

MESSIAH

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL



THE CHURCH OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT
SEATTLE, WA

PROGRAM

Please hold your applause until the conclusion of each half of the performance.

Symphony

Accompagnato

Air

Comfort Ye, Comfort Ye My People

Ev'ry Valley Shall Be Exalted

Alan Wheaton, *tenor*

Chorus

And the Glory, the Glory of the Lord

Air

But Who May Abide the Day of His Coming

Nori Heikkinen, *mezzo-soprano*

Chorus

And He Shall Purify

Recitative

Air and Chorus

Behold, a Virgin Shall Conceive

O Thou that Tellest Good Tidings to Zion

Nori Heikkinen, *mezzo-soprano*

Air

The People That Walked in Darkness

Gabriel Salmon, *bass*

Chorus

For Unto Us a Child is Born

Pifa

Recitative

Accompagnato

Recitative

Accompagnato

There Were Shepherds Abiding in the Field

And Lo, the Angel of the Lord

And the Angel Said Unto Them

And Suddenly There Was With the Angel

Emili Rice, *soprano*

Chorus

Glory to God in the Highest

Air

Rejoice Greatly, O Daughter of Zion

Emili Rice, *soprano*

- INTERMISSION -

Intermission will last for twenty minutes. Additional restrooms are located in the parish hall on the northwest-most exterior corner of the building. Please reserve the refreshments for the post-concert reception.

Chorus Behold the Lamb of God

Chorus Surely, Surely He Hath Borne Our Griefs

Chorus And With His Stripes

Chorus All We Like Sheep

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 Out of the Land of the Living
Air But Thou Didst Not Leave His Soul in Hell
Martín Eizayaga, *tenor*

Chorus Let All the Angels of God Worship Him

Air Why Do the Nations So Furiously Rage Together
Michael Beetham, *baritone*

Chorus Let Us Break Their Bonds Asunder

Chorus **Hallelujah**
In keeping with tradition, please rise during the singing of this chorus.

Air I Know that My Redeemer Liveth
Emili Rice, *soprano*

Accompagnato Behold, I Tell You a Mystery
Air The Trumpet Shall Sound
Daniel Ferguson, *baritone*

Duet O Death, Where is Thy Sting
Nori Heikkinen, *mezzo-soprano*
Alan Wheaton, *tenor*

Chorus But Thanks Be To God

Chorus Worthy is the Lamb, Amen.

- RECEPTION -



FROM THE PASTOR

In the readings for the Christmas Mass During the Night we hear the story of the shepherds and the adoration of the baby lying in the manger who is our savior: our Messiah and our Lord. But Christmas is not simply a celebration of the birth of our Lord in his humble state with a very humble gathering of witnesses: it is, even more importantly, a celebration of the mystery of the

Incarnation: the mystery of God becoming man. We are caught up in wonder at the mystery of how the infinite God became finite; how the creator, who made clay out of nothing and formed us out of that clay, emptied himself and became the very clay he had created, without any loss or harm to his divinity.

But what do we even mean by mystery? We use the word “mystery” in lots of different ways – but a mystery in the Church is a little different. A mystery in the Church is something that is supremely knowable: it is one of the greatest truths in all of reality. But it’s kind of like how the ocean is supremely swimmable: there’s no end to the swimming that can go on there, but as human beings we cannot swim across it. We’re too small; we’re not built for it. The problem is not in the supremely swimmable ocean, it’s in us. So too, the mysteries of the Church are not things we can fully understand – not because they are not knowable, but they truly are greater than our finite little minds can handle. We are, however, made to splash around in the shallows – we are made to push the limits of our understanding and spend our lives diving ever deeper into the mysteries that God has revealed to us.

It therefore makes no sense for this engagement with mystery – the contemplation of these greatest of truths – to be limited to some form of academic study or private meditation. And as one of the mottos of the Dominican Order suggests, we should not only contemplate, but share with others the fruits of that contemplation. In the arts, we who are made in the image and likeness of God have a participation in his creative work, and through the arts we often encounter aspects of truth and its beauty that our words cannot express.

Handel's Messiah explores not only the mystery of the Incarnation, it explores the mysteries that flow from that Incarnation as well. The life, passion, death, resurrection, and glorification of Christ are presented for our contemplation. The final judgment and consummation of all things are given for our reflection.

We needed a savior – and the savior God sent was himself – not in his godly form but in our human nature that from his fullness we might all receive, grace in place of grace; that he might untwist the distortion of our nature that we inherited from the fall and lift our nature into the very life of God. What we could have hardly dared to hope for has happened, and happened in a way that was beyond anything we could have ever dreamed.

This is the true source of our Christmas joy – that unlooked for, un hoped for good, tremendous beyond all telling: much too good to be true – except that it is.

May we be filled this Advent and Christmas season with the joy of knowing God's love for us for which he made his dwelling among us; and may we be bearers of those good tidings, the bearers of that love and joy, till all the ends of the earth behold the salvation of our God.

In Christ, through Mary,
~ Fr. Dominic David, O.P.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Preparing Handel's *Messiah* is an interesting and unique experience as a conductor. Very few pieces in the canon are as widely known and loved as this singular work. It draws people from all corners of the belief, political, ethnic, racial, national, and generational spectrums; rarely are found such universally loved pieces of art. The goal of this performance, then, is to simply get out of the way of the music – to let what lives in our collective minds' ear a place to be realized and heard communally.

Father Dominic David has already laid out the mystery behind this piece. Certainly, this was the mystery that Handel was seeking to convey when he wrote this timeless oratorio. Each section of the work – of which we are performing roughly two-thirds – evokes the character of the period in the life of Christ that it sets. We hear the wonder and joy of Christmas, the anguish of the passion and death, and the glory of the resurrection. In the final chorus I think Handel stretches the musical imagery beyond the moment of the resurrection and reaches out to touch the vision of the risen Christ throughout all of time. In a moment of undefendable musicological imagination I cannot help but think that Handel, alone in his chambers, composed that chorus with the image of the Risen Christ descending back to earth at the second coming – but, perhaps that is a musician guilty of over-romanticizing a work.

As I launched into my eighteenth, or so, preparation of *Messiah* over the years in various capacities, I was struck this year not so much by the music, but by the musicians. We at Blessed Sacrament are blessed with a remarkably gifted and hard-working corps of musicians – both paid and volunteer – who constantly enrich our lives through their work. The *Cantorei* is comprised entirely of musicians who sing weekly at one or two of our Sunday morning liturgies, presenting the greatest works of the sacred repertoire at an astonishing level. My gratitude to them is inexhaustible for their dedicated and detailed preparation of not only this concert but all of the music we make in this sacred space.

My eternal gratitude also goes out to Elizabeth Phelps and the baroque orchestra for this evening. Many of these performers have long played for concerts and liturgies at Blessed Sacrament and I am perpetually invigorated by their love of this music, their diligent efforts in its preparation, and the gracious working relationships that we have forged.

Special thanks also go to my good friend and colleague, José Luis Muñoz, whose expertise in early vocal music was generously applied to the coaching of our fabulous soloists.

Please know that there are ample opportunities for you to share in this wonderful community. Every Sunday at noon the all-professional 16-voice *Cantorei* presents a fully choral Mass with sung ordinary, anthems, and Gregorian chant. Whether or not you are Catholic, or religious at all, this is a weekly opportunity to hear some of the greatest music of the last five centuries performed in the context for which it was written. There are also always opportunities to participate in music at Blessed Sacrament! If you sing or play an instrument and are interested in joining one of our parish ensembles, please reach out to me or to our Music Program Coordinator, Caitlin Hennessy, and we would be happy to discuss it with you. There, my obligatory plug for the music program is complete!

On behalf of the choir, orchestra, and all the staff at Blessed Sacrament, we thank you for sharing in this seasonal tradition with us. May this performance bring you peace, joy, and a deep sense of this most cherished season. Please know that you all remain in my prayers of gratitude and that I remain, in Christ through Mary,

Very Truly Yours,

Dr. Michael Plagerman

THE DIRECTOR



Dr. Michael Plagerman is a lifelong student of the church's music, whose career now spans fourteen years of ecclesiastical service. A passionate church musician, Michael advocates for the renewed reading and appreciation for the documents of the Second Vatican Council. He is invested in preserving the sacred treasury of the church's music, primarily chant and sacred polyphony, through the

continuation of the performance practices that have endured through the centuries. He also advocates for the adjustment of historical practices where they no longer fit their original purpose, thereby allowing the church's immense musical heritage to continue as a living tradition, rather than as merely a collection of historical objects.

Michael holds degrees from Pacific Lutheran University (B.Mus), the University of Notre Dame (MSM), and Cornell University (MFA, DMA) where he studied organ with Paul Tegels, Craig Cramer, Christoph Mantoux, Annette Richards and Nathan Laube. His scholarly research focuses on the sounds and uses of late 19th-century organs in and around Boston. He has received numerous awards for his work, including the James D. Holloway Scholarship and the Craig Cramer Award in Organ Performance. In 2025 Michael premiered Judith Bingham's *Seven Last Words* in the context of Blessed Sacrament's observation of Tre Ore.

In addition to his work with liturgical and organ music, Michael is a dedicated choral director, having studied with Brian Galante, Richard Nance, and Stephen Spinelli, among others. In 2025, under Michael's direction, the *Cantorei* of the Church of the Blessed Sacrament premiered the work *Jesus Stood on the Shore* by Grammy Award-winning composer Kile Smith. Blessed Sacrament regularly commissions works for both liturgical and concert use, continuing to grow the sacred repertoire in the context of the living tradition of the church's music.

Michael is an avid hobby woodworker and enjoys spending time driving tractors and chasing cows on his family's farm in eastern Washington, as well as traveling, cooking, and otherwise sharing life with his wife, Erin.

SOLOISTS



Michael Beetham, baritone, holds a Master of Music degree from the University of Washington and a Bachelor of Music from Rutgers University. He has performed on the concert and opera stages as a chorister and soloist, with opera companies including Seattle Opera, Livermore Valley Opera, Pocket Opera, UW Opera, Berkeley Opera, West Edge Opera, Opera Festival of New Jersey, and Rutgers Opera. Michael believes in the power of music and the deep meaning that it brings to the Liturgy, and has been committed to performing music as part of liturgical worship throughout his career.



Martín Eizayaga is a tenor who joined Cantorei in 2024. He was featured as a soloist in St. Matthew's Passion at Cornell University. He previously performed with the schola of the Basilica of Saint John the Evangelist in Stamford, CT, under the direction of Nicholas Botkins. His ensemble experience includes the Chamber Singers and Glee Club at Cornell University.



Daniel Ferguson is a Washington native, born in Bremerton to a Naval family. As a child he acted with Western Washington Center for the Arts in Port Orchard before going on to the University of Idaho to study Voice and Cello. While in school he performed the role of Top in "The Tender Land" and Bogdanovich in "The Merry Widow". He auditioned for and was accepted into workshops with Chanticleer, Seraphic Fire, and the Tallis Scholars. He has sung internationally in Austria, Britain, The Czech Republic, and Germany. After school he took a hiatus from music to work primarily in the medical field, returning to the fold in 2022. Since then, he has sung the part of Don Fernando with Puget Sound Concert Opera in Beethoven's "Fidelio", is a regional division winner for the National Association of Teachers competition, and was a national finalist in the American Prize Competition's Opera Division. He is a staff singer at Blessed Sacrament and studies with Dr. Darrell J. Jordan. Daniel is seeking to grow as an artist through high level choral experiences.



Nori Heikkinen is a versatile mezzo-soprano based in Seattle, WA, with extensive experience as both a vocalist and instrumentalist (viola). Her passion for small ensembles has led her to the 16-voice *Cantorei* at the Church of the Blessed Sacrament, where she has served as a staff alto since July 2023. She also sings locally with the Mägi Ensemble, and the Evergreen Ensemble.

A native of Madison, WI, Nori performed with youth choirs and orchestras in her hometown before focusing on viola during her time at Swarthmore College (Midnight Quintett, founding member; Philadelphia Youth Orchestra; Orchestra 2001; Swarthmore College Orchestra). During her time in San Francisco, Nori sang with the San Francisco Symphony Chorus under Ragnar Bohlin, and also with the International Orange Chorale of San Francisco under Zane Fiala. She currently studies voice with José Luis Muñoz, and has previously studied viola with Joseph de Pasquale (Philadelphia), Judy Geist (Philadelphia), and Elena Denisova (Vienna).

Beyond her musical prowess, Nori cultivated a long career in technology, most notably at Google, where she held the roles of a Site Reliability Engineer, Tech Lead, and Manager on teams running both critical Google-wide infrastructure and the company's flagship Cloud product. Nori also served as part of the elite "Tech Surge" to fix the [healthcare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov)



Seattle-based soprano **Emili Rice** is celebrated for her captivating stage presence and vocal agility. She made her operatic debut as the First Spirit in Seattle Opera's 2017 production of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* before furthering her studies. Emili earned a Bachelor of Music from McGill University under Dominique Labelle and a Master of Music at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music with Susanne Mentzer, exploring a wide range of repertoire along the way. Her notable roles include Gretel in *Hansel and Gretel* (Northwest Opera in Schools, Etcetera), Cleopatra in Handel's *Giulio Cesare* (Saluzzo Opera Academy) and Cendrillon in Pauline Viardot's *Cendrillon* (SFCM). In addition to opera, she has appeared multiple times as soloist with the Northwest Chorale, and recently completed several concerts with the American Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS) in Graz, Austria.



Gabriel Salmon was born in Minneapolis, grew up in Palo Alto, and currently lives in Ballard with his partner Lauren and their three cats. He went to St. Olaf for BAs in Music and in Economics and VCU for a Masters in Computer Science. He also sings with Harmonia and the Swedish Choir, and he likes programming, D&D, jazz, and other nerdy things.



Alan Wheaton is a staff singer at Blessed Sacrament and a regular on stage with Pacific Music Works and Classical Uncorked. A worker and athlete of diverse skills, he can also be found in the workshop restoring harpsichords, or in the gym preparing for his next boxing match.

THE CANTOREI

Soprano

Caitlin Hennessy
Emili Rice
Sarah Santos
Erica Wood

Alto/Countertenor

Matthew Gagliardi
Nori Heikkinen
Anne Lashbrook
Erin Plagerman
Yuhao Zhang

Tenor

Kristor Cummings
Skylar Derthick
Martín Eizayaga
Alan Wheaton

Bass

Michael Beetham
Matt Chan
Daniel Ferguson
Gabriel Salmon

THE BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

First Violin

Elizabeth Phelps
James Garlick

Oboe

Adam Shapiro
Wesley Boehm

Second Violin

Lindsey Strand-Polyak
Olga Hauptman

Trumpet

Judson Scott
Scott Meredith

Viola

Laurel Wells
Kim Zabelle

Tympani

Mark Goodenberger

Cello

Laura Kramer

Harpichord

Lisa Michele Lewis

Double Bass

Ross Gilliland

Organ

Kyle Canaday

Bassoon

Cyrus Roat

Christmas at the Console

13 December 2025, 7:30pm



Holiday Music for Organ
with Blessed Sacrament's Principal Organist

Kyle Canaday

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Music at Blessed Sacrament and its concert arm specifically could not exist without the generous support of individual donors who, in addition to their regular gifts to the church, choose to specifically support music. We are grateful to these "Friends of Music" for making this evening and all our concerts and liturgical music possible.

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Tyler Lange and Rebecca Moyle
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Ed and Lisa Brown
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Chris Maddock

Michael Ann Sagin
Anonymous, *in memoriam* Marcia
Smith and Reid Smith
Gene and Theresa Blahato
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Brian Till
Robin McCabe

Bryan and Mary Smith
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Assistant Director of Sacred Music

Kyle Canaday
Principal Organist

Youngjin Joo
Assistant Organist

**And to all the volunteers who contributed their time
and talent to make this concert possible. Thank you!**



THE CHURCH OF THE
BLESSED SACRAMENT

- To Praise - To Bless - To Preach -

5050 8th Avenue Northeast
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