

Handel's 'Messiah' Ushers in the Season

Written by Connie Brotzman
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Beaufort music lovers can usher in the Christmas holidays with a performance of Handel's Messiah at USCB Center for the Arts on Sunday afternoon, Nov. 24. Under the direction of Charles Frost, Minister of Music for Sea Island Presbyterian Church, the Sea Island Beaufort Chamber Singers will sing Part One of Messiah's three-part oratorio, and the "Hallelujah!" chorus from Part Two.

Popular "Christmas" part and then the blazing "Hallelujah!"

The popular Part One is sometimes called the "Christmas" portion of the composition because it begins with the prophets' predictions of the coming of Christ and the annunciation of his birth to the shepherds. The "Hallelujah!" chorus at the end of Part Two is a joyfully blazing statement of God's glory and one of the most well-known and loved musical pieces from the baroque period. Soloists featured in Part One include, Tenor Alan Lathan, Director of Low Country Chorale; Soprano Jordan Norris, Director of Beaufort High School Voices and BHS music teacher; Soprano Lynda McLain, Lady's Island Elementary School Arts/Music/Drama teacher; and Alto Katie McAllister, professional singer with opera background and new to Beaufort from Dallas, TX.

Oratorios are very dramatic sacred operas

An oratorio is a sacred opera divided into sections, called "parts." Each part is further divided by compositions for orchestra, choir and soloists performing individually and in combination. It is not performed like a traditional opera with the singers addressing each other, but rather, the singers address the audience throughout the performance. Handel wrote a total of sixteen

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oratorios during his lifetime, some more sacred in content than others.

Messiah an intensely emotional and spiritual experience

Handel wrote his iconic masterpiece in the fall of 1741, and set the scriptural text assembled by librettist Charles Jennens to the music during that winter. The first performance of the work was in April, 1742. It is said that Handel was able to write the music for Messiah in the span of only 24 days because he was caught up in the fervor of "divine inspiration" and, as he wrote the "Hallelujah!" chorus, he "saw heaven before him." There is no denying that the Messiah has been an intensely emotional and spiritual experience for both singers and audiences alike, all the way back to King George II of England, who was one of its most fervent admirers. That we still can feel the power and the glory of this masterpiece written over 270 years ago is testament to Handel's skill as a great master of the musical theatre and the inspiration and deep-felt passion he was able to set to the music we continue to love to this day.

Tickets online, all seats assigned

So leave the stress of the world behind and join friends and family to experience a musical afternoon that will definitely put you in a holiday mood. The performance begins at 4:00 p.m. at USCB Center for the Arts, 801 Carteret St, in downtown Beaufort. Tickets, Adults \$25-20; Seniors \$18-15 and Students \$15-10, and available online at uscbcenterforthearts.com or call the Box Office at 843-521-4145. All seats assigned. Tickets also available at the door one hour prior to curtain.