Robert Cooper's 35th and Farewell Season

HANDEL

CONCERT SPONSOR JANET PARTRIDGE

CHORUS NIAGARA PROGRAMME ROBERT COOPER, C.M., ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

We acknowledge ...

that we are on the traditional and unceded territory of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Attawandaron peoples. This land has been a place of gathering, celebration, and exchange for countless generations of Indigenous communities. We pay our respects to their elders, past and present, and express gratitude for their stewardship of these lands and waters.

The Niagara region holds a rich history deeply interwoven with the Indigenous cultures that thrived here for millennia. For countless generations, singing has been an integral part of Indigenous traditions, serving as a means of storytelling, prayer, healing, and celebration. The melodies have carried the wisdom and knowledge of their ancestors, passing down their history and cultural heritage to the next generations.

Singing has been a vessel for connection, allowing Indigenous communities to maintain their sense of identity and unity with the land, and as we gather on this land, we humbly recognize the profound impact that singing has had and continues to have in maintaining the rich tapestry of Indigenous cultures.

In the spirit of reconciliation, let us commit to honoring and respecting the traditions, knowledge, and contributions of Indigenous peoples. May we learn from their deep understanding of the land and its interconnectedness, and may we strive to be better stewards of this territory that sustains us all.

Dear Friends of Chorus Niagara,

Numerology fans consider the number 35 as an 'Angel Number'...a milestone signifying an arrival marker in a career, and a realization that one has taken the right path in the pursuit of one's dreams. The Angels certainly did not lead me astray when I had the good fortune in 1989 to become the Artistic Director of Chorus Niagara, a proud arts organization and community of singers that pursues its choral dreams with sincerity and zeal. Now, after thirty-five years of working with over a thousand singers and performing a multitude of works covering a panoply of styles, the time has come not only to celebrate our collective achievements, but also to pass the baton to the next generation.

What music then might best reflect this milestone? In a recent Audience Poll we asked you what repertoire and programming you enjoy hearing most of all. With that in mind I have chosen three magnificent, iconic choral masterworks along with one of our ever-popular 'not-so-Silent-Movie' spectaculars.

Supporting and encouraging the development of young singers has always been important to me so I am thrilled to showcase as soloists this year some of the amazing young vocal artists whom I have had the great privilege to mentor and conduct over my career.

Choral music mirrors life's momentous passages and can be a comforting balm in times of tragedy as well as an affirmation of all that is wonderful in life. The works of Verdi and Bach bookend my final season, with the monumental **Verdi Requiem** being the sensational opener. This thrilling work weaves together my passion for opera and choral music in a powerful plea for deliverance with a stirring symphonic score, breathtaking solos and supercharged dramatic choruses. *"Bach is the beginning and end of all music"*, remarked the early 20th c. German composer Max Reger, so it seems only fitting I should conclude my tenure as artistic director with the most resplendent of mass settings, and a score that always enriches - the magnificent **Bach Mass in B Minor.**

No season is complete without Handel and our ever-popular **Messiah**, and this year we are fulfilling my long-held desire to also create a curated **Children's Messiah**. Joyously uplifting, Handel's glorious masterpiece is "always tuneful, dramatic, and hugely accessible for both the young and the old at heart." Then to dispel the winter 'blahs' it's our Silent Film classic, the 1925 cinematic marvel **Phantom of the Opera**. Lon Chaney is the disfigured composer whose passionate obsession for Christine leads to murderous love. CN breathes new life into this riveting story with our 'live' choral soundtrack along with inspired organ improvisations replicating this great silent film tradition.

There is music for ALL in our Sensational Season. Thank you for allowing me to share my choral enthusiasms with you these past many years and thank you for supporting Chorus Niagara so faithfully and fully with your applause, your patronage and your love!

Sincerely,

Robert Cooper Artistic Director

CELEBRATING 35 YEARS OF Gxtraordinary LEADERSHIP

ROBERT COOPER, C.M., ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

MESSIAH A Sacred Oratorio

PART ONE

Symphony

Isaiah's Prophecy of Salvation

Recitative Comfort ye my people (*Tenor*) **Air** Every valley shall be exalted (*Tenor*) **Chorus** And the Glory of the Lord

The Coming Judgement

Recitative Thus saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts (*Bass*) **Air** But who may abide the day of His coming (*Alto*) **Chorus** And He shall purify

The Prophecy of Christ's Birth

Recitative Behold, a virgin shall conceive (Alto) **Air and Chorus** 0 thou that tellest good tidings to Zion (Alto) **Recitative** For behold, darkness shall cover the earth (Bass) **Air** The people that walked in darkness (Bass) **Chorus** For unto us a Child is born

The Annunciation to the Shepherds

Pifa Pastoral Symphony Recitative There were shepherds abiding in the field (Soprano) Arioso And Io, the angel of the Lord (Soprano) Recitative And the angel said unto them (Soprano) Arioso And suddenly, there was with the angel (Soprano) Chorus Glory to God

Christ's Healing and Redemption

Air Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion (Soprano) Recitative Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened (Alto) Duet He shall feed his flock like a shepherd (Soprano/Alto) Chorus His yoke is easy

Intermission PART TWO

Christ's Passion

Chorus Behold the Lamb of God Air He was despised (Alto) Chorus Surely, He has borne our griefs Chorus And with His stripes we are healed Chorus All we like sheep have gone astray Recitative All they that see Him laugh Him to scorn (Tenor) Chorus He trusted in God Recitative Thy rebuke hath broken His heart (Soprano) Arioso Behold and see if there be any sorrow (Soprano)

Christ's Death and Resurrection

Recitative He was cut off out of the land of the living (*Tenor*) **Arioso** But thou didst not leave His soul in hell (*Tenor*)

Christ's Ascension

Chorus Lift up your heads, o ye gates

Christ's Reception into Heaven

Recitative Unto which of the angels (*Tenor*) **Chorus** Let all the angels of God **Air** Thou art gone up on high (*Alto*) **Chorus** The Lord gave the word

The Beginnings of Gospel Preaching Air How beautiful are the feet (Soprano)

Chorus Their sound has gone out

The World's Rejection of the Gospel

Air Why do the nations so furiously rage (Bass) Chorus Let us break their bonds asunder Recitative He that dwelleth in heaven (Tenor) Air Thou shalt break them (Tenor) Chorus Hallelujah Chorus

PART THREE

The Promise of Eternal Life

Air I know that my Redeemer liveth (Soprano) **Chorus and Soli** Since by man came death

The Day of Judgement

Recitative Behold, I tell you a mystery (Bass) **Air** The trumpet shall sound (Bass)

The Final Conquest of Sin

Recitative Then shall be brought to pass (*Alto*) **Duet** 0 death, where is thy sting (*Alto/Tenor*) **Chorus and Soli** But thanks be to God **Air** If God be for us (*Soprano*)

The Acclamation of the Messiah

Chorus and Soli Worthy is the Lamb that was slain

Chelsea Kolić, soprano | Alex Hetherington, mezzo-soprano David Walsh, tenor | Danlie Rae Acebuque, bass Concordo Orchestra Robert Cooper, artistic director and conductor

ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS!

MEET NEW FRIENDS HONE YOUR MUSICIANSHIP BROADEN YOUR MUSICAL HORIZONS!



SING SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH CHORUS NIAGARA THIS JANUARY AS CN CINEMA PRESENTS: PHANTOM OF THE OPERA!

SCAN HERE TO APPLY TODAY!

MESSIAH Programme Notes



- born Halle, Germany, February 23, 1685
- died London, England, April 14, 1759

Levre Frideric Hardes_

George Frideric Handel was a German-British baroque composer, famous for his operas, oratorios, anthems and organ concertos. Most music lovers have encountered George Frideric Handel through holiday-time renditions of the *Messiah's* 'Hallelujah' chorus or his *Music for the Royal Fireworks*.

Handel was born in the German city of Halle on February 23, 1685. As a child he studied music with Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow, organist at the

Liebfrauenkirche, and for a time he seemed destined for a career as a church organist himself.

In 1703 he took a post as violinist in the Hamburg opera orchestra and fought a duel the following year with the composer Mattheson over the accompaniment to one of Mattheson's operas. In 1706 Handel became court composer in Hannover.

English audiences took to his 1711 opera *Rinaldo*, and several years later Handel moved to England permanently. He impressed King George early on with the *Water Music* of 1716, written as entertainment for a royal boat outing. Through the 1720s Handel continued to compose Italian operatic masterpieces for London stages: *Ottone, Serse (Xerxes)*, and other works often based on classical stories. However, Handel found in the 1730s that the public wanted something new and more understandable. After composing some three dozen Italian operas, he shifted his energies to creating what are in essence sacred English operas; we know them as oratorios.

The principal difference between Handel's operas and oratorios is that the oratorio stories were usually religious, often biblical, and were not staged—no sets or costumes. Soloists were still used, but for their vocal qualities rather than to represent specific individuals, and the role of the chorus took on greater prominence, often carrying nationalistic resonances as representatives of the people.

Handel enjoyed considerable success with oratorios such as *Esther, Deborah, Saul,* and *Israel in Egypt,* but by the early 1740s, he was in some financial difficulty and suffering from poor health after a stroke in 1737 which caused both temporary paralysis in his right arm and some loss of his mental faculties.

At this low point in his career, he composed what would become his most famous and beloved piece and one that is probably the oldest work to remain consistently in the repertory of so-called "classical music." Unlike his operas or Bach's passions, *Messiah* never needed to be revived because it never disappeared.

Blind in old age, Handel continued to compose. He died in London on April 14, 1759. Beethoven thought Handel the greatest of all his predecessors and once said, "I would bare my head and kneel at his grave".



MESSIAH, AN ORATORIO OR "SACRED DRAMA"

"For Relief of the Prisoners in the several Gaols, and for the Support of Mercer's Hospital in Stephen's Street, and of the Charitable Infirmary on the Inns Quay, on Monday the 12th of April, will be performed at the Musick Hall in Fishamble Street, Mr. Handel's new Grand Oratorio, call'd the MESSIAH, in which the Gentlemen of the Choirs of both Cathedrals will assist, with some Concertoes on the Organ, by Mr. Handel. Tickets to be had at the Musick Hall...at half a Guinea each."

Messiah is not a narrative drama about the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ but rather offers a 'meditation' on his life, which explains why some of the text is derived not only from the New Testament but from the Old, as well as from the Psalms. *Messiah* is divided into three sections. Part I is concerned with the

prophecy of the coming of a Messiah and then with Christ's Nativity. Part II deals with Christ's suffering and death. The concluding section offers an affirmation of Christian faith and glimpses of Revelation.

It is known that Handel wrote most of the work in some three weeks time, secluding himself beginning on August 22, 1741. Such speed was typical of Handel and it is said that after finishing the "Hallelujah" chorus, he proclaimed: "I did think I did see all Heaven before me, and the great God himself!" The first performance of *Messiah* took place in Dublin, on April 13, 1742. Handel gave the London premiere less than a year later at Covent Garden. It was not well received, in part because of objections to presenting a sacred work in that most profane of buildings—a theatre! It was only in 1750, when *Messiah* began to be presented in annual performances for a London charity at the local Foundling Hospital, that the public embraced the work. Handel performed it some three dozen times—every time around Easter, not Christmas, as later became the custom. Over the years he revised *Messiah* to accommodate new surroundings, performing forces, and audiences. Such adaptations have continued ever since. Many of these later arrangements helped to make the work viable for large choral festivals with many hundreds of singers, sometimes even more than a thousand, confirming its everlasting universal appeal.



Whether its durability is due to its biblical source material or the musical engineering, one thing seems clear: Handel intended the piece to be an instrument of worship. Indeed, at the bottom of the manuscript for *Messiah*, Handel did pen three letters after the final note, just above his own initials and twice as large: S.D.G. – Soli Deo Gloria (Latin for 'To God alone be the glory')."

Why Stand for Handel?

There is a tradition that audience members stand up for the

Hallelujah Chorus towards the end of Handel's *Messiah* and this custom is still normally observed. It is said to have started when the king himself attended an early performance and was so moved by the resounding chorus that he stood erect until it had finished. If the monarch stands, then everybody else would be expected to do the same as no-one could risk sitting down when the king was standing. Alas, this is a well-known story but there is no evidence that King George II ever saw a performance of *Messiah* — or that he stood up during it. This does not stop tourist guides repeating the story, however, and it certainly does not stop audience members continuing to stand as the climax of the greatest work by George Frederick Handel approaches. (guidelondon.org)

Think of it as a 'seventh inning stretch'!



INSPIRING HEARTS & MINDS

JOIN CNCC THIS JANUARY!

Multi-level choirs for children & youth!

Provide your child with the opportunity to develop their musicianship skills, share their love of music, and build lifelong friendships!



SING WITH US!



SCAN TO LEARN MORE!



ROBERT COOPER CM, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

One of Canada's foremost choral musicians, Robert Cooper is also the Artistic Director of the Opera in Concert Chorus and former Artistic Director of the Orpheus Choir of Toronto.

He taught for several years as a member of the Choral Department, Faculty of Music, University of Toronto and has had a long association mentoring youth, having conducted the Toronto Mendelssohn Youth Choir for over 20 years, several provincial youth choirs, the National Youth Choir of Canada and the Ontario Youth Choir on three occasions.

In addition to founding the Ontario Male Chorus and conducting the professional Black Creek Festival Chorus and Stratford Festival Youth Choir, Mr. Cooper made his Carnegie Hall debut conducting a Celebration of Canadian Choral Music.

Mr. Cooper has adjudicated internationally, including the BBC choral competition Let The Peoples Sing, as well as World Choral Games in China, USA, Russia and South Africa. In addition to his work with choirs, Mr. Cooper has conducted symphony orchestras in Halifax, Winnipeg, Edmonton and London, and has been involved with the presentation of more than 150 operas in Victoria, Ottawa, and Winnipeg as well as Toronto Operetta Theatre and Opera in Concert. Over his career Mr. Cooper has prepared choruses for many international conductors including Helmuth Rilling, Sir David Willcocks, Sir John Rutter, Sir Andrew Davis, Charles Dutoit, Robert Shaw and Elmer Iseler.

For 31 successful years Robert Cooper brought fine vocal and choral music to Canadian listeners as Executive Producer of Opera and Choral Music for CBC Radio Two. He has served as President of both Choirs Ontario and Choral Canada, was on the Board of Chorus America, the Advisory Board of the International Federation of Choral Music and acted as Canada's representative to the World Choir Council. Recipient of the St. Catharines' Trillium Arts Award, Robert Cooper has also received the 2016 Distinguished Service Award from Choral Canada, an Honorary Doctorate from Brock University, the Order of Canada as well as the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal for his significant contribution to the Canadian choral community.



KRISTA RHODES, COLLABORATIVE PIANIST

Krista Rhodes is a versatile collaborative pianist, educator, adjudicator, and recording artist in the GTA, Hamilton, and Niagara regions. She has appeared on stages in North America and Europe and has had her music heard on the Oprah Winfrey Show. During her career, Krista has worked with many choral ensembles, soloists, opera companies, orchestras and post-secondary institutions. Her passion is choral music where she enjoys working with a diverse range of choirs. Krista has accompanied some of Canada's most prestigious classical soloists and has made recent appearances that include: the Amadeus Choir and Elmer Iseler Singers of Toronto, the Hamilton Philharmonic

Orchestra, Niagara Symphony, Talisker Players, Symphony on the Bay, Opera Niagara, Sinfonia Ancaster, the Achill Choral Society, the Orpheus Choir of Toronto, and the Bach Elgar Choir. In addition to her musical endeavours, she is a secondary school teacher with the Hamilton-Wentworth school board and is the Music Director at Munn's United Church in Oakville. Krista resides in the Niagara region with her two incredible children and is overjoyed to be returning to Chorus Niagara as their collaborative pianist.



GUEST ARTISTS



CHELSEA KOLIĆ

Croatian-Canadian soprano Chelsea Kolić is establishing herself as an exciting young artist, both throughout Canada and Europe.

Previously based in Germany, Kolić has appeared in a range of roles with Theater Krefeld und Mönchengladbach, made her UK debut (Hamstead Garden Opera) as the title role in Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*, and was an academy artist in Sweden's Confidencen Opera & Music Festival. She is a current member of Opéra de Montréal's Atelier lyrique; her past season included covering the roles of La Contessa and Violetta.

She was a District winner at the 2020-21 Metropolitan Opera

Laffont Competition and has worked under the tutelage of Barbara Bonney, Wolfgang Holzmair, Helmut Deutsch, Christoph Prégardien, Melanie Diener, and Thomas Hampson. An avid performer of Lieder and contemporary works, Kolić is a graduate of Salzburg's Mozarteum University (Master's in Lied/Oratorio and Opera) and holds a Bachelor of Music (Voice Performance) from McGill University.



ALEX HETHERINGTON

Mezzo-soprano Alex Hetherington, recently named one of CBC's "30 hot classical musicians under 30," completed her tenure with the Canadian Opera Company (COC) Ensemble Studio last season. Her recent operatic highlights include Mercédès in *Carmen* and Lapák in *Cunning Little Vixen* with the COC; Offred in The *Handmaid's Tale* at the Banff Centre; and [Riley] in *R.U.R. A Torrent of Light* with Tapestry Opera. This season, Alex will perform Siebel in *Faust* at the Canadian Opera Company and debut as the Stewardess in *Flight* with Vancouver Opera.

Equally accomplished in concert repertoire, she has performed with the National Arts Centre Orchestra, Victoria Symphony, and

Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Future engagements will see her appear in concerts with Ottawa Chamberfest. She holds a Master's in Opera Performance from the University of Toronto, where she won the Norcop Award in Art Song.



DAVID WALSH

Tenor David Walsh, born and raised in Toronto, finished his Diploma of Opera Performance at the University of Toronto with Honours in 2022.

From there David has participated in a wide range of vocal performances. He continues to sing with the acclaimed Canadian Opera Company Chorus. A highlight of the 2023/24 season was David debuting the role of Nemorino in *Elixir of Love* with the North York Concert Orchestra. In the summer of 2023, he debuted the role of the Governor/Vanderdendur in North York Concert Orchestra's production of *Candide*, as well as El Remendado in No Strings Theatre's production of *Carmen*. In winter of 2023, David

made his debut with the Mississauga Symphony Orchestra as *Count Almaviva* in a performance of The Barber of Seville. He made his role debut as Martin in *The Tender Land* in Spring 2022 with U of T Opera.

As well as an avid singer, David is an avid biker. This form of transportation is the way he practices a lot of his repertoire. So, if you ever see a blur of red hair and hear some Rossini or Fauré on the downtown streets of Toronto, you have most likely encountered David Walsh.



DANLIE RAE ACEBUQUE

Described as possessing "a beautiful, warm baritone voice with enviable flexibility and an easy top", and for being a "gifted comedic actor" (Opera Canada), Filipino-Canadian baritone Danlie Rae Acebuque holds a Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance and Masters of Music in Opera Performance in the studio of the Canadian soprano, Frédérique Vézina at the University of Toronto Faculty of Music.

Danlie was the first recipient of the Alexandor Chorney Opera Scholarship at UofT in 2021. In 2022, he was the recipient of the Stuart Hamilton Memorial Award with Voicebox: Opera in Concert, and in 2023 he was one of the Encouragement Award recipients

at The Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition – Oregon District and Audiences Choice at the MET – Western Canada District. Danlie made his operatic debuts as Figaro (*II Barbiere di Siviglia*), Gianni Schicchi (*Gianni Schicchi*), Falke (*Die Fledermaus*), Escamillo (*La Tragedie de Carmen*), Reverend John Smithurst (*Florence: The Lady with The Night Lamp*), Guglielmo (*Cosi fan tutte*) to name a few. Danlie is a current member of Vancouver Opera's Yulanda M. Faris Young Artist Program.

CONCORDO ORCHESTRA

Concordo Orchestra is an instrumental ensemble that was created to specialise in accompanying choirs. Concordo's musicians have a passion for choral music and choral-orchestral collaboration, enjoying imitating the text and adapting to the breathing and phrasing of the voices to make the music come alive. Its musicians bring to the group a wealth of experience from having worked with most of the choirs of southern Ontario and beyond. Concordo Orchestra most recently performed with the Grand Philharmonic Chamber Singers (Waterloo) and Orpheus Choir (Toronto). Concordo tailors its forces to the needs of choirs and their chosen repertoire, and can perform both as a period-instrument ensemble as well as a modern-instrument ensemble. It's exciting to be working once again with Robert Cooper and Chorus Niagara! www.concordo.ca

Violin I

Valerie Sylvester (concertmaster) Charlene Nagel Sarah Boyer Erick Oliver Wawrzkiewicz

Violin II

Elena Spanu Anna Hughes Alexis Brett Yoona Kang

Viola

Sheila Smyth Elspeth Thomson Clara Nguyen-Tran **Cello** Felix Deak Frika Neilsen

Bass Callum MacLeod

Oboe Daniel Brielmaier Karen Ages

Bassoon Ondrej Golias **Trumpets** Shawn Spicer Scott Harrison

Timpani Alejandro Cespedes

Harpsichord Christopher Dawes

Organ Krista Rhodes



Our Choral Family

Chorus Niagara

An auditioned adult choir dedicated to performing a wide spectrum of choral music to a high standard of excellence and fostering an appreciation for the choral art in the Niagara Region.

Side-by-Side High School Chorale

Each season Chorus Niagara invites motivated young adult singers from Niagara Region high schools to rehearse and perform alongside Chorus Niagara in one regular season concert. Participants take part in weekly rehearsals with Chorus Niagara and perform in the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre.

Robert Cooper Choral Scholars

The Robert Cooper Choral Scholars program supports and encourages aspiring post-secondary voice students. Scholars perform with Chorus Niagara for an entire season, work with one of Canada's top choral conductors, further their solo experience and receive a stipend. Scholars must apply and will be invited to audition.

Associate Conductor

Chorus Niagara offers young conductors the opportunity to work with an auditioned SATB choir under the tutelage of one of Canada's foremost choral conductors. They will gain hands-on conducting experience both in rehearsals and performances.

Chorus Niagara Children's Choir

Chorus Niagara Children's Choir offers children in the Niagara region the opportunity to develop their musical knowledge, build relationships and share their love of music with others.

For more information about any of these programs, please contact Elise Naccarato, Managing Director at chorusniagara100@gmail.com or by calling 905.932.6642

Voices of Chorus Niagara



Soprano

Diana Avila Nancy Boese Teresa Cole Julianna Collevecchio Megan Cooper Thomasin Cooper** Frica D'Amore **Renate Dau-Klaassen** Emily Denney Marlene Dykstra **Cindy Ellis** Rebecca Goode Victoria Hartman Lynn Huma Heather Johnson Susan Jugoon Fiona Lougheed Leslie Maddalena Isabella Milano Elise Naccarato Jelena Nero **Claire Phelan** Emma Rotundo Annie Schulz Michaela Scrimger Jane Thomas Yager Alison Thomson Judy Willems **Bailey Williams***

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Bass

Lvdell Andree-Wiebe** Jeff Baker Dean Bonsma Warren Booth Gordon Froese Hugh Gayler Chuck Greenham Jonathon Hauber Peter Hauber **Dick Holden** Connor King Steve Killoran **Bill Leighfield** Brian Mellen John Pendergrast Pablo Ouevedo Alf Redekopp Ken Rempel John Teeuwsen Christopher Wilson John Wilson

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