



Chorus
NIAGARA

HANDEL'S
MESSIAH

CONCERT SPONSOR, JANET PARTRIDGE

CHORUS NIAGARA

PROGRAMME

KATHLEEN ALLAN, 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.



MESSIAH

A Sacred Oratorio

December 20, 2025
Partridge Hall, FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre

Caitlin Wood, Soprano | Daniel Cabena, Countertenor
Asitha Tennekoon, Tenor | Korin Thomas-Smith, Baritone
Concordo Orchestra
Kathleen Allan, Artistic Director and Conductor

PART ONE

Sinfony

Recitative Comfort ye my people (*Tenor*)

Air Ev'ry valley (*Tenor*)

Chorus And the Glory of the Lord

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

Recitative Behold, a virgin shall conceive (*Alto*)

Air and Chorus O 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

Pifa Pastoral Symphony

Recitative There were shepherds abiding in the field (*Soprano*)

Arioso And lo, 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

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

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 (*Tenor*)

Arioso Behold and see if there be any sorrow (*Tenor*)

Recitative He was cut off out of the land of the living (*Tenor*)

Chorus The Lord gave the word

Air How beautiful are the feet (*Soprano*)

Air Why do the nations so furiously rage (*Bass*)

Recitative He that dwelleth in heaven (*Tenor*)

Air Thou shalt break them (*Tenor*)

Chorus Hallelujah Chorus

PART THREE

Air I know that my Redeemer liveth (*Soprano*)

Chorus and Soli Since by man came death

Recitative Behold, I tell you a mystery (*Bass*)

Air The trumpet shall sound (*Bass*)

Chorus and Soli Worthy is the Lamb that was slain

Chorus Amen

A MESSAGE FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, KATHLEEN ALLAN

For many people, hearing Handel's *Messiah* is part of the rhythm of winter. It's music that shows up when the days are short, the air is cold, and we're drawn to moments of warmth and togetherness. Over the centuries, these sounds have become familiar companions, returning year after year to mark a season of reflection, celebration, and shared experience. I have come to treasure that sense of return, not because *Messiah* feels predictable, but because it continues to reveal something new each time we encounter it.

As a conductor, I am deeply interested in how tradition and freshness coexist. This piece carries extraordinary cultural weight, yet it remains remarkably alive. I love making music that feels accessible and resonant for modern audiences while engaging seriously with how it was first imagined. When we approach *Messiah* through a historical "performance practice" lens, we aren't trying to recreate the past for its own sake. Instead, we are tuning in more closely to the text, to the rhetoric of the music, and to the emotional pacing that gives the work its enduring power.

Handel composed *Messiah* in 1741, completing it in an astonishingly short period of time. But the speed of its composition is only part of the story. From its very first performance in Dublin in 1742, *Messiah* was intertwined with acts of generosity and public good. The premiere was mounted as a benefit concert supporting prisoners' relief and a local hospital, and Handel would go on to direct many performances for charitable causes throughout his life.

Messiah was never intended to be remote or untouchable. It was written for real people, in public spaces, with the belief that music could move hearts and strengthen communities. Handel famously responded to praise by saying that he hoped not merely to entertain listeners, but to make them better. That aspiration - that music might delight, teach, and move us all at once - still lies at the heart of this work.

Unlike many oratorios of its time, *Messiah* does not unfold through named characters or staged scenes. The text, compiled by Charles Jennens, is drawn from the King James Bible, assembled as a sequence of reflections rather than a linear drama. The result is a work that feels expansive and contemplative, inviting listeners to find their own meaning in the work rather than prescribing it.

Traditionally divided into three parts, the oratorio moves from anticipation and promise, through suffering and transformation, and finally toward renewal and hope. The music moves through a wide range of moods and energies - there are moments of quiet stillness and moments that burst open with sound, where voices and instruments seem to lift the room together. This contrast is part of what makes the piece so enduring: it reflects the full emotional range of the human experience, especially at a time of year when many of us are holding both joy and challenge at once.

Over time, *Messiah* has grown in scope, sometimes significantly. In the nineteenth century, it became common to perform the work with enormous choirs and orchestras, transforming it into a grand public spectacle.

Handel wrote *Messiah* for comparatively modest forces: a chamber-sized orchestra, a chorus drawn from local singers, a handful of soloists, and trumpets and drums used sparingly but to thrilling effect. Our performance tonight will land somewhere in between the 18th- and 19th-century extremes: a Baroque approach to the articulations, bowings, and phrasing, but a healthy sized choir in Chorus Niagara to fill this beautiful hall we call home.

Today, *Messiah* is performed thousands of times worldwide every year, I imagine far beyond what Handel ever expected its reach to be. It belongs to concert halls and community spaces, to professional ensembles and kitchen sing-alongs, to listeners encountering it for the first time and to those who know every note by heart. Each performance becomes part of an evolving tradition shaped by the people who gather to hear it.

Whether you are listening closely, singing along internally, or simply letting the sound wash over you, I invite you to experience this music as a shared moment across time. Nearly three centuries after its premiere, *Messiah* continues to offer something rare: space for contemplation and connection.

My hope is that you feel welcomed into the experience, not as an observer of a museum piece, but as a participant in a living, breathing work of art. I hope this music brings warmth to you in the winter season, light on this darkest night of the year, and a renewed sense of how deeply music can connect us to one another.

Wishing you a very happy holiday season, and a joyous 2026!

Kathleen Allan, 2025

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A MESSAGE FROM CN'S BOARD CHAIR

On behalf of the Board of Directors, welcome to this performance of Handel's *Messiah* in the First Ontario Performing Arts Centre! This is the second of our four performances in our 62nd season.

A very special thank-you to Janet Partridge for her sponsorship of this performance of the *Messiah* and the Children's *Messiah*, which took place earlier this afternoon.

Arts organizations, like Chorus Niagara and its Children's Choir, operate with a combination of revenue sources – ticket sales, fundraising, grants, donations and sponsorships. As the tax year of 2025 draws to a close, I encourage you all to give strong consideration to becoming, or continuing to be, a donor. Whether it's planned giving, sponsorship, donations or being here in-person, we very much appreciate your support.

Making choral music shine takes creativity, talent and dedication to the craft. My sincere thanks to our artists, staff and many volunteers. And my thanks to you for your support of this fine organization.

Jeff Baker,
Chair of the Board

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CN Artistic Team

Kathleen Allan, Artistic Director
Robert Cooper, C.M., Conductor Emeritus
Yuan Chen, Associate Conductor
Vlad Soloviev, Collaborative Pianist

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Sandra Mason, Intermediate Choir Conductor
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KATHLEEN ALLAN, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Kathleen Allan is the Artistic Director of Chorus Niagara, Artistic Director of the Amadeus Choir of Greater Toronto, and a member of the music faculty at the University of Toronto. In high demand as a guest conductor, commissioned composer, and clinician, she is equally comfortable working in early, contemporary, and symphonic repertoire.

Since the beginning of her tenure with the Amadeus Choir in 2019, the Choir has commissioned over a dozen new works, founded the Choral Creation Lab for emerging composers and poets, and formed new partnerships with diverse artists and ensembles throughout the GTA and beyond. From 2016-2023, she served as the Artistic Director of Canzona, Winnipeg's professional Baroque choir, with whom she conducted many of the masterworks of the Baroque era. A devoted interpreter of early music and steeped in the practice of historically-informed performance, she is passionate about finding relevant contemporary context for the works of the past and sharing their universal power with broad audiences. Recent guest conducting engagements include the Luminato Festival, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Victoria Symphony, Regina Symphony Orchestra, Newfoundland Symphony Orchestra, Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, and Early Music Vancouver. In 2015, Ms. Allan made her Asian debut conducting Handel's *Messiah* and Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* in Japan, and in 2016, she was the recipient of the Sir Ernest MacMillan Prize in Choral Conducting.

Her compositions have been commissioned, performed and recorded by ensembles throughout the Americas and Europe and have been featured at two World Symposiums on Choral Music. Her music is published by Boosey and Hawkes, Oxford University Press, and Cypress Choral Music, and she is a MusicSpoke composer. Inspired by her Celtic roots and musical upbringing in Newfoundland and Labrador, her compositions often fuse contemporary rhythms and harmonies with undertones of ancient folk music. Also an accomplished soprano, she has appeared as a soloist with the National Broadcast Orchestra, Berkshire Choral Festival, and the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. In addition to freelancing regularly in Canada and the US, she has performed as a member of the Vancouver Chamber Choir, the Arnold Schoenberg Chor (Vienna), Skylark Vocal Ensemble (Atlanta), Clarion Choir (New York), and the Yale Schola Cantorum (New Haven).

As a passionate educator, she served as Visiting Professor of Conducting at Western University from 2019 to 2021, and now teaches conducting to undergraduate and graduate students and directs the Chamber Choir at the University of Toronto. She holds a degree in composition from the University of British Columbia and a master's degree in conducting from Yale University.



VLAD SOLOVIEV, COLLABORATIVE PIANIST ***MESSIAH CONTINUO***

Vlad Soloviev is a Hamilton-based pianist, conductor and operatic vocal coach.

As an operatic repetiteur, Vlad has worked at the Canadian Opera Company, Wolftrap Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Opera Arizona, Opera Sarasota, Highlands Opera Studio and University of Toronto Opera School and more.

As a conductor, Vlad has worked at Wolftrap Opera, Opera Arizona, Berlin Opera Academy, Mississauga Symphony Orchestra and Mississauga Festival Choir. As a concert pianist, Vlad has played at institutions like Carnegie Hall (New York), Salle Cortot (Paris), Bohemian National Hall (New York)

and more. As a collaborative pianist, Vlad has performed at institutions like Koerner Hall (Toronto), National Arts Center (Ottawa), Richard Bradshaw Amphitheater, the Kaufman Center (NYC), Toronto Summer Music Festival and more. Vlad has worked at institutions like the Eastman School of Music, Mannes College of Music, University of Toronto and the Glenn Gould School, performing over 200 recitals over the past ten years. As a vocal coach, Vlad helped singers prepare for successful auditions at institutions like the Paris Opera, Deutsche Oper, Metropolitan Opera, Merola, Santa Fe, Canadian Opera Company, Vancouver Opera, Opera de Montreal, and more.

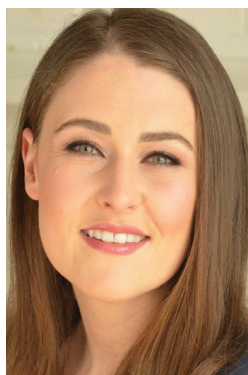


KRISTA RHODES ***MESSIAH ORGAN***

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 a guest artist for *Messiah*.

GUEST ARTISTS



CAITLIN WOOD

Alberta-born soprano Caitlin Wood won praise this season as the godlike **Controller** in Vancouver Opera's *Flight*, "effectively navigates the dizzyingly stratospheric vocal writing", and hailed as "delightfully expressive" in her debut as **Poppea** with Washington D.C.'s INSeries Opera.

Recent and upcoming concert appearances include *Messiah* with Vancouver Bach Choir, *Carmina Burana* with Ottawa Choral Society and Bach's *St. John Passion* with Regina Symphony Orchestra.

In Montreal, Caitlin performs in excerpts from the new opera *The Miss Chief Cycle*, based on Kent Monkman's painting and stars as **Susanna** with Manitoba Opera's 2026 production of *Le Nozze di Figaro*.



DANIEL CABENA

Daniel Cabena is a concert singer, recitalist, chamber musician, and singing actor. He is highly regarded in both Canada and Europe for performances of music from the medieval to the contemporary.

His Canadian concert engagements have included performances with the Victoria and Newfoundland Symphony Orchestras, the Ottawa Choral Society, the Vancouver Chamber Choir, the Grand Philharmonic Choir, the Elora Festival Singers, Spiritus Ensemble, Spiritus Chamber Choir, and Tafelmusik.

Highlights of his European work include performances with Musica Fiorita, Ensemble Diapsalma, Le Concert Spirituel, La Divina Armonia, Le Parlement de Musique, and Ensemble Gilles Binchois.

In 2025, Daniel starred in Soundstreams' acclaimed production of *The Garden of Vanished Pleasures* (McKevitt/ Livingston). Daniel premiered the role of **Lydie Anne** in *Les Feluettes*, with l'Opéra de Montréal, Pacific Opera Victoria, and Edmonton Opera.

Daniel participates with lyricist Luke Hathaway in ANIMA, which is a metamorphosing ensemble, a gathering place in art: a place of friendship, of sustaining story; a place where old texts and melodies are animated by spirit and voice.



ASITHA TENNEKOON

Praised by The Globe and Mail for "...his silky, emotional presence on stage – both vocally and dramatically...", Sri Lankan tenor Asitha Tennekoon has established himself as one of Canada's most versatile singing artists. In 2017 he received a Dora Award for his acclaimed portrayal of **Paul** in Tapestry Opera/Scottish Opera's *Rocking Horse Winner*. Asitha is sought after for repertoire ranging from Baroque to experimental.

This season, Asitha is the tenor soloist in *Messiah* (Grand Philharmonic Choir, Chorus Niagara) and continues to expand his reputation as an impressive interpreter of Bach's Evangelists, with guest performances in 2026 with Regina Symphony, (*St. John Passion*) and Cantatas with Toronto Bach Festival.

Asitha shared the stage with pianist Steven Philcox in "*Belonging*", a solo recital for Women's Musical Club of Toronto featuring works by Cusson, Vaughan Williams, Loren and Muhly and looks forward to singing Britten's *St. Nicolas Cantata* with Pax Christi Chorale.

Asitha has performed principal roles with Pacific Opera Victoria, Canadian Opera Company, Edmonton Opera, Opera de Montréal and Opera Lafayette. Recent highlights include **Bill** (*Flight*) with Vancouver Opera, **Peter Quint** (*Turn of the Screw*) with Opera 5, and **Devon** in *Missing: In Concert* with Toronto Summer Music Festival.

In 2026, Asitha returns to Pacific Opera Victoria as **Spoletto** in *Tosca*.



KORIN THOMAS-SMITH

Named one of CBC Music's *30 hot classical musicians under 30*, Canadian baritone Korin Thomas-Smith has been carving a place for himself in the North American music scene.

The 2025-2026 season sees debuts at The Dallas Opera, performing in *The Little Prince*, and at The Santa Fe Opera, performing as **Schaunard** in *La Bohème* and **Count Ceprano** in *Rigoletto*. A graduate of the Canadian Opera Company's Ensemble Studio program, Korin returns to Toronto, joining the COC to perform as **Mercutio** in Gounod's *Romeo et Juliette*, and making a debut with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Notable roles include **Doctor Malatesta** in *Don Pasquale*, **Argante** in *Rinaldo*, and **Wagner** in *Faust*. Korin is a graduate of Yale University and the University of Toronto.



CONCORDO ORCHESTRA

Concordo Orchestra is a flexibly-sized instrumental ensemble that specialises in accompanying choirs. Its musicians have a passion for choral-orchestral collaboration and choral music, having worked with most of the choirs of southern Ontario and beyond. Concordo tailors its forces to meet the needs of each choir and its repertoire, and can perform as either a modern-instrument orchestra or period-instrument orchestra. Concordo.ca

Violin 1

Valerie Sylvester
(concertmaster)
Alexis Brett
Charlene Nagel
Sarah Boyer
Anna Hughes

Violin 2

Elena Spanu
Valerie Selander
Rezan Onen-Lapointe
Erick Wawrzkiwicz

Viola

Sheila Smyth
Elspeth Thomson
Elizabeth Van't Voort

Cello

Felix Deak
Rebecca Morton

Bass

Shannon Paterson

Trumpet

Shawn Spicer
Scott Harrison

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Our Choral Family

Chorus Niagara

Chorus Niagara is 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.

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.

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.

Conductor Emeritus

We are honoured to share that Robert Cooper, our longtime Artistic Director, has been appointed Conductor Emeritus. In this new role, he will continue to lend his insight and support to Chorus Niagara, ensuring a meaningful continuity of leadership and artistry within the organization.

Chorus Niagara Children's Choir

Chorus Niagara Children's Choir encourages children in the Niagara Region 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

Nancy Boese
Teresa Cole
Thomasin Cooper**
Michelle Cumiskey
Renate Dau-Klaassen
Katalin Dekany
Emily Denney
Holly Dunning
Marlene Dykstra
Cindy Ellis
Laura Lynn Harry
Fiona Loughheed
Katie Mariz*
Annie Schulz
Michaela Scrimger
Jane Thomas Yager
Alison Thomson
Tianna Vanderhoeven*
Judy Willems

Rosemarie Arsenau
Allison Baker**
Deb Bergen
Gemma Bishop
Joan Campbell
Ava Cattran
Kristin Chow
Jamie Church
Beth Cooper
Trish Crawford
Julia D'Amico
Suzie Findlay
Micheline Hauber
Miriam Hauber
Laura Huh
Susan Lewis
Ruth MacVicar
Gillian Mazzetti
Patricia McKenzie
Joan Medina
Claudia Meyer
Nancy Moffett
Annie Montgomery
Gabriella Paquette
Mi-Hyang Park
Laurie Reimer
Maija Saari
Karen Toppila
Julianna Vanderline
Virginia Vickers
Debbie Vreken
Ruth Wiebe
Ursula Witkowska
Katie Zartman

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Charlie Dufton
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Daniel McColgan
Daryl Novak
Adrian Petry
Chris Sullivan
Hugh Thomson
Daniel Titone

Bass

Lydell Andree-Wiebe**
Jeff Baker
Dean Bonsma
Warren Booth
Gordon Froese
Hugh Gayler
Chuck Greenham
Jonathon Hauber
Peter Hauber
Dick Holden
Brian Mellen
John Pendergrast
Kavin Qiu
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Alto

Tenor

*Robert Cooper Choral Scholar

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 Sheila Petrie
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 Anne Schrompf
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We would like to thank all of our donors for their generous support and apologize if we have made any errors or omissions.

Please email Managing Director, Elise Naccarato, at chorusniagara100@gmail.com to notify us of any edits.

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MYSTICAL SONGS

Concert Sponsor, Josephine Henderson

SAT APRIL 25, 2026

7:30PM | PARTRIDGE HALL

CN NEWS



We are pleased to officially welcome **Yuan Chen** to the CN team as our Associate Conductor for the 2025/2026 season! Yuan is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts in Choral Conducting at the University of Toronto and brings a wealth of knowledge to the singers of Chorus Niagara. Welcome, Yuan!

We are pleased to announce **Tianna Vanderhoeven** as the Theresa Pothier Vocal Scholarship recipient for the 2025/2026 season. She is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Music in Performance at Brock University. Join us in congratulating Tianna!



Save the date for CNCC's spring concert!

**Wednesday, May 6, 2026
6:30PM
Calvary Church | 89 Scott St.**

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