Hallelujah Chorus

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
The kingdom of this world
Is become the kingdom of our Lord,
And of His Christ, and of His Christ;
And He shall reign for ever and ever,
For ever and ever, forever and ever,
King of kings, and Lord of lords,
King of kings, and Lord of lords,
And Lord of lords,
And He shall reign,
And He shall reign forever and ever,
King of kings, forever and ever,
And Lord of lords,
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
And He shall reign forever and ever,
King of kings! and Lord of lords!
And He shall reign forever and ever,
King of kings! and Lord of lords!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Answers from page 8, Do You Know?

1. **False**, he composed *Messiah* in just 24 days.
2. **True**
3. **True**, he swore at the ladies of the Prince of Wales' court if they chattered while he was conducting.
4. **False**, he wanted his son to study law. He would not allow young Handel to own an instrument, and Handel had to practice music on the sly.
5. **True**, three years after Handel's death, the monument by French sculptor, Louis François Roubillac, was installed.
6. **False**, some were not happy that a Sacred Work was to be performed in a concert hall. Also, Handel's choice of contralto, Susanna Cibber, was controversial, because she was embroiled in a scandalous divorce at the time.
7. **False**, Handel never married or fathered children.

80th Presentation of

Messiah

by George Frideric Handel



Michael Beert, Conductor

Saturday, November 28, 2026 *3:00pm*
Sunday, November 29, 2026 *3:00pm*

Emmanuel Lutheran Church
920 Third Avenue, Rockford

presented by the
ROCKFORD CHORAL UNION

Rockford Choral Union

The year 1945 marked the end of a horrible war and the beginning of the rebuilding of lives, homes, and dreams for millions of Americans. The return to peacetime initiated the vision of several local Lutheran churches to gather singers together to prepare a presentation of Handel's *Messiah* as a gift to the community. This group became the Rockford Lutheran Choral Union, today known as the Rockford Choral Union, and its message remains a living testament to the One who came to bring hope and peace to the world.

Today, many denominations and organizations are represented. Singers include first timers and those who have been with the chorus 10, 15, 20 years and longer. Members come from within a 60+ mile radius of Rockford, committing to five Sunday afternoon rehearsals.

Many years have come and gone, and every Thanksgiving weekend *(except for 2020),* the glorious sound of that great work has continued uninterrupted. What motivates us? We all love to sing and present great music. We have a need to retell the story of Christ, the Messiah, to our community. We desire to sing of the true Christmas message that spans the life of Christ from the cradle to the cross and, ultimately, the crown.

We are grateful for the many people, churches, and businesses that provide financial support to the Rockford Choral Union through their sponsorships, memorials, and special gifts. This enables us to continue the concerts and to provide the best soloists and chamber orchestra to augment our great volunteer chorus.

The Rockford Choral Union thanks you for your presence, financial support, encouraging words, and kind comments. Our prayer is that you will leave this concert enriched and better prepared for Christmas.



More information available on our website:
https://rockfordchoralunion.com

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Michael Beert, Conductor



Michael Beert is now in his eighth year as conductor of the Rockford Choral Union. He was involved as the cellist with the group beginning in 1985 and took over as director after the retirement of Nat Bauer in 2017.

Michael has been playing cello since 1969 and has been the Principal Cellist of the Rockford Symphony Orchestra for the past 19 seasons. His conducting experiences include appearances with the Illinois Philharmonic, the Illinois Valley Symphony, and Music Director of the Rockford Symphony Youth Orchestra. He directed the Rock Valley College and Community Orchestra for 35 years as well as the Rock Valley Summer Orchestra under the auspices of the Rockford Park District.

Mike currently teaches at the Rockford Music Academy, where he maintains a studio of cello and bass students. He also teaches classes in Music Appreciation through Rock Valley College's Center for Learning in Retirement as well as the Music Academy. He holds Bachelors and Masters degrees in Music Performance from Roosevelt University and has done extensive graduate coursework in conducting, string pedagogy, and music history from the University of Memphis and Northern Illinois University. He is married to Concertmaster Rachel Handlin, and they have a daughter, Aria, who is in graduate school at the University of Houston, majoring in Music *(Voice)*.

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Section B
Register-Republic
Local News
'Messiah' still thrills chapter Choral Union singers

Newspaper Article, 1975

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Rockford Lutheran Choral Union, 1965.
Allen Elmquist, director
Courtesy Vivian Hansen

Jordan Knapick *Soprano*



Jordan Knapick is an operatic soprano and musical theater singer, dancer, and actress currently based in Seattle, WA. A northern Illinois native, Jordan has been a performer from the time she could walk and talk. From a young age, she loved going to dance classes and voice lessons, and after performing as an orphan in a local youth theatre's production of Annie at age eleven, she caught the theatre bug.

She received her MM from Boston University and her BM from Oklahoma City University, where she studied voice under Lynn Eustis and Jeffrey Picón, respectively. A lover of crossover work, Jordan spent the past three summers as a Resident Young Artist at Ohio Light Opera, where she sang Valencienne in *The Merry Widow*, Elsie Maynard in *The Yeoman of the Guard*, Gretchen in *The Red Mill*, Patience in *Patience*, Carrie in *Carousel*, Juliette in *The Count of Luxembourg*, and Elsa Schraeder in *The Sound of Music*.

In the '25-'26 season, Jordan was well engaged throughout the Seattle area, singing Mabel in *The Pirates of Penzance* with the Seattle Opera School Opera Tour, the soprano solo in Fauré's *Requiem* at St. Clement's Episcopal Church, and both Almirena in *Rinaldo* and Echo in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with the Pacific Northwest Opera.

Additionally, Jordan will sing her first *Messiah* as a soloist with the Rockford Choral Union on Nov. 28 and 29, and she will present a recital with Joel Ross at the Mendelssohn PAC in Rockford on March 19, 2027. She is very excited about what this next year will bring, both in her performing work and her personal life.

Claudia Holensen *Mezzo*



Originally from Rockford, Illinois, mezzo-soprano Claudia Holensen currently resides in Madison, Wisconsin. In May, 2019, she graduated Magna Cum Laude from the Boston Conservatory at Berklee, earning a Bachelor of Music degree with a Minor in Psychology. She also earned a Master of Arts in Musicology from Tufts University.

Her most recent appearances include Mr. Barcarole Wags (*The Bremen Town Musicians*, Boston Conservatory), L'Enfant (*L'enfant et les sortilèges*, Boston Conservatory opera scenes), Sister Claire (*Dialogues des Carmélites*, Boston Conservatory), Orlofsky (*Die Fledermaus*, International Performing Arts Institute), Mercedes (*Carmen*, International Performing Arts Institute), and ensemble (*Eugene Onegin*, Boston Conservatory).

Claudia has also performed as the mezzo-soprano soloist in Handel's *Messiah* with the Boston Conservatory Chorale and Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Rockford, Illinois.



Chorus Impressive in Performance . . .

Allen Elmquist, standing right, conducted the Rockford Lutheran Choral Union in an impressive "Messiah" Saturday night. Here the choristers stand and seated in front at left are three of the guest soloists, Alice Riley, soprano, Marilyn Neilson, contralto, and Howard Nelson, bass. In center are members of Symphonette Orchestra who assisted. (Morning Star photos)

Faith Reaffirmed by 'Messiah'

Rockford Morning Star Article, 1964



10 ¢ ★ ROCKFORD MORNING STAR Sunday, Nov. 27, 1955

FAMILY MEMBERS—The fact that the Lutheran Choral union is a close-knit group is demonstrated by the above members who have a father-daughter and mother-daughter relationship. They are, left to right, Guy Soderberg and daughter, Joanne Soderberg, Mrs. Hugh Johnson and daughter, Mrs. Clifford McCulley, and Mrs. George Sorensen and daughter, Adah Sorensen.

Rockford Morning Star Article, 1955

THE R. L. C. U.

It was nineteen hundred forty-five
Organists and directors met, to plan and strive
To serve our church in a spiritual way
And form a chorus for Luther Day.

All Lutheran choirs to have a part
And join this chorus with grateful hearts.
Mass rehearsals were thus begun
With cooperation from every one.

We organized the governing board
From our own members who love the Lord.
It was their duty to pave the way
For resolutions we now obey.

There are committees who represent
Music, social, and other events.
Sopranos, altos, tenors, and bass
Honor this union with their grace.

Handel's oratorio is greatly adored
And ushers in the advent of our Lord.
May each rendition be glorified
And blest to all hearts from far and wide.

Musicians and soloists beautify
This oratoro for you and I.
As the chorus sings the wonderous word
That tells of the birth of Christ the Lord.

Let's try to improve the prestige won
By faith and honor from every one.
May the Messiah of whom we sing
Be our companion in everything.

Words can not express our thankfulness
To our conductor who is the best.
May God the Father, God the Son
Bless all his efforts till life is done.

Let's all join in with grateful hearts
To thank the Lord we have a part.
And show us Lord, each passing day
How we should live, and how to pray.

By Earl R. White
1-6-'54

Michael Day-Toles *Tenor*



Michael Day-Toles is a lyric tenor from Rockford, Illinois. Michael has sung with companies such as Michigan Opera Theatre, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, the Merola Opera Program, Sacramento Philharmonic and Opera, Utah Festival Opera, Syracuse Opera, and Livermore Valley Opera.

Opera credits include Tamino *(Die Zauberflöte)*, Candide *(Candide)*, Rinuccio *(Gianni Schicchi)*, Alfred *(Die Fledermaus)*, and Arcadio *(Florencia en el Amazonas)*.

Michael recently earned a J.D. from the Northwestern Pritzker School of Law and currently resides in Chicago, where he works as an attorney.

Nicolai Janitzky *Bass*



Baritone Nicolai Janitzky is a native of Northern California and currently resides in the Rockford area. He began his career with the Santa Fe Opera Young Artist Program, where he went on in the title role in *Eugene Onegin* on short notice. Since then, he has appeared with many opera companies in the United States and abroad, including San Francisco Opera, San Diego Opera, and Musica Viva in Hong Kong.

He has performed many roles from the operas of Mozart, Donizetti, Verdi, and Puccini, and he has a particular interest in Russian repertoire. In addition to opera, he enjoys performing art songs and has given recitals through the Marilyn Horne Foundation and other organizations at the Cleveland Institute of Music's Art Song Festival, the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., and Carnegie (Weill) Hall in New York City.

His recent concerts include baritone soloist in *Carmina Burana*, Brahms' *Requiem*, and Mussorgsky's *Songs and Dances of Death*.

He studied at Yale University Opera Program and Music Academy of the West.

Sopranos

Carley Ackland
Laura Caswell
Kyra DeBerry
Sophia DeBerry
Cindy Fischer
Chloe Fisk
Susan Gilbaugh
Jenny Graham
Rachel Johnson
Cyndee Lipps
Kathleen Peterson
Lynda Remling
Amy Salamon
Margo Stedman
Maria Stonehocher
Jane Teders
Jean Wittlief

Altos

Callie Ackland
Margo Anders
Karin Bohr
Dawn Calkins
Barbara Connors
Lois Eckburg
Shirley Fischer
Teresa Gobeli
Ruth Gray
Bonita Harn
Candy Lovan
Christine Mothkovich
Sasha Pogwizd
Martha Rolf
Kathy Roushey
Kathryn Rundblade
Christine Schweitz
Sheree Sensel
Mary Shumaker
Encarnita Somoso
Lydia Stevens
Sylvia Stevens
Linda Todd
Elsie Viall
Kate Viall
Lydia Weinreich
Jan Winterhalter

Tenors

Tom Allabaugh
Gregory Balestrieri
Joseph Bruce
Susan Coers
Peter Cooper
Cindy Jensen
Robert Johnson
Paul Misik
Gonzalo Ocampo
Tamara Ross
Andrew Stacy
Antoinette Vella
Loyd Wollstadt
Rhee Ellen Wright

Basses

Titus Berndt
Gene Dameier
Dale Johnson
Kim Keutzer
Timothy Krug
Terry Schweitz
John Stelter
Webb Stevens
Peter Thomas
Adam Viall
Richard Wittlief

(Some members listed may be unable to sing this year)

Do you know...?

1. **T** **F** Handel composed *Messiah* in 48 days.
2. **T** **F** Handel had his own organ shipped to Ireland for the first performance of *Messiah*.
3. **T** **F** Handel was obstinate, temperamental, and had anger issues.
4. **T** **F** Handel's father, Georg, wanted him to be a musician.
5. **T** **F** Handel provided £600 in his estate for a monument to himself to be built at Westminster Abbey.
6. **T** **F** The first performance of *Messiah* was without controversy.
7. **T** **F** Handel married and had seven children.

Answers on page 20



CROWDS SEEN FOR ORATORIO

Choral Concerts

"Standing room only" audiences will greet the 200-voice Rockford Choral union for its presentation of Handel's oratorio, "The Messiah" in Emmanuel Lutheran church on Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 30 and Dec. 1.

All of the tickets for the three performances have been distributed free of charge by the choristers.

Four guest soloists will join the group. They are Alice Riley, soprano, Ruth Slater, alto, Kay Charles Graves, baritone, and Ralph Nielsen, tenor.

Fern Kirkpatrick, a special trumpeter, will come from the University of Wisconsin at Madison to take part in the three presentations of the oratorio. She will play the trumpet aria "The Trumpet Shall Sound."

Members of the orchestra who will assist in the presentations will be Ernest Seeman, concertmaster, Sadie Beth Miller, and Charles Carlson, first violinists; Lucille Lower, Jacques Raymond, and Jane Northrup, second violinists; Amiel Watz and Alex Las Casas, violas; Lois McDowell, string bass; Joan Wootton, and David Zack, cellists; and Clarence Helsing, who for the second year will play his own harpsichord.

Allen Elmquist will serve as director for this annual Advent musical treat to the community. Celeste Bengston will be organist and Marian Peters and Clarence Helsing, accompanists.

Newspaper Article, 1957



Rockford Choral Union won Album Of the Year in the 17th Annual RAMI Awards, 2007



Reporter of Large—

City's Only Harpsicord To Be Played In Presentation of 'Messiah' Here

HOMEMADE HARPSICHORD — Clarence W. Helsing, seated, shows Allen Elmquist, standing, the harpsichord he has made in his own home. Helsing will play when Elmquist conducts the 180-voice Lutheran Choral Union in three presentations of "The Messiah" on Dec. 1 and 2.

Rockford Morning Star Article, 1956

Looking Back...

80+ Years of The Rockford Choral Union



EDDY MONTVILLE | ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR

Elsie Lundvall sings Sunday during rehearsal for the Rockford Choral Union production of Handel's "Messiah" in Rockford. Lundvall says it's the message of "Messiah" that has kept bringing her back for the past six decades.

Singer local 'Messiah' staple for 61 years

By Elizabeth Davies
ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR

ROCKFORD — Plenty has changed since a group of area churchgoers first performed their holiday "Messiah" concert here in 1945.

Directors have come and gone. The venue has been switched. Tickets — although they're still free — have been added to prevent overcrowding at the concerts.

And yet, at least one thing remains the same: Elsie Lundvall.

This 83-year-old Rockford woman has been a "Messiah" singer each year since 1945, with this weekend's performances marking her 61st consecutive year.

"It's not Christmas until I've done a 'Messiah,' " said Lundvall, a retired inventory control clerk from Sundstrand. "Once I've done it, then I can write my cards and wrap my gifts."

Lundvall is an alto singer in a 120-voice choir, called the Rockford Choral Union, which comes together each year to put on the concert. The two-hour show includes between eight and 10 songs for the choir, plus music from a full orchestra and songs from four soloists.

Although many of her friends have stopped singing or moved away, one thing has kept Lundvall coming back for the past six decades.

"It's the message of it," she said. "It starts with the prophecy and goes through the birth, then the resurrection. It's become a part of me."

So every year, Lundvall shows up for a two-hour rehearsal each of the six Sundays before Thanksgiving. As the longest-standing member of the choir, Lundvall remembers when they used to put on three "Messiah" performances each year. The Sunday evening service eventually was dropped.

"By Sunday night, that's when the snowstorms came," Lundvall said. "I think that's why we didn't have very many at the Sunday night performances, because people didn't want to go out in the snow."

Lundvall also was around in the days before tickets were required for each concert. That didn't last long, as it quickly became obvious that a change was in order.

"I tell you, we had a jam-packed Sunday afternoon," she remembered. "People were down in the basement, listening."

Even though tickets are now used, the choir does not charge for its performances. The show, which costs about $15,000 to produce each year, generates income through goodwill donations at each show. If you ask Lundvall, charging to hear "Messiah" simply should not be done.

"What we're proclaiming is free: It's the word of the Lord," she said. "As long as we're able to, we're going to provide this concert. We make out. In all 61 years, we've never gone in debt for it."

For Lundvall, singing in "Messiah" each Christmas is a spiritual experience. She hopes others feel that way as well.

"This is one way I can spend my time valuably," she said. "I was given a talent, so why not use it this way?"

If you go

What: 61st annual local "Messiah" concert

Where: Trinity Lutheran Church, 200 N. First St., Rockford

When: 7 p.m. Saturday and 3 p.m. Sunday

Tickets: Are free and available at Borders, 199 Deanne Drive; Lemstone Christian Books; 5866 E. State St.; Trinity Lutheran Church and Vineyard Books, Highcrest Shopping Center

Article in the Rockford Register Star, November, 2006

Messiah

by George Frideric Handel

Handel's *Messiah* is probably one of the best-loved, and certainly one of the best-known, works in the standard repertoire of "classical" music. *Messiah* was first performed in Dublin, Ireland, in 1742, and it has now been performed almost every year since for almost three centuries.

***Messiah* represents** the quintessential classical music highpoint of the Christmas season. Handel's inspired setting of Biblical texts, collected by Charles Jennens, is a three-part meditation on the prophecy and fulfillment of God's plan to redeem the world through a savior.
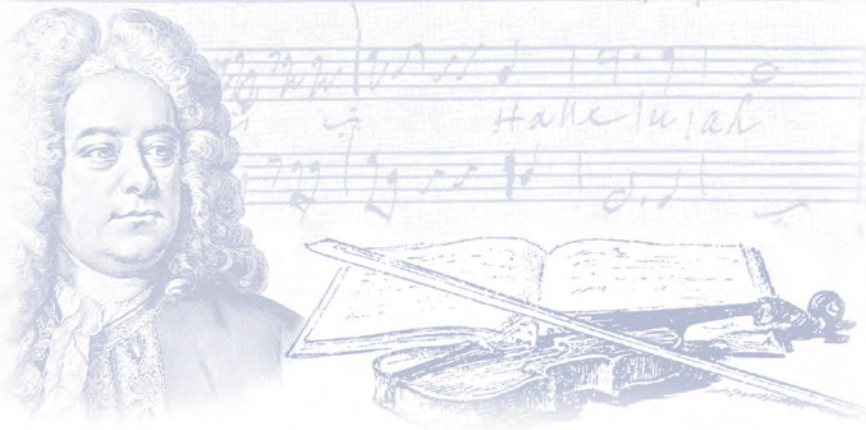
People may come to a *Messiah* concert to be entertained. However, Handel himself reacted to this thought when he said to a friend, "I do not wish to entertain them, sir, but to make them better."

Messiah, with voices and orchestra, tells of the redemption of sinful mankind by Emmanuel, Jesus Christ. The complete libretto (the words) uses only words from 79 Scripture verses from the Old and New Testaments.

Part One: *The Prophesied and Promised Redeemer* is filled with the joy of anticipation of that savior (epitomized in the jubilant chorus "For Unto Us a Child is Born").

Part Two: *The Suffering, Dying and Living Redeemer* reflects the sorrow and agony surrounding Christ's passion and death, and the exultation of the resurrection, captured in the stirring "Hallelujah" chorus.

Part Three: *The Triumphant and Glorified Redeemer* is a hymn of thanksgiving for the final defeat of death and for life eternal.



Messiah

by George Frideric Handel

PART ONE: *The Prophesied and Promised Redeemer*

Orchestra:	Overture
Recitative *(Tenor)*:	Comfort ye my people *(Is. 40:1-3)*
Aria *(Tenor)*:	Ev'ry valley shall be exalted *(Is. 40:4)*
Chorus:	And the glory of the Lord *(Is. 40:5)*
Recitative *(Bass)*:	Thus saith the Lord *(Hag. 2:6,7 and Mal. 3:1)*
Aria *(Bass)*:	But who may abide? *(Mal. 3:2)*
Chorus:	And He shall purify *(Mal. 3:3)*
Recitative *(Mezzo)*:	Behold, a virgin shall conceive *(Is. 7:14; Matt. 1:23)*
Aria *(Mezzo)* and Chorus:	O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion *(Is. 40:9)*
Recitative *(Bass)*:	For behold, darkness shall cover the earth *(Is. 60:2,3)*
Aria *(Bass)*:	The people that walked in darkness *(Is. 9:2)*
Chorus:	For unto us a child is born *(Is. 9:6)*
Orchestra:	Pifa
Recitative *(Soprano)*:	There were shepherds abiding in the field *(Luke 2:8)*
	And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them *(Luke 2:9)*
	And the angel said unto them *(Luke 2:10,11)*
	And suddenly there was with the angel *(Luke 2:13)*
Chorus:	Glory to God *(Luke 2:14)*
Aria *(Soprano)*:	Rejoice greatly *(Zech. 9:9,10)*
Recitative *(Mezzo)*:	Then shall the eyes of the blind be open'd *(Is. 35:5,6)*
Aria *(Mezzo and Soprano)*:	He shall feed his flock *(Is. 40:11; Matt. 11:28,29)*
Chorus:	His yoke is easy, and His burden is light *(Matt. 11:30)*

Offering
Intermission

PART TWO: *The Suffering, Dying and Living Redeemer*

Chorus:	Behold the Lamb of God *(John 1:29)*
Aria *(Mezzo)*:	He was despised *(Is. 53:3)*
Chorus:	Surely He hath borne our griefs *(Is. 53:4,5)*
	And with His stripes we are healed *(Is. 53:5)*
	All we, like sheep, have gone astray *(Is. 53:6)*
Recitative *(Tenor)*:	All they that see Him *(Ps. 22:7)*
Chorus:	He trusted in God *(Ps. 22:8)*
Recitative *(Tenor)*:	Thy rebuke hath broken His heart *(Ps. 69:20)*
Aria *(Tenor)*:	Behold and see if there be any sorrow *(Lam. 1:12)*
Chorus:	Lift up your heads *(Ps. 24:7-10)*
Aria *(Soprano)*:	How beautiful are the feet *(Rom. 10:15)*
Aria *(Bass)*:	Why do the nations so furiously rage together? *(Ps. 2:1,2)*
Recitative *(Tenor)*:	He that dwelleth in heaven *(Ps. 2:4)*
Aria *(Tenor)*:	Thou shalt break them *(Ps. 2:9)*
Chorus:	*Hallelujah! *(Rev. 19:6; 11:15; 19:16)*

PART THREE: *The Triumphant and Glorified Redeemer*

Aria *(Soprano)*:	I know that my Redeemer liveth *(Job 19:25,26; I Cor. 15:20)*
Chorus:	Since by man came death *(I Cor. 15:21,22)*
Recitative *(Bass)*:	Behold, I tell you a mystery *(I Cor. 15:51,52)*
Aria *(Bass and Trumpet)*:	The trumpet shall sound *(I Cor. 15:52,53)*
Aria *(Soprano)*:	If God is for us *(Rom. 8:31, 33, 34)*
Chorus:	Worthy is the Lamb that was slain *(Rev. 5:12,13)*
	Amen

Benediction

**Congregation is invited to sing along. Lyrics on page 20.*