

HANDEL'S MESSIAH: "THE GREAT STORY EVER TOLD..."

Jacksonville, FL (December 6, 2017) --- The annual performance of George Frideric Handel's *Messiah* will take place on December 16 & 17 and is a part of the Jacksonville Symphony Special Presentations. The concerts will feature four guest artists and the Jacksonville Symphony Chorus.

WHO: Jacksonville Symphony Associate Conductor **Nathan Aspinall** will lead both performances of *Messiah*. Recent performances of Aspinall's have included Handel's *Messiah*, Prokofiev's *Cinderella* and a special event concert with organist Cameron Carpenter. Formerly, he held the position of young conductor with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra where he assisted Chief Conductor Johannes Fritzsich and visiting guest conductors and conducted concerts for the education series. Aspinall studied French horn and Conducting at the University of Queensland and upon graduation was awarded the Hugh Brandon Prize.

The Jacksonville Symphony Chorus, under the direction of **Donald McCullough**, is an all-volunteer group of individuals from all walks of life who have a love of singing choral music. The 100 members must audition to participate.

In 2014 the Chorus traveled to New York City for perform under McCullough's direction in the Lincoln Center premiere of his cantata *In the Shadow of the Holocaust*. This season the chorus will participate in several performances including Faure's *Requiem*, Holiday Pops and the final Masterworks performance *Twilight of the Gods*.

GUEST ARTISTS: Joining the Symphony and the Chorus will be four guest vocalists.

American soprano **Emily Birsan** is a critically acclaimed recitalist and well known for her prominent interpretations of concert and operatic repertoire. In the 2016-2017 season, Birsan made role debuts as Juliette in Gounod's *Romeo et Juliette* with Madison Opera, Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Boston Lyric Opera and Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* with Florentine Opera.

American mezzo-soprano **Amanda Crider** is quickly gaining recognition for her extraordinary musicality and assured dramatic presence. In the 2016-2017 season, she made her debut with Boston Lyric Opera as Doreen in *Gree*, joined Apollo's Fire for Handel's *Messiah* and the Southwest Michigan Symphony for Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

Opera News praises tenor **Jason Ferrante** for "singing up a stylish storm" and for getting "the gold star for trills." In the 2017-2018 season, Ferrante creates the role of Little Victor Farrell in the world premiere of Kevin Puts and Mark Campbell's *Elizabeth Cree* with Opera Philadelphia.

Hailed by *Opera News* for his "rich, resonant baritone" **Craig Irvin** brings a vibrant sound and commitment to character to each role he portrays. Last season saw the revival of his Lt. Horstmayer in *Silent Night* for Atlanta Opera, his role debut as *Macbeth* with LoftOpera and Escamillo in *Carmen* with Fort Worth Opera.

WHAT: Handel's *Messiah* is thought to be "the greatest story ever told... the most majestic music ever conceived." The Jacksonville Symphony and Symphony Chorus present music's most powerful message of faith in *THE Messiah* of the season.

WHEN:

- Saturday, December 16 at 8:00pm
- Sunday, December 17 at 3:00pm
- (The Jacksonville Symphony's First Coast Nutcracker will be going on the same weekend)

WHERE: All performances will take place in the Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts in Jacoby Symphony Hall.

SPONSORS: Handel's *Messiah* is sponsored by Drummond Press.

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The Jacksonville Symphony is North Florida's leading music nonprofit offering live performances at Jacoby Hall in the Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts and other venues throughout the area. In addition, the Symphony provides music instruction for youth and operates the Jacksonville Symphony Youth Orchestra. For more information about the Symphony, visit JaxSymphony.org, like them at facebook.com/JaxSymphony, follow them on @jaxsymphony, on Instagram at JaxSymphony and on YouTube at JacksonvilleSymphony.