

Bach Choir of Bethlehem announces retirements of conductor and executive director

By Craig Larimer
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Bach Choir of Bethlehem's Artistic Director and Conductor Greg Funfgeld and Executive Director Bridget George will step down in 2021. Here, Funfgeld speaks to audience after Bach at Noon concert at St. John's Lutheran Church in Allentown. (Morning Call file photo)

The Bach Choir of Bethlehem announced Wednesday that after lengthy tenures, both Artistic Director and Conductor Greg Funfgeld and Executive Director Bridget George will retire in the next two years. Funfgeld will depart in June 2021, and George in December 2020. Board President Harold Black and the choir's board of managers have indicated they have launched a leadership transition plan to fill both positions.

Funfgeld has served as Bach Choir conductor for 38 seasons and George has served in her post for 24.

“On behalf of the board, I want to sincerely thank Greg and Bridget for their countless contributions over many years,” Black noted. “While we will be sad to see them go, their retirements are positively well-deserved and follow a long and impressive tenure for both. The mission of The Bach Choir will remain the same. The Bach Choir of Bethlehem has been around for 125 years, and we plan to be around for at least another 125.”



Bach Choir of Bethlehem Artistic Director and Conductor Greg Funfgeld.

Funfgeld has expanded the choir's programs from the annual Bach Festival to a year-round season of 40 concerts and educational programs, including Bach to School, Bach at Noon and the Family Concert — reaching a total audience of more than 22,000.

“The Bach Choir is an extraordinary organization, and our years together have been rewarding, inspiring, challenging and incredibly stimulating,” Funfgeld said. “The people in this organization are incredible. The commitment of the choir, the board of managers, staff, our brilliant soloists and orchestra, our guarantors and listeners from around the world — this has been a loving and supportive family in which to work and grow.”



Bach Choir of Bethlehem Executive Director Bridget George.

George came to The Bach Choir as executive director in 1997. She implemented five strategic plans, three major fundraising campaigns and 22 concert seasons, including the Centennial Celebration and performances at Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, Severance Hall, Saint Paul's Chapel, Trinity Church Wall Street and the Music Center at Strathmore.

"I came to The Bach Choir not only because of the choir's amazing legacy, but because of Greg Funfgeld's extraordinary creative leadership, his musical and spiritual understanding of Bach and his transformative collaborative vision," George said. "Thanks to Greg, and a board, staff and family of musicians prepared to take creative risks, the 22 years I have spent with the choir have been an exciting time of musical growth, programming initiatives and new partnerships, generously supported by our wonderful donors." "

The Bach Choir of Bethlehem, America's oldest Bach choir, performs the works of Bach and promotes appreciation of the aesthetic and spiritual value of Bach's music while striving for musical excellence. The choir engages its audience — locally, nationally and internationally — through education, performance and the programs of its Bel Canto Youth Chorus.

Morning Call Arts & Entertainment Editor Craig Larimer can be reached at 610-778-7993 or at clarimer@mcall.com