Bach Choir News
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Jewels in the Crown of Bach & The Bach Choir’s Legacy by David Ruhf

THE TIMPANIST OFFERS A BRIEF FANFARE, followed by a response of trilling flutes. Another
fanfare from the drums, and trilling oboes, then the trumpets take over as the strings begin a
descending avalanche of exuberance. The whimsy and excitement of the orchestral introduction
prepares our ears for the choral entrance that follows, with singers mimicking the fanfares at first,
and then casting off on their own contrapuntal journeys, the entire enterprise brimming over with
infectious joy. So begins Bach’s epic Christmas Oratorio, and so will begin the Bach Choir’s explo-
ration of some of the staples of Bach’s œuvre in a season featuring several of Bach’s large works,
including three that have a very special connection to Bethlehem. In addition to the first three
cantatas of the Christmas Oratorio, which we’ll offer at the 2015 Christmas Concerts, The Choir will
be singing Bach’s enormously affecting St. John Passion for our Spring Concert and will return,
as ever, to the Mass in B Minor, at the 109th Bethlehem Bach Festival, in May (The Choir will also
offer one of Bach’s more modestly scaled oratorios at Festival, his joyful Easter Oratorio). After a few
seasons of explorations of some of his smaller works, and works composed by composers clearly
demonstrating the Kapellmeister’s influence, this season allows us to return to some of the central
works of our legacy.

To my mind, two threads connect these works, beyond their authorship. The first: they offer
some of Bach’s most tremendously evocative music. The animation and zest of the
Christmas Oratorio’s introduction eventually gives way to delicate arias of reverence, as well as sonorous
and majestic praise. With the beginning of the second cantata in the cycle, we hear one of Bach’s
most famous sinfonias, a rhapsodic pastorale that seems, at once, to evoke the idyll of the fields of

Heart & Soul – Voices of the Future by Bridget George

“A LIVELY LABORATORY” was how Geoff Gehman described The Bach Choir’s Family Concert in
a recent issue of the Lehigh University Alumni Bulletin. This annual concert has had the participation
of young artists – singers, instrumentalists, dancers, actors, composers, visual artists, and poets –
at its center since its inception as part of the Centennial Celebration of The Bach Choir in 2000.

In recent years, The Choir has been focusing even more strongly on its relationship to the
training of young singers – the voices of the future — not only through its choral scholars
program in which talented high school seniors sing with The Choir for one year, but through
collaboration with youth choruses. Recent examples were the participation of the Bel Canto
Children’s Chorus in Benjamin Britten’s Saint Nicolas and in our most recent CD on the
Analekta label A Child’s Christmas in Bethlehem.

The Youth Choirs Festival for the Family Concert on February 28th is the next step in
our exploration. Four fabulous youth choirs join The Bach Choir and Bach Festival Orchestra
in a program of favorite choruses. When Greg and I met with the choir directors this past
June, there was tremendous excitement about the project. The choirs have already started
please turn to page 3

In today’s reality, the art of personal communication is ever-dwindling. Choral singing gives
us back a small piece of this, a vital element of the human experience – unity of thought and
action for the sole purpose of making our little corner of the world a more beautiful place.

My singers of the Charter Arts Touring Choir have greatly enjoyed the challenge of preparing
the Gloria from the Mass in B Minor. We can’t wait to hear the final product!
- David Macbeth, director Charter Arts Touring Choir

please turn to page 3

INSIDE...
Letter from the Conductor .........................2
Letter from the President ..........................2
Soloist Spotlight .................................4
Choir Spotlight .....................................4
Re-imagined Festival in Review ...............5
Board Staff News .................................6
Corporate Spotlight ............................6
Guarantor Spotlight ..............................7
Allentown Bach at Noon .........................8
Christmas Shopping ............................insert
Dear Friends:

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE COMPOSITION

rehearsing Handel’s spine-tingling Zadok the Priest written in 1727 for the coronation of George II in England; the “new” – oboe, cello, string bass. At our 75th Magnificent Voices of the Future cont.

Dear Friends:

EVEry Three YEarS the board of managers updates The Choir’s strategic plan. During this exercise we take a long look at The Choir from various perspectives. We try to determine what the choir does now and how do we go about serving our world and our country better. We discuss changes in our environment and what they might mean to us, and we select areas of focus for the next three years. Over the past year a committee made up of board members, staff, and choir members has conducted this process once again. At our first meeting of the new season the Board adopted the committee’s recommendations for the new strategic plan.

The Choir exists today in a much different world than in the recent past. We have seen funding sources change, many new performance venues open, and increased challenges in reaching new audiences with our musical message. However, The Choir believes that our basic mission and approach remains not only relevant, but also vibrant and transformative. Our objective is to perform the music of J.S. Bach and the promotion of an appreciation of Bach’s music and the music of composers who influenced him or were influenced by him through performance and education. At our core, we are a volunteer ensemble of around 90 members under the direction of an inspired artistic director dedicated to performing this music to the highest level of excellence we can achieve. This choir will be supported by a professional orchestra that is itself substantial in its dedication and excellence, and by distinguished guest artists many of whom have become part of The Bach Choir family through their long relationship with us. A catch phrase used by the planning committee was “Tradition, Excellence, and Soul”.

We want to continue to find ways to embrace our audience. Our goal is to make sure that you will want to come back and see us again. We are building our repertoire so that we are performing the entire cantata cycle for the Christmas cantata. In the third cantata, we hasten with the scene of the Passion with some of Bach’s most dramatic and panache. With great drama and incredible text-paint-

Bach’s native Thuringia, as well as the hills of Palestine, where shepherds were keeping their flocks on guard, in the Christmas narrative. This pastorate is united with Martin Luther’s beloved text from the chorale, Vom Himmel hoch (From Heaven above), in a glorious chorale fantasia with instrumental interpo-

The Choir at Noon will be the centerpiece of our season and will build on the success of our “new” – oboe, cello, string bass. At our 75th Mass in B Minor 1888. Twelve years later, The Bach Choir of Bethlehem was founded by the late Dr. Frederick Wolle, in June of 1900, and, a year later, in 1901, the Christmas Overture. Both were led by Wolle, whose visionary leadership made the Bethlehem Bach Choir a renowned destination in America’s musical life.

As our collective understanding of Bach performance practice has evolved, and as new generations of Bach Choir singers bring these works to life, we seek to reach them with the freshness encountered in Bach’s lifetime as well as when they burst into the American musical consciousness over 100 years ago. As was written in a review of our 2012 record-

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are performing this year in a season we’re calling “Bach at the Heart” – including three of Bach’s larger works that were heard in the United States for the first time here in our “little town of Bethlehem” – the Christmas Oratorio, Saint John Passion, and Mass in B Minor. We look forward to sharing the timeless beauty and profound spirituality of these works – and much more.

When I’m asked the question about my favorite Bach work, I sometimes say “it’s the one I’m working on right now.” For me, there was great joy in discovering Cantata 152 at last year’s Festival – "Tritt auf die Glaubenshohn sung so magnificently by Agnes Zinzendorf and Bill Sharp, with it’s unusual juxtaposition of "old" instruments – recorder, viola d’amore, viola da gamba – and "new" – oboe, cello, string bass. At our 75th Bach at Noon in September, we encountered again the particular charms of the "new" – oboe, cello, string bass. At our 75th Bach at Noon in September, we encountered again the particular charms of the Bachian master, Elizabeth Field – a work we had not done for almost a decade. Two days ago, at our October Bach at Noon, we sang and played Bach’s first solo cantata, Meine Herz schmerzt im Blut and journeyed with Bach as our guide from desolation to hope and, finally, to joy – Rosa Lamoreaux was sovereign in her performance, and the sense of joy leading to joy was palpable. Whatever your favorite composition is, I’m happy that it’s yours and hope you will love and enjoy it forever. If we’re singing and playing some of your favorites this year, I couldn’t be happier.

Open to the possibility of new works and the joy of discovery – new “chert-teppers” in your catalogue of beloved works. It is a rare privilege and precious opportunity that is ours to share.

Yours ever,

Greg Funfgeld
Artistic Director and Conductor

Dear Friends:

Voices of the Future cont.

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Soloist Spotlight — Isaiah Bell by Karen Clove

To be a performer is to be the vessel for someone else's art

Hailed in the New York Times as truly remarkable individuals, and I know that Columbia, and still lives in Victoria, but his music or sing harmony. It wasn't until his last year of high school, His maternal grandfather is a musician, but a steady diet of classical music and lessons. He adds, “I've developed rituals that I take with me wherever I go, to create a sense of normalcy.” Enter Avocado Toast!

“I realized I was eating a lot of Avocada Toast (it's delicious), so I began chronicling my avocado toast's travels around the world! It's much less boring than saying, 'I'm in my avocado toast's travels around the world!'”

Isaiah grew up as one of six children on a farm in Fort St. John, in northern British Columbia, and still lives in Victoria, but his performing schedule has taken him around the world. “I'm on the road a lot, seeing the world in a strange and easy way and it's easy to be disconnected,” he says. Imagine what it would be like to start a new job every week or month. He adds, “I've developed rituals that I take with me wherever I go, to create a sense of normalcy.”

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AS YOU MAKE YOUR PLANS, we hope you’ll enjoy and reflect on these longer excerpts from reviews of the 2015 Festival. The joyful and impressive spirit of this re-imagined Festival had many attendees saying it was “the best Festival ever” and also elicited praise from newcomers of all ages and national and international press. It is always enlightening to see how new visitors see our city and our musical endeavors.
LIKE THE BACH CHOIR OF BETHLEHEM, Hampson Mowrer Kreitz Insurance has established a solid reputation for its commitment to community and focus on fostering long lasting relationships. The agency traces its roots to Bethlehem in 1914 when Arthur Hampson established The A.B. Hampson Agency, which specialized in fire, casualty and extraordinary concerts throughout the year. In 2014, HMK celebrated its 100th anniversary, receiving the Milestone Award from the Pennsylvania Chamber of Commerce and was also recognized by The Morning Call with a Top Work Places Award. True to its culture, HMK celebrated its anniversary by providing more than 500 volunteer hours of service over a little more than a week to complete the exterior construction of a new home for a local family. Individually, HMK employees can be found volunteering in the community and serving in leadership roles. We are proud to count HMK Insurance among our valued corporate partners who share our commitment to building on the strong foundations of the past while looking forward to the future.

BEING AMBASSADORS for the Bach Choir of Bethlehem comes naturally to Former Congressman Fred Rooney and his wife, Evie. Fred is a native of Bethlehem and comes to the Choir for many years and was highly supportive of the inaugural Allentown Chamber of Commerce. Jim has known and appreciated John Katko. He has early memories of Dr. Ifor Jones, the music of Bach and The Bach Choir. Evie’s father, Fred, who is a native of Bethlehem, went to Washington; he was a vacancy in the 88th Congress. He continued to serve as a board member and to work with Greg Funfgeld, an extraordinary leader. His commitment is an inspiration to my entire family.

For both Fred and Evie, the annual performance of the Mass in B Minor remains their favorite event of the season. Evie, who was a choral scholar the year The Choir traveled to the UK. Her favorite memory is standing alongside her family’s home to practice. Then starting around the age of eight, she recalls going to ticketed rehearsal concerts, where seats were assigned alphabetically. Seating in the “L” section assured the best vantage point to be able to fully appreciate The Bach Choir’s performance.

As a community leader in Washington, Evie, a graduate of King’s College, has focused much of her energy to support the arts and educational programs for under-served students in Washington’s inner city. She has served on the boards of several Washington organizations. Despite the distance, Evie continues to serve as an engaged and thoughtful member of The Bach Choir’s board of managers.

Evie is quick to praise artistic director and conductor Greg Funfgeld for all of the ways that he has advanced and developed The Choir saying, “I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as a board member and to work with Greg Funfgeld, an extraordinary leader. His commitment is an inspiration to my entire family.”

For both Fred and Evie, the performance by acclaimed cellist YoYo Ma, which was part of The Bach Choir Centennial Celebration, was an important part of the tapestry of their life story and family legacy, just as they are important parents.

We are grateful to have them in our Guarantor family and especially want to wish Fred a happy birthday!.Scope to include personal and commercial agency, which specialized in fire, casualty and insurance. Hampson established The A.B. Hampson Agency, which specialized in fire, casualty and insurance. Hampson established The A.B. Hampson Agency, which specialized in fire, casualty and insurance. Hampson established The A.B. Hampson Agency, which specialized in fire, casualty and insurance. Hampson established The A.B. Hampson Agency, which specialized in fire, casualty and insurance.
Allentown Bach at Noon Concerts a Spectacular Success by Bridget George

MANY THANKS TO ALL OUR ALLENTOWN Bach at Noon sponsors – The Rider-Pool Foundation, Air Products, Arts at St. John’s, Alvin H. Butz, Inc., City Center Lehigh Valley, The Century Fund, Norris McLaughlin & Marcus, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Thanks also to participating musicians, and the capacity audiences for an outstanding launch of our summer Bach at Noon Series in Allentown. Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 and Cantata 149 in June and Johannes Brahms’ Liebeslieder Walzer (Love Song Waltzes) paired with Greg Funfgeld and Tom Goeman on two pianos playing Bach’s Concerto for Two Keyboards in C Major in July were received with tremendous enthusiasm.

Few knew what to expect for the inaugural Allentown Bach at Noon concert. If they present it will they come? Indeed they did with an estimated 650 in attendance June 9 at St. John’s Lutheran Church, Allentown…

The powerful voices of the soloists rang out, the choir’s voices soared and the orchestra’s glorious sound rose upward and out, thrilling the audience and eliciting “Bravos” and a standing ovation.


Special thanks to Lee Butz for this beautiful photograph, which captures the beauty of St. John’s Lutheran Church and the spirit of the concert.
Give the Gift of Music from The Bach Choir this Holiday Season!

The Ascension Oratorio
CD @ $17

A Child's Christmas in Bethlehem
Our newest recording, great for the whole family!
CD @ $17

Christmas in Leipzig
CD @ $17

The Christmas Oratorio
Featured at our 2015 Christmas Concerts!
CD @ $30

Set of Child's Christmas and Christmas in Bethlehem, Vol. 2, 3, & 4
CD @ $40

Christmas in Bethlehem, Vol. 2
CD @ $15

Christmas in Bethlehem, Vol. 3
CD @ $15

Christmas in Bethlehem, Vol. 4
CD @ $15

Magnificat & Gloria
CD @ $17

Mass in B Minor
CD @ $30

Songs of Hope
CD @ $17

Saint John Passion
Featured at our 2016 Spring Concert!
CD @ $30

Wachet Auf!
CD @ $17

Coloring Book
Perfect for your young family and friends!

Dear Mr. Funfgeld
Book @ $50

Mr. Bach Comes to Call
Great to pair with a coloring book!
DVD @ $25

5.5-inch Round Magnet
Perfect for the car or refrigerator!

Notepad
An ideal stocking stuffer!

Cotton Tote bag

Shipping & Handling $5.00

Total Enclosed

For a complete list of merchandise, or to order individual items, please visit BACH.org or call the Bach Office at 610.866.4382 ext. 10.

Keep an eye out for new merchandise items beginning at our 2015 Christmas Concerts, including the return of Bach Choir Notecards, and a brand new Bach Choir 2016 Calendar!

Return this form with your payment to:
(Make checks payable to The Bach Choir of Bethlehem)
The Bach Choir of Bethlehem
440 Heckewelder Place | Bethlehem, PA 18018
BACH.org

For questions or more information, please contact, Andrea Fritchey at andrea@bach.org, 610.866.4382 ext. 10