Bach in the Community: Voices of Praise

Sunday, October 23, 2022 | 4 pm

St. Clare of Assisi Catholic Church
Concert Guidelines

Before you silence your cell phones and other electronic devices, be sure to check in and follow us on social media: Facebook, Instagram @bachsocietystl and Twitter @BachSociety

Photography & video recording during the performances is prohibited.

All of our concerts are professionally recorded, so please do your best to minimize excess noise. You will know it’s time to applaud when the conductor lowers their arms after the final chord of a piece. This may not happen after every piece, because sometimes songs are grouped together to create an emotional experience.

Thank you and enjoy the concert.
Music Director and Conductor

A. Dennis Sparger was critically acclaimed as “a conductor equipped with insight as well as craftsmanship” already in his second season. In the past three and a half decades he has received even more praise for his musical leadership with the Bach Society Chorus and Orchestra, conducting them in more than 175 performances of major works by Bach and other composers.

Under his leadership the Bach Society was presented with the Excellence in the Arts award by the Arts & Education Council of Greater St. Louis, the first chorus to be so honored. It was also a driving force in the Christmas Candlelight Concerts being hailed by BBC Music magazine as “one of the top 20 live Christmas events in North America.”

In 1989 he introduced a Young Artists scholarship program for singers under the age of thirty to cultivate future soloists. He also established a professional core of paid Principal Singers and designated a position for Composer-in-Residence to promote the creation of new works.

He was awarded a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in choral conducting by the University of Illinois and earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Eastern Illinois University where he was named one of the 50 Outstanding Graduate Alumni of the Graduate School. In 2013, in recognition of his work with the Bach Society, he was presented with the Lifetime Achievement award by the University of Missouri-St. Louis. He has also received awards from St. Louis Cathedral Concerts, the St. Louis chapter of the American Guild of Organists, and the Illinois chapter of the American Choral Directors Association.

Dr. Sparger is a member of the American Bach Society, American Choral Directors Association, Chorus America, the National Society of Arts & Letters, and is a past board member of Artist Presentation Society.
Stephen Eros graduated from Webster University with the degrees Master of Arts in Choral Conducting and Bachelor of Music in Organ Performance, and faculty bestowed honors in music. He studied conducting and choral music with Trent Patterson, organ with William Partridge, and voice with Robert Ayllón. As Assistant Conductor of the Webster University Choirs, he assisted in preparing works such as Britten’s Cantata Misericordium and Rejoice in the Lamb, Orff’s Carmina Burana, Schubert’s Magnificat (D 486), Bach’s Cantata No. 131, Duruflé’s Requiem, Mozart’s Regina Coeli (KV 276), and Copland’s In the Beginning.

Stephen has been Assistant Conductor of the Bach Society of St. Louis since 2013. In addition to singing with the chorus, he has conducted them in concert in works by Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Handel, Mendelssohn, Mozart, among others. Stephen was the music director for “A Classical Cabaret” at Jazz St. Louis—part of the 2019 St. Louis Bach Festival—alongside his wife, Jamie, who was the director.

Stephen has worked in the field of sacred music for over a decade. He has served parishes in the Diocese of Belleville, Springfield (IL), and Archdiocese of St. Louis. Since 2015, he has held the position of Director of Liturgy and Music at St. Clare of Assisi Catholic Church in O’Fallon, IL. At St. Clare he is responsible for the formation and training of over 400 liturgical ministers, and conducts the parish choir, men’s schola, women’s schola, and two children’s choirs. On the diocesan level, he has served as organist and choirmaster for pontifical liturgies at the Cathedral of St. Peter, and currently serves on the music committee of the diocesan liturgical commission.

As a collaborative pianist, Stephen has served as music director for solo cabarets and musicals in the St. Louis area, and has worked for the Muny St. Louis as a rehearsal pianist. He is a member of the St. Louis Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, having served as Sub Dean, Program Committee Chair, and a member of the Executive Committee. He is a proud union member of the American Federation of Musicians Local 2-197, and holds memberships with several professional organizations in the areas of liturgical and choral music.

His biggest accomplishment to date is being the husband of Jamie Eros, step-father of George and Jon, and father of Samuel and Viola.
Sandra Geary is a native of County Cork, Ireland and has received piano performance diplomas from the Royal Schools of Music, Trinity College, London; the Cork School of Music, Ireland and a Bachelor of Music degree from the St. Louis Conservatory of Music. Her teachers have included John O’Conor, Joseph Kalichstein and Carole Tafoya.

On the piano faculty of Washington University, Sandra also accompanies the WU Chamber and Concert choirs.

She has been the Bach Society of Saint Louis accompanist for the past 26 years and also is the accompanist for Webster University Opera studio.

She is a vocal coach for the OTSL Artist-in-Training program and Union Avenue Opera’s ‘Crescendo’ Young Artist program.

She has collaborated in Voice Masterclasses given by Nathan Gunn, Stanford Olsen, Kevin Short, Erie Mills, Christine Brewer, Mary Ann McCormack and Jennifer Johnson Cano.

Sandra regularly accompanies recitals, auditions and competitions in the St Louis area.
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Bach in the Community: Voices of Praise

The Bach Society Chorus
A. Dennis Sparger
Music Director and Conductor

Presented by

Wolfersberger Funeral Home

The History Guy

Robert and Merlie Kirchgessner
St. Clare of Assisi Catholic Church

4:00 p.m.
Sunday, October 23, 2022
St. Clare of Assisi Catholic Church
BACH in the COMMUNITY: Voices of Praise

Welcome

And the Glory of the Lord from Messiah

G. F. Handel (1685-1759)

Melissa Payton
Executive Director

American Voices

I Will Arise and Go to Jesus

Robert Lehman (b.1960)

The Road Home

Stephen Paulus (1949-2014)

Here I Am, Lord

Daniel L. Schutte, arr. Ovid Young (1940-2014)

Voices in Silence and Prayer

Dum medium silentium

Vytautas Miškinis (b. 1954)

Composed in 2008, the composer quietly captures the “silence” of the night through repeated and overlapping phrases, highlighted by sustained lines which obscure the pulse and reinforce the atmosphere. Loud outbursts of “tenerent omnia” (all…things) by nearly all the voices demand one’s attention and underscore the text.

While all things were in silence and the night was in the midst of her course, Thy Almighty Word, O Lord, came down from heaven from Thy royal throne.

Wisdom 18:14-15
O Lord God

Pavel Chesnokov (1877-1944)

Voices in Praise of Mary

Ave Maria

Franz Biebl (1906-2001)

Bogoroditse Dyevo

Arvo Pärt (b.1935)

Voices of Passion, Pleading, Longing

I Cry Aloud to the Lord

Iryna Aleksiychuk (b. 1967)

Composed in 2002, this motet is even more touching today. The composer writes: “This psalm is especially relevant and tragic now in my home country of Ukraine, a country that has undergone a full-scale military invasion by Russia. Russia is destroying our beautiful cities and villages with rockets and bombs, brutally killing our civilians, among whom are many children and the elderly people. Our men are dying defending their country and their families with weapons in their hands. Ukrainian mothers, wives, daughters and sisters shed tears in prayer for their soldiers…. Only sincere prayer and the support of friends and relatives can help.”

I cry aloud to the Lord. I lift up my voice to the Lord for mercy.
I pour out before Him my complaint, before Him I tell my trouble.
When my spirit grows faint within me, it is you who watch over my way.

Look and see, there is no one at my right hand; no one is concerned for me.
I have no refuge; no one cares for my life.
I cry to you, LORD; I say, “You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.”

Psalm 142
Chorales from the St. Matthew Passion

31. What God hath willed will always be
55. What wonders rare
63. O sacred head, now wounded

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Even When He Is Silent

The text, found scratched on the wall of a concentration camp in Cologne, Germany, during World War II, was written by an anonymous Jewish prisoner. Even during this darkest time in our history and in his or her life, this poem is about hope.

I believe in the sun, even when it is not shining,
I believe in love, even when I feel it not,
I believe in God even when He is silent.

African American Voices

Ev’ry Time I Feel the Spirit

Best known for his arrangements of the many spirituals written for his choir at Tuskegee Institute, Dawson also composed chamber and orchestral music, incorporating African-American themes in all his music. His Negro Folk Symphony of 1934 was premiered by Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra. While the tunes and words of spirituals pre-date Dawson by many decades, it is his sensitivity to their spirit and his ability to shape them for choral voices that has led to his arrangements being performed by millions of singers throughout the world.

Ev’ry time I feel the spirit, moving in my heart, I will pray.
Upon the mountain my Lord spoke, Out of His mouth came fire and smoke;
Looked all around me, it looked so fine, till I asked my Lord if all was mine.
Ev’ry time I feel the spirit, moving in my heart, I will pray.
Jordan River is chilly an’ cold, it chills the body, but not the soul;
There ain’t but one train upon this track, it runs to heaven an’ right back.
Ev’ry time I feel the spirit, moving in my heart, I will pray.
Steal Away  arr. Howard Helvey (b.1968)

One of the best-known of all African-American spirituals, this setting by the Missouri native is scored for men’s voices and piano. Despite the references to “thunder” and “trumpet sounds”, the simplicity of this music is more than hope; it is a reassurance of a better life to come.

Steal away to Jesus, steal away home, I ain’t got long to stay here.
My Lord, he calls me, he calls me by the thunder,
The trumpet sounds within-a my soul, I ain’t got long to stay here.
Steal away to Jesus, steal away home, I ain’t got long to stay here.

Let Everything that Hath Breath  Jeffrey L. Ames (b. 1969)

Thank you for joining us today.

Plan now to attend our Christmas Candlelight Concert, a St. Louis tradition since 1951, on December 9 at Powell Hall. The traditional candlelight procession is followed by familiar carols performed by the Bach Society Chorus and Orchestra. A special highlight is an appearance by the internationally acclaimed soprano Sherezade Panthaki.

We are grateful to…
The Church of St. Michael and St. George for providing rehearsal space.
Vita Levkovsky for assistance with Ukrainian pronunciation.
If you enjoyed today’s performance we think you will also enjoy . . .

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<td>8:00</td>
<td>The King’s Singers, Cathedral Concerts</td>
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<td>Nov 13</td>
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<td>Water to Wine, St. Louis Chamber Chorus</td>
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<td>Dec 9</td>
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* Young Artist

Samantha Arten, Chorus Librarian
David T. Cox, Stage Manager
Erica Ancell, soprano, is excited to be joining The Bach Society of St. Louis as a Young Artist. Under the instruction of Martha Hart, Erica earned a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from Webster University. She was the 1st place winner of Union Avenue Opera’s Crescendo! Program 2022, which earned her a chorus role in UAO’s recent production of Falstaff. Formerly a Scholar Singer at Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Erica has a long history as a liturgical singer in several Churches and choruses. She had her start as a choral singer in the St. Louis Children’s Choirs and as a solo singer in Opera Theatre of St. Louis’ Artists in Training Program. Erica is looking forward to continuing her studies and to learning from the talented musicians of The Bach Society.

Theresa Pancella, mezzo-soprano, is grateful to have been accepted for a second season with The Bach Society of St. Louis as the Alto Young Artist. A St. Louis native, Theresa holds a Bachelor of Music in Music Theory from the University of Missouri – St. Louis, where she studied piano, voice, and choral conducting. She is currently studying voice with Alison Neace. She was a cantor and choral scholar at the Cathedral Basilica for several years under the remarkable instruction of Dr. Horst Buchholz and sang for two seasons under his direction in St. Louis’ only early music ensemble at the time: Pro-Arte. Theresa, a cradle Catholic and professional musician since the age of 16, has been passionate about and employed in the field of liturgical music for all her young professional life. She currently holds her dream job as the Director of Sacred Music at St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Alton, IL, where she directs the choirs, plans and plays music for all church events, and a little bit of everything else. Despite her love of liturgical music and polyphony, her true love is jazz; her vocal inspirations include Rosemary Clooney, Eydie Gormé, Keely Smith, and Diana Krall, and she would probably drop everything to become a jazz singer or studio singer if given the opportunity. She has been off the stage for several years, but her favorite role to date was playing Sandy in Grease. Theresa will be married in November 2022 to another amazing member of The Bach Society, she is the big sister to two and godmother to one, and they are her life’s greatest joys.
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Thank you to our generous supporters.

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SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2022 | 4 PM

CHRISTMAS CANDLELIGHT CONCERT
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2022 | 7:30 PM

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SUNDAY, MARCH 5, 2023 | 3 PM

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SATURDAY, APRIL 29, 2023 | 2 PM