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Concert Report

Handel's *Messiah* was performed by the Willamette Master Chorus under the direction of Dr. Wallace Long, Jr. The guest soloists were Christine Welch as soprano, Lisa Actor-Leslie as alto, Les Green as tenor, and Kevin Helppie as Bass. The concert was held in Hudson Hall on the Willamette University campus. Hudson Hall was a great venue for this performance. It had two levels of seating and a very high ceiling. The color scheme was white walls with red curtains.

The orchestra was much smaller than the orchestra for Western Oregon University's *Messiah* performance. The Willamette Master Chorus, including the Willamette Chamber Choir, had over one hundred voices and had a huge sound that fit this music. All performers were wearing black. The women wore black sparkling dresses and the men wore tuxes. The performance included the second and third parts of the *Messiah* in light of Easter.

The concert opened with the *Sinfonia* by the orchestra which is the introduction to part one. The rest of the concert was played in order from the beginning of part two to the end of part three. After the *Sinfonia* all the late audience members arrived and it interrupted the flow of the performance. The conductor waited after the *Sinfonia* for everyone to be seated but there were no ushers to seat them so it took about five minutes. After they were seated the performance continued.

Since Selections of the *Messiah* were performed at Western Oregon University, the focus is on music that they did not perform. The second piece was a chorus piece entitled *Behold the Lamb of God*. Throughout this piece the strings play along with the vocal parts the majority of the time. The next piece was an alto air entitled *He Was*

Despised. The soloist would have a section of music and the strings would echo that section and the soloist would continue.

After the intermission was part three of the *Messiah* and the performers greatly portrayed a chorus piece entitled *Since By Man Came Death*. The harmony in this piece reflects the text very well and the performers did a wonderful job showing the text. It starts out dark and scary when it speaks of death. Then the text speaks of resurrection and the music is very happy and the performers also acted happy as well to portray this. It continues through another contrast when speaking of death again and then it becomes happy and glorious because Christ is made alive. The music of this piece is excellent. The dark text parts are very slow and the happy parts are very fast and celebratory.

Another great piece was *The Trumpet Shall Sound* which is a bass air. The trumpeter for this piece was excellent. The soloist also did a great job with the text, especially the line when it speaks of the trumpet sounding and the music ascends. Another instance of this is on the word “changed,” when there is a long melisma on that word that changes notes very quickly to show the text. This piece seemed very difficult and the trumpeter and soloist had a little trouble in a few minor spots but overall did a great job.

The performance practice of the performers was very well planned out. The choir stood and sat with the cue of the director and the soloists stayed in character for each piece until it was completely finished. The *Messiah* is very difficult because it is hard on the performers since they never get a break. The performers pushed through it though and kept their energy for the whole concert. Musically, the performers sounded great and the concert went very well.