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ORATORIO SOCIETY PRESENTS POWERFUL 'JUDAS MACCABAEUS'

(Rochester, NY, November 7, 2016) – An acknowledged masterwork by the premier composer in the art form returns to Rochester this December, when the Rochester Oratorio Society presents *Judas Maccabaeus*, the dramatic choral work by George Frideric Handel, **Sunday, December 10, 2017, 3:00 P.M., at Hochstein Performance Hall**, 50 Plymouth Avenue North, in Rochester, NY. Tickets for this performance (\$25, students \$10 with ID) are available from the Oratorio Society office at (585) 473-2234, and online at <https://handel.bpt.me>. A pre-concert chat, presented by Nazareth College Emeritus professor, Dr. Joe Kelly, offers perspectives on the text of the Oratorio.

Handel's oratorio was written in 1746, five years after his world-famous *Messiah*. It was immensely popular during the composer's lifetime, receiving dozens of performances. The story relates to the period 170-160 BCE, when Judea was under occupation by a dynasty of Hellenistic kings who sought to vanquish Jewish culture and religion. Through decades of struggle, the Jews prevailed, a triumph celebrated to this day through the Hanukkah tradition. Handel's history of the Maccabees contains some of his best known and loved music, sung in English and easily enjoyed by audiences hearing the piece for the first time.

The ROS has engaged nationally-renowned vocal artists with strong dramatic delivery to create the roles of Judas, Simon and the Israelites. Tenor Boris Van Druff sings the title role. Roberts Wesleyan alumna and emerging national star, Brittany Hebel, and Nazareth College faculty member (likewise a national performing artist), Jessica Ann Best, take the roles of the Israelites. Bass Eric Kesler takes dual roles as Judas's brother, Simon, and as the Roman Ambassador, Eupolemus. The fully-professional ROS Orchestra and Oratorio Society chorus perform under Artistic Director Eric Townell. "The story is incredibly relevant today, and music is fiery, triumphant, beautiful and engaging," Townell remarks.

Also, this December comes "*A City Sings for the Season*", the fourth annual community holiday celebration of music and dance presented by the Rochester Oratorio Society, **Sunday, December 3, 2017, 3:00 P.M., in the Stardust Ballroom**, 41 Backus Street, at the Edgerton Recreation Center in Rochester. Admission is free of charge. Donations of food items, cash and personal care items accepted at the door benefit ACTION FOR A BETTER COMMUNITY.

The Rochester Oratorio Society, the region's premier large mixed chorus for adults, presents 4-6 performances annually, sings with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra creates and produces the international vocal competition, CLASSICAL IDOL™, each spring. ROS is set apart from other area groups as members are all auditioned adult community members from the nine-county region. Many acclaimed and world-renowned singers are the product of ROS, getting their start with the group and their education here in Rochester. Many alumni have gone on to perform in Europe and at professional operas throughout the country. Their professional engagements at ROS, along with the rich cultural life and family life of Rochester, keeps talent coming back to the group, including this concert's distinguished soloists.

Information on the ROS and its productions may be found at <http://ROSSings.org> or by calling the office at (585) 473-2234. This is the 72nd season of ROS and its rich history in the Rochester Community.

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