

# Handel's Messiah

*The Seattle Chamber Singers and The Broadway Chamber Symphony*  
*George Shangrow, conductor*

December 17 and 18, 1982      8:00 p.m.  
Blessed Sacrament Church, Seattle



## Program Notes

by Gary Fladmoe

Simplistically described, an oratorio is an opera without staging. As the form revealed in its beginning stages, the description is accurate. The earliest examples of oratorio consisted largely of arias (mainly of the *da capo* variety) and recitatives, the standard forms of the opera. They were performed without sets, acting, or costumes.

The oratorio seemed to have evolved for very practical reasons. In Italy, where opera was immensely popular, the Roman Catholic church frowned upon operatic performance during times of penitence. There were even times when opera was totally banned. Composers found that they could circumvent the church and its rulings by writing works which avoided the objections of church leaders while still utilizing the popular elements of opera. The result was the oratorio.

Early oratorio style featured the selection of a biblical story (usually from the Old Testament), setting it to poetic verse, and composing operatic numbers which in turn set the poetry to music.

It was within this atmosphere that George Frederick Handel lived and worked. During a sojourn in Italy, Handel produced an example of the Italian oratorio, completing *La Resurrezione* in 1708. It was, except for its text, typical of all the conventions of Italian opera.

Late in 1710 Handel arrived in England to begin a position in the employ of the Elector of Hanover. He was to remain in England for more than thirty years, during which time he would "invent" what we would come to know as the English oratorio.

Handel pursued a career as an opera composer. However, opera never achieved the status in England that it had on the continent. Handel discovered that if he was to continue to write opera, he would need to find a vehicle for increased earnings to support his unprofitable operatic writing. By astutely combining the oratorio conventions he had learned in Italy with the great English choral tradition, Handel found his answer, the English oratorio.

In 1718 Handel composed a work based on the Old Testament book of Esther which he called *The Oratorium*. It retained the conventions of Italian opera but also incorporated a number of choruses. There are no recorded accounts of a performance of the work for the first fourteen years following its writing. But it was produced with apparent success in February, 1732. Handel revised it, retitled it *Esther*, and performed it to financial success in May, 1732.

The success of *Esther* provided Handel with the means of supporting his opera-writing habit in the face of continuing financial difficulties with that medium. Between 1732 and 1741 he would compose other equally successful oratorios, among them *Deborah*, *Athalia*, *Saul*, and *Israel in Egypt*. 1741 witnessed the demise of Italian opera in England. When that occurred, rumors spread throughout Europe that Handel would soon leave England. During the summer of that year, Handel was invited to Ireland. Before arriving there he would compose what has become probably the most familiar and popular oratorio ever written, *Messiah*.

The music of *Messiah* is itself so well known and easily recognized that it would probably add little to the listener's appreciation to further analyze the musical content of the oratorio. There are, however, fascinating historical considerations associated with the work and its performances. Exploring some of these considerations might help to reveal the musical significance of *Messiah*.

Prior to his departure for Ireland, Handel received from his friend and librettist Charles Jennens the libretto to a new oratorio, *Messiah*. The libretto and overall concept of the oratorio obviously inspired Handel. He began composing on August 22, 1741, and completed it on September 14, an astonishing 24 days. He immediately set to work composing another of his great oratorios, *Samson*, completing it on October 29, just 68 days after beginning *Messiah*. Shortly after completing these two works, Handel left for Ireland. While in Dublin he produced two concert series which ran from late December until early April. Interestingly, neither *Messiah* nor *Samson* was performed during these concerts, although both were completed.

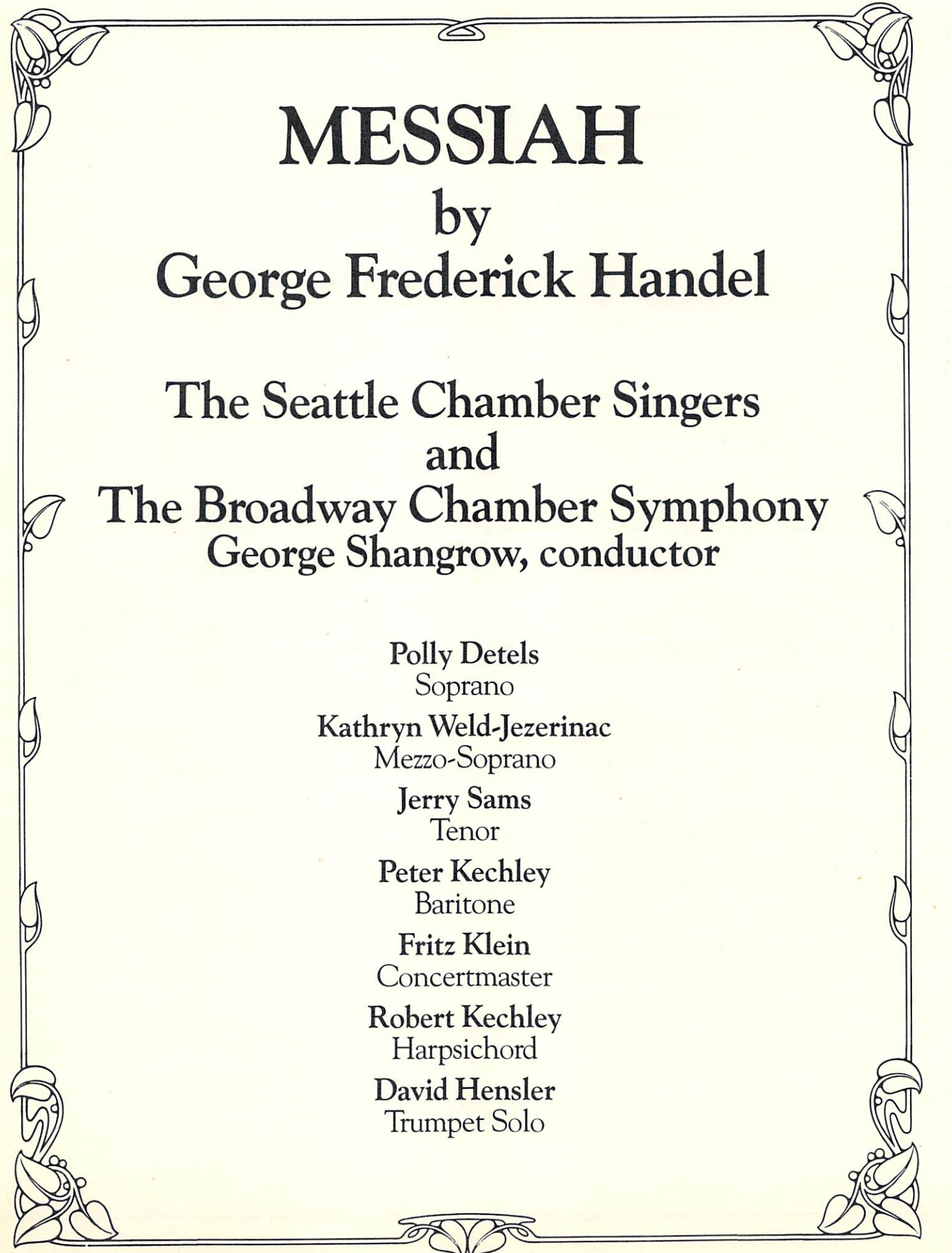
*Messiah* received its first performance on April 12, 1742, as a benefit program for prisoners in Dublin's jails, for Mercer's Hospital in Stephen's Street, and for the Charitable Infirmary on the Inns Quay. The philanthropic motivation remained with Handel. In May, 1750, he offered the work to the Foundling Hospital in London to use for fund-raising, and willed a set of parts to that institution so that *Messiah* might continue to be used to raise funds.

*Messiah* was an immediate hit in Ireland; but, upon returning to England, Handel encountered ecclesiastical

resistance and public lack of enthusiasm. The clerical criticism of the staging of religious subjects in theatrical settings and having Holy Scripture uttered by the likes of musicians was so strong that, on the few occasions *Messiah* was performed, it was titled *A New Sacred Oratorio*, and later simply *A Sacred Oratorio*. Handel withdrew the work from performance from 1745 until 1749. Those few intervening years witnessed a transformation in public sentiment. From the time it was again performed in 1749, under the original title *Messiah*, public acceptance and acclaim were assured.

The libretto itself represented a significant departure from the tradition which Handel had established. As was indicated above, traditional oratorio style was to set religious stories to original poetry. In the case of *Messiah*, the words were drawn entirely from Scripture, lending credence to the theory that the work was never intended to convey a dramatic element. It seems natural that the text would appeal to both a middle class who were not steeped in the operatic tradition, and to those of higher station who were. Both elements of British society found the Bible a source of joy and inspiration. *Messiah* became a natural vehicle for enhancing the spiritual life of the people.





**MESSIAH**  
by  
**George Frederick Handel**

**The Seattle Chamber Singers**  
and  
**The Broadway Chamber Symphony**  
George Shangrow, conductor

**Polly Detels**  
Soprano

**Kathryn Weld-Jezerinac**  
Mezzo-Soprano

**Jerry Sams**  
Tenor

**Peter Kechley**  
Baritone

**Fritz Klein**  
Concertmaster

**Robert Kechley**  
Harpsichord

**David Hensler**  
Trumpet Solo



# George Frederick Handel's MESSIAH

Libretto by Charles Jennens, 1742

## PART I.

### 1. Overture

### 2. Recitative — Jerry Sams

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.

### 3. Air — Jerry Sams

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

### 4. Chorus

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

### 5. Recitative — Peter Kechley

Thus saith 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.

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.

### 6. Air — Peter Kechley

But who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth?

For He is like a refiner's fire.

### 7. Chorus

And He shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

### 8. Recitative — Kathryn Weld-Jezerinac

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Emmanuel, God with us.

### 9. Air — Kathryn Weld-Jezerinac and Chorus

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!

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

### 10. Recitative — Peter Kechley

For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

### 11. Air — Peter Kechley

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

### 12. Chorus

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.

### 13. Pastoral Symphony

### 14. Recitative — Polly Detels

There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks 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.

### 15. Recitative — Polly Detels

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.

### 16. Recitative — Polly Detels

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

### 17. Chorus

Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men.

### 18. Air — Polly Detels

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.

### 19. Recitative — Kathryn Weld-Jezerinac

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.

### 20. Air — Kathryn Weld-Jezerinac

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

### Air — Polly Detels

Come unto Him, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and He shall 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.

### 21. Chorus

His yoke is easy and His burthen is light.

— INTERMISSION —



PART II.

**22. Chorus**

Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.

**23. Air** — Kathryn Weld-Jezerinac

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

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.

He was despised. . . .

**24. Chorus**

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.

**25. Chorus**

And with His stripes we are healed.

**26. Chorus**

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.

**27. Recitative** — Jerry Sams

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

**28. Chorus**

He trusted in God that He would deliver Him; let Him deliver Him, if He delight in Him.

**29. Recitative** — Jerry Sams

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.

**30. Air** — Jerry Sams

Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow.

**31. Air** — Jerry Sams

He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of Thy people was He stricken.

**32. Air** — Jerry Sams

But Thou didst not leave His soul in hell; nor didst Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption.

**33. Chorus**

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 the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

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 the King of glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of glory.

**34. Recitative** — Jerry Sams

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

**35. Chorus**

Let all the angels of God worship Him.

**36. Air** — Peter Kechley

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

**37. Chorus**

The Lord gave the word: great was the company of the preachers.

**38. Air** — Polly Detels

How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.

**39. Chorus**

Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world.

**40. Air** — Peter Kechley

Why do the nations so furiously rage together? and 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.

**41. Chorus**

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

**42. Recitative** — Jerry Sams

He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn; the Lord shall have them in derision.

**43. Air** — Jerry Sams

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

**44. Chorus**

Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ: and He shall reign for ever and ever.

King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, Hallelujah!

—INTERMISSION—



PART III.

**45. Air** — Polly Detels

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.

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

**46. Chorus**

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.

**47. Recitative** — Peter Kechley

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep; but we shall all be changed in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

**48. Air** — Peter Kechley

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.

The trumpet shall sound. . . .

**49. Recitative** — Kathryn Weld-Jezerinac

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

**50. Duet** — Kathryn Weld-Jezerinac and Jerry Sams  
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.

**51. Chorus**

But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

**52. Air** — Polly Detels

If God be for us, who can be against us? who shall lay any thing 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.

**53. Chorus**

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.

THE END

**PROGRAM NOTES , CONTINUED**

The scoring of *Messiah* has also been a source of much speculation and debate. It would probably not be inaccurate to say that every performance during Handel's time was scored differently. Scholars and modern-day performers have sought to construct authentic performances, but the difficulty lies in the fact that each performance was structured by the singers and instrumentalists available at the time. Handel changed the orchestration and keys of the numbers frequently to suit his performance situation. Some of the voice assignments for the solos were even changed so that favored singers could perform them. At least fifteen of the 53 numbers in the oratorio have multiple versions dating from Handel's time. We

modern "purists" attempt to amass the forces to give an "authentic" performance. We might better expend our energies in fitting the performance to our resources. In doing so we might more ideally approach "authenticity."

Handel himself perhaps paid this great oratorio its finest tribute. When addressing Lord Kinnoul on the occasion of the first London performance of *Messiah* in March, 1743, he said, "I should be sorry, my Lord, if I have only succeeded in entertaining them; I wished to make them better."

We leave *Messiah* to stand on its own to lift the spirit and meaning of this holiday season to all who hear it.



# The Seattle Chamber Singers and The Broadway Chamber Symphony

George Shangrow, conductor

## Sopranos

Paula Bridges  
Kyla DeRemer  
Kathryn Hammond  
Ellen Irion  
Rachel Katz  
Mary Koch  
Stephanie Lathrop  
Karen Nordyke  
Margaret Penne  
Liesel Rombouts  
Nancy Shasteen  
Heather Smith  
Kristina Sullivan  
Susanna Walsh

## Altos

Laila Hammond  
Therese Martineau  
Laurie Medill  
Janet Ellen Reed  
Jane Seidman-Vosk  
Katherine Segura  
Nedra Slauson  
Margaret Smith  
Claire Thomas  
Kay Verelius

## Tenors

John Addison  
Kurt Bruhn  
David Call  
Jerry Sams  
Dean Suess

## Basses

Tim Braun  
Gerard Beemster  
Loren Foss  
Gary Jankowski  
Stephen Kellogg  
James Ploger  
Robert Schilperoort  
Sandy Thornton

## Violin I

Fritz Klein, *concertmaster*  
Beth Schmidt  
Avron Maletsky  
Eileen Lusk  
Kenna Smith  
Donna Weller  
Rebecca Soukup  
Jaqueline Cedarholm

## Violin II

Maryann Michael  
Sandra Sinner  
Marcia McElvain  
Jane Crigler  
Phyllis Rowe  
Ellen Ziontz  
Karen Beemster

## Viola

Sam Williams  
Beatrice Dolf  
Katherine McWilliams  
Cathryn Paterson  
Stephanie Read  
Shari Peterson

## Cello

Kara Hunnicutt  
Lauren Root  
Joyce Barnum  
Maryann Tapiro  
Rebecca Beyer  
Rosemary Berner

## Bass

Alan Goldman  
David Couch  
Walter Barnum

## Harpsichord

Robert Kechley

## Organ

James Denman

## Oboe

Susan Scott  
Huntley Beyer

## Bassoon

Francine Peterson  
Daniel Hershman

## Trumpet

David Hensler  
Gary Fladmoe

## Timpani

Ian Alvarez

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University Unitarian Church: Rehearsal space and use of the Sperhakke harpsichord

Choir of the Sound, Robert Metzger, conductor: Use of their chancel platform extensions

Bellevue School District: Use of their acoustical shell and risers

Kristina Newman: Tuning and maintenance of the Sperhakke harpsichord



## Future Events!

Join the Seattle Chamber Singers  
and the Broadway Chamber Symphony  
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The Broadway Chamber Symphony  
proudly presents

*Rachmaninoff*: **Piano Concerto No. 2**

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and

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Roethke Auditorium, U.W.

February 5, 1983 8:00 pm

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*an Entertainment '83 event*

Seattle Chamber Singers offers  
especially for the Lenten Season

*Johann Sebastian Bach*:

**St. Matthew Passion**

featuring *Brian Trevor*  
as the Evangelist

Westminster Chapel, Bellevue

March 11, 1983 7:00 pm

*an Entertainment '83 event*

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