



NEWS RELEASE | August 22, 2017

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The Florida Orchestra to perform Handel's Messiah at churches, Mahaffey

Tickets on sale for holiday staple that has awed audiences for 275 years as orchestra celebrates its 50th anniversary season.

ST. PETERSBURG, FL – Just days before Christmas, The Florida Orchestra and the Master Chorale of Tampa Bay will perform Handel's *Messiah* with its famous "Hallelujah" chorus at two large churches and the Mahaffey Theater, offering an astounding 10,000 seats throughout Tampa Bay to experience the oratorio that has awed audiences for 275 years. Tickets are on sale now as part of the orchestra's 50th anniversary 2017-18 season.

Three consecutive nights of the holiday staple, under the baton of Music Director Michael Francis, begin at the 5,000-seat Idlewild Baptist Church in Lutz on Thursday, December 21. A special performance follows on Friday, December 22, at the Mahaffey Theater in St. Petersburg, with its revitalized acoustics. The final concert is Saturday, December 23, at First Baptist Church of Indian Rocks, which seats about 3,000. All performances start at 8 p.m. Enhancing the experience at the churches, the orchestra and Master Chorale will be simulcast on their state-of-the-art projection screens.

Tickets are on sale now. Reserved seats at the Mahaffey Theater are \$15, \$30, \$45 and \$55. Seats at the two churches are general admission only, for \$30.

George Frideric Handel's *Messiah* has mesmerized audiences since its debut in 1742 in Dublin. The oratorio based on scripture is in English and was originally an Easter offering. Now it's a fixture at Christmastime in churches and concert halls around the world. *Messiah* is also Handel's most famous work, though it didn't take long to compose, only about three or four weeks in the summer of 1741. The story goes that when Handel wrote the "Hallelujah" chorus, he exclaimed through tears: "I did think I saw heaven open, and saw the very face of God."

Tickets to *Messiah* and all Florida Orchestra concerts may be purchased online at floridaorchestra.org; by phone at 727.892.3337 or 1.800.662.7286; and at The Florida Orchestra Ticket Center in the St. Petersburg College Building at 244 2nd Avenue North (main floor) in downtown St. Petersburg. Business hours are Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The Florida Orchestra's 50th anniversary concert season officially opens Oct. 6-8 with Michael Francis conducting *Carmina Burana* -- also featuring the Master Chorale of Tampa Bay -- in Tampa, St.

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Petersburg and Clearwater in the Tampa Bay Times Masterworks series. The season embraces old favorites as well as new pieces, ranging from Dvorak's *New World Symphony* to Verdi's massive *Requiem*. The Raymond James Pops series opens Oct. 13-15 with *Swing is the Thing* and includes the Music of Star Trek & Star Wars and Rodgers & Hammerstein. The expanded morning Coffee concert season, with performances in St. Petersburg and Clearwater, opens Oct. 12.

See a full calendar at floridaorchestra.org

Click for more on Music Director [Michael Francis](#)

[About The Florida Orchestra](#)

Celebrating its 50th anniversary in the 2017-18 season, The Florida Orchestra is recognized as Tampa Bay's leading performing arts institution, the largest professional symphony orchestra in Florida, and one of the most vibrant and innovative orchestras in America. Under the leadership of Music Director Michael Francis, it performs more than 130 concerts a season, with series of classical, popular, and morning coffee concerts in Tampa, St. Petersburg and Clearwater, as well as free Pops in the Park concerts. Dedicated to bringing music to all people, connecting to the community is a priority, with pre-concert talks, family and youth concerts and other educational activities. Kids and teens get in free to classical Masterworks concerts with Classical Kids tickets. To subscribe or buy tickets: 727.892.3337 or 1.800.662.7286; floridaorchestra.org.

[About the Master Chorale of Tampa Bay](#)

The Master Chorale of Tampa Bay, under the direction of [Doreen Rao](#), Visiting Artistic Director, is an auditioned, highly select 150-voice volunteer chorus embracing a broad representation of singers from the entire Tampa Bay area. Recognized as the premier choral ensemble in Tampa Bay, and one of the country's finest choirs, The Master Chorale of Tampa Bay has a decades-long tradition of elevating the cultural experience of the Tampa Bay community. Furthermore, with internationally distributed recordings and important commissions from contemporary choral composers, the Chorale is consistently advancing the choral art form. Find out more about the Chorale at www.MasterChorale.com.