

Bach Choir of Bethlehem to host Family Concert: Youth Choirs Festival



The Bach Choir of Bethlehem's annual Family Concert will take place Sunday at Baker Hall at Lehigh University. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO / Ryan Hulvat)
Jessica Johnson Of The Morning Call

The Bach Choir of Bethlehem will present its annual Family Concert this year. The Youth Choirs Festival is at 3 p.m. Sunday in Baker Hall at Lehigh University's Zoellner Arts Center.

The event will showcase Lehigh Valley youth chorale groups' select pieces from their organizations, and these students will also perform alongside The Bach Choir and Bach Festival orchestras.

Renee James, Marketing Director for The Bach Choir of Bethlehem said, "The Family concert is programmed so children who may not have had much exposure to a classical performance will have a very positive one with this welcoming and non-intimidating concert."

The youth choirs scheduled to perform include:

- The Bel Canto Youth Chorus of The Bach Choir of Bethlehem, now merged with The Bach Choir of Bethlehem and directed by Joy Hirokawa

- Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts Touring Choir, directed by David Macbeth
- Emmaus High School Chorale, directed by Rita Cortez
- Parkland High School, directed by Frank Anonia



Greg Funfgeld is artistic director and conductor of The Bach Choir of Bethlehem
(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO / Ryan Hulvat)

“The Bach Choir is an organization that has thrived on collaborations like these — we’ve worked with gifted youth choirs and college choirs; high school, collegiate and professional dance ensembles; visual artists, theatre companies, poets and painters,” added Greg Funfgeld, artistic director and conductor of the Bach Choir of Bethlehem and Bach Festival Orchestra.

The four youth choirs’ selections include:

- The Bel Canto Youth Chorus: Duet from Cantata 93 from Johann Sebastian Bach
- The Emmaus High School Chorale: “Sitivit Anima Mea” by Richard Burchard
- Parkland High School Chorale: “Elijah: For He Shall Give His Angels” by Felix Mendelssohn
- The Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts Touring Choir: “Hymn of Axiom” by Vienna Teng



The Bach Choir of Bethlehem performs "Mass in B Minor." (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO / Theo Anderson)

The choirs will blend their voices with The Bach Choir and members of the Bach Festival Orchestra by performing Rev. J.K. Alwood's "Unclouded Day," arranged by Shawn Kirchner; George Frederick Handel's "Zadok the Priest" from Four Coronation Anthems; and Dona "Nobis Pacem" from J.S. Bach's Mass in B Minor.

Tickets are \$18 and \$9 for students, and can be purchased by visiting bach.org or calling 610-866-4382 Ext. 115 or 110.

The Bach Choir of Bethlehem is the oldest American Bach Choir and presented the first complete American performances of Bach's Mass in B Minor in 1900.

Since 1983, under Greg Funfgeld's direction, the 85 dedicated volunteer singers — performing with the Bach Festival Orchestra and distinguished soloists — have received international acclaim.

Programming has expanded to 34 concerts and educational programs per year for audiences of more than 22,000. The choir has released 11 recordings including the most recent "Saint John Passion" (2012), "A Child's Christmas in Bethlehem" (2013), "Bach Cantata 21" (2018) and Handel's "Ode for Saint Cecilia's Day" (2018).

The Choir has been recognized for its outstanding educational outreach programs including "Bach at Noon, Bach to School," and interdisciplinary family concerts. They have also been honored by the National Endowment for the Arts (2011-2017).

The J.S. Bach Foundation in Switzerland recognized The Bach Choir of Bethlehem, the first American recipient, with its annual award recognizing outstanding work in Bach performance and education for young people (2012).

[*jessica.johnson@mcall.com*](mailto:jessica.johnson@mcall.com)

610-778-2262

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