

July 2, 2007

The following proposal for a **Do It Yourself *Messiah*** on December 2, 2007, at 4:00 P.M. in the Carl Sandburg Auditorium, sponsored by the Village of Orland Park Arts Commission, is based on the enormous success of last year's premier *Do It Yourself Messiah*, presented on December 3, 2006, inaugurating what I hope will become an annual tradition for Orland Park. Certainly an ongoing cultural event of this magnitude brings considerable benefits and prestige for the community.

Last December's sell-out performance was a huge success, with an exhilarating response from audience and performers alike. The wonderful write-up the next day in the area paper, with the banner headline "Hallelujah", summed up the excitement and enthusiasm of all who participated. This event, with its high-energy audience participation, can easily become a well-anticipated and celebrated annual tradition for the Village. It is also a meaningful and memorable way to inaugurate the holiday season. Based on my seventeen years of conducting *Do It Yourself Messiahs* in Naperville, I know that large numbers of singers return year after year to participate. The *Do It Yourself* format works remarkably well for amateur singers, as Handel was a master at writing exciting and appealing choruses which singers take great pleasure in performing.

Due to a necessary increase in remuneration for both the instrumentalists and four professional singers, I propose a modest increase in ticket prices over last year. I recommend a \$10.00 admission for individuals (up from \$8.00), with \$7.00 for seniors and students (up from \$5.00). The price for the G. Schirmer vocal scores, available in the lobby for purchase to both singers and non-singers, would remain at \$8.00. The scores are sold on consignment from a music distributor. I understand that remaining scores from last year were purchased for sale for this year.

The nineteen members of the orchestra are professional musicians contracted through Cheryl Smith, the same orchestral contractor that I have used for eighteen years. Most of the players have been with me for the previous performances that I have conducted. I contract the four professional soloists. The recommended increases are to keep our compensations for the players and the soloists in line with comparable rates for rehearsals and performances on the same day. Overall, the orchestra players have received an increase of \$25.00 from last year's compensation, with a \$35.00 increase for the continuo players (concertmaster, cello, bass, bassoon, harpsichord) and the trumpet players. I have increased the soloists' fees by \$100.00 each [raising each to \$350.00] to bring them more in line with what they are being paid for similar concerts in the metropolitan area. This new rate is still on the low end for this type of compensation. Many of these singers are receiving \$500.00 or more for similar engagements. Fortunately, I am still able to get these singers for less, but if I am too far below the going rate, I risk losing them to higher bids from competition. It is vital to use first rate singers and players for this event, as they assure its quality, prestige and success.

I am in the process of finding a new tenor and a new bass for this year's performance. I was not satisfied with last year's bass, and the tenor I used last year has committed to

another engagement. Fortunately I have received some excellent recommendations for some exciting and very talented younger singers which I am pursuing.

This is my proposal for this year's budget:

Contractor's fee:	\$ 200.00
Concertmaster	\$ 235.00
7 violins (I & II)	\$1,400.00
2 violas	\$ 400.00
1 cello (continuo)	\$ 235.00
1 bass (continuo)	\$ 235.00
1 bassoon (continuo)	\$ 235.00
2 oboes	\$ 380.00
1 st trumpet	\$ 220.00
2 nd trumpet	\$ 185.00
1 tympani	\$ 90.00*
1 harpsichordist	\$ 235.00
1 clavinova use	\$ 100.00**
4 soloists	\$1,400.00
My fee (conductor)	<u>\$ 450.00</u>
Total:	\$6,000.00

This is an increase of \$1095.00 over last year's budget of \$4,905.00.

Eighteen instrumentalists plus harpsichordist is the ideal size orchestra for this event. The continuo players (cello, bassoon and harpsichord) have the most work to do, hence their higher fees. The oboes have less to do, and come for only the final twenty minutes of rehearsal, hence their lower fees.

*A set of three timpani are needed for the performance. Sandburg has graciously allowed us to use its set, with appropriate acknowledgement in the program. Since Sandberg has an outstanding music program, we will be using a student timpanist from the department. The student will receive an honorarium, indicated above. This event provides a wonderful opportunity for a skilled student percussionist to gain valuable live performing experience with a professional orchestra.

**I am leaving in this fee in case we need a "cartage" fee for an instrument that a keyboard player would be bringing. The clavinova that we used last year from the University of St. Francis would still be available, but I would have to make arrangements for its transportation, and the same "usage" fee would apply. Hopefully we can use the synthesizer that Sandburg has, to eliminate the need for bringing in an outside instrument. Then we would not need this fee. It should be noted that the clavinova we used last year had both harpsichord and organ sound settings, the latter being most advantageous for the large choruses.

The advantage of doing this event a second year is that so much of what is needed to go into a successful program is now known. The 400 programs, budgeted by the Park District, were beautifully executed; the ushers were all on hand and directed singers to their appropriate, designated sections downstairs and the non-singers upstairs; the madrigal singers were a wonderful addition in the lobby, entertaining the audience before the doors opened to the public; the box office ran smoothly; most of the structural set up needs were met. The coordination that took place between the Orland Park Staff, the Arts Commission, Sandburg Performing Art Center and the Mayor's Office was wonderful. The publicity was terrific. Sandburg provides the chairs and stands for the orchestra, as well as four portable sound shells. Several hundred scores are sold on consignment from a music distributor.

To keep costs down, the soloists and orchestra rehearse and perform on the same day. The rehearsal begins at 1:45 P.M. and ends by 3:10 P.M. This allows the orchestra a 45 minute break before returning to the hall by 3:55 P.M. to tune. [The hall would open to the public at 3:15 P.M.]

During the break, light refreshments are on hand for the players, conductor and soloists: twenty-four individuals in all. Water, coffee, tea, platters of fruit, cheese and crackers, and assorted dips will be provided. The cost runs around \$75.00. These refreshments keep energy levels up for the ninety minute performance.

The Village may want to consider the possibility of donor sponsorships to help defray expenses, as ticket sales generally only cover a portion of the costs. Sponsorship levels could be as follows: Benefactors: \$100 and above; Sponsors: \$75.00 and above; Donors: \$50 and above; Supporters: \$35.00 and above; Contributors: \$20.00 and above. All sponsors would have their names listed on an insert in the program. The corporate sponsorship last year by Fifth Third Bank was wonderful.

I am a strong believer in the value of a participatory *Do It Yourself Messiah*. It is a wonderful venue for dynamic community participation, providing a great opportunity for all singers from elementary school age and up, including church choirs and school choirs, to sing these famous and beloved choruses, bringing this very accessible and monumental work of classical music to the community for its enjoyment. It especially allows people who are not necessarily fans of classical music to see how much fun a choral work like this can be, and how inspiring Handel's music is to all generations.

I personally have loved conducting these many Sing Along performances. The enthusiasm of the singers is remarkable, and the build up of the choral energy to the final Amen chorus is tremendous. I am delighted to present this proposal for your kind consideration. I will be glad to answer any further questions you may have.

Respectfully yours,

Willard Thomen