

PRESS RELEASE

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THE SANTA FE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA & CHORUS
PRESENTS A MUSICAL FEAST

Handel's Messiah

Featuring the Santa Fe Symphony Orchestra & Chorus,
Choral Director Linda Raney & Guest Conductor Tom Hall

With Acclaimed Guest Soloists:

**Martha Guth, *soprano*, Katherine Drago, *mezzo-soprano*
Jorge Prego, *tenor* & Stephen Morscheck, *bass-baritone***

Don't miss the Santa Fe Symphony's acclaimed annual performance of Handel's *Messiah*, which will take place on Sunday, November 21, 2010 at the beautiful Lensic Performing Arts Center. This year, this astounding concert will feature the full Symphony Orchestra & Chorus, with Guest Conductor Tom Hall, Choral Director Linda Raney, and acclaimed renowned soloists: Martha Guth, *soprano*, Katherine Drago, *mezzo-soprano*, Jorge Prego, *tenor*, and Stephen Morscheck, *bass-baritone*. Concert is sponsored-in-part by First National Bank.

Sunday, November 21st at 4:00 p.m.

AT THE LENSIC-SANTA FE'S PERFORMING ARTS CENTER



Handel's Messiah was originally associated with Easter, not Christmas, in the Christian tradition. Oddly enough for a work that has become so much a part of the Christian tradition, during Handel's time, the theater and Handel's music were still perceived by many ecclesiastics as profane and subversive. Thus, *Messiah* was first performed in the spring of 1742 in Dublin, Ireland, under the title "A Sacred Oratorio" to avoid any hint of accusations of blasphemy. Ultimately, Handel's marriage of the sacred texts of the Christian Old and New Testaments with the drama and presence of opera has resulted in a universal appeal that has lasted for generations and is felt by many to transcend any religious domination. Just as the Dublin performance of *Messiah* was for charity, Handel placed the work at the service of the Foundling Hospital in London and conducted annual charity performances from 1750 until his final year. *Messiah* became enormously successful. Handel lived for another 17 years and led many performances of this great work, conducting the last one only eight days before his death. Besides the greatness of the music, the 18th Century music historian Charles Burney wrote that *Messiah* "fed the hungry, clothed the naked, [and] fostered the orphan." Musically, the first of the three sections of *Messiah* celebrates the birth of Christ; the second covers the Passion and its redemptive significance, culminating in the exultant Hallelujah Chorus; and the third is an affirmation of faith from quiet musings to dramatic vision. The score to *Messiah* was not published in Handel's lifetime, and there is no single version of the work that can be

regarded as “definitive.” In Handel’s own performances, individual numbers were sometimes dropped, sometimes reinstated, sometimes shifted to different positions in the sequence, and sometimes reassigned from one voice to another. While *Messiah* may not be ranked as Handel’s greatest oratorios, it is the most beloved of all his works in any form, as well as the most beloved work of its genre from any period. It was primarily as the composer of *Messiah* that Handel was enshrined in Westminster Abbey.

Martha Guth, Soprano has emerged onto the international classical music scene as a finely developed and persuasive artist. Acclaimed for her “intuitive sensitivity” (*Montreal Gazette*), and “thrilling top range, rare breath control and an awesome legato” (*Globe and Mail*), Martha has performed in all genres of the vocal repertoire, spanning the centuries from Baroque to present day. Ms. Guth was born in Canada and currently lives and works in New York City. The young soprano had an impressive beginning to her career, singing under the batons of world renowned conductors such as maestros Seiji Ozawa, Helmut Rilling, Robert Spano, and Richard Bradshaw. On the concert stage, Martha has sung with the Bach Akademie Orchestra, The Toronto Symphony Orchestra, The Toronto Philharmonia, the Santa Fe Symphony, the Hamilton Symphony, the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra, and the Calgary Philharmonic. She has been recorded live by the BBC in London, and many times for the CBC radio/ radio Canada and CBC Television.

Martha is particularly interested in recital repertoire, and it is in song and chamber music that her polished craft and collaborative spirit shines. Martha won the coveted first prize at the 2007 Wigmore Hall International Song Competition in London, U.K. As a result of the win, Martha began her recital engagements at the legendary Hall with Graham Johnson at the piano. Other engagements include singing the Countess in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* at Opera Lyra, Ottawa and Norina in *Don Pasquale* with Houston's Opera in the Heights. She gave a recital in New Orleans at the art gallery, and at Trinity Church on Wall Street in NYC, both with Pianist Spencer Myer. She also appeared with the Santa Fe Symphony as soprano soloist in Beethoven’s *Ah, Perfido*. This season, she will perform Norina in *Don Pasquale* with the Toronto Philharmonia and appear as soprano soloist for Handel’s *Messiah* with the Santa Fe Symphony.

Katherine Drago, Mezzo-Soprano is a third-year Resident Artist at Pittsburgh Opera where she most recently sang Meg Page in *Falstaff* and covered the role of Olga in *Eugene Onegin*. In past seasons, she appeared as Kate Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*, the Stewardess in *Flight*, Romeo in the Student Matinee performance of *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, and Zulma in *L’Italiana in Algeri* all with Pittsburgh Opera. Ms. Drago debuted in the role of Ottavia in *The Coronation of Poppea* with Opera Vivente, covered Ma Joad in *The Grapes of Wrath*, and was featured in an evening of music by Ricky Ian Gordon with the composer at the piano with Pittsburgh Opera. She spent the summer of 2008 as an Apprentice Artist with the Santa Fe Opera, appearing in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Falstaff*, and the American premiere of *Adriana Mater*, as well as Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* in the apprentice scenes program. In the summer of 2009, she returned to the Santa Fe Opera to cover Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* and performed La Périchole in *La Périchole* in the apprentice scenes program. Ms. Drago stepped into the role of Zerlina for the final three performances of *Don Giovanni*. A native of Chicago, Drago holds degrees from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and Northwestern University.

In addition to the Chicago Opera Theater and Santa Fe Opera, Ms. Drago has been a young artist with Berkshire Opera, The Lake Placid Institute, and Intermezzo Opera. She has also sung in the choruses of Lyric Opera Chicago and Cincinnati Opera. She is the recipient of awards from the National Association of Teachers of Singing, the Bel Canto Foundation, The Nadia and Lili Boulanger Foundation, the Donald S. Graham Memorial Award from The Santa Fe Opera, and the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions.

Jorge Prego, Tenor is a graduate in piano from Hartt School of Music. He won 2nd Prize at the 2008 *Heida Hermanns International Competition*. During the COT Spring 2009 Festival Season he covered Don José in *La Tragédie de Carmen* and last summer, as a member of the Santa Fe Opera Apprentice Program, he covered Alfredo and sang Giuseppe in Verdi's *La Traviata*. He also sang at the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival in an all Bach Cantatas program. He has been invited to participate in the final round of the auditions for the Ryan Opera Center of the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Mr. Prego's recent engagements included Mozart in Rimsky Korsakoff's *Mozart and Salieri*, Ruggero in Puccini's *La Rondine*, both at CCPA, as well as his professional debut next spring 2010 with COT, where he sang Aronne in Rossini's *Mosè in Egitto*.

Stephen Morscheck, bass-baritone graduated from Wheaton College and completed advanced degrees from the University of Michigan. In 1995, he was awarded the "Richard Tucker Career Grant." He is widely respected for the dignity he brings in concert and opera performances.

Past engagements include Basilio in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* with L'Opera de Montreal, Leporello in *Don Giovanni* with Opera Carolina, Figaro in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with Atlanta Opera, *St. Matthew Passion* with the L'Ensemble Orchestral de Paris, Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Arizona Opera, Handel's *Messiah* with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and Duke Chapel Choir, and soloist in the Atlanta Operagala. In addition, he performed Rocco in *Fidelio* at Opera Company of Philadelphia, Bartolo in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with Dallas Opera, Alidoro in *La Cenerentola* with Orlando Opera, Beethoven's 9th *Symphony* with the National Symphony Orchestra in Santo Domingo, the title role in *Hercules* with Music of the Baroque, and Le Chiffonnier in *Louise* in a return to the Spoleto Festival USA, where he previously performed John Adams in *Amistad* during the summer 2008.

During the 2009-2010 season and beyond, engagements include Sparafucile in *Rigoletto* at the Florentine Opera, Don Alphonso in *Cosi Fan Tutte* with Arizona Opera, Capulet in *Roméo et Juliette* at the Dallas Opera, Kecal in Smetana's *Prodaná nevěsta (The Bartered Bride)* in Czech at the University of North Texas, Mozart's *Requiem* with Music of the Baroque, Handel's *Messiah* with the Dallas Bach Society, Verdi's *Requiem* with the University of North Texas, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with the Choral Society of Durham, and Bach's *B Minor Mass* with the National Symphony Orchestra of Costa Rica in San Jose.

Tom Hall, Guest Conductor was appointed Music Director to the Baltimore Choral Arts Society in 1982. He has added more than 100 new works to the BCAS repertoire, and he has premiered pieces of work by contemporary composers including Peter Schickele, Libby Larsen, Robert Sirota, and many other internationally acclaimed composers.

Mr. Hall is active as a guest conductor in the United States and in Europe, including appearances with the Handel and Haydn Society in Boston, the Berkshire Choral Festival, Musica Sacra in New York, and Britten Sinfonia in Canterbury, England. Mr. Hall has prepared choruses for Leonard Bernstein, Robert Shaw, Thomas Dunn, and others, and he served for ten years as the Chorus Master of the Baltimore Opera Company.

As President of Chorus America, Tom Hall has served as a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts, and he has been an Artist in Residence at Indiana University, the University of Cincinnati, Temple University, and Syracuse University. He has been the Director of Choral Activities at Goucher College for 26 years, and has also taught at the Peabody Conservatory, the University of Baltimore, Towson University, Morgan State University, and the Johns Hopkins University.