



Waterbury Symphony Orchestra

LEIF BJALAND, MUSIC DIRECTOR & CONDUCTOR
THE JANE HARKNESS SENDZIMIR MUSIC DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

Winter Solstice A Musical Offering of Hope & Light

Monday, December 21, 2020 · 7:45 PM

John Stanley
(1712 -1786)

Trumpet Voluntary

John Charles Thomas, trumpet
Christopher Houlihan, organ

John Rosamond Johnson
(1873-1954)

Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing

Lyrics: James Weldon Johnson
(1871-1938)

Michelle Johnson, soprano
Brian Major, baritone
John Charles Thomas, trumpet
Christopher Houlihan, organ

Antonio Vivaldi
(1678-1741)

Gloria, RV 589

III. Laudemus Te
Michelle Johnson, soprano
John Charles Thomas, trumpet
Christopher Houlihan, organ

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Toccata in C major, BWV 564

Christopher Houlihan, organ

George Frederick Handel
(1685-1789)

"The Trumpet Shall Sound" from *Messiah*

Brian Major, baritone
John Charles Thomas, trumpet
Christopher Houlihan, organ

Traditional
arr. Kevin Weed

Ma'oz Tzur (Rock of Ages)

Michelle Johnson, soprano
Brian Major, baritone
John Charles Thomas, trumpet
Christopher Houlihan, organ

Traditional
arr. William Berry

Go Tell It on the Mountain

Brian Major, baritone
John Charles Thomas, trumpet
Christopher Houlihan, organ

Katherine K. Davis
(1892-1980)

Carol of the Drum

Michelle Johnson, soprano
Brian Major, baritone
Dr. Mijin Choi, conductor/piano
David Wilson, percussion
Bravo Waterbury Students

Pietro Yon
(1886-1943)

Gesü Bambino

Christopher Houlihan, organ

José Feliciano
(b. 1945)

Feliz Navidad

Michelle Johnson, soprano
Brian Major, baritone
John Charles Thomas, trumpet
Christopher Houlihan, organ

Franz Gruber
(1787-1863)

Silent Night

Michelle Johnson, soprano
Christopher Houlihan, organ

Lyrics: Joseph Mohr
(1792-1848)

Adolphe Adam
(1803-1856)

Oh Holy Night

Michelle Johnson, soprano
Christopher Houlihan, organ

Jule Styne
(1905-1994)
Lyrics: Sammy Cahn
(1913-1993)

Let it Snow!

Michelle Johnson, soprano
Brian Major, baritone
Christopher Houlihan, organ

Lowell Mason
(1792-1872)
Lyrics: Isaac Watts
(1674-1748)
arr. John Rutter
(b. 1945)

Joy to the World

Michelle Johnson, soprano
Brian Major, baritone
John Charles Thomas, trumpet
Christopher Houlihan, organ

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Michelle Johnson

Soprano **Michelle Johnson** has been praised for her “extraordinary breath control and flawless articulation. Her voice is velvety and pliant – a dulcet dream.” In upcoming seasons, Johnson makes a debut with Opera Columbus, Knoxville Opera and Opera Idaho singing the title role of *Aida*, Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra singing Verdi’s *Requiem* and Madison Opera singing Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana*.

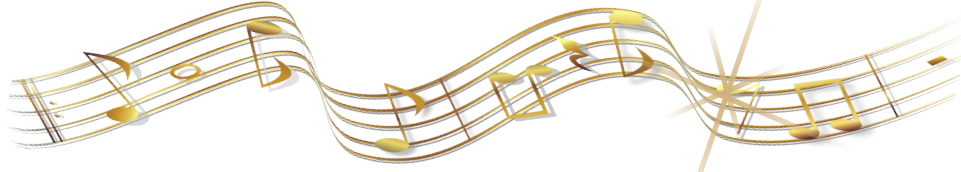
Last season, Johnson returned to Lyric Fest for “I Hear America Singing,” Sarasota Opera for Madame Lidoine, *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Boston Landmark Orchestra for *Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9* and made a debut with Columbus Symphony as soprano soloist in Verdi’s *Requiem* which all lead to rave reviews.



Past seasons included Leonora in *Il trovatore*, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Minnie in *La Fanciulla del West*, Kentucky Opera, Élisabeth de Valois in *Don Carlos* and title role *Aida*, Sarasota Opera, title role *Manon Lescaut* and Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, Opera Philadelphia, Mimi in *La bohème*, Annapolis Opera and Port Opera, *Aida*, Glimmerglass Music Festival and Opera Santa Barbara, Leonora in *Il trovatore* and Alice Ford in *Falstaff*, Opera in the Heights, soprano soloist Verdi’s *Requiem* and Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9*, Orquesta Sinfónica del Principado de Asturias, Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9*, Boston Philharmonic, an all French Opera concert with Maestro Michel Plasson, Montpellier, France, soprano soloist in Vaughan Williams’ *Dona nobis pacem* with Juneau Symphony, and an all Verdi concert with The Princeton Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Maestro Rossen Milanov. She also performed the title role in the rarely performed *Sakuntala* with Teatro Grattacielo, to very favorable reviews.

A graduate of the prestigious Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia, she was seen as the title role in *Suor Angelica*, Leonora in *Oberto*, Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, the Countess in *Capriccio*, and Alice Ford in *Falstaff*. Winner of numerous competitions, most notably Grand Prize Winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, William Matheus Sullivan Foundation, Gerda Lissner Foundation and the Giulio Gari Foundation.

Special Thanks



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Waterbury

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Brian Major



Charismatic baritone **Brian Major** continues to be praised by critics for his “velvety voice” and “commanding stage presence.” In the fall of 2019, Mr. Major joined Madison Opera for their production of *La traviata* as Baron Douphol and covering Giorgio Germont. In 2020, Mr. Major returns to Opera Grand Rapids as Ping in *Turandot*, Toledo Opera as Marcello in *La bohème*, makes his South American debut as Amonasro in *Aida* with the Theatro Municipal de São Paulo and makes his Princeton Festival debut as Germont in *La traviata*. During the 2020-2021 season, Mr. Major also will make his Chautauqua Orchestra debut singing Paul Moravec and Mark Campbell’s *Sanctuary Road* as well as selections from *Porgy & Bess* and his Opera on the James debut as Scarpia in *Tosca*. Recently, he made debuts with Toledo Opera, Opera Grand Rapids, and Opera Carolina in their productions of *The Magic Flute* and *Carmen* where he sang the roles of The Speaker and El Dancaïro. Other 2018-2019 season highlights included his turn in title role of *Gianni Schicchi* with Michigan State University Opera Theatre, a recital

for the Shivers Concert Series in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and a return to Colorado to sing Brahms’ *Ein deutsches Requiem* with The Colorado College Summer Music Festival. Mr. Major was also a featured musical guest at an Evening of Joyful Praise at the historic Great Auditorium in New Jersey and closed out his season as the baritone soloist in Orff’s *Carmina Burana* with the Boston University Tanglewood Institute.

Past season credits include his debut with Opera Columbus and Columbus Symphony Orchestra in a collaborative production of *Aida* as Amonasro. Mr. Major also presented Kirke Mechem’s *Songs of the Slave* in Boston Symphony Hall and reprised the role of Amonasro in a debut with Opera Theatre of the Rockies in their twentieth-year celebration where Mr. Major’s voice was described as “honey-filled and capable of organic, dramatic expression.”

Quickly gaining renowned for his proficiency in the iconic dramatic repertoire, Opera News praised Mr. Major’s Escamillo as “embracing the love of the spotlight” and “never losing the strength of the vocal line.” Mr. Major has performed with Opera Saratoga as Giorgio in Catan’s *Il Postino*, with Opera in the Heights where he gave a “sexy and despicable, full-bodied and broad” performance of the title role in *Don Giovanni*, with Opera Company of Middlebury where he sang the role of Germont in *La traviata*, and in Montpellier, France where he performed an all French Opera concert with Maestro Michel Plasson. Other operatic credits include Enrico in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Marcello in *La bohème*, Count Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro*, 1st Nazarene in *Salome*, and George Milton in *Of Mice and Men*.

An accomplished recitalist and concert artists, Mr. Major has been the baritone soloist in Orff’s *Carmina Burana*, Handel’s *Messiah*, Vaughan-Williams *Five Mystical Songs*, and Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*. The majority of these works were performed with The Siena Chamber Orchestra in Italy, Sun Valley Opera in Idaho, Des Moines Symphony Orchestra, and the Michigan State University Symphony Orchestra. He has won numerous awards and honors on the competition circuit, including 2nd Prize Harold Haugh Opera Vocal Competition, 1st prize Opera Ebony Vocal Competition, 3rd prize Annapolis Opera Vocal Competition, 2nd prize Opera at San Nicola Vocal Competition, 1st prize Harlem Opera Theater Vocal Competition, 1st prize Atlanta Music Club Vocal Competition, and Encouragement Prize Palm Beach Atlantic Vocal Competition. Mr. Major holds degrees from Morehouse College, Boston University, and Michigan State University.



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Special thanks to
Humphry Rolleston
*for sharing his many talents with the
Waterbury Symphony Orchestra!*

Christopher Houlihan



The organist **Christopher Houlihan** has established an international reputation as an “intelligently virtuoso musician” (Gramophone), hailed for his “glowing, miraculously life-affirming performances” (Los Angeles Times).

Houlihan has performed at Disney Concert Hall with the principal brass of the Los Angeles Philharmonic; the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia; and at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. The Los Angeles Times raved about his Disney Hall debut, proclaiming, “Houlihan is the next big organ talent.”

Highlights of Mr. Houlihan’s 2019-20 season include performances of Joseph Jongen’s monumental *Symphonie Concertante* with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra (opening concert of the Albert Schweitzer Organ Festival) and the St. Ann’s Festival Orchestra in Washington D.C.; solo recitals in St. Louis, Seattle,

New York City, Rohnert Park (CA), and Birmingham (AL); and chamber performances at the Screendoor Summer Music Festival in Camden, ME.

He has appeared in recital at the Cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris, Glasgow Cathedral in Scotland and San Francisco’s Grace Cathedral and Davies Symphony Hall, and at numerous conventions of the American Guild of Organists and the Organ Historical Society. In 2017 he was featured performer at the AGO Southeast Regional Convention at Jacoby Symphony Hall in Jacksonville, FL where he premiered Hannah Lash’s *Ludus* (written specifically for Houlihan). In 2014, Houlihan performed in a prime-time slot of WQXR’s All-Day Bach Organ Marathon in New York City which was webcast live and seen by thousands. Houlihan’s “Vierne 2012” tour attracted international attention and critical acclaim for his marathon performances of the six organ symphonies of Louis Vierne.

In 2020 Christopher Houlihan will release a recording on the Azica label featuring music by Vierne and César Franck. In 2017, Houlihan released *Christopher Houlihan plays Bach* (Azica), recorded at Trinity College, Hartford, CT. His other recordings include music by Maurice Duruflé and Jehan Alain, and *Organ Symphony No. 2* by Vierne, on Towerhill Records.

In 2017 Christopher Houlihan was appointed to the John Rose College Organist-and-Directorship Distinguished Chair of Chapel Music at Trinity College in Hartford, CT succeeding his former teacher John Rose.

In addition to his studies at Trinity College, Houlihan studied with the Grammy Award-winning organist Paul Jacobs at The Juilliard School, where he earned a master’s degree, and with Jean-Baptiste Robin at the French National Regional Conservatory in Versailles.

More information is at ChristopherHoulihan.com. Christopher Houlihan is represented in North America exclusively by Phillip Truckenbrod Concert Artists, LLC.

John Charles Thomas



John Charles Thomas is the Principal Trumpet with the Waterbury Symphony having played in that role since 2010. He is also the Assistant Principal Trumpet with the Hartford Symphony, and Principal with Ridgefield Symphony. For twenty years, John was a member of the Grammy Award winning Chestnut Brass Company in Philadelphia. He has performed in the premieres of works in Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, and appeared in the U.S., Canada, Europe and Asia as soloist and chamber musician.

John has performed frequently with the New York Philharmonic, and various Broadway shows. His solo appearances have included performances of Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 2*, Haydn's *Trumpet Concerto*, Copland's *Quiet City*, and

the Richard Rodney Bennett *Trumpet Concerto* among others.

He is the Artist/Teacher of Classical Trumpet at the University of Rhode Island and is on the trumpet faculty at the Hartt School in Hartford.



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On the Green in Waterbury, Connecticut

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Waterbury Symphony Orchestra

LEIF BJALAND, MUSIC DIRECTOR & CONDUCTOR



Waterbury Symphony Orchestra

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Music, undeterred in its ability to bring us together!

On Saturday, September 26th, we came together in Hollow Park, spread out across lawn chairs and picnic blankets, and bid farewell to summer. It had been more than six long months since our musicians had last gathered to make music. The familiar sounds of Vivaldi filled the air on what turned out to be a picture-perfect autumn day. But on that day we experienced this masterpiece as never before, and for many of us, it was as if we were hearing Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* for the first time. Perhaps what we were hearing was the unison sigh of relief that washed over us, artists and audience joined together in a shared bond of hope, and a collective belief that music had brought us together again.

Violin soloist, Sirena Huang, was particularly grateful to be on stage again, and she had Isabelle Curtiss to thank. A long-time supporter and former Board member of the WSO, Isabelle's gift represented her larger commitment to fostering opportunities for youth through music. Following the concert, Sirena wrote a letter to Isabelle expressing her gratitude:

"I want to sincerely thank you for your incredible generosity in making Saturday's concert possible. As a musician, having the opportunity to connect and share music with a live audience is one of our greatest joys, which has been extremely challenging for us during the pandemic. While I am very grateful for the technologies we have today to enable virtual concerts, nothing beats a live concert for me. Saturday felt truly uplifting. Sharing this experience with musicians and audiences during times of such uncertainty felt so rejuvenating and meaningful. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to be back on stage – our home – and to experience the beauty of live music together again."



This is a letter that Isabelle will always cherish, and it is a letter that belongs to all of you. Thanks to you, the WSO has not only survived the last eight months, but is thriving amidst unprecedented circumstances, providing invaluable music education and performance programs.

"One may ask, 'Why give during one's lifetime?' This experience says it all."—Isabelle Curtiss

As the curtain falls on 2020, we are asking once more for your support. Whether virtually, or in person, the WSO is here for you during a time when we need music more than ever. As we face prolonged uncertainty, your ongoing generosity ensures the continuation of an 83-year-old legacy of bringing people together and creating community through the shared experience of music.

Thank you,

Robert Cinnante

Robert Cinnante, Executive Director





**Waterbury
Symphony Orchestra**

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