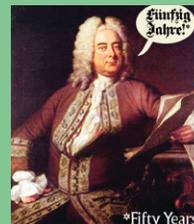


The Music Committee of the Village Church, the congregation, Rev. Jon Rehmus, and all our friends, wish to acknowledge our profound gratitude to Rev. David Rose, Roberta Cowell, Bunny Howes and so many others in the past who created and sustained this annual event so that we can enjoy it today. It is our wish to honor their efforts and contributions by continuing to keep the Cummington Messiah Sing alive for future generations. Theologies and belief systems change and grow, come and go, over the years, but the music is forever.

The Village Church of Cummington, MA  
presents its

# 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Messiah Sing

4:00 PM, December 28, 2014



\*Fifty Years!



## And so it begins...

It is good to know that the Cummington Messiah continues! Forty-five years ago, Roberta Cowell was directing the Hilltown Choral Society, made up of area church choir members and other singers. She proposed to them that they do a Christmas concert with the beloved choruses from Handel's masterpiece. That idea did not fly. Everyone was too busy! Roberta and I too were disappointed.

Then she proposed that we simply announce a Messiah Sing, open to all who wanted to take part. She said, look! We have the space at Village Congregational Church; we have the organ, I can enlist other singers for the solo parts, I think we could get Nathan Gotschalk to conduct! He loves Cummington. And I said: I bet the Congregational Church in Northampton has choir music for the Messiah. I will try to borrow what they have, and of course many singers have at home their own copy. The Northampton minister not only offered the use of a great set of the Messiah music; he told me that they had been around the church for years and our church was welcome to keep them!

So Roberta contacted soloists and local church choirs, while I took care of publicity. I put the point of a compass on Cummington and drew a circle of 30 miles on the map. I sent notices to nearly all the papers, weekly or daily, in the area as well as to virtually every church for their bulletin board. We called our venture a "non-performance" of the Christmas music, with "no offering, no ushers, no audience except interested friends and families." Meanwhile the wonderful ladies of the village church offered to have sandwiches and cookies and tea and coffee ready for all comers following the Messiah Sing. The beautiful little church filled up! Roberta's vision and my communications know-how led to that first full-house for Sunday afternoon Sing. Greetings and a Happy New Year from David and Margaret Rose, (now age 93 and 86 respectively.) We remember Cummington fondly.

The late Rev. David Rose generously offered his recollections of the beginning of the Annual Messiah Sing in 2009.



LISA KARL/Gazette Staff  
ROBERTA COWELL will lead the 25th annual Messiah sing in Cummington Sunday — just as she has for a quarter-century.

## Leading Cummington in song for 25 years

By LISA KARL  
Gazette Staff

CUMMINGTON — A champion of infusing music into people's lives, Roberta Cowell confesses that the words are even more important than the tune.

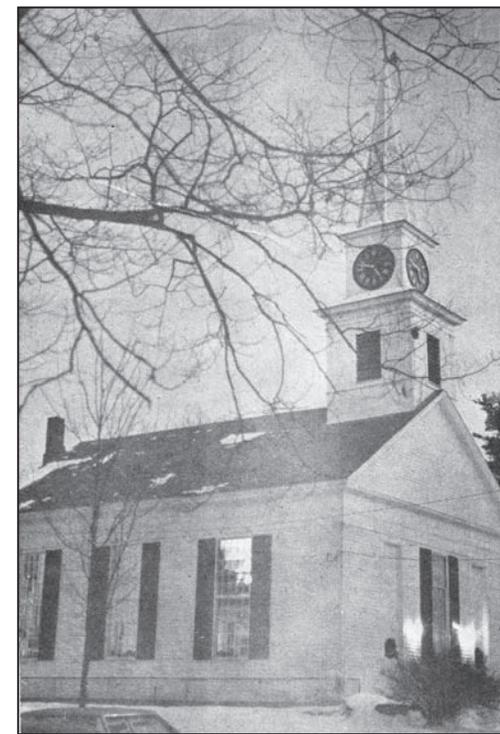
She sits leaning forward on the couch in her Cummington living room, reading from Handel's "Messiah." She hasn't rehearsed it much recently, but it is like an old friend.

Twenty-five Decembers ago, Cowell sat in Cummington's Congregational Church listening as an idea she'd had came to life. In 1964, a friend had told her about a concert in Chicago, where the audience sang the music.

A great idea, she thought. Cowell proceeded to organize Cummington's yearly "Messiah Sing," which as dusk falls Sunday will mark a quarter century of tradition.

The group that first year was small; only a straggling orchestra and a few enthusiastic voices, with Cowell as the soprano solo.

(from the Daily Hampshire Gazette, 12/31/88)



Beryl Campareto, organist for many years



SOME 300 VOICES rang out in the Messiah Sing at the Village Congregational church in Cummington on Sunday. Shown directing the impromptu orchestra of 25 musicians is Joseph Schaaf, head of the music department at the Putney School in Vermont. (1978, Hampshire Gazette)

# 50th Annual Messiah Sing

Part 1 and other Selections by

George Frederic Handel

December 28, 2014, 4:00 PM Village Church

## Program

Words of Welcome: John Maruskin

### OVERTURE

**ACC. RECITATIVE:** (tenor) "Comfort ye, my people"

**AIR:** (tenor) "Ev'ry valley shall be exalted"

**CHORUS:** "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed"

**RECITATIVE:** (bass) "Thus saith the Lord"

**AIR:** (bass) "But who may abide the day of His coming"

**CHORUS:** "And He shall purify"

**RECITATIVE:** (alto) "Behold! A virgin shall conceive"

**AIR:** (alto) AND CHORUS "And thou that tellest good tidings to Zion"

**RECITATIVE:** (bass) "For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth"

**AIR:** (bass) "The people that walked in darkness"

**CHORUS:** "For unto us a Child is born"

### PASTORAL SYMPHONY

**ACC. RECITATIVES:** (soprano) "There were shepherds abiding in the field,"

"And lo! The angel of the Lord came upon them," "And the angel said unto them," "And suddenly there was with the angel"

**CHORUS:** "Glory to God"

**AIR:** (soprano) "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!"

**RECITATIVE:** (alto) "Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened"

**AIR:** (alto & soprano) "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd," "Come unto Him"

**CHORUS:** "His yoke is easy and His burthen is light"

(End of Part 1)

**ACC. RECITATIVE:** (bass) "Behold, I tell you a mystery"

**AIR:** (bass) "The Trumpet shall sound"

**CHORUS:** "Worthy is the Lamb... Amen" (from Part 3)

**AIR:** (tenor) "Thou shalt break them" (from Part 2)

**CHORUS:** "Hallelujah" (from Part 2)

### SOLOISTS

**Kristi Spicer**, soprano

**Cynthia Sanner**, contralto

**Dario Coletta**, tenor

**Steve Curylo**, bass

**Sheldon Ross**, trumpet

**Joy Mullen**, organ

**Gregory Hayes**, conductor

*Refreshments will be served in the vestry immediately following today's sing.*

Restrooms are in the rear of the church and can be found by going through the kitchen.

Look for the donation boxes at the doors and in the vestry.

We appreciate your support.

*Village Church welcomes all who have come to participate or listen.*

KRISTI SPICER, soprano, (Northampton ) is currently a senior at Ithaca School of Music studying vocal performance and music education. Kristi is a member of the Ithaca College choir which will be on tour this spring performing at Lincoln Center and other venues in the northeast. This fall she participated in the Ithaca College Light opera performing baroque opera scenes and recently presented her first solo vocal recital in a public setting.

CYNTHIA SANNER, contralto (LENOX) divides her time between teaching and singing, both internationally and in the USA. She can be heard on her CD "God Be in My Heart" released in 2004. She has been teaching in Bogota, Colombia the last few years and performed with their symphony and will be again in February as well as in Arizona in February. She teaches at The Juilliard school and privately in Barcelona, Spain and New York, Delaware, and also in France every summer. Cynthia has 3 granddaughters that keep her happy and busy.

DARIO COLETTA, tenor (PLAINFIELD) received degrees from Connecticut College and the Yale School of Music and spent several years in residence with the Minnesota and Texas Opera Theatre programs. His musical theatre credits include national and international tours with Les Miserables and Phantom of the Opera. Having "retired" from professional singing, Dario currently works in the hilltowns as a stonemason. He also serves as the tenor section of the Plainfield Congregational Church choir.

STEVE CURYLO, baritone (CHICOPEE) has appeared as a soloist throughout western New England and beyond for more than forty years. He has performed with Arcadia Players, Commonwealth Opera, Deerfield Choral Society, Hampshire Choral Society, and Valley Light Opera. He will give a recital at Wistariahurst Museum in Holyoke on April 26, and will sing Raphael and Adam in Haydn's The Creation on May 3 in Springfield Vermont.

JOY MULLEN, organ (PITTSFIELD) is the Director of Music at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Pittsfield and a teacher of instrumental and choral music at Richmond Consolidated School, where she is also involved with the Creative Arts Project.

GREGORY HAYES, conductor (GOSHEN) has taught piano and harpsichord since 1991 at Dartmouth College, where he is Senior Lecturer. He performs often in the region on keyboard instruments of various kinds with the Springfield, Vermont, and Albany Symphony Orchestras, Arcadia Players, and chamber ensembles. He is music director for the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence. For many summers he has taught on the faculty of Greenwood Music Camp in Cummington.

This event couldn't happen every year without the efforts of many people. Thanks to Elaine Holder and Scott Keith, on the Music Committee, and to Pat Keith and behind-the-scenes volunteers providing food and taking care of the kitchen.

A big thank you to our conductor, organist, soloists, and members of the Cummington Philharmonia Volunteer Orchestra for their presence and making this event so special. And thanks to all of the chorus, and all of the singers and musicians, who love and have loved this music and come every year to express that love by playing and singing with enthusiasm and joy.

# Messiah rings out at Cummington

By LESLIE SKANTZ

CUMMINGTON—Maestro Nathan Gottschalk may have gone through hell to get to yesterday's 31st Annual Messiah Sing Through, but the result of his trek was heavenly.

The enthusiastic performance of the 1741 work by German composer George Handel sounded as though the choir were composed of angels, instead of the amateurs who had just congregated to perform the piece unrehearsed.

Gottschalk, conductor laureate of the Pioneer Valley Symphony Orchestra and professor emeritus of music at the State University of New York at Albany, said icy conditions in Albany and

thick fog in Western Massachusetts made his trip here treacherous.

"He comes hell or high water," observed Carolyn Drake, a member of the church's music committee.

Dozens of other singers and instrumentalists just have to go through other New England states, but come they do. The "sing" at-



Staff photo by Bob Stern

**MADE IT** — Dr. Nathan Gottschalk, music director and conductor laureate of the Pioneer Valley Symphony Orchestra, conducts Handel's "The Messiah" yesterday at the Village Congregational Church in Cummington after braving fog and ice to get there.

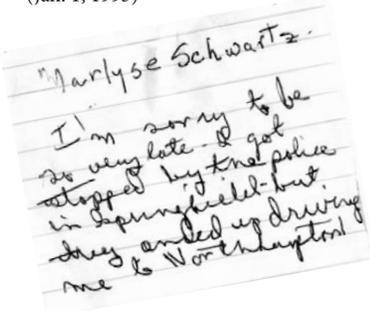
tracts people from Connecticut, New Hampshire and Vermont, as well as New York.

One devotee, Marlyse Schwartz, hitchhikes each year from the Boston area. This year, she reported that police picked her up in Springfield and brought her as far as Northampton by relays.

The sing is traditionally held

the first Sunday after Christmas. There is no rehearsal, but the resulting sound seems flawless.

(Jan. 1, 1995)



Late last Sunday afternoon over a hundred persons gathered in the simple, white-walled Village Congregational Church of Cummington to sing the Christmas sections of Handel's "Messiah." Many had traveled up to a hundred miles to sing or to play. There had been no rehearsals, and though scores were available almost everyone brought their own. This was not to be a concert, but rather a musical celebration for the love of singing.

The idea of such a gathering was conceived by Roberta Cowell, a member of the Hilltown Choral Society. Originally she thought to have the society itself learn the Handel work, but the group proved too small. Instead, the conception was then expanded to encompass the whole community of Cummington. Anyone who knew and enjoyed "The Messiah" was asked to the church to "perform" it... That was three

Christmases ago. Now, this "non-production" of "The Messiah" has become a tradition.

... in its Cummington manifestation, "The Messiah" is both a celebration of Christmas and a celebration of music. And it is a linkage with traditions far older than Handel, with all cultures and people who carried works of art in their minds and memories to keep them fresh and alive.

A spirit of praise and devotion characterizes "The Messiah," and this spirit was most apparent in Cummington. All who sang and in future years will sing in Cummington at Christmastime know that the joyful noise which Handel heard may always be theirs.

From a "Special Report" in the Berkshire Eagle, Dec. 23, 1967, by Lawrence Raab



Photographs by Joel Librizzi and Michael Miller

