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MSU Music presents uplifting concert to celebrate the season

More than 200 singers and instrumentalists unite at Wharton Center to tell the story of Christmas.

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EAST LANSING, Mich. – Choir and orchestra members of the Michigan State University College of Music will gather to bring the joy and spirit of the holiday season to the community through *Telling the Story: Christmas Oratorios by Bach & Saint-Saëns*. This concert of inspiring music and storytelling at the **Cobb Great Hall of Wharton Center** on Saturday, **Dec. 10**, at **8 p.m.** is the first in the [MSU Federal Credit Union Showcase Series](#) that highlights a mix of musical excellence within the College of Music.

This annual holiday concert offers inspired and uplifting choral music and celebrates the festive season in December. The event marks the second year that MSU choirs of this scale have been able to rehearse and perform live and in-person on stage since the pandemic sidelined the event in 2019 and 2020, and reflects the excitement felt by the choral community.

“We chose the program for *Telling the Story: Christmas Oratorios by Bach & Saint-Saëns* because the music of Saint-Saëns complements that of Bach,” said Professor of Music and MSU Choral Director David Rayl. “The lyricism of Saint-Saëns music contrasts beautifully with the vocal and instrumental virtuosity delivered in Bach’s cantatas. We are grateful for this opportunity to share the beauty of choral-orchestral music and to help uplift everyone’s spirits during the holiday season.”

Rayl will conduct more than 200 instrumentalists and singers from the MSU Choral Union, University Chorale, State Singers, and the MSU Symphony Orchestra in selections from the Christmas Oratorios of J.S. Bach and Camille Saint-Saëns. The concert opens with choruses from Saint Saëns *Oratorio de Noel*, which was composed for Midnight Mass in the Church of the Madeleine in Paris, France in 1858. Rayl will then conduct the first three of the six cantatas from Bach’s *Weihnachts-Oratorium*, composed in 1834. The cantatas were originally performed for major feasts of the Christmas season held within the iconic churches of Leipzig, Germany. The three cantatas featured in this program cover the birth of Jesus, the angel’s announcement to the shepherds, and the shepherd’s visit to Bethlehem. The role of the Evangelist, who literally “tells the story” and weaves together the Christmas narrative with choruses and chorales will be sung by tenor soloist Cole Harvey, a master’s student in the College of Music.

The concert is part of the Showcase Series generously underwritten by the MSU Federal Credit Union. Additional sponsors of the concert include a donor family with the hope that attendees enjoy the concert and reflect upon its message of peace and joy. It is also sponsored by MSU Interim President Teresa K. Woodruff, Ph.D., and Thomas V. O’Halloran, Ph.D.

Reserved-seat tickets for this event are \$22 for adults, \$20 for seniors (age 60 and older), and \$12 for students, plus a \$3.50 Wharton facility fee. Tickets are available through Wharton Center box office only. Call 517-432-2000, (800) WHARTON, or visit whartoncenter.com. Tickets can also be purchased at the door if available.

For those who are unable to attend, an hour-long television special featuring highlights from the concert will air in mid-Michigan on PBS station WKAR HD 23.1, Tuesday, December 20 at 9 p.m. and Saturday, December 24 at 8 p.m. A radio rebroadcast will also air on WKAR 90.5 FM Friday, December 23 at 11 a.m.

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