his favorite composer (Handel) in a symphony so compelling that it draws its listeners along as if they were reading a page-turning novel.

George Frideric Handel *Zadok the Priest*

George Frideric Handel *Dixit Dominus*

Ludwig van Beethoven *Symphony No. 7*

HARMONIA CHAMBER PLAYERS

Saturday * November 23, 2024 * 2:00 P.M.

University Unitarian Church • Seattle

MESSIAH

Saturday * December 14, 2024 * 2:30 P.M.

First Free Methodist Church • Seattle

Sunday * December 15, 2024 * 2:30 P.M.

Bastyr University Chapel • Kenmore

Harmonia Orchestra & Chorus

Ellaina Lewis *soprano* **Soon Cho** *mezzo-soprano*

Andrew Etherington *tenor* **José Rubio** *baritone*

Handel's *Messiah* is a revered institution—in Harmonia's hands, it's a party. Dueling harpsichords, vocal theatrics and a maximalist approach to every bar have set Harmonia's interpretation of this score apart for so many years. You won't hear a *Messiah* with such dash and flair anywhere else.

Handel *Messiah*

INNOCENCE

Saturday * February 8, 2025 * 7:30 P.M.

Northshore Concert Hall • Kenmore

Harmonia Orchestra

Katherine Goforth *tenor*

Gustav Mahler was so enchanted by *The Boy's Magic Horn*, a collection of Romantic German folk poems, that he set 14 of them for voice and orchestra. The innocence of childhood in these songs stands in contrast to the innocence of a guileless artist, Dmitri Shostakovich, whose symphonies were deeply influenced by those of Mahler. Shostakovich's multi-layered fifth symphony served as a form of atonement to the Soviet government, which had found him guilty of artistic sins.

Carl Maria von Weber *Overture to Oberon*

Gustav Mahler selections from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*

Dmitri Shostakovich *Symphony No. 5*

INVENTION

Saturday * March 1, 2025 * 7:30 P.M.

First Free Methodist Church • Seattle

Harmonia Chorus

This program displays our vocal artists at the pinnacle of their versatility. Our concert explores several strains of contemporary choral composition, most notably with world premieres from two of our own musicians.

Johann Sebastian Bach/arr. Swingle *Invention in C Major*

Morten Lauridsen "Quando son più lontan" from *Madrigali*

Eric Whitacre *Leonardo Dreams of His Flying Machine*

Marques Garrett *The Lesson*

R. Nathaniel Dett *O Holy Lord*

Ken Burton *A Prayer*

Carol Sams "Stone" from *The Earthmakers*

Sheila Bristow *At harbor, waiting for wind* **WORLD PREMIERE**

Aaron Key *Nizina* **WORLD PREMIERE**

Johann Sebastian Bach "Confiteor" from *Mass in B minor*

HARMONIA CHAMBER PLAYERS

Saturday * March 8, 2025 * 2:00 P.M.

University Unitarian Church • Seattle

MASS IN B MINOR

Saturday * March 29, 2025 * 7:30 P.M.

First Free Methodist Church • Seattle

Harmonia Orchestra & Chorus

Arwen Myers *soprano*

Brendan Tuohy *tenor*

Clarice Alfonso *soprano*

Sarah Larkworthy *mezzo-soprano*

Zachary Lenox *baritone*

In his final completed work, Bach left not only a masterpiece but also a mystery: to this day, nobody knows for certain why this most devout Lutheran composer composed a gargantuan setting of the Roman Catholic mass as his dying statement. Whatever the reason, Bach's B-minor mass now stands as one of the uncontested peaks of the oratorio repertoire, a masterpiece that must be experienced live to be fully appreciated.

Johann Sebastian Bach *Mass in B minor, BWV 232*

HARMONIA CHAMBER PLAYERS

Saturday * April 19, 2025 * 2:00 P.M.

University Unitarian Church • Seattle

SPRING RITES

Saturday * May 3, 2025 * 7:30 P.M.

First Free Methodist Church • Seattle

Harmonia Orchestra & Chorus

Carson Ling-Efird *cello*

Die Erste Walpurgisnacht tells the story of a band of pagan druids who are beset upon by Christian invaders and—unlike in any other Romantic oratorio—the pagans win! Druids were in the air in 1831: they were also the subject of Bellini's great dramatic opera *Norma*. The centerpiece of our concert is Robert Schumann's cello concerto, performed by a phenomenal young soloist: Seattle native Carson Ling-Efird, who joins Harmonia on a break from her studies at the Curtis Institute of Music.

Vincenzo Bellini *Overture to Norma*

Robert Schumann *Cello Concerto*

Felix Mendelssohn *Die erste Walpurgisnacht*

GALA: AMADE-ISH

Friday * May 30, 2025

Brockey Center at South Seattle College