

Minnesota Orchestra

Nicholas Kraemer, conductor

Sherezade Panthaki, soprano | Robin Blaze, countertenor

Richard Croft, tenor | Christopher Edwards, baritone

Minnesota Chorale, Kathy Saltzman Romey, artistic director

Holiday Concerts

Saturday, December 8, 2018, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

Sunday, December 9, 2018, 2 pm | Orchestra Hall

Johann Sebastian Bach

Suite No. 3 in D major for Orchestra, BWV 1068

ca. 20'

Overture
Air
Gavotte I and II
Bourrée
Gigue

I N T E R M I S S I O N

ca. 20'

Johann Sebastian Bach

Christmas Oratorio, BWV 248

ca. 75'

Cantata IV: On New Year's Day (The Feast of Circumcision)

Cantata V: On the Sunday After New Year (King Herod)

Cantata VI: On the Feast of the Epiphany (The Adoration of the Magi)

Sherezade Panthaki, soprano | Robin Blaze, countertenor

Richard Croft, tenor | Christopher Edwards, baritone

Sara Payne, echo soprano | Minnesota Chorale

Text and translation appears in an insert; translation will also be projected as surtitles.

The performance on Sunday, December 9, will be broadcast live on stations of [Classical Minnesota Public Radio](#), including KSJN 99.5 FM in the Twin Cities.





Nicholas Kraemer, conductor

Nicholas Kraemer, the principal guest conductor of Music of the Baroque in Chicago, began his career as a harpsichordist and in 1978 formed the Raglan Baroque Players. During his long and distinguished career he has held the positions of artistic director of the Irish Chamber Orchestra, the London Bach Orchestra and the Bath Festival music programme; permanent guest conductor of the Manchester Camerata, the Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra and Musikkollegium Winterthur; and associate conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. He was also the first music director of Opera 80, now the English Touring Opera. He has conducted the Berlin Philharmonic, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Bergen Philharmonic, BBC Philharmonic, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Hallé Orchestra, Gothenburg Symphony, City of Birmingham Orchestra, West Australian Symphony and the orchestras of Chicago, Detroit, Toronto and Colorado, among many other ensembles. In addition to numerous recording projects, he has contributed to several feature films. More: caroline-phillips.co.uk.



Sherezade Panthaki, soprano

Sherezade Panthaki, making her Minnesota Orchestra debut in these concerts, has ongoing collaborations with leading early music interpreters including Nicholas McGegan, Simon Carrington, Matthew Halls and Masaaki Suzuki, with whom she made her New York Philharmonic debut. Her 2018-19 season includes orchestral performances with the Detroit Symphony and Calgary Philharmonic, returns to the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Music of the Baroque, Ars Lyrica, Bach Festival Society of Winter Park and Tafelmusik, and a debut with Musica Angelica. Additional season highlights include a tour with the viol consort Parthenia and performances of Handel's *Samson* with NDR Radiophilharmonie. Her repertoire extends beyond the music of the Renaissance and Baroque to works such as Orff's *Carmina burana* with the Houston Symphony, John Tavener's *The Last Discourse* with Orchestra of St. Luke's, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with American Classical Orchestra, and Rachmaninoff's *Vocalise* and Strauss lieder at the Bari International Music Festival. More: schwalbeandpartners.com.



Robin Blaze, countertenor

Robin Blaze, who debuted with the Minnesota Orchestra in 2011 performances of Handel's *Messiah*, is firmly established in the front rank of interpreters of Purcell, Bach and Handel, and has worked with many distinguished conductors including Harry Christophers, Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Emmanuelle Haïm, Philippe Herreweghe, Christopher Hogwood, Ton Koopman, Paul Goodwin, Gustav Leonhardt, Robert King, Nicholas Kraemer, Sir Charles Mackerras, Trevor Pinnock and Masaaki Suzuki. Highlights of his recent and upcoming schedule include singing *Lhumana fragilitá* in Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* for the Grange Festival, Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* with the Handel and Haydn Society in Boston, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with the Copenhagen Philharmonic Orchestra, Purcell's *Odes* at the Berlioz Festival with The King's Consort, and Handel's *Messiah* with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Indianapolis Symphony. He also continues regular collaborations with the Bach Collegium Japan with concerts in Japan and Europe. More: rayfieldallied.com.

one-minute notes

Bach: *Orchestral Suite No. 3*

Bach's Third *Orchestral Suite* includes an *Overture* that is at turns imposing and dazzling, an *Air* built on a melody made famous from its transcription as a violin solo, and three dance movements that culminate in a cheerful *Gigue* of folk origins.

Bach: *Christmas Oratorio*

The Christmas season of 1734-35 in Leipzig included a multi-day unveiling of newly-composed music by Bach that we now know as the *Christmas Oratorio*. Each of its six cantatas was designated for a specific day spanning Christmas and the Epiphany, and together the set forms the narrative of the birth of Christ through the arrival of the Wise Men; these concerts feature cantatas four through six. The fourth cantata is focused on the naming of the new baby, and features stunning solo moments and a sparkling chorale for the soprano section. The fifth cantata uses a modest orchestration of two oboes d'amore and strings to depict Jesus' introduction to society, and the final cantata completes the narrative with a celebration of the festival of Epiphany, musically complete with trumpets and drums.



Richard Croft, tenor

American tenor Richard Croft is internationally renowned for his performances with leading opera companies and orchestras around the world, including the Metropolitan Opera, Vienna Staatsoper, Teatro alla Scala, Opéra National de Paris, Berlin Staatsoper, Salzburg Festival and Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, as well as the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Cleveland Orchestra, New York Philharmonic and Boston Symphony Orchestra. He has performed several times with the Minnesota Orchestra since 1995. His recent engagements have included singing the title role of Mozart's *Idomeneo* with the Orquestra Metropolitana de Lisboa and Tito in Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito* at Glyndebourne with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. This season, he is featured as Mamud in *La verità in cimento* at Opernhaus Zürich. Among his many recordings and accolades, he earned Grammy nominations for recordings of Handel's *Hercules* and Scarlatti's *Il Primo Omicidio*. More: imgartists.com.



Christopher Edwards, baritone

Christopher Edwards is an avid opera and concert performer who makes his Minnesota Orchestra debut in these performances. Most recently he has appeared as a soloist in Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Dona Nobis Pacem* with the Washington Men's Camerata and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with Symphonicity. His major opera roles include Leporello in *Don Giovanni*, Bartolo in *The Barber of Seville*, and Figaro and the Count in *The Marriage of Figaro*. He also performed in *Così fan tutte* with the Charleston Symphony as part of a special collaboration with the Peabody Institute. As a performer of Baroque music, he has performed with Bach in Baltimore and the Bach Choir of Bethlehem, with whom he won the Biennial Bach Vocal competition in 2016. He is a graduate of the Peabody Institute, and a former Songfest at Colburn Young Artist.



Minnesota Chorale
Kathy Saltzman Romey,

artistic director

Barbara Brooks,
accompanist and
artistic advisor

The Minnesota Chorale, the Minnesota Orchestra's principal chorus since 2004, is now in its 24th season under the leadership of Kathy Saltzman Romey. Founded in 1972, the Chorale is the state's preeminent symphonic chorus, performing regularly with both this Orchestra and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. Among the Chorale's initiatives are its acclaimed Bridges community engagement program, the Minneapolis Youth Chorus and Prelude Children's Chorus, the Voices of Experience choir for older adults, Men in Music for high-school boys, InChoir open rehearsals and Emerging Conductor training program. More: mnchorale.org.

Minnesota Chorale roster

soprano

Alyssa K. Breece
Deborah Carbaugh
Cathy Crosby-Schmidt
Monica deCausmeaker
Deyhdra Dennis-Weiss
Laurel Drevlow
Kristin Elliott
Michelle Hayes
Pamela Marentette
Sara Payne
Elizabeth Pemberton
Deaven Swainey
Karen R. Wasiluk

alto

Judy Arnstein
Sara Boss
Susan Druck
Marcia Evans
Sara Fanucchi
Heather Hood
Celia McCoy
Mary B. Monson
Josey Poppin
Barbara S. Prince
Deborah Richman
Elizabeth Sullivan
Joanna Zawislak

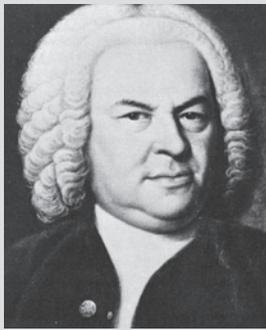
tenor

Samuel Baker
Jevon Bindman
Ryan Cogswell
Chris Crosby-Schmidt
Rich Maier
Josh McCallister
David Nordli
Patrick Romey
Jake Thede
Mark Trease

bass

Matthew Abernathy
Peder Bolstad
David Goudzwaard-Vaught
James Hild
Joe Kastner
Steven W. Landby
Mark Loder
Jon Nordstrom
Nathan Oppedahl
Bob Peskin
Chad Shultis
Russ Vander Wiel
Rick Wagner





Johann Sebastian Bach

Born: March 21, 1685,
Eisenach, Germany

Died: July 28, 1750,
Leipzig, Germany

Suite No. 3 in D major for Orchestra, BWV 1068

Composed: ca. 1729-1731

Whether for solo instrument or orchestra, the suite—a series of dance movements all in one key—was one of the Baroque forms that Bach brought to its peak. After his death, this type of suite virtually disappeared, supplanted by the classical symphony of Haydn. Following the style of his times, Bach opens his Third Orchestral Suite not with a dance, but with a grand overture in the traditional French mould. A broad and imposing beginning makes way for a swift section in which oboe and violin are partnered to lead off a fugal escapade, not strict, but free-flowing and full of dazzle. The processional mode returns to close the movement, the suite's longest.

Before the dances start, Bach offers an *Air* built on one of the most exalted melodies in all musical literature. The lofty strain is well-known from its transcription as a violin solo, where it sounds weightier than the ethereal strain you will encounter here. Then the dancing begins, but hardly in earnest, for these dances represent the stylization of movement, rather than something for cavorting feet. Of the two blue-blooded *Gavottes*, the second is to the first as a trio is to a minuet. The *Bourée*, a less patrician dance, steps down a social rank, and the suite concludes with the least self-conscious dance of all, a cheerful *Gigue* of folk origins.

Instrumentation: 2 oboes, bassoon, 3 trumpets, timpani, harpsichord continuo and strings

Excerpted from a program note by Mary Ann Feldman.

Christmas Oratorio, BWV 248, Cantatas IV, V and VI

Composed: ca. 1734

In the 18th century, the town of Leipzig celebrated the birth of Jesus and the events surrounding it not with a single feast day, but with a “season” of six special commemorations occurring between Christmas Day and the Feast of the Epiphany. These were the birth of Jesus (December 25), the announcement to the shepherds by a host of angels (December 26), the adoration of the baby by the shepherds (December 27), the circumcision and naming of Jesus (New Year's Day), the coming of the Magi from the East to find the Christ child (the Sunday after New Year's Day), and finally the Magi's worship with their gifts (January 6). On each of these days near the mid-1730s, Johann Sebastian Bach's congregation was filled with inspiration by a cantata that recounted one of these stories, commenting and reflecting upon the events and their meanings for the Christian individual and community.

a unique oratorio for the season

Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, completed around Christmastime of 1734, is not an oratorio in the usual sense. Instead the format is that of a cantata, with a tenor Evangelist who narrates the story of the birth of Christ as it appears in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. In order to keep clear what is narrative and what is commentary, all the Evangelist recitatives—the Gospel texts—are *secco* (dry, with simple chords from the cello and organ), while the other recitatives are paired with more complex instrumental lines or string accompaniment. These recitatives are unified by lyrical meditations, or arias. The rich, imaginative harmonizations of the ten chorales reflect the voice of the people, as they were hymn tunes mostly well-known to Bach's congregation.

Bach had already composed virtually all of his cantatas when he came to assemble the *Christmas Oratorio*. In fact, many of the movements are paraphrases from two earlier secular cantatas dating from 1733, the year before he produced the *Christmas Oratorio*. Because of this, it is difficult to judge the extent to which Bach viewed the work as an entity. However, one might point to the unifying aspect of the same chorale used in the first and last cantatas. Equally convincing is the fact that all of the opening choruses are composed in triple meter—an understood symbol of the Holy Trinity—and the oratorio commences and concludes in D major. Yet, there is no one consistent structural pattern uniting these cantatas. Five of them begin with a rousing major-key chorus, and one with a sinfonia. All but one end with a chorale, but there is no homogeneity in their presentation, ranging from the unadorned four-part setting of the fifth to the resplendent, chorale-fantasia of the sixth.

Today's concert features the fourth, fifth and sixth cantatas of the *Christmas Oratorio*, thus completing the narrative that began with last year's performances of the first three cantatas.

the cantatas in brief

On New Year's Day (The Feast of Circumcision). The fourth cantata is, in a way, the most perfect and symmetrical of the six sections of the oratorio. The offering of praise is directed more towards Jesus rather than to God, and the entire cantata is focused on the naming of the baby. The two horns give a peaceful, otherworldly quality to the opening chorus. After the Evangelist tells of Jesus' name, we encounter a section of gorgeous recitatives by the bass, with the sopranos of the choir intoning a chorale. This is among the most beautiful of all the chorales in the *Christmas Oratorio*. Next comes the stunning "echo" aria for soprano and oboe. For all of its simple, almost popular quality, the relationship between the obbligato, the voice, and the echo (the voice of humankind) is complicated and unpredictable. The soprano chorale returns with the bass recitatives. Then comes a vibrant and rhythmically irresistible tenor aria with violin duet. The final chorale brings back the radiant horns to close this wonderful, rich work.

On the Sunday After New Year (King Herod). The shape of the fifth cantata is wholly determined by the emotional impact of the narrative. It begins with the most unabandoned and cheerful chorus, and is the only one of the six cantatas to end with a plain chorale. It moves from the sheer ecstasy of Jesus' arrival to his personal and private adoption within the human heart. While this section of the oratorio has the most modest orchestration (just two oboes d'amore in addition to the strings), it is one of the liveliest sections of the oratorio. It begins with an energetic chorus. The Evangelist tells of the coming of the Wise Men, while the chorus takes the part of the Wise Men with tropes by the alto describing the listeners' reaction to them. The following chorale again represents the congregation's reaction, picturing the untarnished adoration of the infant before inevitable human sinful thoughts and actions manifest themselves. Although poetic rather than Biblical, the bass aria clearly depicts one of the Wise Men in his reaction to this remarkable situation. The Evangelist continues to describe King Herod's hysteria. The following trio takes a curious stance when the soprano and tenor ask when the Messiah will appear; the alto quiets them and announces that he already has. The concluding chorale, short and symmetrical, is almost rustic in character, and its message somewhat stark.

On the Feast of the Epiphany (The Adoration of the Magi). The festival of Epiphany, the traditional twelfth day of Christmas, completes the narrative of the Wise Men and the revelation of the arrival of the savior to the world. Bach celebrates with the maximum of musical ceremony, including trumpets and drums. While the

narration is concerned with the arrival of the Wise Men, much of the music exhibits a darker cast heading toward Lent. The opening chorus has a complexion that is both passionate and vertiginous, going in one direction then veering off unexpectedly in another, as befits the text, which is concerned with the treachery of Herod. After a bit of narration, the soprano sings an accompanied recitative and aria, rather abstract in its condemnation of Herod and its pronouncement of God's power. After more narration and a chorale setting, Bach abandons the Wise Men, and in the tenor recitative and aria again concentrates on the treachery of Herod. The little four-voice recitative leads into the astonishing final chorus, a triumphant trumpet-and-drum affair in which is imbedded the Passion chorale heard most often in solemn days before Easter. Thus the *Christmas Oratorio* begins and ends, significantly, with musical reference to the Passion, akin to the nativity paintings of the period that showed a small sapling growing in the background—the eventual tree from which the cross will be made.

Instrumentation: soprano, alto, tenor and bass soloists, four-part mixed chorus and orchestra comprising 2 oboes (both doubling oboe d'amore), bassoon, 2 horns, 3 trumpets, timpani, portative organ and strings

Program notes © **Craig Smith and Ryan Turner**,
courtesy of *Emmanuel Music*, www.emmanuelmusic.org.

coda

The Minnesota Orchestra has never before performed the fourth, fifth and sixth cantatas of **Bach's *Christmas Oratorio***. Prior to last December's performances of the oratorio's first half, the Orchestra had performed the first three cantatas together only once: on December 14, 1958, at Northrop Memorial Auditorium, under the baton of the Orchestra's Associate Conductor Gerard Samuel. Vocalists Helen Rice, Lois Duffy, Charles Fullmer and George Gaber were the featured soloists on that occasion, and the choir came from Central Lutheran Church—which is now a close neighbor of the Orchestra, located just a few blocks from Orchestra Hall in downtown Minneapolis.

Four days after that 1958 performance, the United States launched SCORE (Signal Communications by Orbiting Relay Equipment), the world's first communications satellite. It captured international attention that month by broadcasting a Christmas message from President Dwight D. Eisenhower, relayed via short-wave radio through an on-board tape recorder, bringing the U.S. closer to parity with the Soviet Union during the nascent Space Age.

