

DAVIDSON COLLEGE CHOIRS

# Handel's *Messiah*

NOVEMBER 24, 2014

*A performance of the complete oratorio*

## *Authentic performance features baroque instrumentation*

For the first time in Davidson's history, the Davidson College Choirs join forces with the North Carolina Baroque Orchestra, Lake Norman Choral Artists, and guest soloists to perform the oratorio that is beloved by generations. Davidson College Choirs are enjoying learning the work with a fresh take on its performance. Baroque vocal styling is based largely upon the way that baroque instruments, particularly the strings, sound when played. Not only does the choir have to take into account the clear, flexible, and articulate execution required of their tuning and phrasing, but they also have to take into consideration that baroque instruments play at A=415 pitch—almost a half step lower than the modern A=440 pitch to which singers are accustomed. This presents somewhat of a challenge for choristers who have worked the many florid *Messiah* passages into their voices at modern pitch.

Guest professional soloists who specialize in renaissance and baroque performance practice will demonstrate the exquisite, expressive, and clarion vocal tones typical of the style. Arias and recitatives including "Comfort Ye, My

People," "Rejoice Greatly," "O Thou that Tellest Good Tidings to Zion," and "But Who May Abide" have become staples of the holiday season, and will be among the evening highlights.

Artistic Director and conductor, Dr. Christopher Gilliam says of the event, "This performance will certainly be a highlight in my conducting career. Not only will it be my first time conducting the *complete* oratorio, it will be an honor to direct the talented and unique forces assembled for the occasion. We feel it is sure to be an inspiring and elegant evening of great music. The singers and players are excited, and so am I!"

Handel's *Messiah* will be performed on the Davidson College Campus in the Duke Family Performance Hall at 7:30 PM on Monday, November 24<sup>th</sup>. Tickets can be purchased for the *Messiah* event alone, or can be bundled with the annual **Holiday Gala**. Individual tickets or the "Holiday Package" can be purchased online at the below web address. Don't miss this unique performance featuring local and national professional artists!

<http://www.davidson.edu/the-arts/ticket-office>

## The Musicians

### Choral Arts Society & Davidson Singers

Davidson College students, faculty, staff, alumni, and members of the Lake Norman community rehearse every Monday evening from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM in Sloan Music Center on the Davidson College Campus. Recent performances include the Duruflé *Requiem*, Brahms *Requiem*, and many more!

[www.davidson.edu/the-arts/music/choral-arts](http://www.davidson.edu/the-arts/music/choral-arts)

### Lake Norman Choral Artists

A new and vibrant vocal chamber group of experienced professionals who hail from Charlotte, Huntersville, Cornelius, Davidson, and Mooresville, this elite choral ensemble specializes in new and traditional choral works from the classical repertoire. The ensemble is under the artistic direction of Christopher Gilliam.

[www.lakenormanchoralartists.com](http://www.lakenormanchoralartists.com)

### North Carolina Baroque Orchestra

Begun as entertainment for the birthday party of cellist and co-founder Barbara Blaker Krumdieck, the NCBO is quickly becoming a well-established, powerful artistic force on the early music scene. They frequently perform throughout the Carolinas and are anticipating the release of their first CD. The ensemble is under the direction of Frances Blaker.

[www.facebook.com/ncbaroqueorchestra](http://www.facebook.com/ncbaroqueorchestra)

### Christopher Gilliam, director

Dr. Gilliam is in his third year as Director of Choral Activities at Davidson College, where he conducts the premier choral ensemble at Davidson, the Chorale, in addition to Collegium Musicum, Davidson Singers, and the Choral Arts Society. He received his master's and doctoral degrees in Choral Conducting and Vocal Performance under mentors Simon Carrington and John Stephens. He is active as a performer on both the podium and the stage, and his compositions can be found in the catalogues of three publishers.

[www.christophergilliam.com](http://www.christophergilliam.com)



## Margaret Carpenter, soprano

A doctoral candidate in early music at Case Western Reserve University and former Gates Cambridge Scholar at Clare College, Cambridge, Carpenter has coloratura that has been described as “agile and expressive,” and “executed to perfection.” She is no stranger to Davidson or the Choral Arts Society, and it is our joy to welcome her back to campus!

[www.margaretcarpenter.org](http://www.margaretcarpenter.org)



## Charles Humphries, countertenor

Described as “one of the finest of the young generation of countertenors,” British native Humphries is known for his intelligent interpretation of renaissance and baroque music and has been one of the most sought after countertenors for the past twenty-five years.

[www.charleshumphries.me](http://www.charleshumphries.me)



## Daniel Stein, tenor

With a voice described as “ringing, warm, and flexible,” Stein has distinguished himself as a highly sought after recitalist, concert artist, and opera singer. He has recently appeared with symphonies and companies in Charlotte, Winston Salem, and Portland (ME), and in such notable venues as Carnegie Hall. Dan also serves on the voice faculty at Winthrop University. [www.danielcstein.com](http://www.danielcstein.com)



## Jeff McEvoy, baritone

Dr. McEvoy is the Director of Opera studies and Assistant Professor of Voice at Winthrop University. He has sung professionally with Opera Boston, Kansas City Lyric Opera, and Lake George Opera, and he is on the music faculty at the Seagle Music Colony in Schroon Lake, NY as a stage director. He is a former district winner and regional finalist for the Met Opera National Auditions. [www.jeffreymcevoy.com](http://www.jeffreymcevoy.com)





## What you should know about the performance:

- ❖ Our complete *Messiah* performance is the first collaboration between Davidson College Choirs and the North Carolina Baroque Orchestra.
- ❖ This is the first time that Davidson College has performed the *Messiah* in its entirety.
- ❖ The work is about 3 hours in length with one intermission.
- ❖ The chorus is made up of over 100 singers—made up of Davidson College students, faculty, staff, and community members.
- ❖ We invite you to dress up for the occasion, or simply “come as you are.”
- ❖ Considering the length of the program, we invite you to take a break whenever you feel the need. Please be considerate of the other audience members if you have to leave and return, and try to time your movement between selections.
- ❖ Tickets (including a “Holiday Package” option that includes our Holiday Gala event 12/1-2) can be purchased online.
- ❖ Visit the Davidson College Music Department webpage to learn more about the Choirs, Symphony Orchestra, Jazz Band, Concert Series, and more!

<http://www.davidson.edu/academics/music>



## At the 20 minute intermission...

The intermission will feature free\* refreshments!



\*Cash bar also available



# *Nota Bene: An Enduring Tradition*

“And from that time to the present, this great work has been heard in all parts of the kingdom with increasing reverence and delight; it has fed the hungry, clothed the naked, fostered the orphan, and enriched succeeding managers of the Oratorios, more than any single production in this or any country.” – Charles Burney, *A Sketch of the Life of Handel*, 1785.

With these words, English music historian Charles Burney expressed the popularity that Handel’s *Messiah* had enjoyed in the four decades since its premiere in 1742. His testimony of the artistic and financial success of *Messiah* also acknowledged the oratorio’s religious significance. His characterization of *Messiah*’s reception as with “reverence and delight” underscores the dual nature of the oratorio as a work of religious edification and artistic entertainment.

More than two centuries later, *Messiah* retains this dual existence, reaching a level of popularity and public exposure attained by few works of art. Perhaps to Burney’s words we must now mention the oratorio’s canonization into the soundscape of the Christmas season. For many institutions, a performance of *Messiah* is an annual holiday event, whether performed professionally or as a “sing-along.” Such enterprises attest to the work’s broad appeal and familiarity among modern audiences. Some performances present the work in its entirety, either with massive choirs and modern orchestras or with period instruments and historical sensibilities. Others truncate the oratorio, often concluding after Part I providing for roughly an hour’s worth of music and concluding the story with the birth of Christ. Such performances allow the work to fit within the theme of a December holiday concert, which has undoubtedly been a significant reason for the work’s perceived association with

the Christmas season. But there is more to the story and more to the score. Davidson College’s performance of *Messiah* is an opportunity to experience the entire story and its musical setting.

Keeping a monumental work like *Messiah* fresh for audiences and performers alike has been an important endeavor for artists and impresarios. To that end, *Messiah* has a long history of creative interpretations and revisions. By the end of the 18th century, the number of vocal performers began to increase; by the mid 19th century, large festival performances of *Messiah* involved more than a thousand singers. Vocal forces, however, were not the only augmentations to *Messiah*. Handel himself provided “strengthening” parts for additional winds, and records indicate the addition of horns later in the 18th century. Of particular interest is a 1789 performance led by Mozart in Vienna with a German translation of the libretto. Mozart revised parts for some of the instruments in Handel’s original orchestration and added new parts for clarinets, horns, and trombones, which were integral to the “classical” orchestra of the late 18th century. Mozart even took the liberty to completely rewrite some of the movements which he found unsatisfactory.

A late-20th century effort to refresh *Messiah* has been through the use of period instruments and historical performance practice. Although a complete performance of *Messiah* is not an uncommon event, the opportunity to hear a live performance on period instruments with performers trained in the appropriate style is rare. In this manner, Davidson stands in a long history of performers engaging with a timeless work in the search for what the masterpiece still has to offer after so many years. –ACP

DAVIDSON COLLEGE CHOIRS

FALL 2014

# Holiday Gala!

Join the Davidson College Choirs, Symphony Orchestra, Jazz Band and guests Young Voices of the Carolinas, Dance Davidson, Davidson Community Players, and WDAV's own Frank Dominguez as we ring in the holiday season with new and traditional holiday favorites—singing, dancing, and theatre all packed in one family-friendly evening that is sure to delight!

December 1 & 2, 7:30 PM – Duke Family Performance Hall



## Davidson College Choirs

Sloan Music Center

Box 7131

Davidson, North Carolina 28035-7131

Friends and Supporters of the  
Davidson College Music Department