

FELIX MENDELSSOHN, *ELIJAH*



SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 2026 AT 3:00 P.M.

HOLY SPIRIT CATHOLIC CHURCH

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FELIX MENDELSSOHN, *ELIJAH*

Elijah

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

We invite you to follow along throughout the program with the complete text and at this link:



Part I

<i>Elijah</i>	As God the Lord
<i>The People</i>	1. Help, Lord!
<i>soprano, mezzo-soprano</i>	2. Lord, bow thine ear
<i>Obadiah</i>	3. Ye people, rend your hearts
<i>Obadiah</i>	4. If with all your hearts
<i>The People</i>	5. Yet doth the Lord
<i>An Angel</i>	6. Elijah, get thee hence
<i>An Angel</i>	7. Now Cherith's brook
<i>The Widow, Elijah</i>	8. What have I do to with thee / Give me thy son
<i>The People</i>	9. Blessed are the men who fear him
<i>Elijah, King Ahab, Chorus</i>	10. As God the Lord of Sabaoth
<i>The Priests of Baal</i>	11. Baal, we cry to thee
<i>Elijah, The Priests of Baal</i>	12. Call him louder! / Hear our cry, O Baal!
<i>Elijah, The Priests of Baal</i>	13. Call him louder! / Baal! Baal!
<i>Elijah</i>	14. Draw near, all ye people
<i>The People</i>	15. Cast thy burden upon the Lord
<i>Elijah, The People</i>	16. O Thou, who makest thine angels spirits / The fire descends
<i>Elijah</i>	17. Is not his word like a fire?
<i>Obadiah</i>	19. O man of God, help thy people!
<i>Elijah, The People, The Youth</i>	19a. O Lord, Thou has overthrown thine enemies Kaeshi Zoeller, <i>treble soloist</i>
<i>The People</i>	20. Thanks be to God!

There will be a brief intermission between Parts I and II.

Part II

soprano	21. Hear ye, Israel!
<i>The People</i>	22. Be not afraid
<i>Elijah, Queen Jezebel</i>	23. The Lord hath exalted thee
<i>The People</i>	24. Woe to him!
<i>Obadiah, Elijah</i>	25. Man of God
<i>Elijah</i>	26. It is enough
tenor	27. See, now he sleepeth
<i>The People</i>	28. Lift thine eyes
<i>The People</i>	29. He, watching over Israel
<i>An Angel, Elijah</i>	30. Arise, Elijah / O Lord, I have labored in vain
<i>An Angel</i>	31. O rest in the Lord
<i>Elijah, An Angel</i>	33. Night falleth round me / Arise, now!
<i>The People</i>	34. Behold, God the Lord
<i>The People, Elijah</i>	36. Go, return upon thy way / I go on my way
<i>Elijah</i>	37. For the mountains shall depart
<i>The People</i>	38. Then did Elijah
tenor	39. Then shall the righteous shine forth
<i>The People</i>	42. O come, every one that thirsteth
<i>The People</i>	43. And then shall your light break forth

SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 2026

HOLY SPIRIT CATHOLIC CHURCH

Special thanks to our concert sponsors who provided significant support for today's performance: June Hampe, in loving memory of Dr. Edward Hampe, and the Jewish Heritage Fund.



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CONDUCTOR'S NOTE

Welcome to Louisville Master Chorale's final season concert, *Elijah*. Are there any more popular stories than those of bigger-than-life heroes who challenge political establishments and defeat, against all odds, the forces of "evil," while revealing very human weaknesses, but who ultimately are translated to heaven? Now that is a true hero! Thus, when the world-famous composer, Felix Mendelssohn, was commissioned to write an oratorio for the opening of the 1846 Birmingham Festival, Elijah became his only subject for consideration. The stories within the story of Elijah provide such drama that no other oratorio comes closer to opera in its dramatic development of scene and character.

This is an oratorio for all times – when kingdoms and rulers should be challenged, when enemies of truth must still be called out, and when we find in ourselves the humility to seek the "still small voice" that speaks to us. I hope you are challenged by this presentation.



John Dickson
Musical & Artistic Director



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PROGRAM NOTES

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) was born into a prominent Jewish family in Germany. His parents, recognizing the difficulties that faced Jews in early 19th-century Germany, had their children baptized by a Lutheran minister and became Protestants a few years later. Thus, Mendelssohn was deeply aware of his Jewish heritage—his grandfather famously translated the Psalms into German—but he grew up a devout Lutheran.

Did you know?

Mendelssohn had been working on *Elijah* here and there for a decade, but was never happy with the libretto. The Birmingham commission spurred him to finally finish the piece, with English-language texts.

Mendelssohn was a great admirer of both Bach and Handel. In fact, he was fond of saying, "Every room in which Sebastian Bach is sung is transformed into a church", and he may have desired something of that prominence and transformation, eventually, for his own work. In 1829 he conducted Bach's *Passion of St. Matthew* in the first performance of that work since Bach's death, returning it to public performance and popularity. Mendelssohn himself wrote two oratorios, *St. Paul* and *Elijah*, and was working on a third, *Christus*, when he died at 37 years old.

Did you know?

The soprano part of *Elijah* was originally written for Jenny Lind, the renowned Swedish soprano who toured in 1850 with U.S. entrepreneur P.T. Barnum. Although Lind didn't perform in the premiere, she sang in *Elijah* after Mendelssohn's death to raise money for a composer's scholarship that went to Arthur Sullivan, of *Gilbert and Sullivan*.

The first text of *Elijah* was in German, written for Mendelssohn by the composer's friend Julius Schubring (1806-1889), an evangelical minister. When the piece was commissioned to be performed for an English audience at the Birmingham Triennial Music Festival of 1846, Mendelssohn turned to his friend William Bartholomew (1793-1867) for an English translation. Mendelssohn

Did you know?

Although *Elijah* was critically acclaimed, playwright George Bernard Shaw did not enjoy it at all, writing of “the great gulf that lies between true religious sentiment [of Bach and Handel] and our delight in Mendelssohn’s exquisite prettiness”.

worked closely with Bartholomew to prepare *Elijah* for the festival, adjusting his music to fit the English or adjusting Bartholomew’s translation to fit the music. The resulting oratorio was a huge success in Birmingham. According to Jeffrey Skidmore, founder and director of the choral group *Ex Cathedra* in Birmingham, England, Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* was “the high point of religious expression between Beethoven’s *Mount of Olives* and Wagner’s *Parsifal*.”

There is enough drama in *Elijah* that some scholars have wondered why he did not write it as an opera. It might be that in crafting the piece for a music festival, he was not writing for an opera house but indeed, for a space that could be “transformed into a church”; however, there are elements of the theatrical throughout *Elijah*, and in places the music is almost cinematic. The story comes primarily from the books of First and Second Kings of Jewish teachings. But there are also echoes of the Psalms, Jeremiah, Lamentations, and other religious texts. Additionally, Professor R. Larry Todd, in his analysis *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music* (Oxford University Press, 2003), pointed to moments in Mendelssohn’s music, particularly late in the oratorio, that echo protestant hymns with which many in Mendelssohn’s audience might have been familiar. Nonetheless, Mendelssohn himself asserted to his English translator that Number 15, *Cast thy burden upon the Lord*, is the “only specimen of a Lutheran Chorale” in this work.

The oratorio is structured around confrontations. Even before the scenic orchestral overture, the work opens with a confrontation: Elijah himself announces to the people of Israel that there will be a

Did you know?

Music from *Elijah* was chosen for the first-ever concert at New York City’s Carnegie Hall when it opened in 1891, and for its 100th anniversary year in 1991.

drought that will not end until the people of Israel cease their sinful ways. Other confrontations central to the drama include Elijah's conflict with the Israelites, with the widow whose son has also died, with the priests of Baal and fire raining down from heaven, and with Queen Jezebel. The oratorio concludes with the poignant imagery of Elijah's being carried to heaven in a fiery chariot.

Elijah remains one of Mendelssohn's most popular works, particularly among choral societies, and many of its movements are particularly well-liked and performed as stand-alone works. Certainly, in the ancestral line of the great Handelian oratorios, Mendelssohn's setting of this astonishing story remains a work for the ages.

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ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP



JOHN H. DICKSON, MUSICAL & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, is Professor Emeritus and former Director of Choral Studies at Louisiana State University. Retired from his long career of collegiate teaching, he continues his conducting through workshops and festivals. He is the Founding and Emeritus Director of of Coro Vocati, one of Atlanta's most accomplished professional chamber choirs. As a conducting pedagogy, he has presented masterclasses before the

Association of British Choral Directors, the American Choral Directors Association, the Royal Northern Music Conservatory (Manchester), and the Russian State Music Conservatories of St. Petersburg and Moscow. He has conducted festivals and workshops in England, Wales, Scotland, Finland, France, Italy, Hungary, Austria, the Czech Republic, Mexico, Canada, and throughout the U. S. For three decades his choirs have been featured at conventions of the ACDA, ABCD, Texas Music Educators Association, and the National Collegiate Choral Organization. A Visiting Fellow of Wolfson College, Cambridge University, Dr. Dickson sang with Sir David Willcocks and The Bach Choir; a second post-doctoral fellowship allowed him to serve as David Hill's assistant conductor. He is the Founding Director of the Oxbridge C. S. Lewis Choral Institute.

KIRK RICH, COLLABORATIVE ARTIST, is Director of Music at St. Francis in the Fields Episcopal Church in Louisville and was previously Director of Music at All Saints' Episcopal Church in Atlanta. He has performed at the Kennedy Center, St. Thomas Church Fifth Avenue, for three national conventions of the American Guild of Organists, and for two international tours with the Royal School of Church Music America National Choir, including cathedral residences in Dublin, St. Albans, and Salisbury. He has twice been a prize-winning finalist in the American Guild of Organists' National Young Artists Competition in Organ

Performance and holds degrees in organ performance from the Oberlin College Conservatory, the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University, and a doctorate from the University of Houston's Moores School of Music.



PRINCIPAL SOLOIST

Brandon Hendrickson (*Elijah*), *baritone*, associate professor of voice at Louisiana State University, has been praised by *Opera News* for his “mellifluous” and “beautiful” baritone and has distinguished himself in opera, musical theater, concert, and oratorio on national and international stages. He has performed leading operatic roles with companies such as Des Moines Metro Opera, Annapolis Opera, Mobile Opera, and Utah Festival Opera. A versatile concert artist, he has appeared as baritone soloist in *Carmina Burana*, *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, Mahler 8, *Messiah*, and other major concert works with ensembles such as the National Philharmonic, South Dakota Symphony Orchestra, Charleston Symphony Orchestra, Helena Symphony Orchestra, and the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra. An active recitalist, he has performed art song throughout the United States and internationally in Malaysia, Canada, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and Italy.

SOLOISTS

Emily Albrink, *soprano*, is a soprano whose career sports esteemed collaborations with venerable conductors and composers such as Robert Spano, Marin Alsop, Jake Heggie, and John Musto. She has sung leading roles with the Washington National Opera, Kentucky Opera, Charlottesville Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Opera Boston, Indianapolis Opera, and Chicago Opera Theater and has been a featured soloist with the Boston Symphony, the Chicago Symphony, the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, the Baltimore Symphony, the Phoenix Symphony, and the Louisville Orchestra. She released her debut album *Force of Nature* in 2023 and is on the voice faculty at the University of Louisville School of Music.

Rebekah Bortz Hardin, *mezzo-soprano*, is a Louisville native and UL School of Music grad. A soloist with the Louisville Orchestra, Louisville Civic Orchestra, Palm Beach Opera, and the Chorus of Cincinnati Opera, her most recent roles with Kentucky Opera were Mastrilla in *Songbird*, Kate in *The Pirates of Penzance*, and Marcellina in *Le Nozze di Figaro*. She is a three-time Winner of the Metropolitan Opera Kentucky Auditions, has received a Regional MET Encouragement Award, is a Winner of the Palm Beach Opera Vocal Competition. She calls LaGrange home and loves making music in her hometown.

Elijah Bowen, *tenor*, specializes in early music and has appeared as a soloist with the Indianapolis Baroque Orchestra, the Bloomington Bach Cantata Project, and the Internationale Bachakademie Stuttgart. On the operatic stage, he has performed with IU Opera Theater and Haymarket Opera Company, in both standard and early operatic repertoire. Formerly a staff singer at Christ Church Cathedral, Indianapolis, he now sings at St. Francis in the Fields in Louisville, Kentucky, where he continues to perform a wide range of sacred repertoire.

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