

Travels to Europe Bring Inspiration & New Audiences

WE ARE FAMILY – BACH CHOIR FEATURED IN BACHFEST LEIPZIG, 2020 *by Bridget George*

“**WE ARE FAMILY**” is the 2020 theme of the famous Bachfest in Leipzig. We are honored that for this occasion, The Bach Choir is one of only 18 Bach choirs on six continents invited to give a featured performance of Bach Cantatas in the Thomaskirche, the church where Bach was the cantor from 1723–1750. Bach’s entire Chorale Cantata cycle will be presented, and The Bach Choir will sing Cantatas 8, 99, and 130. This performance will be 20 years after The Choir’s most recent performance there in 1995, under Greg Funfgeld’s direction. The Choir’s first performance in this venerable church was conducted by Alfred Mann in 1976, before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

As Greg Funfgeld said, talking to Choir members and tagalongs participating in the tour, “these experiences are life-changing and unforgettable.” Around the Bachfest invitation, we have built a tour in Germany and the Czech Republic with additional performances in the Kirchensaal Herrnhut (birthplace of the Moravian Church), the Kreuzkirche, Dresden, and the Church of the Holy Saviour in Prague.

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THE BEL CANTO YOUTH CHORUS TOURS ENGLAND, 2019 *by Joy Hirokawa*

THE BEL CANTO YOUTH CHORUS is excited to be returning to the International Children’s Choral Festival in Canterbury and London, 20 years after its first visit there in 1999! The experience was magical for the choristers on our last trip, and provided a

safe, well-structured opportunity to experience travel abroad. Since this is the last year for the festival, it seemed a perfect fit. While there, the choristers will be singing *Evensong* in Canterbury Cathedral, sitting in the very choir stalls the cathedral choir

normally uses. Guest conductor Henry Leck is a master at bringing together festival choirs to perform outstanding repertoire. He will be assisted by the Canterbury Cathedral Master of the Choristers, David Flood.

Our performance last year of the Britten *War Requiem* also influenced the choice of England as a tour destination this year. Following our time in Canterbury, Bel Canto will travel to Coventry Cathedral, for which the *War Requiem* was written. What an honor it will be to perform a noontime concert there! Britten’s music will most certainly come alive in the minds of the choristers as they pass through the bombed-out cathedral ruins to enter the rebuilt cathedral. On our way back to London, we will be stopping to visit Stratford, Shakespeare’s home.

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DEAR FRIENDS:



THIS YEAR'S FESTIVAL OVERFLOWS WITH BLESSINGS

– both the people who will sing and play for you, and the incredible music being offered. All of this is very thoughtfully described throughout this newsletter, and it is put in wonderful perspective in David Ruhf's insightful article. If someone asked me *which* concert to attend at this year's Bach Festival,

I'd be hard-pressed to choose just one. If someone asked me to articulate a few of the things to which I'm looking forward at this year's Festival, I might respond like this:

BACH AT 4:

- The first-ever Bethlehem performance of Cantata 111, which means The Choir has now performed 150 of Bach's sacred cantatas. • The exquisite beauty of Telemann's Funeral Cantata, *Du aber, Daniel, gehe hin*: It breathes the same air as Bach's Cantata 106 and that's really saying something!

BACH AT 8:

- Cantata 146 with its three organ *obligati* brilliantly played by Charlotte Mattax Moersch and Tom Goeman • Cantata 149 – with its utterly charming bassoon solo in the duet for alto and tenor • Hearing Tony Cecere in the Haydn *Horn Concerto* – a tour de force!

IFOR JONES CHAMBER MUSIC CONCERT:

- A world premiere featuring The Bel Canto Youth Chorus
- The chance to hear Bach's *Concerti for Three and Four Harpsichords* – a rare treat! • Charlotte Mattax Moersch's impeccable technique

THE MASS IN B MINOR:

- The Festival debuts of mezzo soprano Krisztina Szabó and tenor Isaiah Bell – you will love them • The Laudamus, Quoniam, Et in Spiritum, Benedictus, Agnus Dei • The rest of our soloists – Kendra, Rosa, Bill, and David – superb artists!
- The opening Kyrie, the Cum Sancto, Et resurrexit, Sanctus, Dona nobis pacem... • The choices are endless...one of Bach's most beloved scores.

And there's so much more – Chamber Music in the Saal, Brass Chorales and the chance to sing along, the pure pleasure of Zimmermann's Coffee House, lectures and discussion. To what do you most look forward?!? One of the greatest joys is sharing it all in a wonderful community of souls. I look forward to greeting you soon!

Ever grateful,

Greg Funfgeld, Artistic Director & Conductor



DEAR FRIENDS:



THIS BACH CHOIR NEWS cover articles focus on our upcoming tours. Bel Canto is going to England to sing at the Canterbury Cathedral and The Bach Choir is heading off to Leipzig to sing Bach Cantatas in the church where many were first performed. One of our goals is to give Choir members the opportunity to perform in venues far and wide. And the core statement of

our mission is to spread an appreciation of the music of J.S. Bach. What better way to accomplish both of those goals?

In a larger sense though, these tours are part of our education and community engagement programs. We do not perform just for patrons who come to our concert venues; we are active in finding ways to take our art out to the public. We believe that the qualities of our music and the discipline of our art are very relevant in society today. Greg Funfgeld has been instrumental in starting these programs, such as the *Bach to School* program, which reaches every 5th grader in Allentown and every 3rd grader in Bethlehem and Easton each year; and the *Bach at Noon* series reaching adults and children of all ages. Our collaborative efforts also draw in many young performers, such as the Lehigh University Philharmonic, the Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts Touring Choir; and choirs from Emmaus and Parkland High Schools joining us

in our Family and Spring Concerts. This year our *Bach at Noon* performances are being recorded and broadcast on the Classical Music Network, reaching a broad audience on the East Coast.

Joy Hirokawa, our Bel Canto Artistic Director, has a deep interest in musical education and the role of music in the development and socialization of our youth. Our Choral Village program brings together youths of various backgrounds in a one-week workshop where choral music serves to highlight both differences and similarities among cultures. More recently, as a result of her outreach to the music teachers in the Lehigh Valley elementary and middle schools, Joy and the Bel Canto team organized a three-day clinic for teachers to explore and discuss matters ranging from modern pedagogy to classroom management, issues of great importance in school systems that have seriously cut funding to their arts programs.

We are honored to be recognized by organizations like the Leipzig Bachfest for the quality of our performances, and we will continue to look for new and inventive ways to engage with audiences wherever they may be.

Sincerely,

Harold G. Black, President

REMEMBERING *Paul Florenz* by Renée James

JANIE AND PAUL FLORENZ may not have imagined a lifetime filled with music but they had just that for almost fifty years. Originally from Methuen, Massachusetts, Paul met Janie Kolb at Dickinson College, where they both sang in ensembles. After they married in 1971, Paul spent a year in graduate school in Hawaii and they eventually moved to Bethlehem, home of The Bach Choir. Janie's father had sung in the choir and both Paul and Janie became members themselves.

After traveling to Germany with The Choir in 1976, they moved to Boston where Paul attended law school. They returned to Bethlehem in 1979, where their first child, Andrew, was born. Janie rejoined the choir and shortly thereafter, Paul joined the Board of Managers and remained on the Board for decades, serving most recently as Vice President. His involvement with The Choir was significant. He served on or chaired a number of committees over the years, and most recently, his expertise and careful oversight was invaluable to our successful merger with The Bel Canto Youth Chorus in 2018.

Drawn to the Choir largely due to its formidable history and – of course – its musical excellence, Paul viewed The Choir as an irreplaceable experience; something that doesn't really exist anymore nor is easily found in today's "wired" world. As Janie tells us, "To see the music touch people at a *Bach at Noon* concert



is an experience you don't get very often. It was precious to him."

People fondly recall Paul's demeanor: the perfect blend of professionalism and warmth, a welcome combination for his clients and colleagues; for the many civic organizations he supported, and the staff and board of The Bach Choir. Whether interacting with the Finance Committee or the House Staff at every concert, he was candid, thoughtful and positive about The Choir and our future, perhaps no more so than when Greg Funfgeld came on board as the artistic director and conductor. According to Janie, Paul was the "ultimate admirer" of Greg, not only for his excellent musicianship but for his forward-thinking creativity about opportunities for The Choir.

The contributions made in his honor last fall "would have meant the world to Paul," as they did to Janie. People from every facet of Paul's life recognized his love of The Choir and the decades of service he offered us with each memorial contribution.

For the first time in many years, Paul will not be our formidable and resourceful House Manager at the Bethlehem Bach Festival, welcoming patrons and solving myriad challenges in the audience with good cheer and efficiency. Still, his spirit will be close by for many of us. Somewhere, he's listening to his beloved Choir, just from a different place this year.

BACHFEST, LEIPZIG cont.

Vocal soloists and principals of the Bach Festival Orchestra traveling with The Choir under Greg Funfgeld's direction include: Nola Richardson, soprano; Janna Critz, mezzo-soprano; Benjamin Butterfield, tenor; Dashon Burton, baritone; Elizabeth Field, violin; Robin Kani, flute; Mary Watt, oboe; Loretta O'Sullivan, cello; and Thomas Goeman, organ.

We hope that many of you will help support this important endeavor. The Choir will broaden its audience, gain increased international recognition, receive irreplaceable musical inspiration, and build cherished memories and friendships with world-wide Bach organizations. The total costs of the tour are \$345,000 and to date we have raised 54% of this cost in contributions and earned revenue with just under \$160,000 still to raise.

Please contact Bridget George (bridget@bach.org) 610-866-4382 ext. 111 or Cheryl Dungan, cheryl@bach.org ext 113 for more information on sponsorship opportunities.



The Bach Choir of Bethlehem...had their audience enthralled... The Choir knows and loves this work – and it shows... Transatlantic magic"

– The Scotsman, Edinburgh, 2003

Such jubilantly sung choruses...all deeply internalized, held their strong impression long after the performance. Bach himself would never have dreamed of such worldwide spread of his music (to Pennsylvania) and of the power of its return to Leipzig

– Werner Wolf, Leipziger Volkszeitung 1995

THE 112TH FESTIVAL – *Brimming Over With Gifts* by David Ruhf

THE SERENDIPITOUS DISCOVERY, in the late 1930s, of Bach's personal Calov Bible, in the private home of German immigrants in Michigan, was a watershed moment in 20th century Bach scholarship. Howard Cox, friend of The Choir, and father of one of our current first sopranos, Martha Cox Popichak, was part of the first wave of research of the Bible's three volumes, overseeing a process of using cyclotron-generated proton beams to identify and analyze the ink used by Bach to make 348 annotations in the Bible. Other friends, including Robin A. Leaver, our recently retired program annotator, and Michael Marissen, Professor Emeritus of Music at Haverford College, and a regular guest at our Festival, have furthered the depth of our understanding of Bach's theological mind with their own Calov scholarship. Michael will join us for this year's Distinguished Scholar Lecture to discuss the significance of the Calov Bible and to set the stage for the 112th Bethlehem Bach Festival, a time full of artistic, intellectual, and spiritual nourishment, the pleasure of keeping company with The Bach Choir family, and overflowing quantities of rich beauty.

In reviewing the schedule for this year's Festival, I am at great pains to identify which items stand out among the usual embarrassment of riches. Festival goers may choose from the intimacy of a single lute, in recital in the jewel box confines of the Saal at the Moravian Museum, or a maximalist orchestral concert, including harpsichord concerti for three and four harpsichords (featuring instruments by Bethlehem's own world-renowned builder, Willard Martin). There's the world premiere of a vocal work to celebrate our fruitful merger with The Bel Canto Youth Chorus of The Bach Choir of Bethlehem, by the estimable composer, Gwyneth Walker, and violist Paul Miller's curated performances with the excellent Main Street Brass (who are becoming the Festival Brass Choir), ideal for Bach fans of all ages, at *Bach Outdoors*. There's the erudition and wit of Larry Lipkis' Dinner Discussion, and the conviviality of our recreation of Zimmermann's Coffee House, with performances by handpicked young musicians on the rise. There are chorale sings: oppor-



Theo Anderson; Calov Bible courtesy of The American Bach Society

tunities to join The Bach Choir in making music in community, and stately pre-concert Chorale recitals by Main Street Brass.

At the core of the Festival is the work of our namesake Choir, in three powerful programs. At *Bach at 4*, we'll add another Cantata to our vast repertoire, No. 111, which finds Bach in an Italianate mood, combining Vivaldi-esque ritornellos and fleet runs for oboes and strings with the cantus firmus structure, and a concluding chorale featuring one of Bach's most elaborate harmonizations (if you enjoyed this past March's Google Doodle, you will delight in hearing the Cantor breaking all kinds of harmonization rules!). The concert will also feature Nobuo Kitagawa in a Telemann oboe sonata, another Festival first, Telemann's funeral cantata, *Du aber, Daniel, gehe hin*, and Greg Funfgeld's fascinating introductions to the music.

At *Bach at 8*, we'll hear one of Bach's most gripping sinfonias, the adaptation of the *D-Minor Harpsichord Concerto for Organ* that begins his Cantata No. 146, an epic barn-burner! Attendees will also enjoy a Haydn horn concerto featuring Anthony Cecere, our principal horn, in a work slightly more sympathetic for his instrument than the "Quoniam" from the *Mass in B Minor*, but no less virtuosic. The program will end with one of Bach's great Michaelmass Cantatas, No. 149, which will feature another Bach Festival Orchestra mainstay,

bassoonist Chuck Holdeman, in a charmingly whimsical obbligato. The cantata includes a rousing opening chorus and a final chorus that concludes with the gates of heaven opening in a blazing cadential fanfare from trumpets and timpani.

Then, on the Saturday afternoons, we return to the summit again for a performance of Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, the heart of the Festival. In assembling our marketing materials for this year, we invited reflections from Choir members. It was affirming to discover how meaningful my colleagues find this pinnacle of artistic and spiritual expression, as well as the joy we experience yearly as we breathe in the animating spirit that sparked our most inspired composer, who so eloquently illuminates all that we encounter on our lives' journeys. It's gratifying to think of that spirit surrounding J. Fred Wolle and his early singers as they brought the *Mass* to life for the first time in America; Howard Cox and his colleagues, as they painstakingly identified Bach's own annotations in the Calov Bible; Willard, as he hones one of his amazing harpsichords; Tony, as he masters a punishing passage for the horn; and Gwyneth, as she sets pen to paper and births a new celebratory work. Join us, and share in that irresistible spirit of discovery and joy, and leave refreshed, recharged, and brimming over with the inestimably valuable gifts we all are so passionate about sharing.

A Glorious Sound with our Arts Youth Partners by Bridget George

Youth Choirs Festival

Thanks to Greg Funfgeld and The Bach Choir's collaboration with 143 students from four vibrant youth choirs – The Bel Canto Youth Chorus of The Bach Choir of Bethlehem (Joy Hirokawa, director); Emmaus High School Chorale (Rita Cortez, director); Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts Touring Choir (David Macbeth, director) and Parkland Chorale (Frank Anonia, director), we had an amazing Family Concert for a packed house at Zoellner Arts Center.

But you needn't take my word for it – here are some very telling testimonials from the February 2019 performance:

It reminded me of the feeling I had when involved in choral singing as a participant and audience member at the age of 16 – a positive feeling that has never left me.
– Karl Blitschke, executive director of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts

The February 24 concert opened on a sublime note as the combined choirs filled the aisles of Baker Hall to sing the gospel song Unclouded Day...thrilling harmonies enveloped the audience for an amazing effect...The concert concluded on a joyous note with the powerful 'Dona Nobis Pacem' from Bach's Mass in B Minor – a lush and breathtaking waterfall of sound bringing the exquisitely enjoyable concert to a climactic finish.

– Kathy Lauer-Williams – Bethlehem Press

Dear Greg and Bridget - Thanks to both of you, and the entire Bach Choir staff and singers for making my Touring Choir students feel welcomed and supported during our Sunday concert!!! Watching my students light up while singing "Zadok", or concentrate for a run in the Sanctus was yet another delightful reminder of why we do what we do!!! It was a wonderful afternoon.

– David Macbeth – Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts



Youth Choirs Festival (Hub Willson)



Mozart Requiem

Mozart Requiem with The Lehigh University Philharmonic

(above) Members of The Bach Choir and musicians of the Lehigh University Philharmonic at the conclusion of a performance of Mozart's *Requiem* at the Zoellner Arts Center in Bethlehem. Stellar soloists in the "Amadeus" concert directed by Greg Funfgeld were Eugene Albulescu, piano, Kendra Colton, soprano, Laura Atkinson, mezzo-soprano, Benjamin Butterfield, tenor, and Dashon Burton, bass.

Talk about an emotional roller coaster ride! When The Bach Choir of Bethlehem teamed up with the Lehigh University Philharmonic April 12 and 13 at the Zoellner Arts Center in Bethlehem, it took its audience from the celebratory pomp of Walton's Te Deum, to the emotional high spirits of Mozart's joyous Piano Concerto No. 21, down into the solemn depths of Mozart's Requiem...it's a safe bet even Mozart himself would have approved of a performance so solid and convincingly heartfelt.

– Steve Siegel, The Morning Call, April 2019

BEL CANTO cont.

Tours of both cathedrals will help the choristers understand the historical significance of these magical places. Following a repeat performance of the Canterbury program with the other festival participants in London, we will have a day to tour the city ourselves before our return.

We have found that tours truly strengthen the bond of the singers, and as a result, we see them grow as musicians and

individuals. Traveling choristers are receiving monthly bulletins that cover everything from history, geography, background on the historic sites, tips on how to travel, how to pack, exchanging money, how to beat jet lag, how to be mindful of their fellow choristers, and what to expect when they walk into these magnificent spaces. We invite you to share in our excitement for this trip! Visit Bach.org/belcanto.

New & Old Friends

FESTIVAL SPOTLIGHT by Renée James

OUR 112TH BETHLEHEM Bach Festival in May welcomes new and old friends offering their particular talents to us this year: composer Gwyneth Walker and principal horn Anthony Cecere.

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of The Bel Canto Youth Chorus and the first year of its merger with The Bach Choir, we commissioned a piece from American composer Gwyneth Walker. *The Day Is Done*, a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, has been adapted by Ms. Walker, selected because it “speaks of evening as a time when poetry and music come alive. They soothe the cares of day. The soul hears the music of ‘celestial harmonies.’” The world premiere of this piece, featuring the voices of Bel Canto along with members of The Bach Choir and Bach Festival Orchestra will take place at our Saturday morning Ifor Jones Chamber Music Concerts.



Ms. Walker’s catalog includes more than 350 commissioned works for orchestra, chamber ensembles, chorus and solo voice. She is a graduate of Brown University and the Hartt School of Music, and holds a B.A., M.M., and D.M.A. in Music composition.

Our principal horn, Anthony Cecere has been a member of the Bach Festival Orchestra for more than twenty years. He is a proud alumni of the University of Michigan, where he received his Master’s Degree and was a member of the Michigan

band. He has performed around the world and holds the performance of the *Mass in B Minor* in the Thomaskirche in Leipzig as one of the high points of his musical life with The Bach Choir.

This year, he’ll be featured at our *Bach* at 8 concerts on May 10 and May 17, playing Franz Joseph Haydn’s *Second Concerto for Horn in D Major*. As Greg notes, “Every year, Tony thrills and delights us with his performance of the ‘Quoniam’ from the *Mass in B Minor* – this virtuosic turn promises to be pure joy!”

Please make your plans to attend both of these performances – brand new music sung with the lightness and purity only children’s voices can offer, and a moving performance by one of our long-standing principal orchestra members. Both are certainly worthy of our Festival “spotlight” this year.

Galas Past & Future Bridget George

THE 2018 GALA with pianist Peter Serkin provided an extraordinary musical experience with breathtaking performances of Mozart’s *Adagio in B Minor* and *Sonata in B-flat Major*, and Bach’s iconic *Goldberg Variations* in Central Moravian Church. As Steve Siegel commented in his review, “Serkin raised this music to another, higher place – rare and precious...The trance finally broken, the audience broke into well-earned rapturous applause.”

With the lively fund-raising event that followed at Saucon Valley Country Club, we once again exceeded expectations, raising more than \$36,000 in net income. Congratulations to co-chairs Hal & Allison Black and David Craig & Jackie Renner, and to the Gala Committee.

THE 2019 GALA moves to Allentown for the first time. We are thrilled to welcome the acclaimed Theatre of Early Music from Canada directed by Daniel Taylor, a frequent and warmly regarded Bach Choir soloist. Offering Renaissance to Baroque to present day music, this sweeping orchestral and choral pageant takes us to the coronation of King George II.

Moving through the attentive audience to join the Theatre of Early Music’s refreshingly uninhibited players on stage, chorus and orchestra assemble for the great swelling coronation anthem “The King Shall Rejoice”, Taylor leading with great charm and exuberance.

– Ian Ritchie, *Opera Going Toronto*

The beautiful St. John’s Lutheran Church in downtown Allentown with its gothic architecture, stunning stained glass, and outstanding organ is the perfect venue

for this bewitching performance featuring the music of Handel, Purcell, Palestrina, and Parry, and offering an enthralling and uplifting experience as we welcome the new monarch.

After the musical and dramatic performance, benefactors will adjourn to Lehigh Country Club. Our thanks to honorary chairs Dolly & Lee Butz, and co-chairs Annette & Charlie Thiel and Judy Harris & Jack Mydlo, who will be working with the committee and staff to put together another fabulous Gala event.



Emily Ding

SAVE THE DATE
The Bach Choir welcomes
Theatre of Early Music
Saturday October 26, 2019
3pm Concert
St. John Lutheran Church
5pm Benefactor Cocktails,
Dinner & Auction
Lehigh Country Club

REVEREND RONALD R. MILLER ENDOWS THE AUGUST ALLENTOWN BACH AT NOON

In Loving Memory of Maestro James A. Simms by Cheryl Dungan

THIS SEASON, I HAVE HAD THE PLEASURE of getting to know Rev. Ronald R. Miller and have especially enjoyed introducing him more fully to the community and programs of The Bach Choir.

Ron grew up in Allentown and was educated at William Allen High School and Muhlenberg College. An alumnus of the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago and graduate of Union Theological Seminary in New York City, Rev. Miller went on to serve his first parish, The Lutheran Church of Christ-St. John, for more than 24 years. In 2000, Drew University granted him a Ph.D. in Liturgical Studies. In retirement, Ron was invited to assist in the Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem, and is currently serving as Priest-in-Charge of St. John's Episcopal Church in Hamlin, PA.

Joining me at *Bach at Noon* concerts, Ron had great appreciation for the musical excellence of The Bach Choir and the warm and welcoming environment of the concerts. He was encouraged by seeing students and people of all ages and walks of life at the concerts and was particularly impressed by Artistic Director and Conductor Greg Funfgeld's ability to connect so personally with the audience, sharing his knowledge and spiritual insight on the works performed. Rev. Miller tells me that he finds The Bach Choir to be a great source of camaraderie and spiritual renewal.

Rev. Miller expressed his desire to find a meaningful way to honor and celebrate the life and love of music of his partner, James A. Simms, who passed away in 2015.

"It was during my last seminary year in New York that I came to know James (Simms). Much of our happy life together was spent in the opera house and concert hall. James' life as a full-time professional church musician contributed much to my own musical and liturgical education, particularly during his 18 years of extraordinary service as the principal conductor of the choirs at Trinity Church, Broadway and Wall Street in New York."

According to Ron, "James often said that Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem* was his favorite piece of music. Although, it must be said, he appreciated and listened to all kinds of music. The very same year he died, we organized a memorial performance of Brahms' *Requiem*, at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Scranton where Dr. Timothy Smith is parish musician. Dr. Smith was an organ scholar at Trinity during James' tenure there, and has remained a treasured and life-time friend.

During that performance, at which many of James' former choir members gathered to sing, my then 100-year-old Aunt Gertrude,



To remember and to celebrate the quiet, generous, kindly life and art of this extraordinary human being – the great-great grandson of a freed slave woman – who lived a beautiful and rancor-less life, filled with the joy of music

I am delighted, as James' partner of 43 years, to invite you to join me in taking this opportunity to listen to the music of others and to take away from this the inspiration to sing out the rest of our lives in a fashion which might make the angels jealous yet again.

– Ronald R. Miller



Lee Butz

asked me: "Are you satisfied now?" I was truly pleased by that profoundly moving event. But I realized I would never be really "satisfied" unless I could find a way to keep that kind of fine music-making, in James' memory, alive for the future."

Reverend Miller graciously committed to supporting the August *Bach at Noon* Concert in Allentown, finding it a most appropriate and fitting tribute. Through this considerate musical gift to The Bach Choir and the community, Rev. Miller tells me he has found a great sense of peace and comfort.

"My desire to keep the memory of dear James alive and to continue to share the fruits of his life-giving labors in music-making, helped me to make the decision to underwrite the annual *Bach at Noon* concert at St. John's Lutheran Church, in my home town, in perpetual and loving memory of Maestro James A. Simms. In this gift, I give thanks to God for the profoundly gracious gift of James to me and to our world."

Rev. Miller frequently comes to Allentown to visit his beloved Aunt Gertrude, now celebrating her 104th year. He will be joining The Bach Choir European Tour as a tag-along in 2020.

JAMES ALBERT SIMMS • 1938-2015

Born in Charlottesville, Virginia, and educated at the High School of Performing Arts and New York University, James studied and worked with Ernest White at St. George's Episcopal Church in Stuyvesant Square before he was called to the music staff of The Riverside Church in Manhattan. In 1972 James was invited by Larry King to join him and the music staff at Trinity Church, Broadway and Wall Street in New York, where he served as the Principal Conductor of the professional choir for

18 glorious and immaculate years of exquisite music-making. He rounded out his music career spending the last 10 years of his professional life as the Director of Music at The Presbyterian Church in Westfield, New Jersey, from which he retired in 2000.

James always shared music generously and kindly with any who would listen, learn, and lend their own voices to the enterprise of concerted sound. James was incapable of seeing flaws rather than possibilities in any and every serious attempt anyone made at making music. James was not only skilled in training singers, he was capable of helping mere mortals produce vocal art which surely the angels envied.

Asked often, after he retired, whether he missed music making, James always replied: "I have hung up my organ shoes. This is my opportunity to listen."

Happy 100th Birthday Bach at Noon in Bethlehem!



Christa Neu

THE AUDIENCE FOR THIS FREE CONCERT SERIES

comes from far and wide as shown by notes that arrived with checks in honor of 100th *Bach at Noon* performance this past March, not only from throughout the Lehigh Valley but from New Jersey, Philadelphia, Harrisburg, and many towns in between.

The notes proclaimed:

“Happy 100th *Bach at Noon*!”

“I’m an ALUM and proud of it.”

“For the 100th *Bach at Noon* performance! Bravo! Bravo!”

“Here’s to 100 more!!!”

“Keep up the wonderful work you do!”

“Long live The Bach Choir of Bethlehem!”

“What a wonderful series of magnificent music this has been.”

“It has enriched our lives and given us something to look forward to every month.”

“Thank you for another inspirational *Bach at Noon* season.”

***And now on to the 5th year of Bach at Noon in Allentown
Don’t miss second Tuesdays, June 11, July 9, & August 13
at St. John’s Lutheran Church, 37 S. 5th St., Allentown***



The Bach Choir News
is published by:
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Supported in part by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, The Bach Choir of Bethlehem, Inc. is recognized by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All contributions to The Bach Choir are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law. The official registration and financial information for The Bach Choir of Bethlehem may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling, toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999.