



BUFFALO PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

A Note to BPO Patrons about *The Passion of Yeshua*

This coming weekend, April 13 and 14, the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra will present the east coast premiere of esteemed American composer Richard Danielpour's new work, *The Passion of Yeshua*, following performances in Oregon and California.

Mr. Danielpour is often lauded among the most gifted composers of his generation. His catalog is distinguished by more than forty commissions from a variety of major institutions, including the New York Philharmonic, the San Francisco Symphony, and the Philadelphia Orchestra, as well as for renowned performers such as Emanuel Ax, Yo-Yo Ma and Jessye Norman. Mr. Danielpour's honors include awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Guggenheim Award, the Bearns Prize from Columbia University, and two Rockefeller Fellowships. He currently serves as professor of composition at UCLA.

A Passion is a musical setting of the suffering and death of Jesus of Nazareth, based upon Biblical texts which began to be composed in the 4th century and continue into modern times. Composers writing Passions include Alessandro Scarlatti, Marc-Antoine Charpentier, G.F. Handel, J.S. Bach, Krzysztof Penderecki among others. The BPO has performed the J.S. Bach *St. Matthew Passion* six times over the years, dating back to 1948 and his *St. John Passion* in 1964.

However, there are concerns inherent in the presentation of such works due to differing views of history, beliefs and interpretation, so there is concern that such works can be viewed as anti-Semitic. The composer is well aware of history of Passions being used as weapons against the Jewish people but decided to use this musical form for the exact opposite reason. As Danielpour states:

"I was born to parents who are from Iran with the presence of both Jewish and Christian faiths, which made our household a place of open inquiry. This oratorio is among things, an attempt to help Jews and Christians alike understand more fully how the person of Jesus of Nazareth is so closely connected, whether one likes it or not, to Jewish history. I never intended for the Passion of Yeshua to be a polemical statement. Within this hour and 40 minute piece I wanted to ask a question, namely - Who is this man Jesus, and why after nearly 2000 years is he arguably the most talked about person in human history?"

The BPO has worked proactively with the Network of Religious Communities and the Buffalo Jewish Community Relations Council to use this opportunity for an open dialogue about the intersection of the two faiths and as a way to address anti-Semitism wherever it exists.

Music and art have the power to bring about dialogue on the most challenging and important issues we face as a community and the BPO offers this piece in that spirit. The BPO has a long-standing history of presenting new music. Our mission is to present live symphonic music for the broadest possible audiences within and beyond the Western New York community. We represent no religious affiliation or stance, and as we do with every concert, we invite our audiences to interpret and respond to the music in their own unique way.