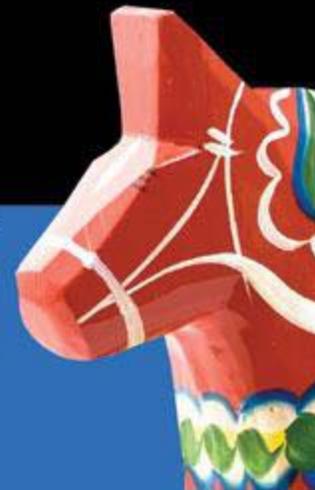


LINDSBORG

LITTLE SWEDEN, USA

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SPOTLIGHT ARTICLE
02/07/2011

For Immediate Release
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(888) 227-2227
Lindsborg CVB

The Messiah Festival of the Arts *Celebrating 130 Years of Handel's Messiah in Lindsborg*

LINDSBORG, KANSAS - 02/07/2011- The Bethany Oratorio Society was founded in 1881 in the parsonage of Dr. Carl and Alma Swensson. The Swenssons chose George Frideric Handel's *Messiah* for the society after seeing it performed in Illinois, and endeavored to teach the English words and music as the membership was composed entirely of immigrants. The beginning rehearsal notes for this English work were initially given in Swedish. The society members brought with them from the Old World an enduring passion for music and the arts, even as they lived in rough housing, difficult weather conditions and the hardness of a Great Plains pioneer existence. Religious freedom and the valuation of free expression was held in the highest regard. Therefore, they chose music that could transport them from their troubles and elevate them spiritually.



Messiah on Palm Sunday.

Handel's *Messiah*, an oratorio composed in 1741, embodies the sweeping scale of Christianity and is considered the most beloved piece of music in western culture. The story is told in three parts: the Nativity, Christ' crucifixion, resurrection and ascension and the redemption with victory over death.

Every Palm Sunday and Easter since the first rehearsals began in 1881, *Messiah* has been performed in Lindsborg. For 130 years the tradition continues as the longest consecutive annual performance in the United States. In the current Bethany Oratorio Society, some of the members have been participating for over 50 years. Often there are three generations of a family singing in the chorus. There are various reasons why people return year after year. "It is such a maturing experience, a time of spiritual growth during Lent," explains Sharon Luka of Salina who has been blind since birth and sings from her braille copy. "It takes a lot of patience and commitment." Marianna Richard of Beloit says, "It's a time of self-fulfillment and spiritual experience."

Dr. Jeffery Wall, Director of Choral and Vocal Activities at Bethany, states, "for my tenure as the Bethany Oratorio Society conductor, I hope to engage new performers and audience members alongside "veterans" to provide a musically and spiritually enriching experience. I want to honor the traditions of the past, but forge new and exciting territory too. Newcomers can join the chorus by arriving one hour early to one of the first two rehearsals for an easy voice placement hearing. I will test their range and perhaps ask them to sing a simple hymn or tune as a pitch retention exercise. Interested orchestra players should contact either me or Dr. Richard Koshgarian. I encourage everyone to consider being a part of this special experience."

In addition to the tradition of *Messiah*, Johann Sebastian Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* is another vital part in the Messiah Festival of the Arts. *St. Matthew Passion*, established by Dr. Hagbard Brase, a graduate of the Royal Conservatory of Music in Stockholm, was first performed in Lindsborg on Good Friday, 1929, the 200th anniversary of the original presentation at St. Thomas Church in Leipzig. *St. Matthew Passion* leads the audience from Maundy Thursday to the crucifixion of Christ in the Gospel according to Matthew. It is believed to be a masterpiece of religious classical music.

"If you have never sung in the Messiah Festival or attended the performances, we invite and encourage you to be a part of the Festival this year. This will truly be an Easter journey for you!"--Maridene Lundstrom, chorus singer for 54 years and longest participating member.

Information about ticket sales for *Messiah* or *St. Matthew's Passion* is available on the [website](#) or by contacting the Messiah Festival Coordinator, Blakely Bunning, at 785-227-3311, ext. 8137.

The Messiah Festival of the Arts Schedule:

April 14-27
Messiah Festival Juried Student Art Exhibition
Hours: Daily 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Mingenback Art Center

Events & Performances

April 17, Palm Sunday
Messiah Festival Juried Student Art Exhibition Reception 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Awards Ceremony 1:30 p.m.
Mingenback Art Center

The Bethany Oratorio Society presents Handel's *Messiah*
Presser Hall 3:00 p.m.
Ticket required.

April 18, Monday
Symphonic Band Concert
Presser Hall, 7:30 p.m.
Free admission.

April 19, Tuesday
Messiah Festival Soloists Recital
Presser Hall, 7:30 p.m.
Free admission, reception to follow in Sandzén Gallery.

April 21, Thursday
Student Honors Recital
Presser Hall, 3:15 p.m.
Free admission.

Maundy Thursday Service
Burnett Center, 7:00 p.m.
Free admission.

April 22, Good Friday
The Bethany Oratorio Society presents J.S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*
Presser Hall, 7:30 p.m.
Ticket required.

April 23, Saturday
Messiah Festival Theatre Production
TBA

April 24, Easter Sunday
The Bethany Oratorio Society presents Handel's *Messiah*
Presser Hall, 3:00 p.m.
Ticket required.



Contact the Convention and Visitors Bureau for more information regarding events in Lindsborg.
Ph: (785) 227-TOUR (8687) or Toll free: (888) 227-2227. E: cvbdir@lindsborgcity.org.
W: visitlindsborg.com. When in Lindsborg, please stop by at 104 E. Lincoln for all travel information.
See you in the 'Borg--A Destination For All Seasons!

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