



A Joyful and Comforting Presence online - expanded

If we had to define the qualities that became obvious about The Bach Choir in 2020, the words **resourceful, refreshed and reinvention** spring to mind. Absent our live audience since March, when we performed our most recent live Bach at Noon concert, we have turned to technology (specifically YouTube and facebook) to serve as our Choir risers, and invited our audience to join us online for the music and connections that have become even more vital to all of us during the pandemic and the social distance it imposed.

Most of our outreach has focused on our weekly series, ***A Moment of Comfort*** video or audio clips, and our monthly ***Bach at Noon*** concerts. The ***Moments*** are largely original productions, created by a variety of contributing artists and introduced by Greg. (For a handful of them, we've utilized some audio and video clips from previous performances.) The monthly ***Bach at Noon*** concerts, starting in June, have all been original performances, shot and produced according to our COVID-19 protocol.

We are enthusiastically anticipating our first ever ***Virtual Christmas Concert***, and asking viewers to register (for free) to watch the premiere on Sunday, December 13. ***Opening Up Our Hearts: Music and Inspiration of Christmas*** will be a welcome and beautiful addition to your holiday season, offered with joy and gratitude from everyone at The Choir.

We're happy to report that those same words seem to define our audience. For many, the idea of accessing YouTube or facebook, or even going to our website, was something new, and you've made the transition beautifully. As Greg wrote in one of his notes to the Choir: *We continue to get lovely feedback on our MOMENTS OF COMFORT and our virtual BACH AT NOON concerts – we've had responses from across the country – including Maine, South Carolina, West Virginia, Washington D.C., Philadelphia and throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey, San Diego, Atlanta, our Guarantors in ICELAND (!), and lots more – it's very gratifying. The "reach" of The Bach Choir is ever-expanding.*

Thank you for joining us in our reinvented world, and for your support in so many ways. We've gathered just a few excerpts of the notes we've received to share them here; you can access even more on our website by clicking on the fall 2020 Bach Choir News link.

From Greg W.: I have just finished listening to the August performances of the "Bach at Noon" series and had the following thought. One often hears the adage that "desperate times demand desperate measures." Well, we are certainly in desperate times with the pandemic, but Greg and his fellow musicians and those musical pieces stand collectively as a defiant and living contradiction to that adage. Desperate times demand delightful measures--that should be the aphorism. The delightful musical

measures of those August performances brought a much-needed balm and antidote to an anxious, turbulent, and troubled world.

From R. Bruce T: I just received the posting of the various pieces. I knew I couldn't listen to it from the tiny computer speakers, so I put on my Bose headphones for better quality. I began by listening to "World Farewell", remembering the many times I sang it with the choir. As I listened to it, I cried. I cried for the memories of the people I knew who are listed, I cried for the sadness of not being at the festival, I cried simply by being moved by the music, and I cried with appreciation and hope that one day my name will be on that list and the choir will sing for me! As I listen to the other postings, I feel the joy and beauty of the music and am supported by many fond memories. Thank you for these musical postings. It makes this day of self-isolation more enjoyable than it would have been otherwise.

From Joseph S.: Good afternoon. I have just made a donation via your website, but wanted to add this note of deep appreciation for the truly extraordinary and comforting Moments of Comfort that you have been sending out on a weekly basis. They are a wonderful touch and I've enjoyed them very much.

From Len A.: Sandra and I truly enjoy these Moments of Comfort. We are celebrating the 76th year of Independence for Iceland today, June 17, and it seems fitting to be able to listen to more Moments of Comfort on such a wonderful day. The joy we feel is almost overwhelming.

From Jean S.: I'm in receipt of the "Final Summer Bach at Noon" email and overwhelmed with awe and appreciation at all of the musical offerings, and the time and effort that they require. We musicians are facing unprecedented and extraordinary times that challenge our creative efforts in previously unimaginable ways. We are making progress, and in so doing, continuing to engage our musicians and to inspire our audiences/congregations. Bravo! Keep up the good and life-sustaining work!

From John K.: The music of Bach undoubtedly thrives on love. This is especially true in Bethlehem, where such love, thanks to our brilliant performers and dedicated staff, is palpable and inspiring. But this love, as special as it is, does not end with them. For more than a century -- during good times and bad, it has been continuously sustained by the generosity of our benefactors and supporters. If there were ever a time to profess your love for The Bach Choir of Bethlehem, surely that time is now. Please join with me today in sharing your love -- for the Choir, for Bethlehem, and for Bach.

From Todd F.: Many thanks for the Summer BACH AT NOONS and the MOMENTS OF COMFORT. I have so appreciated these soulful offerings for this very hard time. Please accept my offering of gratitude!

From Jan B.: I was blown away listening to Bach at Noon today! The program was SO well planned and executed by ALL, including your conversation about the George Herbert poem. Both soloists were remarkable...well, really everyone was. Such a gift! Thank you again and again!

From John S.: Thank you for such a beautiful rendition! I am a bass- baritone myself, and really enjoyed Dashon's singing.

From Maynard M.: Thank you and Greg for the very moving talk and then the recording of the Bernstein psalms. Wow!

From Sally H.: Many thanks for your continuing BACH AT NOON programs.

From Edith R.: Thank you for the You-Tube concerts!

Dena D.: Thank you for all the wonderful music you have been putting out there for us to enjoy and savor during this strange time. Best wishes.

Johannes B.: Herr Funfgeld, Thank you for the fine, intimate You Tube concert. Well done!

From Paul B.: Thank you so much for Moments of Comfort and for playing Bach throughout the year. I met Greg Funfgeld at my first Bach at Noon in February and was totally smitten; this man is a believer in Bach, wonderful. Loved the way he played the Oratorio choral and French suite. I will be at the Mass in B minor, but we are even considering moving to Bethlehem to be around people who love and play Bach. I am an aficionado of Vox Ama Deus which plays baroque music with period instruments around Philadelphia; they did a memorable Mass in B with a double chorus. I found out about you from a brochure in a license and tag shop in Springhouse and saw you were doing the Mass this spring, saw the Bach at noon series, and the rest is history. I will become a guarantor and perhaps a neighbor! Please advise what is the best part of Bethlehem to look for a house in the heart of Bach country.

From Karen C: I miss you and pray you and yours are well. Thank you for these incredible musical moments. They nurture my soul.

From Steve S.: I'm writing this in the final moments of the first virtual Bach at Noon, which I've been viewing on your webpage. This had to be the finest virtual production of a classical music performance I have seen in these trying few months. Of course the musical artists were all extraordinary, which comes as no surprise. I especially loved Robin in the G Minor flute sonata, and Sheri (and the entire ensemble) in the passionate "Ich folge dir gleichfalls." Greg's comments and introductory remarks had a personal, one-to-one feeling much stronger than what one would get even in a live performance.

The sound quality, the professionalism of the video camera work, with lovely fades from close-up to wide angle, and the simple yet dramatic lighting made this a real joy to experience. The sound quality and balance were so good, in fact, that this was the first virtual performance I found worthy enough to patch into my "real" home stereo system!

Kudos to all involved. Can't wait to hear live concerts again.