



 victoria @10  
baroque

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

MESSIAH PART ONE  
CHRISTMAS



CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE DIVINE  
DECEMBER 17, 2020 AT 7:30 PM



WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WE MAKE  
THIS MUSIC ON THE TRADITIONAL TERRITORIES  
OF THE LEKWUNGEN-SPEAKING PEOPLE

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# *Performers*

## **Soloists**

Jennifer Turner, soprano  
Deanna Sills, mezzo soprano\*  
Isaiah Bell, tenor  
Nathan McDonald, bass

## **Victoria Baroque**

Christi Meyers, violin/leader†  
Kathryn Wiebe, violin  
Mieka Michaux, viola  
Amy Laing, cello  
David Stratkauskas, harpsichord

\*sponsored by Harald and Sharon Krebs

†sponsored by anonymous donors

Audio and video by the Cowichan Performing Arts Centre

Co-presented by Victoria Baroque, Cowichan Symphony  
Society, and the Church of St John the Divine

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## **VICTORIA BAROQUE**

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR: SOILE STRATKAUSKAS

Now in its tenth season, Victoria Baroque brings together early music specialists from Vancouver Island and beyond. The ensemble's repertoire ranges through chamber, orchestral, vocal, and choral works from the Baroque and Classical periods. Guest performances have included Early Music Vancouver, Early Music Society of the Islands, Cowichan Symphony Society, and ArtSpring. Past guest directors and soloists have included Tafelmusik's Jeanne Lamon; leader of the English Baroque Soloists, Kati Debretzeni; British harpsichordist Steven Devine; Pacific Opera Victoria's Timothy Vernon; and soprano Nancy Argenta. Victoria Baroque's debut CD, *Virtuosi of the Baroque* on Marquis Classics, was nominated for a Western Canadian Music Award in 2014. In summer 2020 Victoria Baroque partnered with violinist Chloe Kim, the Early Music Society of the Islands, Christ Church Cathedral Victoria, and Early Music Vancouver in presenting a highly popular online concert series, *Music for the Pause*. Victoria Baroque is passionate about outreach and engaging with emerging young talent through community workshops, school concerts, and collaborations with the University of Victoria School of Music, Victoria Conservatory of Music, and the Greater Victoria Youth Orchestra.

# Messiah Part One

## Sinfonia

### Accompagnato (Tenor)

*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.*

### Air (Tenor)

*Ev'ry valley shall be exalted, and ev'ry mountain and hill made low; the crooked straight and the rough places plain.*

### 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. (Isaiah 40:1-5)*

### Accompagnato (Bass)

*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. 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. (Haggai 2:6-7)*

### Air (Alto)

*But who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire.*

### Chorus

*And he shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. (Malachi 3:1-3)*

### Recitative (Alto)

*Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel, God with us. (Isaiah 7:14/St. Matthew 1:23)*

### Air (Alto) & 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. (Isaiah 40: 9/60:1)*

**Accompagnato (Bass)**

*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: 2–3)*

**Air (Bass)**

*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. (Isaiah 9: 2)*

**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. (Isaiah 9: 6)*

**Pastorale (instrumental)**

**Recitative/Accompagnato (Soprano)**

*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. 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 saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying:*

**Chorus**

*Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men. (St. Luke 2: 8–14)*

**Air (Soprano)**

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is the righteous Saviour, and he shall speak peace unto the heathen. (Zechariah 9: 9–10)*

**Recitative (Alto)**

*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)*

### **Duet (Alto & Soprano)**

*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. (Isaiah 40:11)*

*Come unto Him, all ye that labour, come unto Him that 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. (Matthew 11: 28–29)*

### **Chorus (from Part 2)**

*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! (Revelation 19: 6, 16; 11: 15)*

## *Programme Notes*

First performed in 1742 in Dublin, *Messiah* is one of the very few pieces from the Baroque Era to have remained as a popular staple in the concert repertoire ever since the composer's lifetime. The text is compiled by Charles Jennens, whom was the librettist for several of Handel's oratorios. Unlike Handel's other oratorios, *Messiah* does not have characters or narrative drama. The text is derived from the Old and New Testaments and, rather than having a distinct story line, could be described as commentary and meditation around the idea of a Messiah. As typical for Handel's Oratorios, the piece begins with a French-style Overture. Part 1 includes excerpts from several Old Testament prophecies of the coming of Messiah. The instrumental pastorello sets the scene for the most narrative segment of the work: the description of the shepherds in the fields and the angelic announcement and chorus from the Nativity Story in St Luke's Gospel. As an elevating ending, we have included the most iconic number of the piece: the Hallelujah Chorus from Part 2.

Due to the current restraints around the pandemic, this production is performed by smaller-than-usual forces: just one person per part. This gives us the opportunity to explore Handel's masterwork in a uniquely intimate, nimble, and transparent manner, and enables us to perform this magnificent music—an important part of the Christmas tradition for many—during this most unusual Holiday season.

Soile Stratkauskas

# Biographies

## JENNIFER TURNER – SOPRANO

Jennifer is a soprano known for her expressive singing and ringing tone. Her warm and engaging presence has captivated audiences on the operatic and concert stages alike. She has been fortunate to work as a soloist with musical organizations throughout Canada including Pacific Opera Victoria, Manitoba Underground Opera, the Linden Singers, the Victoria Civic Orchestra, the Victoria Philharmonic Choir, the Sooke Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Okanagan Festival Singers. Concert repertoire includes Bach's *Magnificat*, Mozart's *Requiem* and *Coronation Mass*, Haydn's *Creation*, Handel's *Messiah* and *Judas Maccabeus*, Vivaldi's *Gloria* and Fauré's *Requiem*.

Jennifer sang the role of Donna/Siren in Handel's *Rinaldo* with Pacific Opera Victoria. She also received extensive operatic training through the Victoria Conservatory of Music Opera Studio including the role of Fiordiligi in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* under the stage direction of Glynis Leyshon and Maestro Giuseppe Pietrarroia, and the



role of Countess in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* with stage director Julie McIsaac and Maestro Timothy Vernon.

Jennifer holds a M.Mus. from the University of Manitoba where she studied with Tracy Dahl and a Diploma in Music Performance from the Victoria Conservatory of Music where she studied with Ingrid Attrot and Nancy Argenta.

## DEANNA SILLS – MEZZO SOPRANO

Deanna Sills has a Bachelor's Degree in Voice Performance from the University of Victoria, where she studied with Susan Young. Over the years, she has performed in the chorus of several Pacific Opera productions and with the Victoria Gilbert & Sullivan Society. Currently studying voice with Ingrid Attrot at the Victoria Conservatory of Music, Ms. Sills has taken part in several of the VCM's programs in the recent past including the Vaughan Williams and Mahler Song Projects (under the direction of Kathryn Whitney and Anna Cal), the 2018 Summer Baroque Adult Soloist program and as a featured student in the VCM's annual Spark to Flame concert in February 2020.



## ISAIAH BELL – TENOR

Isaiah Bell is a tenor, a composer, and a writer of prose and poetry. This season he combines these disciplines in his critically acclaimed solo show, *The Book of My Shames*, which will be performed in Victoria as part of a Canadian tour in early 2021. He also stars in his own new translation/adaptation of Poulenc's *La voix humaine*, in a digital production with City Opera Vancouver.

Last season Isaiah appeared with Vancouver Opera (*Almaviva, The Barber of Seville*), the Toronto Symphony (*Messiah*), and the Bethlehem Bach Festival. Some of his COVID postponements included a return to Carnegie Hall to premiere a new oratorio, and to Opera Atelier for Handel's *The Resurrection*. He was also scheduled to present Schubert's *Schwanengesang* for the Société d'art vocal de Montréal, and to stage direct *Dido and Æneas* at Opera NUOVA.

Previously, Isaiah created the role of Antinous in the world premiere of Rufus Wainwright's *Hadrian* at the Canadian Opera Company, and his interpretation of the Madwoman in Mark Morris' *Curlew River / Dido and Aeneas* double-bill was described as "a performance of exquisite poignancy" by the *The New York Times*.



Photo Credit: Chelsea Brooke Roisum

## NATHAN MCDONALD – BARITONE

Praised for his "Rich Tone" (*Coastal Spectator*), baritone Nathan McDonald commands a repertoire spanning centuries, from renaissance polyphony to modern Opera and Musical Theatre.

Active as an oratorio singer, Nathan has appeared with numerous Western Canadian ensembles including the Pacific Baroque Orchestra, Cowichan Consort, and Vox Humana Chamber Choir. Some recent highlights include: Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with the Okanagan Festival Singers; Handel's *Messiah* with the Civic Orchestra of Victoria and Sooke Philharmonic; and Handel's *Apollo e Dafne* with Victoria Baroque and Steven Divine.

On the operatic stage, Nathan has interpreted such roles as Marcello (*La Bohème* – Puccini), Dandini (*La Cenerentola* – Rossini), Il conte (*Le nozze di Figaro* – Mozart), and Don Alfonso (*Così fan tutte* – Mozart). He has presented recitals in Canada and the United States, and has sung professionally in choirs on 4 continents. During the pandemic, Nathan has been especially focused on his teaching activities, and appreciating the opportunity to spend extra time with his two young children. Nathan is a member of the Voice Faculties at the Victoria Conservatory of Music and the Canadian College of Performing Arts.



## CHRISTI MEYERS – VIOLIN/LEADER

Christi Meyers has played a prominent role in the musical life of Victoria for over 15 years. She is the Assistant Concertmaster of the Victoria Symphony, a founding member of Victoria Baroque and the Odyssey String Quartet. She performs frequently with the Vancouver Symphony, Pacific Baroque Orchestra, and Early Music Vancouver and has been a leader or member of Sinfonia Rotterdam (NL), European Camerata (UK), and the Vancouver Opera Orchestra. A dedicated educator, Christi was for several years on faculty at UVic. She currently maintains a small private studio, is on faculty at the Victoria Conservatory and coaches the violins of the Greater Victoria Youth Orchestra. She has recorded chamber music for CBC television and radio and can be heard on several discs for ATMA and Marquis. Born in Montreal and raised in Grande Prairie, Alberta, Christi studied at McGill, Western, UVic and the Vancouver Academy of Music under the tutelage of Gwen Thompson, Sonia Jelinkova and Paul Kling.



Photo Credit: K. Goodwin

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!*

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## VICTORIA BAROQUE MUSIC SOCIETY

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