

Handel's Jephtha



Ad Astra Music Festival

July 15 ~ 31, 2016

Russell, Kansas

This concert is underwritten by an anonymous donor.

Handel's Jephtha



Trinity United Methodist Church
Saturday, July 30 | 7:30pm

Program

Jephtha, HWV 70

George Frideric Handel
(1685-1759)

1. Overture
2. Menuet
3. It must be so
4. Pour forth no more
5. No more to Ammon's god and king
6. Virtue my soul shall still embrace
7. In gentle murmurs
8. If, Lord, sustain'd by thy alright pow'r
9. O God, behold our sore distress
10. Scenes of horror
11. The smiling dawn of happy days
12. When his loud voice
13. His mighty arm
14. In glory high

————— Intermission —————

15. Welcome, as the cheerful light
16. Open thy marble jaws
17. First perish thou
18. On me, let blind mistaken zeal
19. Spare my child!
20. For joys so vast
21. Deeper and deeper still
22. How dark, O Lord, are thy decrees
23. Hide thou thy hated beams
24. Waft her, angels
25. Farewell, ye limpid springs and floods

Libretto by Thomas Morell
(1703-1784)

Synopsis

Jephtha, once ostracized by the Israelites, returns to lead them in battle against the oppressive Ammonites. His brother Zebul welcomes his return but Jephtha's wife Storgè (also the Greek name for parental love) and his daughter Iphis remain apprehensive about the future. Alone, Jephtha reflects on his prospects, promising to God that he will sacrifice the first person he meets on his return from battle if he is granted victory. The Israelites decisively defeat the Ammonite armies and return in triumph. The joy is short-lived as the first person Jephtha greets upon his return is his own daughter, Iphis. He reveals his covenant to Zebul, Storgè and the young warrior Hamor, who is in love with Iphis. Hamor offers himself in the maiden's place. Iphis herself pleads for her own life, but her father demurs. She then resigns herself to her fate as Jephtha carries out the covenant he has sworn.

Dramatis Personae

Jephtha

Iphis, *his daughter*

Storgè, *his wife*

Zebul, *his brother*

Hamor, *a warrior, in love with Iphis*

Choruses of Israelites

Notes

Though born the same year as that musical sensation Johann Sebastian Bach, George Frideric Handel managed to blaze a trail in music that is without peer. A compositional dynamo of international proportions, Handel was a shrewd businessman to boot, always adapting to current tastes and (usually) turning a profit. This was not only in music: a recent article in the *Telegraph* highlighted the composer's shrewdness in his dealings with the South Sea Company, a doomed enterprise that ruined the finances of Sir Isaac Newton. The son of a German barber-surgeon, Handel established a name for himself in Italy before making London his base of operatic operations in 1712. Around 1732, however, changing tastes in London's musical world compelled him to switch his gears towards the genre of the oratorio. Dramatic musical works presented without any staging, sets or costumes, oratorios were effectively "barebones" operas. (In a bit of paradox, many of Handel's oratorios are now presented in fully staged productions around the world.) The subject matter for oratorios usually came from sacred or religious sources, as is the case with *Jephtha* and that original Christmas blockbuster *Messiah*, also written by Handel.

Written between January and August of 1751, *Jephtha* would be the last oratorio Handel completed in his lifetime. The composer's gradually failing eyesight plagued him during this period, and his blindness became particularly acute during the composition of the act 2 chorus "How dark, O Lord, are thy decrees," a poignant coincidence given that the crux of *Jephtha* depends upon a moment of metaphorical blindness: in return for victory over the Ammonites, the warrior Jephtha arrogantly swears before God to sacrifice the first person he greets upon his return, who sadly turns out to be his own child. The libretto, or text, of *Jephtha* was provided by Thomas Morell, upon whom Handel prevailed for the texts of *Judas Maccabens* and *Theodora*. Morell's primary source was the Book of Judges, but the brevity of that account demanded the inclusion of other source material, both biblical and mythological. (The names and personalities of the other characters took many cues from the Greek mythology and tragedy, particularly the story of Iphigenia.) Critical to these additions was a revision of the story's ending. Morell's conclusion offered a more humane approach with Jephtha's daughter reprieved by an angel's intercession at the moment of sacrifice. The version of the oratorio performed in this concert, however, reflects the original biblical account.

As much as last season's *Saul* explored the troubled relationship of fathers and sons, *Jephtha* takes a stab (both literally and figuratively) at the tensions between fathers and daughters. While the role of the chorus is in no way insubstantial, Handel and Morell gave full reign to the protagonists, whose strengths and flaws drive the drama forward. The major musical units for these characters are the recitative, passages of exposition in which the text is sung in a style similar to conventional speech, and the aria (or air), a melodic solo movement in which the characters give full vent to their emotional state. Arias frequently contain three parts, a form known as *da capo*. First comes an initial section, A, followed by a contrasting section, B. Section A is then repeated, but not exactly as before. Ferocious vocal embellishments are thrown into this repeat to display the individual talents of the performers, and Handel's reputation ensured that he would have the best singers available for his performances, as was the case with *Jephtha*. The composer led the oratorio's premiere on February 26, 1752, after compositional delays and Handel's health made a performance during the 1751 season impossible. His former students Catarina Galli and Giulia Frasi sang the female parts, while the celebrated tenor John Beard took on the title role. The oratorio was revived several times before Handel's death in 1759, albeit with fewer revisions as was the composer's normal practice.

-Ryan M. Prendergast

Cast

Jephtha	Matthew Anderson
Storgé	Katelyn Mattson-Levy
Iphis	Megan Pachecano
Hamor	Timothy Parsons
Zebul	Dan Moore

Ad Astra Chamber Choir

Soprano: Aani Bourassa, Alexandra Rome, Shelby Matlock, Nini Marchese*

Alto: Melody Barton, Katie Bruton, Jessica Kerler*, Mike Miller

Tenor: Michael Davidson, Mark Lucas, Nathan Hilger, Francis Williams*

Bass: John Bitsas*, Lucas DeJesus, John Irving, Johnny Matlock

*Ad Astra Young Artist

Festival Orchestra

Violin I

Michael Cervantes, concertmaster

Allison Lint

Oboe

Greg Stead

Erin Graham

Violin II

Jasmine Gomez

Manda Deegan

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Renetta Dawson

Cello

Alyssa Aubuchon

Benjamin Cline

Trumpet

Brad Dawson

Megan Bailey

Bass

Andrew Book

Harpsichord

Max Holman

Organ

César Cañón

*Ad Astra Young Artist



Matthew Anderson has been praised for the warm tenor voice and polished musicality he brings to oratorio, opera, and musical theater. An accomplished interpreter of the music of Bach, Matthew sings regularly as a soloist in Boston's renowned Emmanuel Music Bach Cantata Series. He appeared at the Aldeburgh Festival as a soloist in the Saint Matthew Passion and spent several summers at the Carmel Bach Festival, where he was featured as a Virginia Best Adams Fellow and aria soloist in the Saint John Passion. He has received particular acclaim for his portrayals of the Evangelists in Bach's Passions, which he has performed throughout the United States. Matthew spent two seasons as a vocal fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center and was a Lorraine Hunt Lieberman

Fellow with Emmanuel Music. He also trained in the

James Collier Apprentice Artist Program at Des Moines Metro Opera, the Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme, and the Cincinnati Opera Resident Ensemble. Matthew is a Kansas native and resides in Boston, where he studied Classics at Harvard and voice at the New England Conservatory.



Katelyn Mattson-Levy, soprano, has been recognized as an artist of great passion and sensitivity. Most recently, she appeared as The Mother in *Ambal and the Night Visitors* with Opera Kansas and as a guest artist at Clarke University. Katelyn is a two-time award winner of the Metropolitan Opera's National Council Competition at the district level, first place recipient in the National Opera Association Competition, and a finalist in both the International Contemporary Opera Competition and Liederkrantz Foundation Competition. Katelyn has performed with the Des Moines Metro Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Illinois Symphony Orchestra, Musica Sacra of Cincinnati, Chicago Chamber Orchestra, Southern Illinois Music Festival, and the Bellingham Festival of Music. Katelyn

received her training at Wichita State University, University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Dance, and Cincinnati-College Conservatory of Music. She is a native of Sterling, KS. Katelyn designed the #humansofrussell program, and sang in the Ad Astra Chamber Choir.



Megan Pachecano returns to the Ad Astra Music Festival, having previously performed Michal in Handel's *Saul* and the Soprano solos in Mozart's *Requiem*. Other concert appearances include Handel's *Messiah* and *Israel in Egypt*, Mozart's *Mass in C minor*, *Coronation Mass*, and *Exsultate, jubilate*, Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass* and *Little Organ Mass*, Purcell's *The Fairy Queen*, Boismortier's *Don Quichotte chez la Duchesse*, and Villa-Lobos' *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5*, singing with such organizations as the Helena Symphony, Astoria Symphony Orchestra, Round Rock Symphony Orchestra, Westminster Choral Festival, and the Orchestra of New Spain. Operatic highlights include Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*), Norina (*Don Pasquale*), Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), and Anne Page (*Sir John in Love*), working with such companies

as Odyssey Opera, Opera Company of Middlebury, Salt Marsh Opera, and New Rochelle Opera. Megan can be heard as a soloist on the Naxos recording *American Choral Music*. She holds a bachelor's degree in voice performance from The University of Texas at Austin and a master's degree in classical voice from Manhattan School of Music. This coming season she makes her Metropolitan Opera debut in Beethoven's *Fidelio*.



Timothy Parsons, countertenor and conductor, is active as both soloist and ensemble member in the New York City choral scene. Past performances have included Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion* at Saint Thomas Church and Clarion's Russian Christmas program at Trinity Wall Street. Timothy will make his Bargemusic debut with the Clarion Music Society. Timothy also sang as a member of the vocal ensemble during the annual Film Night at Tanglewood with the Boston Pops under the baton of John Williams and with the New York

Philharmonic. As a soloist he has been seen at the Manhattan School of Music and at the Amherst Early Music Festival, where he performed Arsace in Scarlatti's *La Principessa fedele*. Timothy has a particular interest in the development and performance of new works, having performed world, U.S, and New York premieres at MSM and at Carnegie Hall. He recently conducted the Manhattan School of Music Chamber Choir, of which he is a founding member, in two performances of Veljo Tormis' *Sügismaastikud*. In 2011, he premiered Thomas Stumpf's song-cycle *Drei Mondlieder*, written for him. Timothy holds a bachelor's degree in classical voice from the Manhattan School of Music and was a candidate for the Master of Music in Choral Conducting, studying with Kent Tritle.



Deemed "excellent" by the New York Times and hailed for his "warm" and "voluminous" sound by the South Florida Classical Review, baritone **Dan Moore** is a sought-after performer of both solo and choral classical music. He has performed throughout the US and Asia with ensembles including Grammy-nominated ensemble Seraphic Fire, Clarion Society, Desert Chorale, Spire Chamber Ensemble, The American Baroque Orchestra, and Yale Schola

Cantorum (including concert tours in Japan, Singapore and Burma). Since September 2014, Dan has been on the regular roster of the world-renowned Choir of Men and Boys at St. Thomas Church Fifth Avenue in New York, singing five services per week. Dan received his Bachelor of Music degree at Temple University, where he studied under baritone Dr. William Stone and bass-baritone Eric Owens. He completed his Masters of Music degree at the Yale School of Music in December 2013, where he worked with tenor James Taylor. While at Yale, he also received a certificate in early music, oratorio and chamber ensemble from the Institute of Sacred Music.



Alex Underwood is a choral conductor and music educator originally from Russell, KS. He conducts the University Women's Chorus at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign) where he is in his second year as a doctoral candidate in Choral Music studying with Andrew McGill. He earned an undergraduate degree from Sterling College (KS) in music education and voice performance before serving as the vocal music teacher at Ruppenthal Middle School and Russell High School from 2008-2012. He is the recipient of the 2011 Young Director Award from the Kansas Choral Directors Association and the 2010 Horizon Award for first year teachers from the Kansas Department of

Education. Alex completed a Masters of Music in Choral Conducting degree at Westminster Choir College in 2014 where he studied with Joe Miller and James Jordan. He founded the Russell Arts Council's Summer Concert Series in 2014 which has grown into the Ad Astra Music Festival. In this year's festival, Alex conducted the Russell Community Choir and sang in the Ad Astra Chamber Choir.

Acknowledgements

Thank You

Colleen and Mick Allen
Marceline Bender
Richard Bender
Andrea Cross
Melinda and Jim Cross
Lori and Dennis Davidson
Michael Davidson
The Deines Cultural Center
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Espresso Etc.
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Ad Astra Music Festival

Main Stage Performances

The Mass Unordinary

July 15 | 7:30pm

St. Mary Queen of Angels

Catholic Church

Chamber Music at the Deines

July 23 | 7:30pm

Deines Cultural Center

Jazz at the Barn

July 16 | 8:00pm

Granny Mae's Barn

#humansofrussell

July 24 | 2:00pm

Deines Cultural Center

Schumann Song Cycle

July 17 | 2:00pm

Deines Cultural Center

Handel's *Jephtha*

July 30 | 7:30pm

Trinity United Methodist Church

Duruflé and His Organ

July 22 | 7:30pm

Trinity United Methodist Church

Encore: Handel's *Jephtha*

July 31 | 2:00pm

First Presbyterian Church, Hays, KS

Liturgical Music Series

Byrd Mass for 3 Voices

July 17 | 10:30am

St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Hays, KS

Bach Cantata 94

July 24 | 10:30am

St. John Lutheran Church

Josquin Missa De beata virgine

July 31 | 10:00am

Basilica of St. Fidelis, Victoria, KS