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#### SOLOISTS ANNOUNCED FOR BETHANY'S "MESSIAH" FESTIVAL

LINDSBORG, Kan.—The 129<sup>th</sup> Messiah Festival of the Arts will welcome back soloists from the past as well as introduce a new performer to the Presser Hall Stage. Soprano Maureen Sorensson, mezzo soprano Jean McDonald, tenor Jeffrey Brich, bass-baritone Dashon Burton and Evangelist and tenor Christopher Cock will join the Bethany Oratorio Society March 28-April 4 for the longest running "Messiah" performances in North America.



Bethany College's Director of Choral Activities Daniel Mahraun will return, after a sabbatical during the 2009 festival, as this year's conductor. He will also sing the bass arias and roles in Bach's "St. Matthew Passion." This century-old tradition began with Professor Samuel Thorstenberg, the conductor of the Bethany Oratorio Society from 1898-1909.

Maureen Sorensson, a soloist in 2005, is a member of the voice faculty at the University of Wyoming. She received her bachelor's and master's degrees in vocal performance from Colorado State



University and University of Colorado at Boulder under the instruction of the late Barbara Doscher. Sorensson, established as one of the leading regional sopranos in opera and oratorio literature, credits operatic roles in *Don Pasquale*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *The Magic Flute*. Her concert repertoire includes the cantatas, passions, oratorios, masses and requiems of J.S. Bach, Beethoven,

Mozart, Handel, Mendelssohn and more. She is also a member of the Central City Opera Ensemble, National Association of Teachers of Singing and Delta Omicron Music Fraternity.

Jean McDonald appeared on the Messiah stage in 2002. Currently, she serves the University of Northern Iowa as an associate professor of voice. Married to tenor Jeffrey Brich, her recent performances



include Ravel's *Sheherazade* with the Northern Iowa Symphony Orchestra, Britten's *Abraham and Isaac* for the Cedar Valley Chamber Music Festival, and *Il Tramonto* by Respighi with the UNI Faculty String Quartet. She has appeared with the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony Orchestra, the Des Moines Symphony, Cedar Rapids Symphony and Quad-Cities Mozart Festival. She holds degrees from the University of Iowa and Simpson College and several competitive honors, including awards from the National Association of Teachers of Singing Artist Auditions and the District Metropolitan Opera Auditions.

Jeffrey Brich, a soloist in 2002, is an instructor of applied voice at the University of Northern Iowa. As a tenor, he has distinguished himself in a broad spectrum of literature, performing with versatility in



orchestral, opera and recital venues. Professionally, he has performed nearly 20 roles in opera and oratorio, including frequent performances of Handel's *Messiah*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and Mozart's *Requiem* in locations such as Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Peoria and Cedar Rapids. Brich has performed with David Aiken Production's national tour of *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. He received a bachelor's of music degree from the University of Iowa and his master's of music degree from the University of Northern Iowa. He has also earned several competitive honors.

New to the festival, Dashon Burton has performed vocal music around the country since high school. He studied with George Vassos at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland and graduated with a bachelor of music in voice from Oberlin College Conservatory of Music in 2005. He then joined the professional men's vocal ensemble Cantus, based in Minneapolis, Minn. With Cantus, he has collaborated with various artists including The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Bobby McFerrin and Trio Mediaeval. As a soloist, he has performed with the Cleveland Orchestra as well as at a variety of solo and chamber recital events. Currently, Burton is a student at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, where he studies with James Taylor.

Christopher Cock, director of choral and vocal activities at Valparaiso University, last appeared in the Messiah Festival 15 years ago. Through his activities as a choral music educator and as a distinguished soloist, he has forged a unique career path combining the roles of conductor and performer.



Cock has conducted in Minnesota, Georgia, Ohio, Hong Kong and Carnegie Hall. In 2004, he founded the Bach Institute at Valparaiso. His appearance as Evangelist in the *St. Matthew Passion* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic earned him praise from the *LA Times* for his “illuminating freshness.” He has also performed with the Florida Orchestra, the Los Angeles Master Chorale, the Miami Bach Society, the American Sinfonietta and the Grand Rapids Symphony.

To purchase or reserve tickets for Bethany College’s performances of Handel’s “Messiah” and Bach’s “St. Matthew Passion”, call Bethany’s Messiah Manager at (785) 227-3380, ext. 8132, or e-mail [ashs@bethanylb.edu](mailto:ashs@bethanylb.edu). Special rates are available for students, churches and tour groups. Tickets can also be purchased online or in person at Presser Hall Box Office on Bethany’s campus, open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

For a full listing of special events and exhibits during the Messiah Festival of the Arts, visit [www.bethanylb.edu/messiah](http://www.bethanylb.edu/messiah).

Every year since 1882, the Bethany Oratorio Society has presented “Messiah” at the college. The society has performed “Messiah” across the plains, in Carnegie Hall and on national television. For more information about the Messiah Festival, call (785) 227-3380, ext. 8132.

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 to reach for truth and excellence as they lead lives of faith, learning and service. Bethany College is on the Web at [www.bethanylb.edu](http://www.bethanylb.edu).

Caption: Soloists soprano Maureen Sorensson, mezzo soprano Jean McDonald, tenor Jeffrey Brich, bass-baritone Dashon Burton and Evangelist tenor Christopher Cook will perform during the 2010 Messiah Festival of the Arts at Bethany College. Daniel Mahraun will conduct the Bethany Oratorio Society.