

Features

COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE



[Subscribe](#) | [Search Archive](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Frequently Asked](#)

Home

Classifieds

Autos/Boats/RVs
Garage Sales
Merchandise
Real Estate
- Online Tours
Top Jobs

Departments

News
Business
Sports
For the Record
Obituaries
Commentary
Features
- Outdoors
- Spiritual Life
- Travel
Lifestyle
Food
Calendars
Go!
Ovation
Entertainment
Photography
Darkow Cartoons
Columnists
Sudoku

XML

Blogs

Class Notes
Cool Dry Place
Game Over
Politics Blog

Sports Blogs

Behind The Stripes
Courtside View

Trib Board

News Forum
Sports Forum
Arts Forum
Food Forum

Special Sections

Special Ad Sections
Special Sports
Sections

Lift up your voice

Conductor, Columbia Chorale bring life to 'Messiah.'



Colin Suchland photo

Conductor Alex Innecco leads the Columbia Chorale in a rehearsal of Handel's "Messiah" on Monday in preparation for next week's concerts at Jesse Auditorium and Missouri United Methodist Church. The Columbia Civic Orchestra will perform at both venues.

By MARY T. NGUYEN of the Tribune's staff

Published Saturday, December 2, 2006

Handel's "Messiah" has become a popular chorale piece performed during the Christmas season. The sacred oratorio is the most famous work by the 18th-century baroque composer and chronicles the prophecy, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ with its libretto taken out of the Bible's Old and New Testaments.

The Columbia Chorale has taken on the task of performing the piece annually and this year will present the oratorio in two concerts accompanied by the Columbia Civic Orchestra. Although the choir group will perform decked in formal black attire, the execution itself will not be entirely sacred, with innovative interpretations and ideas from conductor Alex Innecco.

"The danger of the 'Messiah' is that it can be amazingly boring," said Ted Willmore, a tenor in the

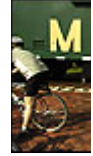
Where to see it

The Columbia Chorale will present Handel's "Messiah" in two concerts with the Columbia Civic Orchestra.

The first concert is at 7 p.m. Thursday at Jesse Auditorium as part of the University Concert Series. The second performance, a singalong concert, will be at 4 p.m. Dec. 10 at Missouri United Methodist Church, 204 S. Ninth St.

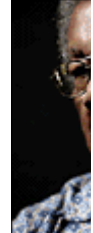
Tickets for the concert at Jesse Auditorium are from \$18 to \$22 and \$12 for children. Tickets for the singalong

In Feat



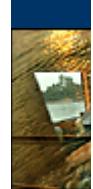
- Odysse
- Slide
- Audio

So



- Veter
- Multir

R



- Reac
- Slide
- Audio

In Feat



- Part 1: I
- Part 2: I
- Part 3: I
- Part 4: I



Search Archive

Subscribe

**Contact
Circulation**

**Newsroom Staff
Directory**

Tribune Jobs

**Tribune in
Education**

**Display
Advertising**

**Commercial
Printing**



chorale. But with Innecco leading, he said, they know their performance will be a more lighthearted and spirited version compared to its classical execution.

Part conceptual artist and part musician, Innecco has livened up this year's performance by hiring a lighting technician for the concerts at Jesse Auditorium and Missouri United Methodist Church. He warned the choir and soloists to have their words memorized because he gave the light designers "100 percent freedom" and isn't sure himself how much light the singers will have to read on stage.

Going one step further to promote the group and as a fundraiser, this year solos for the singalong performance were available for purchase online at the Internet auctioning site eBay.

By the week before the first concert, five solos had been purchased at the bidding price of \$100, three of which were bought and paid for by a person in Pennsylvania.

"Since they already paid ... tricks welcome!" he announced to the group at a rehearsal Monday.

The highest bidders win the solo or can win the solo on someone else's behalf. Bids for solos are not restricted to singers or voice students, which poses the risk of inexperienced - or worse yet, bad - soloists.

"The worse, the better," he said.

Although Innecco sounds like he swings his baton a little frantically, the 39-year-old conductor simply takes an interactive, community-based approach to music.

"If you have a common goal, you can change the world," he said. "It might be "naïve, but I truly believe that."

As a conductor, Innecco's goal is to make high-caliber classical music more accessible and approachable to the masses, hence his unconventional productions. He doesn't heed criticisms from those offended by his secular presentation of the sacred piece.

"That's fine, but the other 99 percent are going to love it," he said. "To the other 1 percent I would say, 'Handel is dead.' I have the highest respect for his work and his music. But we are alive, and they are dead. I have a responsibility to update the music. I always say if Mozart had had a microphone, he would have composed different music."

Indeed, Innecco is not far from being a Handel of his time because Handel himself is arguably known as the most versatile theatre composer of the baroque period, and "Messiah" was originally criticized as blasphemous.

are \$5.

All tickets may be purchased at Missouri United Methodist by calling 443-3111 or online at www.columbiachorale.com.

Tickets for the Jesse Auditorium concert are available at the Jesse Auditorium box office by calling 882-3781 or online at www.concertseries.org.

Innecco sounds like a theater director when he conducts the rehearsals. He gives the singers directions such as, "Twist it" and "Don't let the darkness take over" and asks for "a little more lust."

Innecco asks the chorale to make their "Hallelujah" chorus "lighter and fluffier," as if he were creating mousse, not music.

"This was the TV of that time. It has to have some effect," he said during a run-through of "Let Us Break Their Bonds Asunder."

Innecco's conceptual approach to conducting impressed chorale members when he auditioned for the job five years ago. They also attribute their success to it.

"He is inspiring," chorale member Elizabeth Jordheim said. "Yes, he is a dramatic nut during rehearsals, which keeps things light and entertaining to say the least. But he knows a lot and does his work with intense passion. He is extraordinarily patient and diplomatic. He tackles the big works with serious confidence. I've often gone to rehearsals not really in the mood for working on choral music, but I've never left one feeling that way."

In keeping with his principles of building a community group, Innecco donates his pay as chorale conductor to the group. All profits from tickets sale are split between the chorale and the Missouri United Methodist Church concert series.

Other members of the chorale donate time and money to help fund the group's endeavors to put on larger productions.

"I think everybody has something to offer," Innecco said. "The spirit is to all sing and to all have fun."

In addition to conducting the chorale, Innecco works full time as the concert series director at Missouri United Methodist Church, a position he took on five years ago after earning his master's degree in chorale conducting from the University of Missouri-Columbia. He became interested in conducting when he realized he could find better work and more artistic freedom as a conductor.

"I love my job," he said. "It lets me be creative in both the services I lead and in the concert series. It is an outlet for my music and my art. I never thought I'd be a church musician."

Reach Mary T. Nguyen at (573) 815-1704 or mtnguyen@tribmail.com.



Subscribe Now! Save over 40% off the newsstand price.

Copyright © 2006 The Columbia Daily Tribune. All Rights Reserved.

COLUMBIA DAILY
TRIBUNE

