ARTISTS
Handel and Haydn Society
Harry Christophers, artistic director and conductor
Period Instrument Orchestra and Chorus

PROGRAM
George Frideric Handel: Coronation Anthem No. 1, Zadok the Priest

Antonio Vivaldi: Concerto for Two Violins in A Minor, op. 3, no. 8
Allegro
Larghetto e spiritooso
Allegro
Aisslinn Nosky, leader and violin
Susanna Ogata, violin

Antonio Vivaldi: “Summer” from The Four Seasons
Allegro ma non molto
Adagio
Presto
Aisslinn Nosky, leader and violin

George Frideric Handel: Coronation Anthem No. 3, The King Shall Rejoice

INTERMISSION
Johann Sebastian Bach: Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied, BWV 225

George Frideric Handel: Part the Third from Messiah
Margot Rood, soprano
Emily Marvosh, contralto
Stefan Reed, tenor
David McFerrin, bass

PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE. Please be considerate of others and turn off all phones, pagers, and watch alarms, and unwrap all lozenges prior to the performance. Photography and recording of any kind are not permitted. Thank you.
YEARS IN THE MAKING

On December 25, 1815, at 6:00 pm, the Handel and Haydn Society opened its inaugural concert at King’s Chapel with Part 1 from The Creation by Haydn. Selections from oratorios by George Frideric Handel (1685–1759) interspersed with English anthems completed the three-hour concert. The music for today’s concert, which features one of H+H’s namesake composers, celebrates some of the composers and works from the ensemble’s 200-year history of continuous performances.

The Handel and Haydn Society was founded about nine months prior to its first concert when seven men met in Boston to discuss the feasibility of forming a new singing society. The founders acted quickly, and by the end of April, a constitution outlining the organization’s goal of “improving the style of performing sacred music, and introducing into more general use the works of Handel and Haydn and other eminent composers” was approved by the original members. Membership was open to any man with “a good singing voice.” Women sang in the chorus from the first days of the Handel and Haydn Society; however, they officially participated only as invited guests until 1967, the first year women were accepted as members.

Throughout 1815, H+H grew steadily. For the first concert, there were 100 singers (90 men and 10 women), accompanied by an orchestra of 13 and performing for an audience of about 1,000. Demand for tickets was high, and a Boston newspaper hoped the concert would be “immediately announced for repetition.” The second concert was soon scheduled for the following January.

Portions of Handel’s Messiah were performed at the first H+H concert, including the “Hallelujah” chorus as the final work. In 1818, H+H presented the first complete performance of Messiah in America. Although initially performed throughout the concert season, which generally lasted from November or December to May or June, since 1854, H+H has performed Messiah annually in December.

Handel’s Coronation Anthem No. 1, Zadok the Priest, was published in conjunction with H+H in 1819. Two sets of text were provided for Handel’s anthem; the first was the text which Handel set and the second was a Christmas text by Rev. Dr. Gardiner, from Boston’s Trinity Church.

Handel composed four anthems to be sung at the October 1727 coronation of King George II and Queen Caroline. Zadok the Priest, the story of which has been part of English coronations since 973, was sung at the anointing ceremony. Handel crafts a powerful and lasting effect with the clarity of his choral and orchestral writing; it is no wonder that this anthem has been sung at every English coronation since 1727.

The third anthem, The King Shall Rejoice, was sung at the crowning and equals the first anthem in its feeling of joy balanced with reflection. The cascading lines on the word blessings sound exuberant; these are matched by the steadiness and stability of the entrances of each individual part. The blessings are, in effect, the result of the fundamental, underlying musical order.

For H+H, the mid-19th century was a time of expansion not only in the size of the organization (membership reached an all-time high of some 700 singers) but also in terms of the repertoire performed. American premieres of Handel oratorios were given, including Samson in 1845 and Jephtha in 1867. Boston premieres included Mendelssohn’s Elijah in 1848, Mozart’s Requiem in 1857, Handel’s Israel in Egypt in 1859, and Verdi’s Requiem in 1878.

H+H first performed music by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) as part of its 50th Anniversary Festival in 1865, and Bach’s music, such as the American premiere of the complete St. Matthew Passion in 1879, has remained a distinctive part of H+H’s history. In today’s performance of his motet Singet dem Herrn ein neues Liede, BWV 225, we will hear double chorus with strings, an ensemble Bach used in motet performances. Bach’s position in Leipzig required that he provide music for special occasions; however, no specific occasion has been definitively associated with this motet, composed between 1726 and 1727.

Bach sets the opening text rather delicately, with bell-like articulations that begin in the upper voices but are eventually heard in all the voice parts. Next, he overlaps and weaves two texts, one a hymn and the other a response. Not surprisingly, Bach sets the final text to a magnificent fugue. Interestingly, when Mozart heard this motet during a visit to St. Thomas Church in 1789, he is said to have exclaimed, “Now there is something one can learn from!”

Beginning in the 1880s, the instrumental and vocal music of Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) became a welcomed addition to H+H concerts. Today’s concert includes the Concerto for Two Violins in A minor, op. 3, no. 8, which is followed by “Summer” from The Four Seasons.

Vivaldi titled his highly successful Op. 3 collection of concertos L’estro armonico. Sometimes rendered as The Musical Fantasy or The Harmonic Whim, these translations attempt to convey the effect of Vivaldi’s concertos in which a pattern is first established and then altered with unexpected twists and turns, such as in the solo passages of the outer movements. These are balanced with sections for the larger ensemble, the ritornelli, which are a stabilizing but never a staid force.

One of the most recognized compositions by Vivaldi, The Four Seasons (Le quattro stagioni) was published in 1725 as part of a larger collection of 12 solo concertos. Each concerto has a corresponding sonnet that describes a scene associated with that season;
even the performing score is marked with letters that correspond to lines in the sonnets to create a one-to-one correspondence between the poems and the music.

When the Handel and Haydn Society was founded in 1815, Haydn’s music was new or contemporary and Handel represented the traditions on which choral music was based. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, H+H concerts regularly programmed the music of past masters and contemporary composers. In the late 20th century, H+H adopted a historically informed performance practice, renewing its mission to perform “the works of Handel and Haydn and other eminent composers.”

—Notes by Teresa M. Neff, H+H Historically Informed Performance Fellow

HANDEL AND HAYDN SOCIETY
For 200 years, the Handel and Haydn Society has enriched life and influenced culture by bringing vocal and instrumental music to America. Founded in Boston in 1815, H+H is considered the oldest continuously performing arts organization in the United States and is celebrating its bicentennial with special concerts and initiatives to mark two centuries of music making. Under the leadership of artistic director Harry Christophers, H+H performs at the highest level of excellence and also provides engaging, accessible, and broadly inclusive music education in greater Boston and beyond.

H+H’s Period Instrument Orchestra and Chorus are internationally recognized for historically informed performances of Baroque and classical music that use instruments and artistic techniques from the time period in which the music was written. H+H presents a nine-program subscription series at Boston’s Symphony Hall, New England Conservatory’s Jordan Hall, and Sanders Theatre, reaching nearly 3,000 subscribers and more than 18,000 single-ticket attendees each year. Listeners can also hear H+H on 99.5 WCRB, National Public Radio, and American Public Media broadcasts, and the organization maintains an active touring schedule that includes performances this season in California, Montreal, and Washington, D.C.

In 1985, H+H established the Karen S. and George D. Levy Education Program and now reaches more than 10,000 children each year through public school visits, chorus partnerships, in-school music instruction, and a Vocal Arts Program that includes five youth choruses. H+H also maintains partnerships with higher-education institutions such as the New England Conservatory, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Massachusetts College of Art and Design, giving college students opportunities to learn about and develop mastery in Baroque and classical music. The Heartstrings program gives free concert tickets to children and adults who cannot otherwise attend performances, and H+H presents free concerts and lectures at local libraries, community centers, and museums.

HARRY CHRISTOPHERS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
The 2015–16 bicentennial season marks Harry Christophers’ seventh as artistic director of the Handel and Haydn Society. Since his appointment in 2009, Mr. Christophers and H+H have embarked on an ambitious artistic journey toward the organization’s 2015 bicentennial with a showcase of works premiered in the United States by H+H since 1815, broad education programming, community outreach activities and partnerships, and the release of a series of recordings on the Coro label.

Mr. Christophers is known internationally as the founder and conductor of the U.K.-based choir and period-instrument ensemble the Sixteen. He has directed the Sixteen throughout Europe, America, Australia, and the Far East, gaining a distinguished reputation for his work in Renaissance, Baroque, and 20th- and 21st-century music. In 2000, he instituted The Choral Pilgrimage, a tour of British cathedrals from York to Canterbury.

He has recorded more than 120 titles for which he has won numerous awards, including the coveted Gramophone Award for Early Music and the prestigious Classical Brit Award in 2005 for his disc Renaissance. His CD Ikon was nominated for a 2007 Grammy, and his second recording of Handel’s Messiah on the Sixteen’s own label, Coro, won the prestigious MIDEM Classical Award in 2009. In 2009, he also received one of classical music’s highest accolades, recognition as the Classic FM Gramophone Awards Artist of the Year, and the Sixteen won the Baroque Vocal award for Handel Coronation Anthems, a CD that also received a 2010 Grammy Award nomination, as did Palestrina, Volume 3 in 2014. Since 2007, he has been featured with the Sixteen in the highly successful BBC television series Sacred Music, presented by actor Simon Russell Beale. The latest hour-long program, devoted to Claudio Monteverdi’s Vespers of 1610, will be screened in 2015.

Mr. Christophers is principal guest conductor of the Granada Symphony Orchestra and a regular guest conductor with the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields. In October 2008, Mr. Christophers was awarded an honorary degree of doctor of music from the University of Leicester. He is an honorary fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and also of the Royal Welsh Academy for Music and Drama, and he was appointed as a Commander of the Order of the British Empire at the 2012 Queen’s Birthday Honors.