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.

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.”
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 Choir (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 batch of Bach at Noon concerts in the visual and acoustic splendor of St. John’s Lutheran Church in downtown Allentown. We have welcomed The Bel Canto Youth Choir 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, 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 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 to them in the timeless music of J.S. Bach. Sincerely,

Harold G. Black, President

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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, we are navigating academically. That first concert of the year was dedicated to the commissioning of the work Threaten and Mozart’s epic K467 with Eugene Albulescu as soloist, and organ, Mozart’s Piano Concerto in C, and organ.

Each of the Bach and Handel recordings will be available as SINGLE CDs in physical or digital format through The Bach Choir, Analekta, Amazon, Spotify, 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. To order online, visit BACH.org.

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 about 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. – Jenna Gilman, Choral Village 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.

We conclude 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.

PITCURE 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. After a run-through of our Bach Festival Orchestra principals, here are aspiring engineers, a smattering of music minors, individually 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 profound beauty of works featured in these recordings for many years to come!

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Presbyterian Church in Rye. Jim has been taking full advantage of the Rye Historical Society, and chairman of the board of Trinity as trustee at Second Presbyterian Church in NYC, treasurer of cultural institutions. He and his wife Bonnie were active BOARD MEMBERS her husband Charlie have a passion to see growth, and positive very involved in ministry at her local church in Allentown. She and where she met her husband, Charlie. Annette has been secretary (CPA), licensed in Pennsylvania and New York.

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 PricewaterhouseCooper 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 sea-sons. 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.

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 coordi-nation of events, museum exhibitions, and marketing/fundraising campaigns. She is a native of Bethlehem and has a BFA in Communication Design from Kutztown University (1986). Janet was a volunteer choir member, board president, and concert conductor 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.

CHORAL REPRESENTATIVES TO THE BOARD

(elected by The Choir for a two-year term)

• KURT ANCHORSTAR First Tenor since 1994 (Dos Schneider) Music Teacher, Catasauqua Elementary School | Copey, PA
• CARRIE NEDICK First Soprano since 2006 (Thos Anderson) Mother of three, former Associate Director/Giving Coordinator, Aza Packer Society, Lehigh University | Allentown, PA
• KATE RACCUOLA First Alto since 2016 (Hee Wilson) Published novelist and development/marketing specialist at the Bethlehelm 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 Schneider) Manager, Versall East Inc | Bethlehem PA

Welcome to Our Newest Guarantors!

James & Patty Alercia, PA  •  Robert Calandriello, PA  •  Christie & Dwight Gehman, PA  •  Nancy & Draycott Hooke III, PA

Mr. Nicholas Huff, MD  •  Paul & Nancy Lagas, CT  •  Roberta Renard, NY  •  Steven L. Wilson, FL

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 adoration 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 impor-tant expansion of our youth education and outreach initiatives.

We are thrilled that Jesse 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.”

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 plush writing for the choir. There are considerable musical demands for players and singers alike: rich choral textures, sparkling accompaniment, and virtuosic writing for solo singers. It will be a delight to hear this little-known piece given a lavish sparkling accompaniment, and virtuosic writing for solo singers. It will be a delight to hear this little-known piece given a lavish

MANY PEOPLE HAVE BECOME GUARANTORS because of national, regional, or personal history with The Bach Choir. In the case of the Gehman family, there is a history of connections stem-ming 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 – Dwight Gehman.

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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 Cosi 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.

Watch for New Faces and Festival Soloist Debuts this Season!
New Recording from
The Bach Choir of Bethlehem & Bach Festival Orchestra!

Order Today!
The exuberant and cosmic music of Johann Sebastian Bach and George Frideric Handel in an exciting two-disc set celebrating the 120th birthday of The Bach Choir and Greg Funfgeld’s 35th anniversary as artistic director & conductor!

Disc One - Bach
Cantata 21 "Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis"
Aria: Heil und Segan from Cantata 120
Aria: Liebt, ihr Christen, in der Tat from Cantata 76

Disc Two - Handel
Ode for Saint Cecilia’s Day

Great Holiday Gift…for friends or for you!

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<tr>
<td>Coloring Book</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.5-inch Round Magnet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Set of 9 Notecards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notepad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cotton Tote bag</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Enclosed</td>
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