

Bach Choir of Bethlehem announces 2020-21 'Season of Grace'

By CRAIG LARIMER

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Artistic Director and Conductor Greg Funfgeld will lead the Bach Choir of Bethlehem for the final time this season.

The Bach Choir of Bethlehem has announced its 2020-21 “Season of Grace,” which will celebrate the leadership and career of retiring Artistic Director and Conductor Greg Funfgeld.

The Choir has planned a series of virtual performances and hopes to pivot to live concerts — to mark the 113th Bethlehem Bach Festival — as soon as it is able, according to a news release.

This is Funfgeld’s 38th and final season with the choir. “In the midst of uncertainty and much that remains unknown, I offer you this pledge — we will sing again!” Funfgeld said in the release. “We have the will to do it — we will be patient, will persevere, will be careful, thoughtful and mindful of the guidelines from experts and the government ... The human voice is a miracle and a marvel — it expresses the most profound thoughts and beauty, carries the heart and soul of the singers to the heart and soul of the listeners and create a bond that is life-giving, uplifting, sustaining.”



This season also marks the final one for Executive Director Bridget George, who’s been with the choir for 24 years.

“In spite of the heartbreak of our choristers not yet being able to rehearse together, there is a great deal of optimism about the musical connections we are making this season through our virtual Moments of Comfort and Bach at Noon Watch Parties, as well as outside choral rehearsals and recordings to prepare for a virtual

Christmas production full of the joy of the season,” George noted in the release.

“Our artists, students, loyal supporters, and newly discovered audiences near and far are all grateful for this opportunity to share live music-making together in new ways. We have great hope that this is all leading to a spectacular 113th Bach Festival in May 2021, to be shared in person with audiences from across the United States, all eager to make the pilgrimage to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and share in Greg Funfgeld’s final Festival.”



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The music of Johann Sebastian Bach remains at the core of the choir’s performances — with additional repertoire from both baroque masters and significant 20th-century composers — as well as the artistry of special guests at the Festival.

Soloists this year include two artist-in-residence guests: Paul Taylor Dance Company (Festival premiere of this group during Weekend One) and Elliot Fisk, guitar, (Weekend Two). In addition to the annual performance of Bach's Mass in B Minor, the 2021 Festival will also include the Saint Matthew Passion, presented in two parts.

The season will conclude with the postponed appearance by The Choir at the Bachfest in Leipzig, Germany in June, 2021.

Here is the 2020-21 schedule:

Bach at Noon

**Second Tuesdays, 12:10-1 p.m. at Central Moravian Church,
Bethlehem**

This season, Bach at Noon concerts begin virtually, with fall concerts recorded live at Central Moravian Church with a small ensemble of musicians, all following the COVID-19 protocol for safety. A free-will offering will be received.

Sept. 8

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Duo Nr. 2 in B-flat Major, KV 424; Adagio – Allegro; Andante cantabile;
Thema & Variazioni: Andante grazioso-Allegretto-Allegro
Elizabeth Field, violin, and Uri Wassertzug, viola

Johann Sebastian Bach

Cantata 51 – “Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen”
Sherezade Panthaki, soprano, and Rob Skoniczin, trumpet

Oct. 13

110th Bach at Noon in Bethlehem

Repertoire to come

Nov. 10

Repertoire to come

Jan. 12, Feb. 9, March 9, April 13, 2021

Repertoire and performance venue (live or virtual) to come.

Please join us this season for our 115th Bethlehem Bach at Noon in April and our 20th Allentown Bach at Noon in August!

Visit bach.org for complete 2020-21 Bach at Noon repertoire as it is announced.



The Bach Choir of Bethlehem will present its annual Christmas concerts virtually this season on YouTube and Facebook. (Ryan Hulvat / CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Dec. 13, at 4 p.m.

Christmas Concert: Opening up Our Hearts – Music and Inspiration of Christmas

Virtual concert presented on YouTube and Facebook

Repertoire includes J.S. Bach: Arias from the Christmas Oratorio; Robert Parsons Ave Maria; Franz Xaver Gruber: Silent Night

Soloists include Daniel Taylor, countertenor; Lawrence Jones, tenor; Christophéren Nomura, bass-baritone; Robin Kani, flute; Greg Funfgeld, organ & piano

Feb. 28, 2021 at 3 p.m.

Greg Funfgeld Family Concert: Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra

Baker Hall, Zoellner Arts Center, Lehigh University; Tickets: \$18, Students (up to 22) \$9

Benjamin Britten: Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra

March 21, 2021 at 4 p.m.

Spring Concert

Dureflé and Handel: Requiem and Messiah, Part 2

First Presbyterian Church of Bethlehem; Tickets: \$39, Students (up to 22) \$9

Soloists include Ellen McAteer, soprano; Daniel Taylor, counter-tenor; Benjamin Butterfield, tenor; Daniel Lichti, bass-baritone

May 1, 2021 at 2 p.m.

Bel Canto Spring Concert

Tickets: Adult, Senior and Student \$11, Children under 10 are free; Tickets purchased at the door: \$15

May 14-15 and 21-22, 2021

113th Bethlehem Bach Festival

Lehigh University and Payrow Plaza, Bethlehem

Tickets: Adults \$20-\$58, Students \$9-\$20

Soloists include Sherezade Panthaki, soprano; Rosa Lamoreaux, soprano; Daniel Taylor, countertenor; Meg Bragle, mezzo-soprano; Benjamin

Butterfield, tenor; Isaiah Bell, tenor; William Sharp, baritone; Dashon Burton, bass-baritone

- **Festival Artist-in-Residence (Weekend One)** — Paul Taylor Dance Company
- **Festival Artist-in-Residence (Weekend Two)** — Elliot Fisk, Guitarist
- **Festival Brass Choir** — Main Street Brass
- **Youth Ensembles** including Lehigh Valley Suzuki violin program & Bach Chaconne Project student composers

Fridays May 14 and 21, 2021

NOON: Festival Opening — Bach Outdoors

Payrow Plaza, adjacent to City Hall in downtown Bethlehem

2 p.m.: Distinguished Scholar Lecture — Dr. George Stauffer: Bach in Leipzig: The Great Passion

Zoellner Arts Center Room 145

4 p.m.: Part 1 Saint Matthew Passion

Packer Memorial Church, Lehigh University

5:45 p.m.: Buffet Dinner with informal talk — Dr. Larry Lipkis

Butz Lobby, Zoellner Arts Center, Lehigh University

Dr. Lipkis is Professor of Music and Composer-in-residence at Moravian College

8 p.m.: Part 2 Saint Matthew Passion

Packer Memorial Church, Lehigh University

Saturdays, May 15 and 22, 2021

10:30 a.m.: Ifor Jones Chamber Music Concert Weekend 1

Baker Hall, Zoellner Arts Center, Lehigh University

Bach Festival Orchestra, Paul Taylor Dance Company, Artist-in-Residence

- Brandenburgs, Opus Number: 88 – Bach Festival premiere

- Esplanade, Opus Number: 61
- J.S. Bach Flute Sonata – Greg Funfgeld & Robin Kani

10:30 a.m.: Ifor Jones Chamber Music Concert Weekend 2

Baker Hall, Zoellner Arts Center, Lehigh University

Bach Festival Orchestra, Eliot Fisk, Artist-in-Residence and Chaconne Project

Baker Hall, Zoellner Arts Center

- Luigi Boccherini Concerto in E major for Guitar and Orchestra, featuring artist-in-residence, Eliot Fisk
- J. S. Bach Trio Sonata No. 5 in C Major, BWC 529 with Charlotte Mattax Moersch
- Chaconne Project

12:30 p.m.: Festival Lunch

Butz Lobby, Zoellner Arts Center, Lehigh University

2 p.m.: Bach Chorale Sing

2:30 p.m.: The Mass in B Minor (Part 1) and 4:30 p.m. (Part 2)

Packer Memorial Church, Lehigh University

Info and tickets: BACH.org, 610-866-4382

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