

POCONO RECORD

Bach Choir to ring in spring at the State Theatre

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The State Theatre will host its Spring Celebration of the Choral Art, featuring The Bach Choir of Bethlehem in its first performance at the venue, at 7:30 p.m. Saturday at 453 Northampton St., Easton.

As part of his 35th season as the choir's artistic director and conductor, Greg Funfgeld will direct two festive master-works for choir and brass: William Walton's "Coronation Te Deum," composed for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth in 1953, and John Rutter's "Gloria," composed 20 years later. Funfgeld will combine the aforementioned works with J.S. Bach's "Cantata 118 O Jesu Christ, mein Lebens Licht" ("O Jesus Christ, Light of My Life"), one of the last choral works Bach composed, and Morten Lauridsen's earliest choral cycle, the "Mid-Winter Songs" on poetry by Robert Graves.

The Bach Choir of Bethlehem will perform the latter in the version for a Leipzig funeral procession.

Formed in 1898, The Bach Choir of Bethlehem — whose 80-plus members perform at the annual Bethlehem Bach Festival — gave the first complete American performances of Bach's "Mass in B minor" in 1900 and "Christmas Oratorio" in 1901. The choir has performed at venues such as the Thomaskirche, Bach's church in Leipzig, Germany, and Carnegie Hall in New York City, among others.

Aside from Bach works, The Bach Choir of Bethlehem's discography includes recordings of Christmas-oriented music. Among the choir's other career highlights: producing "Mr. Bach Comes to Call," a 2007 film based on the "Classical Kids" CD, in collaboration with Touchstone Theatre and GreenTreks Network; representing Pennsylvania in "Remember to Love," a series of New York City concerts observing the 10th anniversary of 9/11; commissioning "Young Meister Bach," a one-act comic opera by composer Chuck Holdeman and librettist Bill Bly, performed in 2014 in Bethlehem and in Philadelphia for the German Society of Pennsylvania's 250th anniversary; and Bach to School, an educational outreach program presented for 100,000-plus children.

Tickets are \$42 and \$39. For information, call 610-252-3132 or visit statetheatre.org.