

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, February 23, 2009

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MESSIAH FESTIVAL WELCOMES PAST SOLOISTS BACK TO THE STAGE

LINDSBORG, Kan.—Audience members may recognize familiar faces on Presser Hall's stage this April during the 2009 Bethany College Messiah Festival of the Arts. Five virtuoso soloists, all of whom have previously sung in the festival, will return to perform Handel's "Messiah" and Bach's "St. Matthew Passion" with the Bethany Oratorio Society.

Soloists for performances of Handel's "Messiah" and Bach's "St. Matthew Passion" include soprano Janeanne Houston, mezzo soprano Emily Lodine, tenor Randall Black and baritone Jeffrey Snider. In addition, bass baritone Kevin Eckard will sing bass arias and roles in the "St. Matthew Passion."

A new face on the stage this year will be conductor Mark Bowdidge, visiting associate professor of music. Bowdidge is the twenty-fifth conductor in the festival's 128-year history. He previously was assistant professor of music at Brewton-Parker College, Mount Vernon, Georgia. He has served as an organist, choir director and vocalist at numerous churches. Bowdidge holds a Doctor of Musical Arts and Master of Music, both with concentrations in conducting, from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"It is my sincere delight to be affiliated, ever so briefly, with the Messiah tradition. I am eager to work with the chorus and orchestra in the presentation of these monuments of the choral and orchestral repertoire as we retell the great story of God's love for us in the person of Jesus Christ," said Bowdidge.

Soprano Janeanne Houston performed in the 2001 Messiah Festival. Her recordings include "So Great a Joy," "Living Mysteries," "The Chamber Music of Dan Locklair," "So Much Beauty," "The Shining Place" and most recently "Songs of the Cotton Grass." In addition, she has recorded many of North Carolina composer Dan Locklair's songs and vocal work, and in 2006 she recorded "Lairs of Soundings" with the Slovak Radio Orchestra. Concert works she has performed numerous times include "Carmina Burana," "Messiah," Mozart's "Mass in C Minor" and requiems of Brahms, Verdi, and Mozart. Houston is

the managing and founding member of Northwest Artists and the recording label Elmgrove Productions. She is a member of the voice faculty at Pacific Lutheran University.

Mezzo soprano Emily Lodine performed in the 1998 Messiah Festival. She has appeared with the symphonies of Jacksonville, Milwaukee and Indianapolis, as well as the orchestras of South Dakota, Phoenix and Rochester, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Philip Glass Ensemble. A frequent soloist with Music of the Baroque, she can be heard on the group's recording "Vom Himmel Hoch." She also received acclaim for her work in the world premiere and recording of Jon Polifrone's "Requiem," which was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. Lodine made her Carnegie Hall debut in the "Messiah" and her Ravinia Festival debut in Strauss' "Elektra." In addition to numerous other opera credits, Lodine created the role of Verena Marsh in the world premiere of Paulus' opera "Summer." A graduate of Indiana University, she is the recipient of four Margaret Hillis Fellowships and six grants from the Scholl Foundation.

Tenor Randall Black performed in the 2001 and 2004 Messiah Festivals. He has won critical acclaim with orchestras and opera companies throughout the United States, including his Carnegie Hall debut as the tenor soloist in the "Mozart Requiem," the American premiere of Henze's "We Come to the River" with the Santa Fe Opera, and the tenor solos in the "Messiah" with Robert Shaw and the Atlanta Symphony. His accomplishments include a European debut with a solo concert at St. Martin-in-the-Fields Church in London, England; the release of the compact disc, "An American Son: The Vocal Works of Joseph Baber, Vol. 1;" and creating the role of the Evangelist in the World Premiere of William Averitt's "St. Matthew Passion." Black teaches voice at Murray State University.

Baritone Jeffrey Snider performed in the 1999 and 2003 Messiah Festivals. His recent concert appearances include the title role in Mendelssohn's "Elijah" with Oklahoma State University and Boston Avenue United Methodist Church in Tulsa, the baritone solo in Orff's "Carmina Burana" with the Knoxville, Tennessee and Corpus Christi Symphony Orchestras, the baritone solos in Vaughan Williams' "Hodie" with the South Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, and the Duruflé "Requiem" and Mendelssohn's "Die Erste Walpurgisnacht" with the Tulsa Oratorio Society. In 2005, he placed second in Opera New York's inaugural Chester Ludgin American Verdi Baritone Competition, singing before a panel that included

opera stars Placido Domingo, James Morris and Regina Resnick. A native of Buffalo, New York, Snider is an associate professor at the University of North Texas.

Bass baritone Kevin Eckard performed in the 2005 Messiah Festival. A native of South Carolina, he has performed in the United States, Italy, Austria and Great Britain. He has performed as a soloist with the International Choir Festival, the Denver Opera, the Colorado Symphony and the National Repertory, among others. Along with a number of operatic roles, he has been the featured soloist in Mozart's "Requiem," Brahms' "Requiem," Faure's "Requiem" and Beethoven's "Ninth Symphony." Eckard has studied at the University of South Carolina, Indiana University and the University of Colorado, Boulder. He is a two-time winner of the Metropolitan Opera's South Carolina District competition, and has won the Margerite Elfe Erckmann Award for vocal performance. Eckard directs the opera program at the University of Central Oklahoma.

In addition to "Messiah" and "St. Matthew Passion," Houston, Lodine, Black and Snider will perform in recital April 7 at 7:30 p.m. in Presser Hall auditorium. The recital is free and open to the public.

The 128th consecutive annual season of Handel's "Messiah" by the Bethany Oratorio Society will be held April 5 and 12 at 3 p.m. in Presser Hall auditorium on the Bethany College campus. The Bethany Oratorio Society will perform Bach's "St. Matthew Passion" April 10 at 7:30 p.m. The Messiah Festival of the Arts also includes art exhibitions, theater performances and ensemble concerts. For a full schedule of events, visit www.bethanylb.edu/messiah.

Tickets for Bethany College's performances of Handel's "Messiah" and Bach's "St. Matthew Passion" are now on sale. Tickets can be purchased at Presser Hall Box Office on Bethany's campus, open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.; by phone at 785-227-3380, ext. 8132; or online at www.bethanylb.edu/messiah. Special rates are available for churches and tour groups. Complimentary tickets are available for students interested in the arts.

Bethany College, established by Swedish Lutheran immigrants in 1881, is a college of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The mission of Bethany College is to educate, develop, and challenge individuals in their search for truth and excellence as they lead lives of faith, learning and service. Bethany College is on the Web at www.bethanylb.edu.

