



Don Schröder



Ryan Hulvat

**FOR THIS YEAR’S CHRISTMAS CONCERTS**, Greg Funfgeld has created a program of a numerical palindrome, Cantatas BWV 36 and 63. Bridging these two gems of Bach’s repertory is a rarely-heard bonbon by the late-Romantic (some might even say impressionist) Italian composer, Ottorino Respighi, performed by The Bach Choir for the first time in these concerts.

We set out on a grand Christmas journey, from the joyful, almost whimsical expectation of Advent in Cantata No. 36, to a stunningly lyrical and opulently rendered pastiche of medieval musical allusions and the pastoral sounds of double reeds in the Respighi, to an exegetical celebration of the Nativity story, etched in metal and marble, with some of Bach’s most celebratory and most cosmic writing in Cantata No. 63.

We begin with a cantata that had many earlier lives as secular works of tribute to various patrons and dignitaries in Bach’s pre-Leipzig existence, and which was finally codified into the form we will perform, well into his tenure as the Thomaskantor, which was given its first performance in 1731. Perhaps because the first Sunday in Advent was the only one on which there was any concerted music in Leipzig (the remaining three Sundays prior to Christmas were considered *tempus clausum*, or quiet time), Bach pulls out all the stops in this ebullient work. Beginning with an opening chorus featuring vivid text painting of praise soaring joyfully aloft, featuring as interpolations the chorales *Savior of the Nations, Come* and *How Brightly Shines the Morning Star*, including a time-stopping soprano aria accompanied by muted violin, and concluding with a doxological hymn of praise, this cantata demonstrates Bach’s total mastery as a reviser of his own work, recontextualizing the earlier material into a piece that seems tailor-made for Advent. *please turn to page 7*

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## World premiere by Gwyneth Walker

### FOR BEL CANTO & BACH CHOIR *by Bridget George*

**COMMISSIONING WORKS FROM LIVING COMPOSERS** has been an important part of both The Bach Choir and The Bel Canto Youth Chorus cultures. Now we eagerly anticipate the world premiere of a work by internationally acclaimed American composer Gwyneth Walker to celebrate our merger and Bel Canto’s 25th anniversary. The process of talking with Gwyneth, Greg Funfgeld, and Joy Hirokawa about possible texts and combinations of voices and instruments has been a delightful beginning to our creative collaboration.

Writing from her home in the Connecticut countryside after some of the major decisions were made and the composing began, Gwyneth said, “*Greetings to The Bach Choir and Bel Canto Youth Chorus. Although we have never met, I keep you in my thoughts these days. For I am currently creating our new song for premiere next May. This is a musical setting of the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow poem, The Day is Done. The message of these words is that evening is a time for poetry and music, a time when the power and beauty of song can soothe the cares of day. And the night shall be filled with music. I look forward to joining you for a rehearsal and premiere next Spring.*” *please turn to page 3*





DEAR FRIENDS:

FROM THE CONDUCTOR



**I HAVE JUST REVIEWED THE OUTLINE** for this issue of *Bach Choir News* and am struck by several things – what incredible energy characterizes this organization, what amazing people are involved with BACH IN BETHLEHEM, what extraordinary privileges are ours!

In September, we gave our 95th *Bach at Noon* concert in Bethlehem. This past Summer, we offered our third series of *Bach at Noon* concerts in the visual and acoustical splendor of St. John's Lutheran Church in downtown Allentown. We have welcomed The Bel Canto Youth Chorus into our Bach Choir Family. At least 18 of those children will join us for our *Bach to School* concerts in Allentown this November, when we sing for every fifth grader in that city. What a treat – and what an inspiration – for those precious children to look up on stage and see “our kids” performing alongside members of The Bach Choir and Bach Festival Orchestra! We will present the world premiere of a new work for Bel Canto as part of our Ifor Jones Chamber Music Concerts next May – don't miss it! You can read about some of the other amazing

people involved in our Bach Choir family – Board members, Choir members, the winner of our most recent competition for Young American Singers. We'll be collaborating with four amazing youth choirs in this season's Family Concert, and with the Lehigh University Philharmonic Orchestra in the Spring – joined by Kendra Colton, Laura Atkinson (a former competition winner), Benjamin Butterfield, and Dashon Burton. In May, Cassandra Lemoine will return to the festival, joined by mezzo soprano Krisztina Szabó and tenor Isaiah Bell in their Festival debuts – alongside beloved veterans Rosa Lamoreaux, Bill Sharp, and David Newman. We have two new recordings about to be released – *Bach and Handel* – memorable performances by our gifted Choir, orchestra, and distinguished soloists. Add to all of this our Board of Managers, Staff, The Choir and Orchestra, our soloists, Guarantors, and all of YOU – our audience – who listen with such intensity, devotion and palpable joy – our cup of blessing truly overflows! We are blessed – come, and share in these blessings with us!

Ever grateful,

Greg Funfgeld, Artistic Director & Conductor

As we go to press, we have been deeply saddened by the loss of Paul A. Florenz, vice-president and legal counsel of The Bach Choir board of managers, who died on October 18. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Jane, our devoted Choir manager, and the beautiful Florenz family. A tribute to Paul will appear in the next issue of *Bach Choir News*.



Trevor Dixon

DEAR FRIENDS:

FROM THE PRESIDENT



**AS I WRITE** this note, the staff and volunteers of The Choir are once again gearing up for our annual Gala Concert and Fundraiser. This year we will spend the afternoon listening to the renowned pianist Peter Serkin play the music of J.S. Bach and Mozart. Among the many wonderful aspects of this concert is that of watching how the love of music is passed between generations. Bach himself was a great educator of future musicians teaching young boys at the Thomasschule in Leipzig. And of course, he taught his own sons, including C.P.E. Bach, an influential composer and artist in his own right. Though Mozart's relationship with his father was at times tense, his musical influence on Mozart's career is undeniable. Peter Serkin, for his part, is carrying on the tradition of his father, Rudolph, one of the world's greatest pianist and classical musicians.

The purpose of the Gala is to raise funds for The Choir's youth outreach programs. These programs originated from our sense that the music of Bach, and classical music in general, is under-represented in the culture our youth experience today. But our objective has grown. We not only want to introduce these young people to our art in an entertaining way, but also to encourage them to become the next generation of enthusiasts, participants and supporters of the arts.

Our programming has evolved accordingly. We continue our seminal program, *Bach to School* in which we present Bach to the third, fourth, and fifth graders throughout the Lehigh Valley each year. And we continue to include young singers in The Choir as Choral Scholars. More recently we have found ways for young people to perform at our concerts, adding the extra joy that comes from making music with and for others. Through the participants in our Youth Choir Festival, Chaconne Project, Young Composers Competition, and the young players at Zimmermann's Coffee House we see these young people grow through their pursuit of musical excellence. For the first time this year, with The Bel Canto Youth Chorus joining The Bach Choir family, we have the capacity to train young choristers from sixth to twelfth grade, give them exciting opportunities to perform, and encourage them to pursue their interests in the choral arts throughout their lifetime.

I hope to see you at the Gala, but in any case, please be sure to take every opportunity to encourage those young people in your life to enjoy and to pursue the countless pleasures that are available in the timeless music of J.S. Bach.

Sincerely,

Harold G. Black, President

## FAMILY CONCERT –

### 200 Youth Raise Their Voices with The Choir by Renée James

**THE BACH CHOIR'S FAMILY CONCERT** celebrates the diverse nature of the arts by collaborating with arts organizations that help us offer a unique approach to classical music. Recently, Mock Turtle Marionette Theatre helped us bring *The Nightingale* to life, and the talented cast who presented *Mr. Bach Comes to Call* last season helped us celebrate the tenth anniversary of this Classical Kids film.

In February, we'll offer a Youth Choirs Festival, last presented in 2016. Joy Hirokawa, founder and artistic director of The Bel Canto Youth Chorus remarked, “It was thrilling to sing with everyone at our last Youth Choirs Festival. The sound of all those voices together lifted in song was fabulous!” Along with the Concert Choir from Bel Canto, young singers performing with The Bach Choir and Bach Festival Orchestra include Emmaus High School's Chorale, Parkland Chorale, and Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts Touring Choir.

Some 200 voices will offer an exquisite program of music, ranging from Bach to works from contemporary composers from around the world:

**Joy Hirokawa** tells us, “The Concert Choir of The Bel Canto Youth Chorus is really excited to be joining with other young singers from across the Lehigh Valley and The Bach Choir!”

**Frank Anonia** (Parkland High School) notes, “The Parkland Chorale is thrilled to be collaborating with The Bach Choir, and to be teaming up [with other students] to create beautiful music. Our students are eager to tackle repertoire not typically programmed for our concerts and honored to participate in this event.”

**David Macbeth** (Charter Arts High School) agrees: “For us, this festival provides an opportunity to experience the full power



Ryan Hulvat

and majesty of large works we would otherwise not tackle on our own. From the “Dona nobis” of the *Mass in B Minor*, to *Zadok the Priest*, there is nothing that transcends the experience of singing a timeless masterwork with one's friends and colleagues!”

**Greg Funfgeld** describes choral music as “an experience of community unlike any other. An experience that touches hearts and minds in profound ways...and continues to enrich lives immeasurably.”

We're certain the performance at the upcoming concert will offer this kind of experience and more for these young singers. We promise an outstanding afternoon for everyone, on and off the stage!

**YOUTH CHOIRS FESTIVAL – Reserve your seats now for Sunday, February 24, 2019, 3pm at Zoellner Arts Center, Lehigh University • Adults \$18 | Students \$9 BACH.org 610-866-4382**

## WORLD PREMIERE cont.

*The Day is Done* will be composed for The Bel Canto Youth Chorus Concert Choir, an ensemble from The Bach Choir, and instrumentalists from the Bach Festival Orchestra including flute, strings, and light, versatile percussion.

Both Greg Funfgeld and Joy Hirokawa have included Gwyneth Walker works in their programming on previous occasions and her exquisite *Shepherd's Song at Christmas* with a text by Langston Hughes was part of our *A Child's Christmas in Bethlehem*. Gwyneth's catalogue includes more than 300 commissioned works for orchestra, chamber ensembles, chorus, and solo works. In the choral world she is especially well known for her wonderful writing for children's voices as well as adult choirs.

A graduate of Brown University and the Hartt School of Music and former faculty member of Oberlin College Conservatory, Gwyneth Walker's work is beloved by performers and audiences alike for its energy, beauty, reverence, and drama. Gwyneth described her work in a recent interview for Interlochen Public Radio before the world premiere of her *Great Lakes Overture*, as “very American.” Her choral works are often inspired by her love

of folk music and her orchestral music is “like Aaron Copeland with a sense of humor!”

Commissions for The Bach Choir during the past 25 years have included Larry Lipkis, *Apotheosis: A Suite in Honor of J.S. Bach*; Libby Larson *I It Am – The Shewings of Julian of Norwich* (co-commissioned with the BBC Proms); Stephen Paulus *A Dream of Time*; and most recently Chuck Holdeman *Young Meister Bach* (an opera with libretto by Bill Bly). Commissions for The Bel Canto Youth Chorus have included Malcolm Daglish, *Woods*; and Nick Page, *Always Something Sings*.

*The Day is Done* promises to be a wonderful addition to our previous contributions to new music. We hope you'll reserve your seats now for the Saturday Morning Concerts at the 2019 Bach Festival and not miss the wonderful opportunity to be with Gwyneth Walker, The Bach Choir and Bel Canto for this exciting world premiere. I'll leave you with one of my favorite verses from the Longfellow poem:

“Such songs have the power to quiet the restless pulse of care,  
and come like the benediction that follows after prayer.”



## 120TH ANNIVERSARY CD RELEASE –

### *Bach & Handel* by Bridget George

**We are excited to announce that the official Analekta release date for our new Bach and Handel recordings is October 26, 2019.**

On the following day, Saturday October 27, our Guarantors, sponsors, and the media have been invited to celebrate with choir and orchestra members and soloists at a CD launch party in the Zoellner Arts Center Lower Gallery at Lehigh University 12 noon – 2pm.

Each of the Bach and Handel recordings will be available as SINGLE CDs in physical or digital format through The Bach Choir, Analekta, Amazon, Spodify, and Apple Music.

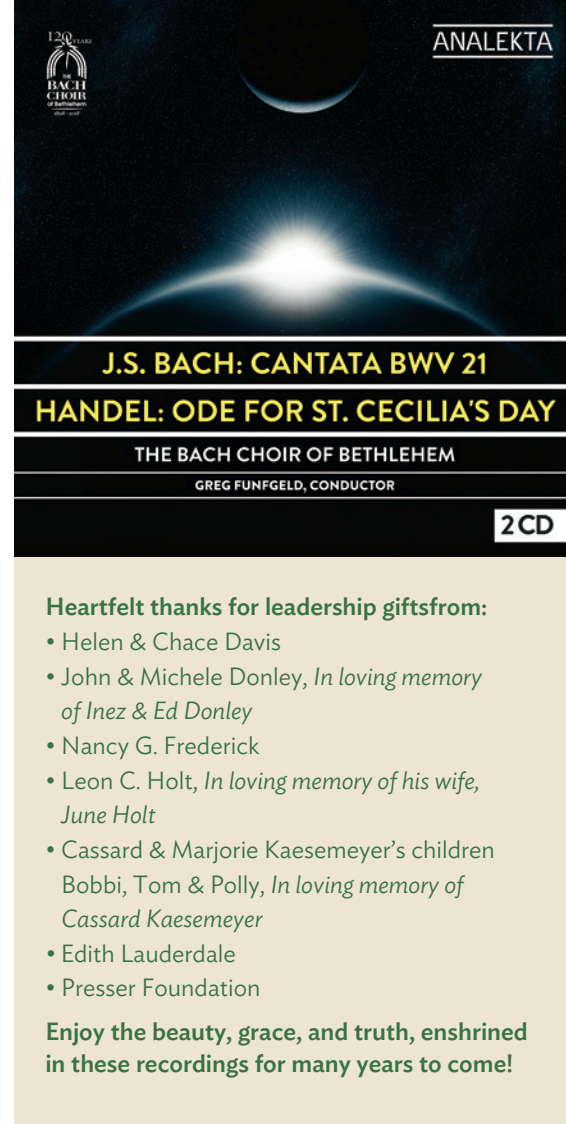
The special DOUBLE CD set recorded in celebration of the 120th anniversary of The Bach Choir and Greg Funfgeld's 35th anniversary as artistic director and conductor will be available ONLY through The Bach Choir and it includes a special booklet with complete texts and translations. An order-form is included with this issue of *Bach Choir News* or order online at BACH.org.

The profoundly beautiful works featured on these exquisite recordings are:

- **J.S. Bach** • Cantata 21 – *Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis* • Aria: *Heil und Segen* from Cantata 120 • Aria: *Liebt, ihr Christen, in der Tat* from Cantata 76
- **G.F. Handel** *Ode for Saint Cecilia's Day*

Tremendous congratulations go to Greg Funfgeld, The Bach Choir and Bach Festival Orchestra, and to our vocal and instrumental soloists Cassandra Lemoine and Rosa Lamoreaux, sopranos; Daniel Taylor, countertenor; Benjamin Butterfield, tenor; William Sharp baritone; Elizabeth Field, violin; Robin Kani, flute; Mary Watt and Nobuo Kitagawa oboes; Lawrence Wright, trumpet; Loretta'O'Sullivan, cello; Mollie Glazer, viola da gamba; and Charlotte Mattax Moersch, portativ organ, for their extraordinary contributions.

Our great thanks also to Analekta and especially to Carl Talbot and James Clemens-Seely who were such brilliant producers, sound engineers, and editors.



#### Heartfelt thanks for leadership giftsfrom:

- Helen & Chace Davis
- John & Michele Donley, *In loving memory of Inez & Ed Donley*
- Nancy G. Frederick
- Leon C. Holt, *In loving memory of his wife, June Holt*
- Cassard & Marjorie Kaesemeyer's children Bobbi, Tom & Polly, *In loving memory of Cassard Kaesemeyer*
- Edith Lauderdale
- Presser Foundation

**Enjoy the beauty, grace, and truth, enshrined in these recordings for many years to come!**

## SPRING CONCERT – *The Bach Choir & Lehigh University Philharmonic Perform Mozart's Requiem* by David Ruhf

**PICTURE THIS SCENE** from a few years ago in Baker Hall, Lehigh University: in the midst of midterm examinations, several dozen beleaguered college students assemble on the stage, instruments in hand. Alongside some of our Bach Festival Orchestra principals, here are aspiring engineers, a smattering of music minors, individuals studying communication and economics. Their charming leader, the accomplished pianist and conductor, Eugene Abulescu, calls them to attention, and they launch into Stravinsky's musically tumultuous *Symphony of Psalms* with an energy that belies the challenging time they were navigating academically. That first rehearsal set the tone for a very gratifying collaboration with the Lehigh University Philharmonic, which we will reprise in the April 12 & 13, 2019 Spring Concerts.

This year, with Greg Funfgeld at the podium, the repertoire will include the

symphonic version of William Walton's *Coronation Te Deum*, heard last in the 2018 Spring Concerts in a version for brass and organ, Mozart's *Piano Concerto in C*, K467 with Eugene Abulescu as soloist, and Mozart's epic *Requiem*, K626. All of the lore about the *Requiem*, from Peter Shaffer's play and the Oscar-winning film to Mozart's widow Costanze's tales about the commissioning of the work threaten to eclipse the music itself, which shows Mozart at the absolute heights of his powers (even though the *Requiem* had to be completed by his pupil, Süßmayr).

Surprisingly, many of us in The Choir haven't sung the *Requiem* before, despite our having encountered his *Mass in C-Minor* and *Coronation Mass* in earlier concerts. Thus, we're very excited to bring this powerful work to life with a sense of discovery shared by the students of the LU Philharmonic. Eugene will be on a sab-

batical during the spring semester, and he has asked his friend and colleague Greg Funfgeld to take the reins during his time away. Their collaboration on the Mozart concerto promises to be especially satisfying, and the union of students and experienced singers for the Walton and Mozart *Requiem* should result in a stellar evening of music-making!



Karlö Geiser

Simon Woolf

## THE BEL CANTO YOUTH CHORUS – by Silagh White *25 Seasons Uniting Children in Song*

**WE CANNOT THINK OF A BETTER WAY** to celebrate 25 seasons of uniting children in song than with our completed merger with The Bach Choir of Bethlehem. We are happy to report that our enrollment is steadily increasing. We welcomed 18 new choristers to the preparatory and concert choirs, including many recommendations from singers in The Bach Choir. Area music teachers who have seen their students' musical growth by participating in The Bel Canto Youth Chorus have also encouraged children to join our choirs.

*What a wonderful gift! Not only is your work providing these young people with life changing experiences, but you are helping them to touch the lives of others with their music as well. Thank you.*

– Patty Alercia music teacher/  
Bach Choir member

In June, 15 choristers participated in the 2018 Queen City Children's Choir Festival hosted by the Cincinnati Youth Chorus. After the final performances, a number of audience members remarked that our choir sang with beauty and finesse, especially one of the pieces that featured a solo in Welsh.

Our second Choral Village continued this summer with cultural ambassadors representing gospel singing, Puerto Rican drumming, Indian dance, and Appalachian instruments and dance. The program does more than celebrate cultural diversity. It is transformative in the way students see each other and dialogue on common challenges.

#### Choral Village Students:

- *It was really fun, and I made a lot of friendships and improved my confidence for more things, musically and in the arts.*
- *I finally found my voice.*
- *I learned to listen to what people have to say and see their side of something.*

*We ended with sharing Reflections about the week. Students talked about being surprised to learn how much they had in common with other students who appeared to be so different from them. – Jennie Gilrain, Choral Village theater teacher*

**DON'T MISS** Bel Canto's Winter Concert, December 1, 2018, 4pm at Wesley United Methodist Church, Bethlehem, PA, which features Benjamin Britten's wonderful *Ceremony of Carols*. Tickets at Bach.org or 610-866-4382 Ext. 116.



Ryan Huwat

**We congratulate Dr. Joy Hirokawa on her 25th season as founder and director of The Bel Canto Youth Chorus and for a year of significant recognition by various organizations including:**

- **Invitation to adjudicate at the Bali International Choir Festival this past summer**
- **Invitation to present her research on the Choral Village program at the North Dakota State University's 3rd Choral Symposium on October 13, 2018.**
- **Recognized by the Bethlehem Fine Arts Commission at the 2018 Tribute to the Arts for her years of service to youth choirs.**

## Corporate Sponsors – PART OF THE BACH CHOIR FAMILY by Cheryl Dungan



**VISIT DOWNTOWN ALLENTOWN** and you will be struck by the renewed vitality and emerging urban vibe of the city, partly due to the collaboration and commitment of community and corporate sector partners, like Norris McLaughlin, P.A. who have invested in its transformation.

Norris McLaughlin, P.A. is a mid-sized legal firm that serves businesses and families in New Jersey, New York, and more recently, in Pennsylvania as the result of a 2009 merger. A value-driven company, Norris McLaughlin was among the first businesses to relocate their Lehigh Valley office to center city Allentown.

Around that time, The Bach Choir introduced our Allentown *Bach at Noon* series at St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church. Norris McLaughlin is among our *Bach at Noon* Allentown series sponsors and has also supported our new *Bach Outdoors!* Festival program and our 2018 Gala.

Named among the "Companies that Care" by *COMMERCE* magazine, many of Norris McLaughlin's attorneys engage in

volunteer leadership roles across our region, including on our own Board of Managers. Board member Julie Macomb is an Associate at the firm, with a focus on business law. Julie is the chair of our Corporate Committee and serves as an ambassador for The Bach Choir, helping us make new friends and connections.

**AS A FAMILY-OWNED**, community-focused printing and



mailing service business, Working Dog Press has been a corporate partner and Bach Choir friend for years. A generous in-kind and Gala sponsor, Fred Fenselau and his team help us provide our patrons with timely high-quality printing. With state-of-the-art equipment and an

accommodating and knowledgeable staff, Fred's team includes his adorable sidekick and mascot, Aldi, a rescued dog who inspired their logo. We consider Working Dog an important part of The Bach Choir family!

"Supporting the arts in our soon to be 40th year! We look forward to many more to come for The Bach Choir and the Working Dog Pack." Fred Fenselau



Board of Managers Welcomes NEW BOARD MEMBERS  
& CHOIR REPRESENTATIVES TO THE BOARD

by Bridget George

BOARD MEMBERS



**JIM HORVATH** is a Vice President with PNC Institutional Investments in north-east Pennsylvania. He lives in Bethlehem, where he was born, and graduated from Lehigh University. Jim has held positions at a series of investment firms in New York and Connecticut as a business development officer. These included BNY Mellon, where he specialized in advising nonprofit organizations such as higher education, health-care, and cultural institutions. He and his wife Bonnie were active in their two daughters’ school’s parents’ association and Jim served as trustee at Second Presbyterian Church in NYC, treasurer of the Rye Historical Society, and chairman of the board of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Rye. Jim has been taking full advantage of the *Bach at Noon* performances and the annual Bach Festival.



**ERIKA RIDDLE PETROZELLI** is the Director of Donor Services at the Lehigh Valley Community Foundation where she joined the staff in 2014. Previously, she was Vice President of Investor Relations at Magnitude Capital, LLC, in New York City, and a Senior Audit Associate at PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP. Erika completed Leadership Lehigh Valley at Northampton Community College and was named a 2018-19 Rider-Pool Foundation Collective Impact Fellow. She is an active member of the Junior League of the Lehigh Valley. A Bethlehem native, Erika graduated from Lehigh University in 2003 with a major in Accounting and went on to earn her Masters in Accounting and Information Analysis. Erika is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA), licensed in Pennsylvania and New York.



**ANNETTE THIEL** has been singing with The Bach Choir of Bethlehem for 21 seasons. Growing up, she started singing solos at five years of age where dad was an accordion playing pastor, and mom played piano and sang solos in the community chorus. Choral director, George Boyer was very influential in Annette pursuing voice in high school and college. She holds a degree in music from The University of Valley Forge where she met her husband, Charlie. Annette has been secretary at Muhlenberg Elementary school for the past 10 years. She is also very involved in ministry at her local church in Allentown. She and her husband Charlie have a passion to see growth, and positive change, and work hard to make it happen in the school district and in the city of Allentown.

CHOIR REPRESENTATIVES TO THE BOARD  
(elected by The Choir for a two-year term)



• **KURT ANCHORSTAR** First Tenor since 1994 (Don Schroder)  
Music Teacher, Catasauqua Elementary School | Coplay, PA



• **CARRIE NEDICK** First Soprano since 2006 (Theo Anderson)  
Mother of three, former Associate Director/Giving Coordinator, Asa Packer Society, Lehigh University | Allentown, PA



• **KATE RACCULIA** First Alto since 2016 (Hub Willson)  
Published novelist and development/marketing specialist at the Bethlehem Area Public Library | Bethlehem, PA



• **PETER YOUNG** First Bass since 1987 and the third of four generations in his family to sing in The Bach Choir (Don Schroder)  
Manager, Versalift East Inc. | Bethlehem PA

Janet Pressler Joins Bach Choir Staff



**WE ARE DELIGHTED** to welcome Janet Pressler as our new administrative assistant and special events coordinator. Janet has had an accomplished career with well-rounded experience in corporate, non-profit, and educational settings. She has supported the creative arts field through the coordination of events, museum exhibitions, and marketing/fundraising campaigns. She is a native of Bethlehem and has a BFA in Communication Design from Kutztown University (1980). Janet was a volunteer choir member, board president, and concert coordinator of Mosaic Harmony Choir in the Washington, D.C. over a period of 15 years. Since returning to Bethlehem, she has worked as a site manager for the Kemerer Museum and coordinated projects for the Lehigh Conference of Churches and Coopersburg Historical Society. Janet has great communication and people skills. She also has a genuine passion for choral music and has seen firsthand how The Bach Choir can affect people’s lives.



Guarantor Spotlight –  
MEET OUR GUARANTORS

by Cheryl Dungan

Howard Brown, Washington, D.C.

**A GUARANTOR FOR MORE THAN A DECADE,** Howard Brown



is among our many Bach Choir Guarantors residing in the Washington, D.C. area. Howard first heard The Bach Choir during the 1999–2000 season, when The Choir performed at the Kennedy Center as part of our Centennial Celebration.

Howard was impressed and moved by the exceptional quality of the musical performance and recalls being particularly struck by the crisp precision of the singers, especially given the size of the choir. He expressed admiration for Conductor Greg Funfgeld’s ability to maintain a

clear connection with the choir members during the performance.

Recognizing that Bethlehem was a reasonable distance to travel to be able experience the musical excellence of The Bach Choir, Howard began attending our annual Festival regularly, often bringing friends with him. A retired public-school educator, Howard has been singing with choral groups since his college days. He remains involved with various choirs and humbly notes that he sings “by ear and from the heart.”

As a former educator and a choral singer, Howard asserts that it is very important for the next generation to have the opportunity to enjoy the music of J.S. Bach and The Bach Choir, as part of their academic and their spiritual education. He was excited to learn about our merger with The Bel Canto Youth Chorus as an important expansion of our youth education and outreach initiatives.



Christie & Dwight Gehman, Quakertown PA

**MANY PEOPLE HAVE BECOME GUARANTORS** because of family history or personal connections to The Bach Choir. In the case of the Gehman family, there is a history of connections stemming from their daughter Jesse’s personal experience, as a singer with The Bel Canto Youth Chorus from 5th to 12th grade and as a Bach Choir Choral Scholar. The connection continues, as Jesse now sings as a member of the soprano section of The Bach Choir, much to everyone’s delight.

*We are thrilled that Jess is singing with The Bach Choir. Her experience with Bel Canto really shaped her into the young woman she is today. The musical education & discipline she learned there made it possible for her to be part of The Bach Choir and she is grateful to be part of it.* – Christie Gehman

Christie and Dwight became Guarantors earlier this season and have also donated to our Youth and Educational Outreach programs, in appreciation of The Bach Choir and Bel Canto connections that have enriched their lives.

*“Bach at Noon is a very special gift to the Lehigh Valley. If, as Guarantors, we can, in some small way, help that flourish we feel fortunate that we are able to contribute.”*

Welcome to Our Newest Guarantors!

James & Patty Alercia, PA • Robert Calandriello, PA • Christie & Dwight Gehman, PA • Nancy & Draycott Hooke III, PA  
Mr. Nicholas Hurff, MD • Paul & Nancy Lagas, CT • Roberta Renard, NY • Steven L. Wilson, FL

CHRISTMAS cont.

Ottorino Respighi is perhaps best known as the composer of a triptych of suites of music celebrating various aspects of Rome, the orchestral showpieces, *The Fountains of Rome*, *The Pines of Rome*, and *Roman Festivals*. The renown of those works has probably overshadowed his work as a musicologist and enthusiast of the music of earlier centuries. In his only sacred choral opus, the *Laud to the Nativity*, Respighi draws on his knowledge of that earlier music, with melodies and harmonies that evoke several centuries of vocal writing. Unlike the allusions and metaphors that populate the text of the Bach works, Respighi gives us a more traditional narrative of the Nativity. Scored for winds and four-hand piano, Respighi creates a cast of shepherds, Mary, Joseph, and an angel, with lush writing for the choir. There are considerable musical demands for players and singers alike, thick choral textures, sparkling accompaniment, and virtuosic writing for solo singers. It will be a delight to hear this little-known piece given a lavish and committed performance by The Bach Choir, members of the Bach Festival Orchestra, and our excellent band of soloists.

The performance continues with one of Bach’s most elaborate

cantatas, BWV 63, a collaboration between Bach and his friend and librettist, Salomo Franck. Franck was a court poet, head of the Wiemar mint (a role that seems to have inspired his poetry in the opening chorus), and a lawyer. The conductor John Eliot Gardiner points out that Franck eschews the traditional conventions of a Christmas cantata: “No cradle song, no music for the shepherds or for the angels, not even the standard Christmas chorales.” Instead, Christians are exhorted to “Etch you this day in metal and marble.” The cantata contains one of the great *recitativo accompagnati* of all of Bach’s music, two stunning duets, and a closing chorus that swells from devotion and joy into something closer to spiritual and musical ecstasy (accomplished with splendid fugal writing and four trumpets. This was the work Bach reprised from his Wiemar years on his first Christmas Day in Leipzig, little wonder, since a performance of this stunning music can’t help but make a splash! As always, the concerts will conclude with the audience joining The Choir for some carols, concluding with a ravishing *Silent Night*, sung in German and English, crowned with an especially moving descant.



The Bach Choir of Bethlehem  
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## *Watch for New Faces and Festival Soloist Debuts this Season!*



### **Bach Vocal Competition Winner Gabriela Estephanie Solis, mezzo soprano:**

At the 2018 Festival, we were delighted to co-sponsor the bi-annual Young American Singer Vocal Competition with The American Bach Society, supported by a gift from Carl and Inge Beidleman. Ten talented individuals, all under the age of 30, performed exquisite programs, with Californian Gabriela Estephanie Solis, mezzo-soprano, taking top honors. Gabriela appeared at our September *Bach at Noon* and the audience was delighted to “meet” her and enjoy her sublime voice.



**Cassandra Lemoine, Soprano** makes her Bach Choir of Bethlehem recording debut on our new *Bach and Handel* CDs and returns from Denmark for a second year to the Bethlehem Bach Festival after rave reviews.



**Making their Festival debuts are Hungarian-Canadian mezzo soprano Krisztina Szabó, and Isaiah Bell, tenor.** Highly sought after in both North America and Europe, Krisztina Szabó made her Lincoln Center debut in *Così fan tutte* at the Mostly Mozart Festival and was praised in the *New York Times* for being clear, strong, stately, and an endearingly vulnerable Dorabella.” Isaiah Bell has already enchanted Bach Choir audiences in Bach’s *Saint John Passion* and Leonard Bernstein’s *Mass*. In the words of one *New York Times* critic “You hang on his face, his words, and the gleaming current of his vocal tone.”



***Please make your Festival plans and reserve your tickets soon! Guarantor seating deadline is December 10, 2018.***



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