

## INTO VIEW

VIOLINIST PIERRE JOUBERT IS TRYING TO HIP LOCAL AUDIENCES TO DELIGHTS OF EARLY MUSIC

# He's putting a new sheen on the old

By Valerie Scher

UNION-TRIBUNE CLASSICAL MUSIC CRITIC

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**MUSICIAN:** Violinist Pierre Joubert

**TITLES:** Leader (concertmaster) of Bach Collegium San Diego's orchestra and member of England's Academy of Ancient Music.

**UPCOMING:** Bach Collegium's performance of Handel's "Messiah" (7 p.m. June 3, St. Paul's Cathedral, 2728 Sixth Ave., Bankers Hill). General admission \$30; \$20 for students. (760) 715-7956 or [www.bachcollegiumsd.com](http://www.bachcollegiumsd.com). **KEY**

**COMMENT:** "San Diego is the only major city on the West Coast that doesn't have its own baroque orchestra. I see it as a kind of mission to get one going."



*Pierre Joubert calls baroque and classical works "my kind of music."* Scott Lennett/Union Tribune

In 1980, violinist Pierre Joubert heard a concert in Birmingham, England, that altered the course of his musical career.

It was a Mozart performance by conductor Christopher Hogwood and the Academy of [Ancient] Music, the pioneering period instrument ensemble Hogwood founded.

"I thought – 'Wow!' It was if a light had suddenly come on," recalled the violinist, now 52. "Until then, I had always felt there was something not quite right about the way people were playing Mozart. That performance had the kind of lightness and texture that were often missing."

Rallying to the early music cause, Joubert became an expert in historically informed interpretations as well as a member of the esteemed academy. Married to dancer-choreographer Yolande Snaith, the head of UCSD's dance department, he continues to concertize, record and tour with the English ensemble though the couple has lived in the San Diego area since 2002.

Joubert even performed last month in La Jolla as part of a U.S. tour, led by new music director Richard Egarr, that included Carnegie Hall.

“It's a big effort to keep up with the organization,” Joubert said of the Cambridge-based orchestra that rehearses and records in London. “My goal is to create a situation where I won't have to do that because there will be enough work here.”

Two years ago, he helped found Bach Collegium San Diego's orchestra as the instrumental counterpart to the chorus established by music director Ruben Valenzuela. Next Sunday, conductor Stephen Sturk will lead both chorus and orchestra in what's being billed as San Diego's first complete period instrument performance of Handel's “Messiah.”

“There's no reason why it has to be done at Christmas,” said Joubert. “Performing the 'Messiah' in June gives a new slant to the piece.”

His goal is for the Collegium orchestra to develop into a full-fledged baroque ensemble rivaling those in such cities as Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles.

“It's time for it to happen here,” said Joubert, who's a member of Los Angeles' Musica Angelica Baroque Orchestra.

He also belongs to a highly musical family. His mother Mary is a pianist; his sister Anna, a cellist. His father, John Joubert, is a composer known for his choral music. And Pierre, who has been playing the violin since age 6, is a graduate of the Birmingham Conservatoire.

While his family traces its history back to 17th-century France – hence his French name – Pierre Joubert is clearly at home in Southern California. (“I was glad to leave England's long, damp, sunless winters,” said the native of Hull, England.)

He shares a bright, airy home in Encinitas with Snaith and their son Alexander, 8. He also has an 18-year-old son, Matthew, from a previous marriage.

Photos on the walls attest to his keen interest in photography. An array of recordings document his work with such celebrated ensembles as the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra as well as with the Academy of Ancient Music, whose new Handel album will be released later this year.

And Joubert's violin – made in England, around 1790 – is decidedly different from contemporary instruments. There's no chin rest. The neck and bow are shorter. The gut strings are tuned a half-step lower than is common today, creating a more mellow sound in baroque and classical works.

“There's a big learning process in bringing this music to life,” said the violinist who hopes to share what he has learned with a growing audience.

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