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### PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

### Bach Choir Artistic and Executive Leaders to Retire



The two mainstays of the Bach Choir of Bethlehem have simultaneously announced their plans to retire: Artistic Director and Conductor Greg Funfgeld [pictured] will step down in June 2021, after 38 ... »[Read](#)

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## PRESS RELEASES

# The Bach Choir of Bethlehem Announces Retirement of Artistic Director/Conductor Greg Funfgeld & Executive Director Bridget George in Next Two Years

May 22, 2019 | By Allison Abbott

Publicity Associate, Hemsing Associates

INTERNATIONALLY LAUDED ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR  
GREG FUNFGELD RETIRING FROM VENERABLE BACH CHOIR OF  
BETHLEHEM

IN JUNE 2021 AFTER 38 SEASONS AT ARTISTIC HELM

DECEMBER 2020 TO SEE LONG-TIME ADMIRER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
BRIDGET GEORGE RETIRE AS WELL

*Choir's Board Launches Leadership Transition Plan.*

New York, NY, May 22, 2019 –Board President Harold Black of **The Bach Choir of Bethlehem** announced the planned retirement of both **Artistic Director and Conductor Greg Funfgeld** and **Executive Director Bridget George**, taking place over the next two years. Mr. Funfgeld will conduct his final performances with The Choir during the May 2021 Bethlehem Bach Festival and officially retire in June 2021, celebrating 38 seasons as artistic head of the organization. Ms. George will retire in December 2020, after 24 years with The Choir.

“On behalf of the board, I want to sincerely thank Greg and Bridget for their countless contributions over many years,” Mr. Black said. “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.”

Looking forward, the board of managers has launched a leadership transition plan to fill both positions, which will begin with the organizing of a search committee for each position this summer. The international search for an artistic director and conductor will begin in October 2019, and the national search for an executive director will follow in April 2020.

The Bach Choir of Bethlehem owes a debt of gratitude to these leaders, who have furthered the legacy and mission of America's oldest Bach choir, which performs the works of Bach and promotes appreciation of the aesthetic and spiritual value of Bach's music while striving for musical excellence. They have worked to engage the choir's audience—locally, nationally, and internationally—through the diligent expansion and programming of education, performance, and the activities of its Bel Canto Youth Chorus.

Mr. Funfgeld is now in his 36<sup>th</sup> season as artistic director and conductor of The Bach Choir. Since his assumption of the role of Artistic Director in 1983, he 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, to reach a total audience of more than 22,000. Funfgeld has led the choir on two major concert tours: to Germany including the Herkulesaal at Munich's Royal Residence and the Thomaskirche, Bach's church in Leipzig, and to the United Kingdom including a performance for the BBC Proms in London's Royal Albert Hall. He also directed the choir's Centennial performances at the Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall. Under Mr. Funfgeld's leadership, the choir has released 14 recordings and co-produced two films—the Emmy Award-winning PBS documentary *Make a Joyful Noise* and the internationally distributed Classical Kids' DVD *Mr. Bach Comes to Call*.

"The Bach Choir is an extraordinary organization and our years together have been rewarding, inspiring, challenging and incredibly stimulating," Mr. 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. I consider myself blessed, having been privileged to work with these remarkable people. Superlatives are inadequate when speaking of these souls—they are angels in our midst—and our work together has been filled with joy! And many good things are yet to be accomplished!"

Ms. George came to The Bach Choir as executive director in 1997. She has led the implementation of five strategic plans, three major fundraising campaigns, and 22 concert seasons that have included 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. Ms. George was responsible for booking and administering the choir's United Kingdom tour, including a performance for the BBC Proms. She was the executive producer of the film *Mr. Bach Comes to Call*, which was broadcast nationwide on PBS, and helped produce 10 of the choir's recordings and the PBS production of *Make a Joyful Noise*. Ms. George was the editor of the book *Dear Mr. Funfgeld* and has administered the significant expansion of the choir's educational programs and its merger with Bel Canto Youth Chorus, effective July 2018.

"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 result is a strong and vibrant organization and significant expansion of our audience of all ages. The careful planning for a new dynamic leadership duo is in great hands with board president Hal Black, and I look forward to the seasons to come with joyful optimism."

### **About The Bach Choir of Bethlehem:**

Building on a rich history of music-making as America's oldest Bach choir—founded in 1898 and giving the American premieres of the *Mass in B-minor* (1900) and the *Christmas Oratorio* (1901)—**The Bach Choir of Bethlehem** has been attracting thousands of visitors from across the United States and around the world to the annual Bethlehem Bach Festival each May in the Moravian countryside of eastern Pennsylvania.

The Bach Choir has been recognized for its outstanding education and community-engagement programs by annual awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. The J.S. Bach Foundation in Switzerland named The Bach Choir of Bethlehem as the first American recipient of its annual award to a single Bach organization, recognizing The Bach Choir's outstanding work in Bach performance and education for young people (2012). The choir is honored to be one of 18 Bach choirs from six continents that will each give a featured concert in the Thomaskirche as part of Bachfest Leipzig in 2020. For more information on The Bach Choir of Bethlehem, please visit [www.bach.org](http://www.bach.org).

For further information, please contact Hemsing Associates at (212) 772-1132 or visit [www.hemsingpr.com](http://www.hemsingpr.com).

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