

Mondavi Center
UC DAVIS



American Bach Soloists & American Bach Choir

A Baroque Christmas

Sunday, December 14, 2025 | 2:00pm
Jackson Hall, UC Davis

**THIS SEASON IS PRESENTED BY
THE NANCY AND HANK FISHER FAMILY FUND**

**INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT PROVIDED BY
THE VERN A. FOURNESS-LEMAITRE PROGRAMMING ENDOWMENT FUND**

Our Friends



As we head into a new season of performances at the Mondavi Center, I'm feeling nostalgic and deeply grateful about some very good friends.

Before the Mondavi Center was even a glimmer in the

eyes of those that made it real, there was UC Davis Presents, and its volunteer support group, Friends of UC Davis Presents (now known as Friends of Mondavi Center). Then, as now, the Friends supported our work in a variety of ways. Over the years, their contributions have included fundraising, ushering our K-12 School Matinees, providing Mondavi Center tours, driving artists to classroom activities, helping us with our UC Davis student recognition days and, before the digital era, even helping us stuff envelopes. Just to name a few of the ways they have helped us meet our mission.

Much has changed since the Mondavi Center opened in 2002. Before the Center was built, UC Davis Presents was for decades an itinerant presenting program that utilized venues on campus, in the City of Davis, and Sacramento. For most of that pre-Mondavi Center era, the entire staff of UC Davis Presents was less than 10 people. The Friends helped make it possible to do a lot of good work with a very small staff. Today, we're a team of over 130 full-time, part-time, and student staff, plus hundreds of volunteers.

Together, we now operate what has become an important venue for West Coast tours and a major force in the performing arts, on campus and off.

What has not changed in all these years is the unwavering support of Friends of Mondavi Center. They may be a volunteer support group, but they are as much a part of our team as anyone. They are accomplished people with a passion for the performing arts, and they believe in the power of arts education and arts engagement. For that, I and my Mondavi Center colleagues are extremely grateful.

If you are an arts lover interested in service and volunteerism, I encourage you to learn more about Friends of Mondavi Center, and to consider joining them in their exceptional work on our behalf.

Learn more at mondaviarts.org/friends

With Gratitude,

Jeremy Ganter
Executive Director

ROBERT AND MARGRIT MONDAVI CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS PRESENTS

American Bach Soloists & American Bach Choir

A Baroque Christmas

Jeffrey Thomas Conductor
Liv Redpath Soprano
Ágnes Vojtkó Mezzo-Soprano
Brian Giebler Tenor
Christian Pursell Bass-Baritone

PROGRAM

Noël sur les instruments, H. 531 and 534

Joseph est bien marié
Une jeune pucelle
Laissez paître vos bêtes
Or nous dites Marie
À la venue de Noël
Où s'en vont ces gais bergers?

Marc-Antoine Charpentier
(1643-1704)

Excerpts from *Messiah*

SINFONY
RECITATIVE, accompanied - Tenor - Comfort ye, comfort ye my People
ARIA - Tenor - Ev'ry Valley shall be exalted
CHORUS - And the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed
RECITATIVE, accompanied - Bass - Thus saith the Lord of Hosts
ARIA - Alto - But who may abide the Day of His coming?
CHORUS - And He shall purify the Sons of Levi
RECITATIVE - Alto - Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son
ARIA - Alto & CHORUS - O thou that tellest good Tidings to Zion
RECITATIVE, accompanied - Bass - For behold, Darkness shall cover the Earth
ARIA - Bass - The People that walked in Darkness have seen a great Light
CHORUS - For unto us a Child is born

George Frideric Handel
(1685-1759)

INTERMISSION

Concerto Grosso in G Minor, op. 6, No. 8 *Fatto per la notte di Natale*

Arcangelo Corelli

(1653–1713)

Vivace – Grave

Allegro

Adagio – Allegro – Adagio

Vivace

Allegro – Largo. Pastorale ad libitum

Excerpts from *Messiah* (continued)

George Frideric Handel

(1685–1759)

PIFA

RECITATIVE – Soprano – There were Shepherds abiding in the Field

ARIOSO – Soprano – And lo, the Angel of the Lord came upon them

RECITATIVE – Soprano – And the Angel said unto them, Fear not

RECITATIVE, accompanied – Soprano – And suddenly there was with the Angel a Multitude

CHORUS – Glory to God

ARIA – Soprano – Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Sion

RECITATIVE – Alto – Then shall the Eyes of the Blind be open'd

ARIA – Alto & Soprano – He shall feed his Flock like a shepherd

SEMICHORUS – Lift up your Heads, O ye Gates

CHORUS – Hallelujah!

RECITATIVE, accompanied – Bass – Behold, I tell you a Mystery

ARIA – Bass – The trumpet shall sound

CHORUS – Worthy is the Lamb that was slain

CHORUS – Amen.

PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Land Acknowledgement

We should take a moment to acknowledge the land on which we are gathered. For thousands of years, this land has been the home of Patwin people. Today, there are three federally recognized Patwin tribes: Cachil DeHe Band of Wintun Indians of the Colusa Indian Community, Kletsel Dehe Wintun Nation, and Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation.

The Patwin people have remained committed to the stewardship of this land over many centuries. It has been cherished and protected, as elders have instructed the young through generations. We are honored and grateful to be here today on their traditional lands.

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Program Notes

Noël sur les instruments, H. 531 and 534

Marc-Antoine Charpentier

Born: 1643, Paris, France

Died: 1704, Paris, France

The exact date of Marc-Antoine Charpentier's birth in Paris is lost to us, but it probably was around 1640, give or take a decade. While still a youth he spent several years in Rome, studying with Carissimi, a composer best remembered today as the inventor of the oratorio. Charpentier brought back from Italy not only a fine sense of dramatic church music, but also a keen appreciation for the ability of music to depict intense emotions, particularly through the introduction of chromaticism. These characteristics, when blended with Charpentier's native French taste for suave melody, dense, dissonant harmonies, and a lively instrumental palette, produced a remarkable and distinctive musical language. The richness of his style did not go unnoticed by his contemporaries, whether for good ("Ninths and tritones glittered under his hands") or for ill ("Such mournful chords grate on our ears"), but was a clear expression of his philosophy: "Diversity is the soul of music."

After his return from Italy, Charpentier seems to have plunged headlong into Parisian musical life, in which he was enormously successful, even without ever holding an official post at court. Around 1670 he began a fruitful collaboration with Molière, composing for the theatrical troupe which became (in 1680) the *Comédie Française*. He was employed during the 1680s by the Duchess of Guise, one of the most benevolent patrons of music in France. All the while, he steadily built his reputation as composer of church music, receiving commissions from a wide range of ecclesiastical establishments. For unknown reasons, Charpentier gravitated towards the Jesuits, composing occasional works for a number of their colleges and finally being named to the post of *maître de musique* for the principal Jesuit church in Paris, St. Louis. The church is still there (now called Saint-Paul-Saint-Louis), next to the Saint-Paul Métro stop in the Marais. The pinnacle of Charpentier's career came in 1698, when he was appointed *maître de musique* of the Sainte-Chapelle. It is difficult to imagine now, when that exquisite building is embedded within a warren of offices which contain the bureaucracy of the French judicial system, but in those days the Sainte-Chapelle was the chapel of the royal palace on the Île de la Cité; only the director of music at the royal chapel at Versailles ranked higher. Here he remained until his death in 1704.

Especially during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, French composers routinely prepared settings of Noëls, or Christmas carols. Charpentier's slightly senior colleagues — among them Jean-Nicolas Geoffroy (1633-1694), Nicolas Gigault (1627-1707), and Nicolas Lebègue (1631-1702) —



Part of the spectacular ceiling of the Holy Chapel (Saint-Chapelle) in Paris where Charpentier served as *maître de musique*.

wrote arrangements for organ, a practice that was again taken up a generation or two later by Louis-Claude d'Acquin (1694-1772). Charpentier's slightly younger colleague, Michel-Richard Delalande (1657-1726), composed a famous set of orchestral *Symphonies des Noëls* for the Chapelle Royale, the ensemble of singers, organists, and instrumentalists who provided music for the royal chapel of the French kings. While it is uncertain whose orchestral settings came first, Charpentier's simple harmonizations are a joy to hear. He captured both the lightness of their dance-like structures, while maintaining a quiet sobriety appropriate to the liturgy of the Christmas midnight mass.

Messiah, HWV 56

George Frideric Handel

Born: February 23, 1685, Halle, Germany

Died: April 14, 1759, London, United Kingdom

Handel composed *Messiah* during the three weeks between August 22 and September 14, 1741, and premiered the work in April of the following year. Prior to 1732, for the London theaters he had composed only operatic works in Italian, but the ten years that followed would prove to be a period of experimentation and change. Perhaps spurred on by new competition with a rival opera company, in 1736 he turned to the composition of an English oratorio, a setting of John Dryden's ode for Saint Cecilia's Day titled *Alexander's Feast; or the Power of Musique*. The text of *Alexander's Feast* was brought to Handel's attention by Newburgh Hamilton, who would provide some much-needed assistance to Handel with the intricacies of setting the English language to music. (Hamilton was later afforded a gift in the composer's will for helping to "adjust the words" of Handel's English compositions.) Hamilton wrote that Handel had "with Pleasure undertaken the task" of setting *Alexander's Feast*. Indeed, the experience was so successful and satisfying for Handel that, during the nine days between September 15 and 24 in 1739, he composed his setting of another of Dryden's



Charles Jennens circa 1745 by
Thomas Hudson (1701–79)

odes, *A Song for St. Cecilia's Day*. This “Pleasure” that Handel had newly found in the composition of oratorios was something of an economic and spiritual windfall for the composer. The sad truth is that twenty years earlier, he had begun to suffer financial difficulties, and by the early 1730s his professional life was simply unraveling. He was nearly bankrupt and had fallen very much out of the critical favor of the aristocratic

public for whom he had composed his Italian operas. They were expensive to produce, and not accessible enough for his audience. But by the time he set his pen to paper in the autumn of 1741 to compose *Messiah*, things would begin to take at least a slight turn for the better.

It was a time of transition for the composer: he had already begun to explore the possibility of accepting an invitation for an extended stay in Dublin, but proceeded nonetheless to address his annual task of composing new works for his next London season. *Messiah* was really the idea of the librettist Charles Jennens, who wrote in July of that year: “Handel says he will do nothing next Winter, but, I hope to persuade him to set another Scripture Collection I have made for him ... I hope he will lay out his whole Genius and skill upon it, that the Composition may excel all his former Compositions, as the Subject excels every other Subject. The Subject is *Messiah*.” Handel scored *Messiah* for chorus, soloists and an orchestra of only strings, continuo, two trumpets, and timpani — a rather modest combination. There are strong indications that Handel had Dublin in mind while he composed the score, and therefore the relatively small forces required for *Messiah* are a reflection of what Handel expected would be available to him there. Additionally, he may have taken Jennen’s recommendation that the premiere of *Messiah* should be a benefit performance, perhaps utilizing a smaller orchestra to economize on expenses.

Handel was highly skilled at transcription and revision of his own compositions. For *Messiah* he borrowed music from some of his Italian vocal duets for several of the choruses, and eventually wrote as many rearrangements of the solo arias as can be imagined. Certainly, a composer is allowed to change his mind! There is a notion, however, that while Bach’s revisions were probably always enhancements to his original music, Handel’s revisions might have been little more than concessions to the forces he had available to him; more specifically, Handel often had to rework the arias in order to take advantage of the soloists he had at his disposal, and in the case of the premiere, he may have had to compensate for the soloists’ inabilities or, in the worst cases, the lack of some proper soloists at all.

The performance history of *Messiah* under the composer’s direction is a wildly varied one, to say the least. The first performance in Dublin utilized only two singers of any real distinction, two Dublin cathedral choirs (from which were drawn the male voice solos), and a rather meager orchestra. By a few years later, however, the orchestra had grown considerably, augmented by oboes, bassoons, and horns. The number of vocal soloists also increased, and by 1750 the famous castrato Guadagni was among them. Its various performance venues included the Dublin Cathedral, Covent Garden, and London’s Foundling Hospital. From the moment Handel began to rehearse its premiere, and until the very last performance under his baton, this most famous of all musical masterworks continued to evolve, garnering a life of its own that inspired and responded to greatness.

Each season of Handel’s career — especially any of those that followed the premiere of *Messiah* and included revivals of the work — was abounding full of events and accomplishments that continued to bring together an ever-changing cast of marvelously fascinating characters. Handel’s world was replete with opera singers and theatrical producers, eccentric church and social leaders, and a public that held him up as a demigod, yet it was as susceptible to cultural trends as our world is today. A few years ago, we began an exploration into the genesis and reception of Handel’s *Messiah* during the years in which the composer conducted his own performances. One of the results of our research is a landmark recording of the so-called autograph score version of 1741, the first to document all of the composer’s original intentions before substantial modifications were required in order to produce the work’s premiere. But a composer’s wishes are often subjected to the stark realization that the practical considerations of performance — available forces, abilities of the performers, etc. — might demand alterations. This was the case when the work was premiered in Dublin. After all, revisions, alterations, and edits for the sake of concision and flow are all common occurrences, whether they are realized in rehearsals of a new musical or theatrical work, with a red pen on the text of a manuscript, or with digital cutting blades in a film studio.

On the other hand, some of Handel’s greatest opera and oratorio singers performed *Messiah* with him. Each one brought his/her professional reputation and credentials to the table, and Handel clearly sought to honor and promote those qualities as a means to continually complement the unprecedented success of his oratorio. In Dublin, Handel found the remarkable contralto Susanna Cibber, exiled as a result of an unfortunate scandal that had practically ended her career. Handel sought her out, convinced her to return to the stage, and made her his own personal *cause célèbre*. Her triumph in Dublin was as great as Handel’s. In fact, he was then able to convince her to return to London in order to participate in the London premiere. This first ‘revival’ of the work was presented in the Covent Garden Theatre, in March of 1743. Even within just three performances that year, there were cast changes, but they enabled Handel to continue his efforts to customize the work. For at least one of the performances, he had two sopranos, a contralto, two tenors,

and a bass at his disposal. Among them were the English singer and actress, Catherine “Kitty” Clive, and John Beard, who is considered to be Handel’s favorite tenor. For these artists, Handel wrote two new *arioso* settings of the angel’s annunciation scene (for soprano), and “Their sound is gone out” (for tenor). Other, less noticeable, transpositions and reassignments were made, as well.

By the time that Handel conducted *Messiah* for the last time, at least nine known versions of the work had been performed, all of which can be reconstructed: the autograph score of 1741; the first performance in Dublin in 1742; four performances at Covent Garden in 1743, 1745, 1749, and 1750; a performance at London’s Foundling Hospital in 1759; Handel’s conducting score; and a performance in Dublin in 1761. The particular dispositions and arrangements of arias and choruses are unique in each one. It is entirely possible to assemble a particular compilation of the various pieces of the work that was never heard by Handel, and — considering the work’s mutability at the hands of its composer — it could hardly be judged wrong to do so. In fact, most performances heard today represent exactly such a hybrid version.

The work attracted great artists; their artistry inspired Handel; and audiences began to realize that they were experiencing a work that was larger and more universally significant than any other that had preceded it. Its advantageous transformations were already beginning to accumulate, contributing to *Messiah*’s never-ending vivacity that thrives to this day. The transformations and adaptations didn’t stop after Handel’s lifetime. *Messiah* has been ‘modernized’ many times, appearing in numerous, (mostly) clever reincarnations. In 1789, less than fifty years after its premiere, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was commissioned to compose the first of what would be many subsequent arrangements of *Messiah*. His version utilized the “modern” aspects of the classical era’s orchestra. And within another few decades, choral societies in London had begun to multiply the number of singers (both professional and amateur), eventually leading to performances that would involve hundreds of participants, and attract thousands of patrons. In the 1950s, Sir Thomas Beecham commissioned Sir Eugène Goossens, a noted British composer and conductor, to arrange *Messiah* for a full orchestra of grand, symphonic proportions. Having become frustrated with Goossens’s unsatisfactory pace, Beecham then turned to another internationally renowned composer and conductor, Leonard Salzedo. Although Salzedo is not mentioned in the notes that accompany the 1959 recording of this arrangement, his orchestration, in the hands of Beecham and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir, is a thrilling indulgence. Full wind and brass sections, complemented by harps, a battery of percussion instruments, and ‘Wagnerian’ soloists that included Jon Vickers and Giorgio Tozzi, make this recording a ‘must have’ (and this recommendation comes from a hard-nosed period instrument advocate).

Later in the twentieth century, two radical revisions were undertaken almost simultaneously. In 1992, rhythm and blues producers Quincy Jones and Mervyn Warren released

“Handel’s *Messiah*: A Soulful Celebration,” a spectacularly innovative arrangement that features the legendary talents of Dianne Reeves, Patti Austin, Stevie Wonder, and Al Jarreau, among others. And in 1993, the creative team of Bob Christianson and Gary Anderson premiered “Too Hot to Handel: The Gospel Messiah” at New York City’s Lincoln Center. This gospel and jazz version is scored for three vocal soloists (each of which must be versatile in classical, gospel, pop, jazz/scat and R&B styles), a large gospel choir, and an orchestra including five saxophones, three horns, three trumpets, three trombones, timpani, percussion, symphonic strings, and a rhythm section comprised of jazz piano, Hammond B3 organ, electric guitar, electric bass guitar, bass, and drum set. But, while any truly great work of art can survive all kinds of refashionings, *Messiah* always shines brightest when graced by historically informed performance practices. The sound of period instruments and singing that is in the style of singers from Handel’s day ensures that the true splendor of Handel’s sublime eloquence triumphs.

One wonders, of course, whether or not Handel had any inkling that the work he composed in only twenty-four days would become, without question, the world’s most popular oratorio: It has been performed, since its premiere more than 250 years ago, by hundreds of thousands of professional and amateur musicians, and heard by millions. The answer is: “certainly not!” ... well, *perhaps* not, in any case. The notion of a ‘masterwork’ was just beginning to come into existence in the days of Handel and Bach. There was no precedent, and relatively little incentive to generate such monumental compositions, yet both composers ultimately did create several that are inarguably included in the genre of masterworks. As the Age of Enlightenment worked its influence on the arts and their evolving audiences, most creative geniuses began to contemplate how their works would be received by future generations. Some were inspired by the possibility of a kind of artistic immortality which could be reached by any one of several means.

Concerto Grosso in G Minor, op. 6, No. 8 “Fatto per la notte di Natale”

Arcangelo Corelli

Born: February 17, 1653, Fusignano, Italy

Died: January 8, 1713, Rome, Italy

Arcangelo Corelli’s career flourished during one of Rome’s most artistically fertile periods. He was born in 1653 near Ravenna to a family of well-to-do landowners, and was sent to study the violin in Bologna, home of a number of famous string players who handed on the tradition to their young prodigies. By 1675, he had moved to Rome where he quickly established himself as one of the city’s greatest virtuosos and most celebrated musicians, known equally as a performer and composer. He earned further fame as an orchestral director who imposed exceptional discipline on his players. He led performances in the homes of Queen Christina of Sweden,



Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, oil on canvas circa 1689 by Francesco Trevisiani (1656-1746)

Cardinal Benedetto Pamphili and Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni; and directed public concerts at civil ceremonies, religious services, or private banquets. Throughout the 1680s and 1690s his works appeared in print at regular intervals, culminating in the celebrated opus 5 sonatas.

The decades surrounding 1700 saw a rapid increase in the number of music publishers and music publications in Europe.

Corelli was among the composers who most benefited from the expanded audience and wider dissemination of instrumental music. He was the first popular composer whose reputation derived from his publications, and because of them, his works became the earliest instrumental classics. The opus 5 violin sonatas, for example, went through forty-two editions and countless arrangements and parodies in the century from its publication to 1800. From about 1710, Corelli retired from public appearances and concentrated on selecting and revising pieces for the set of concertos that he would publish as opus 6. The set was published in 1712 in Amsterdam, where they were beautifully engraved rather than printed from moveable type. While Corelli certainly composed a vast quantity of chamber music, only his twelve concertos for two violins and violoncello — along with an Introduction and Sinfonia to Giovanni Lorenzo Lulier's oratorio *Santa Beatrice d'Este* — are all that remain of his orchestral music.

Corelli's collection of *concerti grossi* represents a lifetime of public performance, during which he may have composed well more than a hundred concertos. These twelve are in fact a set of individual movements, assembled by Corelli to form models of his *concerto grosso* style. Corelli repeatedly made improvements to his works, hardly being able to leave well enough alone. And all the opus 6 concertos have more movements than a typical concerto, providing yet another reason to believe that they were assembled from various manuscripts. It is likely that any one of them derives material from as many previous sources as there are movements.

They are usually divided into two groups. The first eight are in the *sonata da chiesa* ("church sonata") style, though only one — the so-called "Christmas concerto" with its final pastoral movement — has a tie to religious imagery or celebrations.

The last four follow the format of the *sonata da camera* ("chamber sonata"), indicated by the presence of dance movements. But such a division hardly does justice to either the heterogeneity or the kaleidoscopic variety of opus 6. The style of the music reflects Corelli's playing style: "learned, elegant, pathetic," in the words of one contemporary. All the concertos are models of subtlety and nuance, and they share a singing, *cantabile* expressiveness that spurred a thousand clichéd imitations.

In 1708, he wrote "[I am] fully aware of my own weaknesses, so that only recently, in spite of numerous, long drawn-out corrections, I scarcely had the confidence to put before the public eye those few works I entrusted to the printer." Despite his humbleness, these concertos are brilliant examples of the oft-changing and contrasting elements that are so integral to Corelli's compositional style. It is interesting to note the full title of the collection: *Concerti Grossi con duoi Violini e Violoncello di Concertino obligati e duoi altri Violini, Viola e Basso de Concerto Grosso ad arbitrio, che si potranno radoppiare* ("Concerti grossi for two violins and violoncello in the obligatory solo group and two other violins, viola and bass in the orchestra, which is optional and whose numbers may be increased"). In other words, the elasticity of their scoring enables performances by as few as three or four players, or as many as are available.

The Concerto Grosso in G Minor, Op. 6, No. 8, bears the inscription "*Fatto per la notte di Natale*" ("Made for the night of Christmas") and appears to have been commissioned by the Roman Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni (1667-1740), who had factored significantly in the early years of George Frideric Handel's career that he spent in Italy. He was a generous patron of the arts and especially of composers who understood his refined tastes. According to musicologist and Handel expert Ellen T. Harris, Ottoboni "loved pomp, prodigality, and sensual pleasure, but was in the same time kind, ready to serve and charitable." That all rings true considering the statement of a contemporary, the French philosopher Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu (1689-1755), that Ottoboni fathered between 60 and 70 children. Another interesting connection between Handel and Ottoboni lies in the acquisition of significant parts of his music collection by Handel's librettist for *Messiah*, Charles Jennens. Records show that Corelli played a "Christmas Concerto" for the Cardinal in 1690, so it may be that the work later included in Corelli's opus 6 collection was composed around that time, a bit more than two decades before its publication.

© Jeffrey Thomas

Libretto

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Messiah

AN ORATORIO Set to Musick by George Frideric Handel, Esq.

PART ONE

SINFONY

SCENE I

RECITATIVE, accompanied - Tenor

Comfort ye, comfort ye my People, saith your God; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her Warfare is accomplish'd, that her Iniquity is pardon'd. 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. (*Isaiah 40:1-3*)

ARIA - Tenor

Ev'ry Valley shall be exalted, and ev'ry Mountain and Hill made low, the Crooked straight, and the rough Places plain. (*Isaiah 40:4*)

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. (*Isaiah 40:5*)

SCENE II

RECITATIVE, accompanied - Bass

Thus saith the Lord of Hosts; Yet once a little while, and I will shake the Heav'ns 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, ev'n the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in: Behold He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts. (*Malachi 3:1*)

ARIA - 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. (*Malachi 3:2*)

CHORUS

And he shall purify the Sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an Offering in Righteousness. (*Malachi 3:3*)

SCENE III

RECITATIVE - Alto

Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his Name Emmanuel, GOD WITH US. (*Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23*)

ARIA - 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. O thou that tellest good Tidings to Zion, Arise, shine, for thy Light is come, and the Glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. (*Isaiah 40:9 and 60:1*)

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. (*Isaiah 60:2-3*)

ARIA - 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*)

INTERMISSION

SCENE IV

PIFA

RECITATIVE - Soprano

There were Shepherds abiding in the Field, keeping Watch over their Flock by Night. (*Luke 2:8*)

ARIOSO - 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*)

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. (*Luke 2:10-11*)

RECITATIVE, accompanied - Soprano

And suddenly there was with the Angel a Multitude of the heav'nly Host, praising God, and saying: (*Luke 2:13*)

CHORUS

Glory to God in the Highest, and Peace on Earth, Good Will towards Men. (*Luke 2:14*)

SCENE V

ARIA - Soprano

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Sion, 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 open'd, 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. Come unto Him all ye that labour, come unto Him all ye 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. (*Isaiah 40:11; Matthew 11:28-29*)

PART TWO

SCENE III

SEMICHORUS

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. 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 of Hosts: he is the King of Glory. (*Psalms 24:7-10*)

SCENE VII

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

PART THREE

SCENE II

RECITATIVE, accompanied – Bass

Behold, I tell you a Mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be chang'd, in a Moment, in the Twinkling of an Eye, at the last Trumpet. (*1 Corinthians 15:51-52*)

ARIA – Bass

The trumpet shall sound, and the Dead shall be rais'd incorruptible, and We shall be chang'd. (*1 Corinthians 15:52*)

SCENE IV

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 Pow'r be unto Him that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. (*Revelation 5:12-14*)

CHORUS

Amen.

About American Bach

American Bach comprised of American Bach Soloists, American Bach Choir, American Bach Cantorei, American Bach Academy, the San Francisco Bach Festival, and its newest performance platform, SF Baroque — is one of the world's premier music consortia. The refreshed ethos of the organization puts its dynamic and engaging artists front and center across a variety of programs that showcase their incredible talents as they present some of the best of the Baroque, drawing on their riveting performance styles and virtuosity. Recognized as leading performers in the field of Baroque music, dedicated to historically informed performances of Bach and his contemporaries, the ensemble's mission — to provide meaningful, memorable, and valuable musical experiences for our audiences through inspiring performances and recordings and to support the preservation of early music through educational programs for students and emerging professionals — has been realized under the leadership of Jeffrey Thomas. Critical acclaim has been extensive: *The Washington Post* called American Bach "the best American specialists in early music" and "a flawless ensemble ... a level of musical finesse one rarely

encounters." *San Francisco Classical Voice* declared, "There is nothing routine or settled about their work. Jeffrey Thomas is still pushing the musical Baroque envelope." And the *San Francisco Chronicle* has extolled the ensemble's "divinely inspired singing." The first public concerts were given in February 1990 at Saint Stephen's Church in Belvedere, and increased demand led to the 1993 inauguration of an annual summer festival followed by expansion to San Francisco, Berkeley, and Davis. An extensive set of acclaimed audio and video recordings is popular on all streaming services, including a full-length feature film, "Handel's *Messiah* in Grace Cathedral," that has been watched by more than 3.9 million viewers worldwide. American Bach's robust commitment to the mentorship, training, and support of young artists began with the establishment of the American Bach Soloists & Henry I. Goldberg International Young Artist Competition in 1998, followed by The Jeffrey Thomas Award in 2013. In July 2010, ABS inaugurated the American Bach Academy, which has drawn more than 500 participants from around the world, representing Australia, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Palestine, Peru, Puerto Rico, Russia, Republic of Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, Taiwan, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Ukraine, the United States, and Venezuela.

About the Artists

Jeffrey Thomas Conductor

Jeffrey Thomas has dedicated his professional life to bringing thoughtful, meaningful, and informed perspectives to his performances as Artistic Director and Conductor of the American Bach Soloists. But his greatest passion lies in his determination to foster and mentor young artists who have the desire to perform music from the Baroque era with dedication to the highest artistic and historical standards. Working with American Bach Academy participants since its founding in 2010 has become his chosen legacy, and he is now actively developing continued forums for performances by the dynamic and engaging artists that now define American Bach. Educated at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, Manhattan School of Music, and the Juilliard School of Music, with further studies in English literature at Cambridge University, he was artist-in-residence at the University of California, where he is now Professor Emeritus of Music in the Department of Music at UC Davis, where he held the Barbara K. Jackson Chair in Conducting. Before devoting all of his time to conducting, he was one of the first recipients of the San Francisco Opera Company's prestigious Adler Fellowships. Praised by *The New York Times* for his "fervent declamation, brilliant coloratura and a voice of Italianate warmth," and cited by *The Wall Street Journal* as "a superstar among oratorio tenors," Mr. Thomas' extensive discography of vocal music includes dozens of recordings of major works for Decca, EMI, Erato, Koch International Classics, Denon, Harmonia Mundi, Smithsonian, Newport Classics, and Arabesque. Maestro Thomas is also an avid exponent of contemporary music, and has conducted the premieres of new operas, including David Conte's *Gift of the Magi* and *Firebird Motel*, and premiered song cycles of several composers. Recognized worldwide as one of the foremost interpreters of the music of Bach and the Baroque, he continues to inspire audiences and performers alike through his keen insights into the passions behind musical expression. *Fanfare Magazine* has praised his series of Bach recordings, stating that "Thomas' direction seems just right, capturing the humanity of the music ... there is no higher praise for Bach performance."



Liv Redpath Soprano

Liv Redpath is quickly gaining recognition worldwide in both opera and symphonic performances. In the last two seasons, she debuted at the Royal Opera House, Staatsoper Hamburg, and The Metropolitan Opera. She also appeared at Santa Fe Opera and collaborated with major orchestras such as the Berlin Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and sang prominent roles in productions of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Hamlet*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Last year, she appeared with Opera Omaha as Anne Trulove in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*, and she returned to the Bayerische Staatsoper in her signature role of Sophie in Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*. At the Santa Fe Opera, she sang the role of Susanna in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* and appeared in orchestral engagements with the Danish, San Francisco, and Seattle symphony orchestras, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, Les Violons du Roy, and the Orchestra of St. Luke's at Carnegie Hall. A graduate of Harvard University and The Juilliard School, Liv is a former Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist with the Los Angeles Opera. The *Berliner Umschau* praised her "radiant voice" and hailed it as "effortless, even in the highest register, with breathtaking coloratura, the likes of which have not been heard for a long time." She previously appeared with American Bach in "A Baroque New Year's Eve at the Opera" in San Francisco's Herbst Theatre in a program featuring arias from Handel's *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* and *Apollo e Dafne*, and Vivaldi's *La fida ninfa*.



Ágnes Vojtkó

Mezzo-Soprano

Ágnes Vojtkó is hailed as “earnest and grounded” (*San Francisco Classical Voice*) with a “heart-touching and plush sound” (*Bay Area Reporter*). Known for her masterful presentation of early music repertoire, her previous performances with American Bach have included Bach’s Saint Matthew Passion, Saint John Passion, and Christmas Oratorio.



In October, she joined American Bach in a program that included Handel’s “Eternal Source of Light Divine” and Vivaldi’s Gloria, and returns to American Bach audiences to reprise her heartrending performances of Handel’s *Messiah*, which she performed with ABS ten years ago. Ágnes brings a diversity of perspectives and experience from her international upbringing. Born and raised in Hungary, she was introduced to music through piano and the Kodály Method at an early age in her hometown of Siófok. She went on to earn her Bachelor of Music degree at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest. As a recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship, she moved to the US and now holds Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees in Voice from the University of Texas at Austin. Ágnes came to American Bach through the 2014 Academy when she performed solo arias in Bach’s Mass in B Minor and Handel’s *L’Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*.

Brian Giebler

Tenor

Brian Giebler, praised for his “lovely tone and deep expressivity” by *The New York Times*, radiates “shine and clarity” (*Opera News*) in every phrase using “his high-placed tenor with great skill” (*Opera Magazine*). A busy 25/26 season includes debuts with American Bach Soloists, the National Philharmonic, and Charleston Symphony Orchestras (Handel’s *Messiah*); the Boise, San Antonio, and Vermont Philharmonic Orchestras (Orff’s *Carmina Burana*); return engagements with The Sebastians, the Austin Symphony (Mozart’s *Requiem*), and the Colorado Symphony (Haydn’s “Mass in Time of War”). Sought-after for his interpretations of the Roasted Swan in Carl Orff’s *Carmina Burana* and Handel’s *Messiah*, he has been heard as Apollo in Handel’s *Semele* with The English Concert and Clarion Choir, Septimius in Handel’s *Theodora* with Ars Lyrica Houston, Aeneas in Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* with Atlanta Baroque Orchestra, and as Arnalta in



Monteverdi’s *L’incoronazione di Poppea* with Boston Baroque. As a Bach specialist, he frequently performs the Evangelist in the Saint Matthew and Saint John Passions, the Mass in B Minor (Carnegie Hall with the Oratorio Society of New York, Carmel Bach Festival, and Clarion Music Society), and Bach Cantatas (Grand Rapids Symphony and Handel & Haydn Society). Championing new works, Brian has been seen in diverse roles such as Matthew with *Conspirare*, Trinity Wall Street, and the Oregon Bach Festival in Craig Hella Johnson’s *Considering Matthew Shepard*, Adam in Wachner’s *REV 23* at the Prototype Festival, and Iff the Water Genie in Wuorinen’s *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* with Boston Modern Orchestra Project.

Christian Pursell

Bass-Baritone

Christian Pursell recently performed with American Bach Soloists in Bach’s Mass in B Minor, Handel’s *Messiah*, and “A Baroque New Year’s Eve at the Opera” singing bravura arias from Handel’s *Rodelinda*, *Ezio*, *Rinaldo*, and *Orlando*, solidifying his standing as a favorite among ABS audiences.



Hailing from the Santa Cruz mountains of California, he is a graduate of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and received his Master of Music degree from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. Additionally, Christian is a graduate of the prestigious Adler Fellowship program at the San Francisco Opera, where his performance credits with the company include Lieutenant Ratcliffe in *Billy Budd*, Walter Raleigh in *Roberto Devereux*, the Jailer in *Tosca*, Count Lamoral in *Arabella*, and Angel in *It’s a Wonderful Life*. He recently debuted with the Canadian Opera Company in the role of Angelotti in Puccini’s *Tosca*. Other recent operatic performances included Escamillo in *Carmen* at Cincinnati Opera in July 2021, followed by appearances in the same role with Houston Grand Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Des Moines Metro Opera, and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. As a concert soloist, he has performed Haydn’s *The Creation* with Arizona Musicfest, Handel’s *Saul* with the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra in the Walt Disney Concert Hall, a concert version of Strauss’ *Salome* with the Fabio Luisi and the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Handel’s *Messiah* with the San Francisco Symphony, and Britten’s *War Requiem*, Brahms’ *Ein deutsches Requiem*, Bach’s Saint Matthew Passion, Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9, Faure’s Requiem, and Pärt’s *Passio*.

American Bach Soloists

VOCAL SOLOISTS

Liv Redpath, soprano
Ágnes Vojtkó mezzo-soprano
Brian Giebler, tenor
Christian Pursell, bass-baritone

VIOLIN

YuEun Gemma Kim, leader
Mishkar Núñez-Fredell, principal 2nd
Tatiana Chulochnikova
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