



AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA PRESENTS
HANDEL'S ORATORIO *JUDAS MACCABAEUS*
AT MANHATTAN'S THE RIVERSIDE CHURCH
DECEMBER 14, 2023

Featured Soloists are Tenor Jack Swanson, Mezzo -Soprano Deborah Nansteel,
Bass William Guanbo Su, and Soprano Brandie Sutton, with
the Bard Festival Chorale and The Riverside Choir



New York, NY, November 8, 2023 - Music Director Leon Botstein leads the American Symphony Orchestra (ASO) in the second of four full orchestra concerts in New York City this season, on Thursday, December 14 at 7 PM at The Riverside Church. The program offers a holiday alternative to Handel's *Messiah* with one of his lesser-known oratorios, *Judas Maccabaeus*, featuring tenor Jack Swanson, mezzo-soprano Deborah Nansteel, bass William Guanbo Su, and soprano Brandie Sutton along with the Bard Festival Chorale and The Riverside Choir. The Church is located in Manhattan's Morningside Heights and is modeled after the 13th century Gothic cathedral in Chartres, France.

The ASO's next concert will present a rare performance of Antonin Dvořák's 1890 Requiem on January 25, 2024 at Carnegie Hall.

[Judas Maccabaeus](#)

Thursday December 14, 2023 at 7 PM, The Riverside Church, 490 Riverside Drive, New York, NY

American Symphony Orchestra

Leon Botstein, conductor

Jack Swanson, *Judas Maccabaeus*

Brandie Sutton, Woman

Deborah Nansteel, Man

William Guanbo Su, Simon

Bard Festival Chorale and The Riverside Choir

James Bagwell, choral director

George Frideric Handel: *Judas Maccabaeus*, HWV 63

Set amidst the story of Hanukkah, Handel's 1746 three-act oratorio *Judas Maccabaeus* is a dramatization of the Jews' resistance to their oppressors during the Maccabean Revolt led by Judas against the Greek empire.

The composer's depiction of a peoples' triumph over tyranny is brought to life through exultant choruses. The symbolic duo of an Israeli man and woman plays an important part in the work and provides a voice of their people, and to the chorus of Israelites. The piece is dedicated to the Duke of Cumberland, who had recently defeated the Jacobite revolt of 1745 in Scotland at the Battle of Culloden. The librettist, Rev. Thomas Morell, recalled "the plan of *Judas Maccabaeus* was designed as a compliment to the Duke of Cumberland." Morell would continue to write the librettos for at least four more of Handel's final oratorios. Soloists for this performance are the young American tenor and Richard Tucker Career Grant winner **Jack Swanson**; Metropolitan Opera soprano **Brandie Sutton**, praised by *The New York Times* for her "warm, ample voice," "ravishing performance" and "distinctive earthy coloring"; Metropolitan Opera mezzo-soprano **Deborah Nansteel**, who appears as Aunt Lou in the 2024 west coast premiere of the LA Opera's production of William Grant Still's *Highway 1, USA*; and bass **William Guanbo Su**, who returned to the Met Opera as the Speaker in the company's English presentation of *The Magic Flute*.

Tickets: Priced at \$25 and \$35, are available at americansymphony.org.

American Symphony Orchestra

The American Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1962 by Leopold Stokowski with the mission of providing music within the means of everyone. Music Director Leon Botstein expanded that mission when he joined the ASO in 1992, creating thematic concerts that explore music from the perspective of the visual arts, literature, religion, and history, and reviving rarely performed works that audiences would otherwise never have a chance to hear performed live.

The ASO's signature programming includes its *Vanguard Series*, which presents concerts of rare orchestral repertoire, and various other events dedicated to enriching and reflecting the diverse perspectives of American culture. During the summer months, the ASO is the orchestra-in-residence at Bard's SummerScape, performs at the Bard Music Festival, and offers chamber music performances throughout the New York City area.

As part of its commitment to expanding the standard orchestral repertoire, the ASO has released recordings on the Telarc, New World, Bridge, Koch, and Vanguard labels, and live performances are also available for [digital streaming](#). In many cases, these are the only existing recordings of some of the forgotten works that have been restored through ASO performances.

For more information, please visit americansymphony.org.

Leon Botstein

Leon Botstein has been music director and principal conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra since 1992. He is also music director of The Orchestra Now, an innovative training orchestra composed of top musicians from around the world. He is co-artistic director of Bard SummerScape and the Bard Music Festival, which take place at the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College, where he has been president since 1975. He is also conductor laureate and principal guest conductor of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, where he served as music director from 2003–11. In 2018, he assumed artistic directorship of Campus Grafenegg and Grafenegg Academy in Austria. Mr. Botstein also has an active career as a guest conductor with orchestras around the globe, and has made numerous recordings, as well as being a prolific author and music historian. He is the recipient of numerous honors for his contributions to the music industry. In 2019, *The New York Times* named Leon Botstein a "champion of overlooked works...who has

tirelessly worked to bring to light worthy scores by neglected composers.” More info online at LeonBotstein.com.

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Images: Jack Swanson ©Craig Vanderschaegen, Brandie Sutton ©Roy Cox, Deborah Nansteel @Arielle Doneson, William Guanbo Su @Lynn Lane.

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