



THE
HANDEL CHOIR
OF BALTIMORE



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**HANDEL CHOIR OF BALTIMORE PRESENTS BENEFIT CONCERT FOR
BOARD OF CHILD CARE**

Sunday, April 3 at 3 pm, Kraushaar Auditorium, Goucher College

Tickets on Sale! * \$40 *Visit www.boardofchildcare.org or call 410-922-2100 ext. 5610

BALTIMORE – (March 1, 2011) During his musical career, George Frideric Handel, the world-renowned 18th-century composer of *Messiah*, became an ardent donor to London’s Foundling Hospital, a home and education program for orphans and children whose parents could not afford to raise them. Handel presented a benefit concert every year from 1750 to 1759 to raise support for the institution, promoting a philanthropic tradition of presenting benefit concerts that continues today. And, 252 years after his death, the tradition continues. **On April 3, Handel Choir of Baltimore will present a choral-orchestral concert to benefit the Board of Child Care, a nonprofit child welfare agency and outreach ministry of the United Methodist Church based in Baltimore County. All net proceeds will benefit the Board of Child Care.**

The concert will feature Mozart’s orchestral overture to his opera *Don Giovanni*, Ralph M. Johnson’s *This House of Peace* for strings, chorus, soprano and oboe soloists, and Beethoven’s *Choral Fantasia*, Op. 80 with pianist Michael Sheppard, performed by Handel Choir and Orchestra under the direction of Melinda O’Neal, artistic director and conductor. In the first half of the concert, Handel Choir will perform *a cappella* works by Palestrina, Stanford, Whitacre, and folksongs and spirituals arranged by Erb and Tippett.

Thomas L. Curcio, President and CEO of the Board of Child Care, says, “This event is a first-time opportunity for the Board of Child Care that will help raise awareness and support for the work we do 365 days a year for children and families throughout the region. We are grateful to Handel Choir for partnering with us and working hard to prepare a concert program that honors and celebrates the work we do to give children hope for the future, and power in their present lives.

Melinda O’Neal stated, “Unquestionably, music helps us better understand our shared human condition, is transformative and healing. G.F. Handel understood this better than most, as he selflessly dedicated his efforts and own personal finances in his last years to help those whose circumstances were less fortunate than his. Handel Choir is honored to perform in support of the Board of Child Care, sharing music in this tradition of understanding, giving and empowerment.”

ABOUT THE PROGRAM: Mozart composed his brilliant *Overture to Don Giovanni* in three hours on the eve of the opera’s first performance. Just before the curtain rose, copyists were still finishing preparing the parts for the orchestra. The overture begins solemnly with the music that accompanies the fateful appearance of the Stone Guest in the last scene of the opera. It is followed by an *allegro*, which characterizes the impetuous, pleasure-seeking Don Giovanni, a

man oblivious to consequences of his behavior and thus illustrating the dominant mood of this *drama giocoso*, or “jolly play.”

The centerpiece of Handel Choir’s concert, *This House of Peace* by Ralph M. Johnson, was composed for soprano and oboe soloists, strings and chorus in 2008 and recently performed by the St. Olaf Choir at the Oregon Bach Festival. Commissioned by Sacred Heart Medical Center in Springfield, Oregon, Johnson set writings of the hospital’s patients and caregivers. The soprano sings about a patient who found hospitality at the hospital after giving birth to her child under a bridge. The lyrics describe how she had “never lived in a house like this, a clean house where people don’t fight.” Handel Choir conductor Melinda O’Neal chose the work for the text’s relevance to the Board of Child Care’s mission of providing housing and care to those less fortunate.

Beethoven first performed *Choral Fantasia* for a benefit concert in Vienna in 1808, which also premiered his Fifth and Sixth Symphonies and his Mass in C Major. To conclude this important event, he composed the *Fantasia* as a brilliant finale, bringing together the array of musical components already highlighted of soloists, chorus and orchestra, and playing the piano solo himself.

Michael Sheppard is a Peabody Conservatory-trained pianist described as a “...virtuosic soloist possessed of power, sensitivity, earthiness and humor.” He has performed with orchestras throughout the United States and toured Southern Asia and the Middle East as a Classical Fellow of the American Pianists Association. He has also been a Fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center and the La Gesse Foundation, and a prizewinner in the National Federation of Music Clubs National Competition.

Melinda O’Neal has been artistic director and conductor of Handel Choir of Baltimore since 2004. Praised for her “lucid and musical understanding of the score” and “moving and satisfying interpretations” as a conductor, she is also professor of music at Dartmouth College in Hanover, NH, where she teaches courses in conducting and music theory. O’Neal holds masters and doctoral degrees in choral-orchestral conducting from Indiana University’s Jacobs School of Music, Bloomington.

ABOUT HANDEL CHOIR OF BALTIMORE

Handel Choir of Baltimore is a community-based oratorio ensemble that presents baroque, classical and early romantic works with period instrument orchestras, as well as modern repertoire and commissioned works. During Handel Choir’s 76-year history, performance of Handel’s *Messiah* has been an uninterrupted annual tradition. In addition to subscription concerts, Handel Choir of Baltimore provides concerts for civic events, educational programs, retirement communities, and concert series. Tim Smith of *The Baltimore Sun* has praised the Choir for its “dynamic performances,” “sensitive singing” and “considerable polish.”

ABOUT THE BOARD OF CHILD CARE

The Board of Child Care is a nonprofit, multi-service organization serving children and families in Maryland, West Virginia and the District of Columbia as an outreach ministry of the United Methodist Church. Programs include residential care, foster care, early childhood education, therapeutic counseling, adoption services, special education and a car loan program.