THE
ATLANTA BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

Presents

Messiah

with

LEILA LAZENBY, soprano
ALYSON HARVEY, alto
JOHN WRIGHT, tenor
DANIEL COLE, bass

and

ATLANTA CHORAL ARTISTS

with

STEPHEN SMITH, GUEST DIRECTOR

Saturday, November 22 at 8:00 p.m.
Peachtree Road United Methodist Church
Atlanta, Georgia
MESSIAH
An Oratorio
Set to Music by George Frideric Handel

Part the First
No. 1 -- Sinfony
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 cried in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

No. 2 -- Recitative, accompanied (Tenor)
Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low, the crooked straight and the rough places plain.

No. 3 -- Song (Tenor)
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.

No. 4 -- Chorus
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.

No. 5 -- Recitative, accompanied (Bass)
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.

No. 6 -- Song (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.

No. 7 -- Chorus
And he shall purify the sons of Levy, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering of righteousness.

No. 8 -- Recitative (Alto)
Behold! a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel, God with us.

No. 9 -- Song (Alto) and Chorus
O thou that tellest good tidings of 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.

No. 10 -- Recitative, accompanied (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.

No. 11 -- Song (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.

No. 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.

No. 13 -- Pifa
No. 14 -- Recitative (Soprano)
There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.

Recitative, accompanied (Soprano)
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 (Luke 2:9)

No. 15 -- Recitative (Soprano)
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.

No. 16 -- Recitative, accompanied (Soprano)
And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying:

No. 17 -- Chorus
Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, goodwill towards men.

No. 18 -- Song (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.

No. 19 -- Recitative (Alto)
Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.

No. 20 -- Song (Alto and 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. Come unto him, all ye that labour 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.

No. 21 -- Chorus
His yoke is easy and his burden is light.

intermission

Part the Second
No. 22 -- Chorus
Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

No. 23 -- Song (Alto)
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.
No. 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.

No. 25 – Chorus
And with his stripes we are healed.

No. 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.

No. 27 – Recitative, accompanied (Tenor)
All they that see him, laugh him to scorn; they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads saying:

No. 28 – Chorus
He trusted in God that He would deliver him; let Him deliver him, if He delight in him.

No. 29 – Recitative, accompanied (Tenor)
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.

No. 30 – Song (Tenor)
Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto his sorrow.

No. 31 – Recitative, accompanied (Soprano)
He was cut off from the land of the living; for the iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him.

No. 32 – Song (Soprano)
But Thou didst not leave his soul in hell; nor didst Thou suffer Thy holy one to see corruption.

No. 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.

No. 34 – Recitative (Tenor)
Unto which of the Angels said he at any time, Thou art My son, this day have I begotten thee?

No. 35 – Chorus
Let all the angels of God worship him.

No. 36 – Song (Alto)
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.

No. 37 – Chorus
The Lord gave the word, great was the company of the preachers.

No. 38 – Song (Soprano)
How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.

No. 39 – Chorus
Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world.

No. 40 – Song (Bass)
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.

No. 41 – Chorus
Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their yokes from us.

No. 42 – Recitative (Tenor)
He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn; the Lord shall have them in derision.

No. 43 – Song (Tenor)
Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.

No. 44 – Chorus
HALLELUYAH: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. The Kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. King of kings, and Lord of lords. HALLELUYAH!

intermission

Part the Third
No. 45 – Song (Soprano)
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.

No. 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.

No. 47 – Recitative, accompanied (Bass)
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.

No. 48 – Song (Bass)
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.

No. 49 – Recitative (Alto)
Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory!

No. 50 – Duet (Alto & Tenor)
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.

No. 51 – Chorus
But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 52 – Song (Soprano)
If God be for us, who can be against us? 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 makes intercession for us.

No. 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 honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and honour, glory and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen.
The Atlanta Baroque Orchestra was founded by a group of musicians led by Lyle Nordstrom, who felt the need for a permanent professional historical-instrument orchestra in the Southeast. The unique, transparent sheen of “early” instruments, coupled with their capability of a delightful variety of articulations, allows voices and instruments to blend into a unified, yet clear, sound that is very difficult to achieve with “modern” instruments. Since its founding in 1997, the ABO has been applauded for its freshness and verve, and for its delightful, convincing performances of a wide range of earlier works.

The Orchestra received initial generous support from the Atlanta Early Music Alliance and a variety of individuals, and has also depended on donations of time and money from the musicians themselves. The ABO is 501(c)3 not-for-profit status. Contributions are greatly appreciated and are central to the survival of a venture such as this. If you would like to support the ABO and its future programming, please send checks made out to “The Atlanta Baroque Orchestra,” 303 Augusta, Atlanta, GA 30315. There is also a great opportunity for friends of the arts in the community to serve on the new Atlanta Baroque Orchestra board. Please visit our website at www.atlantabaroque.org for more information on the ABO.
Conductor **Stephen Smith** is a dual citizen of Switzerland and the United States. Born in 1955, he began his musical studies at the age of seven at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, and earned multiple music degrees in the U.S. and in Switzerland. He has intensively studied the sacred repertoire of the Renaissance and Baroque eras with particular interest in historical performance practice and the interconnections to contemporary music. Since 1982 he has lived permanently in Switzerland, where he is the Founder and Artistic Director of Ensemble Corund, a Swiss choir accompanied by period instruments. He is a sought-after conductor, organist, harpsichordist and pedagogue. Besides the Ensemble Corund, Mr. Smith is the Artistic Director and conductor of the Studiochor Luzern and directs the Kantorei at the historic St. Matthew's Church in Lucerne. Numerous CD and radio recordings reflect his wide musical interests and activity.

The **Atlanta Choral Artists** is a group of 16-20 emerging professional singers from Atlanta and surrounding states. The group performs 2-3 times per year and singers repertoire from all centuries. The ACA has performed with the Atlanta Baroque Orchestra on two occasions and is a regular participant at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church Twelfth Night Concert.

**Leila Lazenby** graduated as a voice major from the Eastman School of Music and pursued postgraduate study in Baroque performance practice at the Schola Cantorum in Basel, Switzerland. She studied there with René Jacobs and Rosmarie Hoffman and received additional training from Emma Kirkby, Judith Nelson and Monserrat Figueras. After returning to her native Atlanta, Ms. Lazenby was a longtime soloist with Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church, a voice teacher, and a founding member of the early music groups Apollo's Music and the Merry Band. She has performed with the Atlanta Baroque Orchestra and the Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and has appeared in numerous North American music festivals. Currently, she owns EarthenWorks, a shop specializing in European home accessories.

Mezzo-soprano **Alyson Harvey** has sung recitals and appeared with organizations throughout the US, more recently appearing with the Berkshire Bach Society in a performance of Bach’s *B Minor Mass*; with the Masterwork Chorus and Orchestra of NJ in performances of Honneger's *King David*, Respighi's *Lauda per la Nativitá del Signore*, and Brahms’s *Alto Rhapsody*; with the Riverside Choral Society and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment at the Mostly Mozart Festival of New York in a performance of Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy*; with the Brandywine Baroque Ensemble of Delaware in a performance of Bach's lesser known *St. Mark Passion*; and with the Westminster Choir at Lincoln Center as soloist for Copland's *In the Beginning*. As a recitalist she has recently collaborated with JJ Penna in his Song Series at Westminster Choir College, and with tenor John Wesley Wright in performances in Ohio, among others. She has appeared at both the Italian and USA Spoleto Festivals, and has toured in England and the former Yugoslavia as soloist with the Cincinnati International Festival Choir. Other solo appearances include performances with The Philadelphia Singers, the West Village Chorale, the Collegiate Choral of New York City, The Garden State Philharmonic, the Susquehanna Symphony of Maryland, Chautauqua Opera, and the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra. Critically acclaimed for her performances of Bach, she sings and teaches for the annual summer Bach Week at Westminster Choir College with Fuma Sacra, ensemble in residence at the College, with whom she sings regularly. Ms. Harvey holds degrees in Voice Performance from Westminster Choir College and the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. She also holds an Artist Diploma in Opera from Cincinnati Conservatory where she was a Corbett Award winner.

**John Wesley Wright** is a tenor originally from Rome, Georgia and now resides in Mt. Orab, Ohio. He holds a Bachelor of Music degree from Maryville College and a Master of Music degree from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. He is currently Artist-in-Residence, Vocal Instructor and Co-director of Opera Workshop at the University of Dayton (Ohio). John is the recipient of numerous awards, including prizes from the International MacAllister Awards, Opera Columbus Competition, Dayton Opera Guild Competition, Metropolitan Opera Auditions, and the National Federation of Music Clubs. In March of 2000 he received from legendary singer William Warfield the gold medal and a $10,000.00 first prize at the American Traditions Competition in Savannah, Georgia. Prof. Wright’s performance experience extends from classical dance with the
Appalachian Ballet to the opera stages of Indianapolis, Dayton, and Memphis. Wright enjoys recital and oratorio work and frequently performs with the Dayton Bach Society and on area concert series. John also serves his third year as vocal consultant and instructor for the Musical Arts Center in Cincinnati.

In his short performance career, basso-cantante Daniel Cole has appeared with the Netherlands Opera in Stravinsky's *The Flood*, Opera Theatre of Philadelphia as Colline, Sarasota Opera as Ataliba in *Alzira*, Opera Illinois as Colline, Sacristan, and Zuniga, at New York's Alice Tully Hall, as Marco in *L'Arlesiana*, the Lafayette Bach Chorale for the *St. Matthew Passion*, a Taiwan debut as Colline in *La Bohème* and Monterone in *Rigoletto*, a debut in Cologne as Colline and in Lisbon as The King in *Aida*, performances in Shreveport, LA as Elder McLean in Susannah and the Speaker in *The Magic Flute*, and a debut at Opera Theatre of St. Louis, as the Speaker and as the Ghost in Thomas' *Hamlet*. This spring also included performances of a Penderecki work with the Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia, Mozart's *C minor Mass* with the Canton (Ohio) Symphony, and the Mozart *Requiem* in his debut at Carnegie Hall with MidAmerica Productions. An interesting sidelong to his career is his postgraduate work in conducting, and some subsequent professional work as a conductor before switching to singing. He has an MM degree in Conducting from Indiana University, where he is currently completing work on his doctorate.

**Program Notes**

It is a commonplace of music history that Beethoven was the first composer to work outside the centuries-old system of patronage, without being employed by either noble court or church, and to support himself by selling and performing his own compositions. This, however, is not really true. For the ten years from 1781 through his death in 1791, Mozart lived and worked, as we would now say, self-employed. And before Mozart, George Frideric Handel spent the greater part of his career working for himself and not for royalty or for the church. Instead he financed and produced the operas which he himself composed. And for about twenty years he was generally successful.

Unfortunately, in the 1730's audiences in London started to grow weary of opera in a foreign language (Italian) sung mostly by foreign singers (also Italian) about stories from centuries past in the Mediterranean world. After several of Handel's productions failed – which meant bankruptcy and nervous breakdown for the composer – he realized he needed to find a new hook to land his audiences. For this he turned to a form which he had practiced during his five year's stay in Rome as a young man, the oratorio.

The oratorio was a dramatic production, like opera, with solo arias and recitatives and choruses, but traditionally in the language of its audience, and built around stories from the Bible and church history rather than from Classical (Mediterranean) history and mythology. That meant that Handel could work with English-language texts rather than Italian, and with Biblical stories which would appeal to England's large and prosperous middle class as well as to the nobility. Oratorio was also not staged, which meant that Handel's productions were much less costly because of the lack of stage-sets and costumes. It had the further advantage that Biblical oratorios could be presented during the two-month-long season of Lent, during which non-religious theatrical events were prohibited. Four of these works came out during the 1730's: *Esther* (1732), *Deborah* (1733), *Saul* (1739), and *Israel in Egypt* (1739). Nevertheless, the failures of his oratorios prevented him from realizing any gain from the new form. In that same year, 1739, his librettist Charles Jennens provided him with another oratorio text, not so much telling the story of the Messiah as much as presenting meaning of the Messiah's coming.

Handel did not find the time in that year to set Jennens's new text, nor did he the following year. Then in 1741 he received an invitation from the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland to spend the Lenten season of 1742 in Dublin presenting a series of his oratorios, and *Messiah* was composed to finish the season, just before Easter. (And indeed, during his lifetime and under his direction, Handel never produced *Messiah* at any other time than before Easter.) It was moderately successful, but when he produced it in London later the same year it was not well received. London audiences found it difficult to accept a musical work representing the Messiah which was performed in a theater, a place of poor moral repute in that time. It was not until the 1750, when Handel began
annual productions at the London foundling Hospital for the hospital's benefit that this oratorio began to receive
the acceptance that it has enjoyed ever since.

But *Messiah* is not at all typical of his oratorios. Most of them are based on Old Testament stories, whereas
*Messiah*'s text comes from a mixture of Old and New Testament. Moreover, the stories in the other oratorios are
just that — stories. *Messiah* does not have a story-line: it is merely a succession of quotations from the prophetic
books of the Old Testament and the apocalyptic writings of the New. They suggest a story, but do not actually tell
it. It is interesting to note that the only part of the New Testament which does tell a story about the Messiah, the
four Gospels, are almost totally omitted from the oratorio. Furthermore, since there is not an actual plot-line, there
are also no characters: the solo singers are not associated with any particular personalities, as they are in the
other oratorios.

*Messiah*, unlike almost every other piece of music from the Baroque era, has an unbroken history of
performance, from its premier in 1742 in Dublin up to the 21st century. What, then, is the point of a "Baroque
Orchestra" presenting it? Why not keep performing just as we always have? It is because the style of performance
has undergone steady change during the 262 years since Handel penned this masterwork — and not only the style,
but even the very orchestration of the piece.

During Handel's lifetime (he died in 1759), *Messiah* became the most frequently-performed of all his works,
all under his direction (he owned the only copies). After his death, performance style evolved according to the
changing tastes of the times. A landmark in the performance-history was the production in Westminster Abbey in
1784, celebrating the 25th anniversary of Handel’s death: on that occasion more there were more than 300 singers
and players (Handel's productions used about 63 musicians in total). This trend continued through the 19th
century — the 1859 production in London's Crystal Palace involved over 700 musicians — and halfway through the 20th.

At the same time, Handel’s orchestration — very much in the style of the late Baroque period — also was
subject to change. In 1789 Mozart provided his own orchestration for a German-language performance in Vienna:
he added clarinets, flutes, horns, and trombones to Handel’s forces, very much in his own style. Other, lesser
composers made their own modifications during the 19th century, basing their work on what Mozart had done. One
dition, by English theorist Ebenezer Prout, published in 1902, became the standard throughout the first half of
the 20th century (even now the unwary choral director purchasing instrumental parts is likely to get the Prout edition
without knowing it). And the most flamboyant of all was prepared by Sir Eugene Goossens for a recording in 1957
conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham: Beecham reputedly instructed Goossens to put everything in, “including the
kitchen sink.”

It was only in the 1960's that conductors began to return to Handel's orchestration; the first recording of it
came in 1967, albeit with members of a modern symphony orchestra. By that time the pioneers in the original-
instrument movement were making themselves known, but their attention was given mostly to Bach rather than
Handel. Not until the late 1970's did musicians decide to return to Handel's instruments as well as Handel’s
instrumentation.

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- Esther G. Williams

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