

# Allentown Bach at Noon to feature pianist Kristina Moditch

By STEVE SIEGEL

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The season's final Allentown Bach at Noon on Tuesday, Aug. 13 at St. John's Lutheran Church will feature the return of one of the choir's most beloved young soloists. Nineteen-year-old pianist Kristina Moditch will perform Bach's Concerto in C Major for Two



Keyboards, BWV 1061, joined by Bach Choir's conductor and artistic director, Greg Funfgeld, and members of the Bach Festival Orchestra.

The program, in collaboration with the church's Arts at St. John's series, also features Bach's Cantata 180, "Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele" and the motet "How lovely is Thy dwelling place" from Brahms' A German Requiem. The concert is the last of the three summertime Bach at Noon programs, which take place on the second Tuesday of the month in June, July and August at St. John's.

This is the second year in a row that Moditch, a native of Allentown who lives with her parents in Moscow, has played at a summertime Bach at Noon program. Last August, she performed Bach's C Minor Partita, a piece she had been practicing during her studies at the Central School of the Moscow Conservatory. Having graduated with distinction from the Central School last spring, in September, she begins studies at the prestigious Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory.

Described by Moditch as “something like Juilliard, only more difficult,” the Moscow Conservatory has graduated some of the world’s finest musical artists. The list of pianists who studied there includes the likes of Olga Kern, Bella Davidovitch, Lazar Berman, Yuri Egorof, and many more, not to mention Rachmaninoff, Richter, and Scriabin. In fact, we’ll be hearing Kern perform the Rach 2 this September with the Allentown Symphony Orchestra.

Moditch herself has performed with the ASO, in addition to appearances at the New York Piano Festival, the Newport Music Festival, Musikfest, and the Birdland Jazz Club in New York City. A top prize winner in numerous international competitions, she’s performed at Carnegie Hall, the Moscow Conservatory Great Hall, Rachmaninoff Hall, the Moscow International House of Music and the Russian Parliament.

This will not be the first time Moditch has performed a keyboard duet with Funfgeld. Back in 2013, when Moditch was 12, she gave a piano recital at the First Presbyterian Church of Bethlehem. “I played the second and third movements from Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 15, and Greg played the orchestra part. I remember that well — it was a lot of fun,” she said.

That statement just might be the highest praise Funfgeld has ever received from anyone. Why? Because there really isn’t a word for “fun” in the Russian language. Pleasant and interesting are about its closest equivalents. “Well, that’s sort of true, but there are still ways to say it,” says Moditch, refusing to allow mere semantics to get in the way of her obvious admiration for Funfgeld.

Bach’s C Major keyboard concerto was composed around 1730, making it one of his earliest concertos for the instrument. In the absence of an earlier model,

the work was apparently originally conceived and executed as a harpsichord concerto and not as a transcription from another genre.

“It’s a really nice piece and I really like it,” says Moditch. “There are three movements — the last movement is a fugue, the second is for the two pianos alone without orchestra, and the first movement is really lively.” That central adagio, by the way, is a lovely Siciliano, as intimate and gentle as only Bach can achieve.

In addition to the lovely church Cantata 180, “Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele” (Adorn yourself, beloved soul), composed in 1724, the concert includes Brahms’ motet “How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place.” This favorite chorus from Brahms’ “A German Requiem” constitutes the fourth movement of the requiem, and describes the “lovely dwellings” of God as taken from Psalm 84. All works will be introduced by Bach Choir conductor and artistic director Greg Funfgeld.

Doors open at 11:30 a.m., so come early to be sure of a seat. Parking is available in the parking deck at Sixth and Walnut streets.

**Bach at Noon**, 12:10 p.m. Tuesday, August 13, St. John’s Lutheran Church, 37 S. 5th St., Allentown. Free-will offering. 610-866-4382, [www.bach.org](http://www.bach.org).