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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **National Philharmonic Performs Handel's *Messiah* at the Music Center at Strathmore**

**North Bethesda, MD, November 2, 2016** –Hear the genius of Handel as the National Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorale perform his most beloved oratorio, the ***Messiah***, on **Saturday, December 17 at 8pm** and **Sunday, December 18 at 3pm** at the **Music Center at Strathmore**. Led by Artistic Director **Stan Engebretson**, the concert will feature the National Philharmonic's nearly 200 voice all-volunteer Chorale, as well as soloists **Danielle Talamantes** (soprano); **Magdalena Wór** (mezzo-soprano); **Matthew Smith** (tenor); and **Christòpheren Nomura** (baritone).

Handel's *Messiah*, among the most popular works in Western choral literature, was first performed in Dublin on April 13, 1742. The composer's most famous work is divided into three parts that address specific events in the life of Christ. Part one is primarily concerned with the Advent and Christmas stories; part two chronicles Christ's passion, resurrection, ascension and commitment to spreading the Christian message; and part three is based primarily upon the events chronicled in the Revelation of St. John. The National Philharmonic and Chorale, in addition to a stellar cast of soloists, will perform the complete work, which includes such favorites as "The Trumpet Shall Sound," "And the Glory of the Lord," and, of course, the famous "Hallelujah Chorus."

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### About the Soloists

“It’s not often that a fortunate operagoer witnesses the birth of a star,” noted of soprano **Danielle Talamantes’** recent role debut as Violetta in *La Traviata*. This season, Talamantes return to the Metropolitan Opera to reprise the role of Frasquita in Bizet’s *Carmen* as well as debut the role of Anna in Verdi’s *Nabucco*. She will also be the featured soloist in performances with the Manchester Symphony Orchestra and Oratorio Society of VA, as well as Mozart’s *Requiem* with Phoenix Symphony, Brahms *Requiem* and Verdi’s *Requiem* with Gloria Musicae.

Other recent engagements include Haydn’s *Creation* with Cathedral Choral Society, Handel’s *Messiah* with Phoenix Symphony, Haydn’s *Lord Nelson Mass* with the National Philharmonic, Violetta in *La Traviata* at Cedar Rapids Opera and Finger Lakes Opera, Adina in *L’elisir d’amore* at Gulfshore Opera and Mimí in *La Bohème* at St. Petersburg Opera, and a début at Spoleto Festival USA as Sergente in *Veremonda*.

Talamantes recently released her debut album, *Canciones españolas*, to critical acclaim and her sophomore album, *Heaven and Earth, A Duke Ellington Songbook* is an exciting crossover into jazz. Both albums can be found on the MSR Classics label.

“...and (**mezzo-soprano**) **Magdalena Wor** almost stole the show as a well-defined and well-sung Suzuki,” proclaimed Anne Midgette of *The Washington Post* following Magdalena’s role debut of Suzuki with Virginia Opera.

This season holds Magdalena’s debut performance with Seattle Symphony as soloist for their performances of *Messiah*. She sings Maddalena in Opera Birmingham’s *Rigoletto* and Bach *B Minor Mass*. This past season, Magdalena sang *Alexander Nevsky* and *Messiah* with National Philharmonic Orchestra and Suzuki in Opera Birmingham’s *Madama Butterfly*. In 2011-2012, Magdalena sang *Carmen* for Lyric Opera of Virginia, *Messiah* with Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Alabama Symphony Orchestra, was soloist for Janáček’s *Glagolitic Mass* with Cathedral Chorale Society of the Washington National Cathedral and for Bach *Magnificat* with National Philharmonic, and gave recitals at the Polish and Hungarian Embassies in Washington, D.C.

Magdalena Wór is a First Place Winner of the Heinz Rehfuss Vocal Competition, a

Metropolitan Opera Competition National Finalist, an alumna of the San Francisco Opera's Merola Summer Opera Program and Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program at the Washington National Opera. Magdelana is originally from Poland and has lived in the United States since 1991.

**Matthew Smith** is an accomplished **tenor**, who has performed with many prestigious ensembles, including the Washington Bach Consort, the Cathedral Choral Society, the Washington Concert Opera, the Niagara Symphony Orchestra, the Pennsylvania Chamber Orchestra, and the Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia. Matthew received the Carmel Bach Festival's Adams Fellowship for performance and study of the music of Bach in 2008. A finalist in the 2002 San Francisco Opera Center auditions and a semifinalist in the 2005 Montreal International Musical Competition, his operetta and operatic roles have included Frederic in *Pirates of Penzance*, Baron Zsupàn in *Countess Maritza*, The Prologue in *The Turn of the Screw*, Kaspar in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, the Mayor in *Albert Herring*, and Torquemada in *L'heure Espagnol*. He was a resident artist with the Pine Mountain Music Festival in 2003, where he covered the role of Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore*. Matthew has studied voice with Beverley Rinaldi and Christine Anderson while earning a B.M. in Voice from the Cleveland Institute of Music and a M.M. in Opera from Temple University. Matthew currently serves with the Air Force Singing Sergeants in Washington, DC. With them, he performs at the White House, with the National Symphony Orchestra, for nationally televised events including the funeral of former Presidents Ronald Reagan and Gerald Ford, and on tours across the United States.

Hailed as one of classical music's "rising stars" by *The Wall Street Journal*, **baritone Christòpheren Nomura** has appeared with many of the prominent North American orchestras including the Boston, San Francisco, National, Vancouver, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Pacific, Utah, and Memphis symphonies; the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra; Orchestra of St. Luke's; Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra; and Symphony Nova Scotia. Nomura's discography includes recordings on the Sony, Dorian, Teldec, London, Denon, TDK and L'oiseau Lyre labels. His recording of the Monteverdi *Vespers of 1610* on Telarc was nominated for a Grammy (Best Classical Ensemble Recording).

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Nomura has been the recipient of numerous awards and distinctions including a four-year Fulbright Grant to study with Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Hermann Prey and Gérard Souzay. He holds a Masters degree and Artists Diploma from the New England Conservatory of Music.

### **About the Conductor**

In demand throughout the United States and Europe, **Dr. Stan Engebretson** has led choirs in Venice’s Cathedral of St. Mark and taught in Cologne, Trier, St. Moritz, and Barcelona. He has studied with the great masters of choral music, including Robert Shaw, Gregg Smith, Richard Westenburg, Roger Wagner and Eric Ericson. After attending the University of North Dakota and earning his Doctorate from Stanford University, Engebretson taught at the University of Texas and the University of Minnesota. He also was the Artistic Director of the Midland-Odessa Symphony Chorale and the Associate Conductor of the Minnesota Chorale. In Washington since 1990, Engebretson is Professor of Music and Director of Choral Studies at George Mason University and is the Director of Music at the historic New York Avenue Presbyterian Church. From 1993-2003, he was the Artistic Director of the predecessor to the National Philharmonic Chorale, the Masterworks Chorus and the semi-professional National Chamber Singers. Engebretson remains active in other areas, performing as a professional chorister and lecturer, and leading the Smithsonian Institution’s Study Journeys at the Spoleto-USA Festival of the Arts.

### **About the National Philharmonic**

Led by dynamic Music Director and Conductor Piotr Gajewski, the National Philharmonic is known for performances that are “powerful,” “impeccable” and “thrilling” (*The Washington Post*). The National Philharmonic boasts a long-standing tradition of reasonably priced tickets and free admission to all young people age 7-17, assuring its place as an accessible and enriching component in Montgomery County and the greater Washington, DC area.

As the Music Center at Strathmore’s ensemble-in-residence, the National Philharmonic showcases world-renowned guest artists in time-honored symphonic masterpieces conducted by Maestro Gajewski and monumental choral masterworks under National Philharmonic Chorale Artistic Director Stan Engebretson.

The National Philharmonic also offers exceptional and unique education programs, such as the Summer Strings and Choral Institutes. Students accepted into the Summer String Institutes study privately with National Philharmonic musicians, participate in coached chamber music and play in an orchestra conducted by Maestro Gajewski and Philharmonic Associate Conductor Victoria Gau. For more information, visit [www.nationalphilharmonic.org](http://www.nationalphilharmonic.org) .

A free pre-concert lecture will be offered at **6:45 pm on December 17** and at **1:45 pm on December 18** in the concert hall at the Music Center at Strathmore. To purchase tickets to National Philharmonic's Messiah concerts on **December 17 and 18**, please visit [nationalphilharmonic.org](http://nationalphilharmonic.org) or call the box office at **(301) 581-5100**. Tickets start from \$28. Kids 7-17 are FREE through the ALL KIDS, ALL FREE, ALL THE TIME program (sponsored by *The Gazette*). ALL KIDS tickets must be purchased in person or by phone. Photo credit for the National Philharmonic Chorale is Don Lassell.

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