

Summit Choral Society Spring concert to feature guest conductor Marie Bucoy-Calavan

by Daniel Hathaway



Although it's eight times younger than Boston's Handel and Haydn Society, the Summit Choral Society will give a nod to its elder counterpart, founded in 1815, with a 25th anniversary spring concert of music by George Frideric Handel and Joseph Haydn on Sunday, April 12 at 3:00 pm at the historic Greystone Hall in downtown Akron.

The program, which will include Handel's "The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba" (from *Solomon*), the soprano aria "With Ravish'd Ears" (from *Alexander's Feast*), and the coronation

anthem *Let Thy Hand be Strengthened*, will culminate in Haydn's "Lord Nelson" Mass.

Marie Bucoy-Calavan will guest-conduct the 40 singers and members of the Akron Symphony Orchestra, who will be joined by four vocal soloists: soprano Kerrie Caldwell, mezzo-soprano Olga Perez Flora, tenor James Flora, and baritone Brian Keith Johnson.

Bucoy-Calavan is in her first year as Director of Choral Studies at the University of Akron. After undergraduate and graduate study at California State University at Fullerton, she earned her doctorate at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. In Cincinnati, she also served as Robert Porco's assistant conductor for the May Festival Chorus. She continues her connection with Porco by singing in the Cleveland Orchestra

Chorus. When we spoke by phone, Bucoy-Calavan had just returned from concerts in Miami, where COC sang Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* and Leonard Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* under the baton of Gian-Carlo Guerrero. "It was an interesting but very appropriate pairing," she said, "and very cool."

Asked if she had chosen the April 12 program herself, Marie Bucoy-Calavan said yes. "I had only briefly heard about the Summit Choral Society when I was invited to be guest conductor, but when I found out they were celebrating their 25th anniversary, I decided to link the concert to the bicentennial of the Handel and Haydn Society. It just so happened that all the repertoire I picked had to do with ceremonial events. 'The Queen of Sheba' and 'With Ravish'd Ears' both relate to royalty, as does the Handel coronation anthem. And the Haydn mass, originally titled 'Missa in angustiis,' was first published in England as 'Haydn's Coronation Mass.'"

Beyond the thematic links, Bucoy-Calavan also took the appropriateness of texts into consideration when planning this program. "For example, the Handel coronation anthem mentions justice and judgment and asks for strength — all of which apply to the Summit Choral Society through the years they've been here. I strongly believe in choosing repertory that's appropriate to the forces and the audience, that's fun to sing, and whose texts speak to what people are feeling at the time."

Bucoy-Calavan has invited an old friend from California, Carrie Caldwell, to be the soprano soloist in the Handel aria and the Haydn Mass. "Both pieces require a soprano with flexibility and dexterity." The Floras will come up from Columbus, where Olga Perez Flora teaches at Muskingum University. Baritone Brian Keith Johnson is well-known to Northeast Ohio audiences.

Summing up her feelings about her appearance as guest conductor, Marie Bucoy-Calavan said, "The invitation was serendipitous, but I'm honored to be participating in Summit Choral Society's 25th anniversary. That's a great achievement for a choral organization. I'm excited to have the opportunity to make the best music possible with them and get to know the singers in the process."

Preferred Seating tickets are \$25, include a 'Meet the Artists' reception, and need to be [reserved](#) in advance. General seating tickets are \$20, \$15 for Seniors and \$10 for Students, and can also be purchased at the door.

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