



"A National Treasure"

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THE BACH CHOIR OF BETHLEHEM ANNOUNCES New Executive Director, Leela Breithaupt

BETHLEHEM, Pa., April 30, 2021 –The Bach Choir of Bethlehem is pleased to announce its next Executive Director, Ms. Leela Breithaupt. Ms. Breithaupt was selected by a committee of Board and Choir members, chaired by Patty Alercia, after a national search executed by the executive search firm Genovese Vanderhoof and Associates. Ms. Breithaupt will join the Choir's staff on July 1, as Bridget George ends her 24-year tenure as Executive Director of The Choir. The Choir's Board of Managers approved the decision and Mr. Black made the announcement to the Choir and staff members earlier this month. "The Choir is very pleased to have found someone with Leela's knowledge of the Bach repertoire coupled with her training and experience managing the affairs of an arts organization. But above all we are taken with Leela's embrace of the mission of The Choir and her natural fit into the Choir's culture. Leela and her family will be a great addition to our community," Mr. Black remarked.

Trained as a flautist, Ms. Breithaupt earned Bachelor and Master of Music degrees, Major in Flute Performance, from the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University and a Konzertexamen (Artist Diploma) from the Berlin University of the Arts in Berlin, Germany. For 14 years she performed internationally playing both modern and baroque flute with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, the New York Baroque, The Bach Society of Minnesota, and at many international festivals. Ms. Breithaupt founded the baroque ensemble Les Ordinaires, serving as executive producer for two Naxos CD's and four concert seasons including budgeting, grant writing, fund-raising, operations, festival management, and marketing.

Ms. Breithaupt is deeply familiar with the music of Bach and the German culture. Having lived and worked in Germany regularly for the past 25 years, she is a near-native German speaker and retains

connections with the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, Leipzig Barockorchester, and the Munich Office of Tourism.

She has also served on the board and committees for the Indianapolis International Baroque Competition, the Bloomington Early Music Festival, and Indy Baroque Music. She was the executive producer for five Naxos CDs for the Indianapolis Baroque Orchestra (an ensemble of IndyBaroque Music, Inc.) At Indy Baroque, she served for four years, first as Interim Executive Director, and then as CEO and President of the Board.

Becoming more immersed in arts administration, Ms. Breithaupt earned an MBA at the Indiana University Kelly School of Business in May 2020. She is currently Vice President of Business Development and Partnerships at E2E Advising, an educational software company.

Artistic Director and Conductor Greg Funfgeld had previously delayed his retirement from this season to next, and will continue to serve as the Choir's artistic leader through the 2021-2022 season. Of the changes to come, he remarked: "Bridget has been the most wonderful colleague, a partner in the deepest and most profoundly wonderful sense of that word, who has accomplished so much in her 24-year tenure as our Executive Director. Leela is a worthy successor and will be a much-loved and admired colleague. I am honored to serve for one more year and will be eager to support Leela and the new Artistic Director and Conductor, to be appointed in the Spring of 2022. Together they will lead The Bach Choir into a glorious future."

As she prepares for retirement, Ms. George reflected on her many years dedicated to the Choir's excellence and the many fruitful collaborations she has enjoyed over the years. "As I look back on the treasured relationships that have filled my journey with The Bach Choir under the extraordinary artistic leadership of Greg Funfgeld, I feel truly blessed. I couldn't be happier about the choice of Leela Breithaupt as my successor and look forward to welcoming her to Bethlehem."

Ms. Breithaupt and her family will relocate to Bethlehem from Indiana. They are looking forward to joining the community and being immersed in The Choir's formidable history: "I am so excited to have the opportunity to lead the oldest American Bach Choir especially at such a pivotal time for arts organizations. I grew up listening to The Bach Choir of Bethlehem's wonderful Dorian recordings, so this feels like a dream come true. The leadership of The Choir has been incredibly kind to me, and I am deeply grateful to the Board of Managers for entrusting me with this honor. I look forward to joining my new colleagues in the historic Bethlehem community and together exploring new traditions while building on the rich cultural history of this venerable institution. Here's to the next 125 years of celebrating the music of Bach and cultivating a lifelong passion for the choral arts."

The Bach Choir of Bethlehem 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.

About The Bach Choir of Bethlehem:

The Bach Choir of Bethlehem is the oldest American Bach Choir, and gave the first American performances of Bach's *Mass in B Minor* and *Christmas Oratorio*. Since its founding in 1898, the Choir has attracted thousands of national and international visitors to its annual Bethlehem Bach Festival in May. Under the direction of conductor Greg Funfgeld, now in his 38th season, the Choir's activities have expanded to a year-round season of 40 concerts and educational programs for an audience of more than 22,000; recordings for the Dorian and Analekta labels; films for PBS and Classical Kids; and touring performances including the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, Germany; the BBC Proms, Royal Albert Hall, London; Carnegie Hall and Trinity Church Wall Street, New York City; and the Kennedy Center and Music Center at Strathmore in the Washington D.C. area.

The Bach Choir has been recognized for its outstanding education and community-engagement programs by annual awards from the National Endowment for the Arts (2011-2020). 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's affiliated Bel Canto Youth Chorus is celebrating its 27th year under the direction of founder Joy Hirokawa. Both organizations are looking to increase their impact in training the next generation of choral singers and cultivating a life-long passion for the choral arts. For more information on The Bach Choir of Bethlehem, please visit www.bach.org.

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