

23
24 SEASON



BACH'S ST. JOHN PASSION
SUNDAY, MARCH 10, 2024 | 3 PM
First Presbyterian Church of Kirkwood

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A. DENNIS SPARGER, MUSIC DIRECTOR & CONDUCTOR



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; by the end of the 2023-24 season, he will have conducted them in more than 200 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. Dr. Sparger's leadership 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 Founder and Conductor Emeritus of the Masterworks Chorale (1974-2007) and Masterworks Children's Chorus (1985-1990) in Belleville, Illinois.

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 ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR

Stephen Eros graduated from Webster University with faculty bestowed honors in music. While there, he served as Assistant Conductor of the Webster University Choirs and completed a Master of Arts in Choral Conducting and

Bachelor of Music in Organ Performance; studying conducting and choral music with Trent Patterson, organ with William Partridge, and voice with Robert Ayllón.

Stephen has been Assistant Conductor of The Bach Society of St. Louis since 2013 and has worked in the field of sacred music for over a decade, serving in 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, where he is responsible for the formation and training of over 400 liturgical ministers, and conducts five different 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 Muniy 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 also a proud union member of the American Federation of Musicians Local 2-197.

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, ACCOMPANIST

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'Connor, 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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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.

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH
THE PASSION
ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN

THE BACH SOCIETY CHORUS
AND ORCHESTRA

A. DENNIS SPARGER, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR

PRESENTED BY
LUTHERAN CHURCH EXTENSION FUND

GUEST ARTIST SPONSOR
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SUNDAY, MARCH 10, 2024 AT 3 P.M.
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF KIRKWOOD

SOLOISTS

STEVEN SOPH, TENOR
EVANGELIST

STEPHEN MORSCHECK, BASS-BARITONE
JESUS

EMILY DONATO, SOPRANO
JAY CARTER, COUNTERTENOR
GENE STENGER, TENOR
ELIJAH BLAISELL, BARITONE

SAMANTHA ARTEN, MAID
WARREN FRYE, PETER
KURTIS HEINRICH, SERVANT 1
PETER HENSEL, SERVANT 2

OBBLIGATO SOLOISTS

CATHERINE EDWARDS AND JENNIFER GARTLEY, FLUTE
EILEEN BURKE AND MARK PYE, OBOE, OBOE D'AMORE, OBOE DA CACCIA
LENORA-MARYA ANOP AND MANUELA TOPALBEGOVIC, VIOLIN
KEN KULOSA, VIOLA DA GAMBA

CONTINUO

KEN KULOSA, CELLO ROBERT LEHMAN, ORGAN

It is more beneficial to ponder Christ's Passion just once than to fast a whole year or to pray a psalm daily. Martin Luther

Not only is the St. John Passion “the more radical of Bach’s surviving Passion settings,” asserts the celebrated conductor John Eliot Gardiner, it “packs a more powerful dramatic punch than any Passion setting before or since.” Today, we celebrate the 300th anniversary of this musical and spiritual masterpiece.

The 38-year-old Johann Sebastian Bach settled in Leipzig, a city of about 25,000 inhabitants, in 1723. His new position included roles as Cantor at the St. Thomas School, Director Musices for the city, and overseer for the organists and other musicians at the two principal churches. He was also required to compose and, remarkably, during his first decade alone he produced three settings of the passion, two versions of his Magnificat, and over 220 cantatas. The Passion according to St. John, his first large-scale composition, received its first performance at the St. Nicholas Church at the Vespers service on Good Friday, April 7, 1724.

Bach presented the St. John Passion again the following year at St. Thomas Church, but with many revisions. A third version followed in 1732, and a fourth in 1749. The eminent Bach scholar Christoph Wolff confirms that this fourth version, presented “on the penultimate Good Friday before his death, ... was close to that of 1724, but with larger forces than hitherto called for.” Today’s performance is based on Bach’s final revisions.

Purpose and Structure. Bach saw the purpose of his St. John Passion as bringing his listeners to a personal understanding of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice for the redemption of mankind. The Passion is divided into two parts and, as was the custom in Leipzig, the parts were separated by an hour-long sermon (replaced today by an intermission). Although not designated by Bach, there are separate scenes within each part and each scene contains three distinct components: the Gospel narrative, a personal reflection, and a corporate response.

The Gospel Narrative. There are three sources for the text—or libretto—of the St. John Passion: At the core of the Passion is the Holy Scriptures, taken directly from chapters 18 and 19 of the Gospel of John, as translated by Martin Luther. Differing from the other Gospels, John omits the disciples’ falling asleep while Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, the death of Judas, the dream of Pilate’s wife, and the ultimate acknowledgement that “truly this was the Son of God.” Moreover, John’s description of the Last Supper, which includes many of the teachings of Jesus, is so long

Bach leaves it out entirely. On the other hand, sensing the unique dramatic opportunities in Peter's lament over his betrayal and the earthquake at the moment of Christ's death, Bach borrowed these scenes from the Gospel of Matthew.

The Holy Scriptures are sung by the "Evangelist" (a tenor soloist) in a musical style called recitative; the melody follows the patterns of speech, both in rhythm as well as the rise and fall of pitch. The dialogue spoken by Jesus, Peter and Pilate is also sung in recitative, but by other soloists. Groups of people (the Chief Priests, the angry mob, band of soldiers, etc.) are portrayed by the Chorus.

Personal Reflection. Each scene is followed by an aria sung by one of the four soloists. These arias often include an obbligato (i.e., required) part for one or more solo instruments which serves to reinforce the emotional affect with a decorative counter-melody. In this way Bach alternates the "action" with contemplation, providing each listener sufficient time to reflect on the gravity of what has just transpired. The sacred poetry Bach selected for the arias was likely written by Heinrich Brockes, whose passion text was also set by Handel, Telemann and others.

Corporate Response. The Lutheran chorales which often followed the arias were personally selected by Bach. Familiar to all in his congregation, their purpose is to unify the listeners in a common shared experience. Professor Daniel Melamed of Yale University identifies a unique feature of the chorale texts: "Many of them are in the first person. This choice . . . is meant to draw the hearer into the story but also to make a broad theological point, reflecting the importance of the individual's personal relationship to the passion story in Lutheran theology."

The Role of the Chorus. Unlike the soloists, the Chorus functions in three completely different ways: first, to provide the Prologue and Epilogue that "book-end" the Passion; second, to portray the angry mob, high priests and soldiers in the turba (mob) choruses; and third, to represent—and galvanize—the Congregation of Believers by singing the well-known chorales. It is no accident that Bach chose the identical singers to represent the bloodthirsty mob and the Congregation of Believers. Gardiner affirms, "That the very persecutors of Christ from whom we recoil with outrage and disgust are us makes the experience of His Passion all the more emotionally harrowing."

The Prologue. The orchestral introduction that opens the Passion draws the listener into the intense drama that permeates the entire work. Immediately, "the relentless, pulsating bass-line, like a beating heart, sets the stage for passion and terror." Jeannette Sorrell, conductor of Apollo's

Fire, continues, "The surging motion in the violins evokes the chaos of the mob we will soon meet. And above it all, the long and anguished calls of the flutes and oboes lock in painful dissonances, like nails being driven into flesh." Against the Prologue which captures all the turbulence, the Chorus enters with Psalm 8, "Lord, Lord, Lord, our Master, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!" Even as Christ faces His crucifixion, His glory and majesty are simultaneously proclaimed.

St. John, Bach and Responsibility for Christ's Death. Because the Gospel of John mentions "the Jews" 72 times, most often in a negative manner, it has been cited as an example of anti-Semitism. However, Sorrell provides a historical reference by explaining "The Book of John arose in a Jewish Christian community in the process of breaking from the Jewish synagogue. It regularly describes Jesus' opponents simply as 'the Jews.' In later centuries, the book was unfortunately used to support anti-Semitic polemics. However, it is important to understand that the author(s) of the gospel regarded himself/themselves as Jews, championed Jesus and his followers as Jews, and probably wrote for a largely Jewish community."

One might expect that, in the early 18th century, Bach would continue John's charge against "the Jews." But this is not the case. Bach removed any anti-Semitic text passages from the Brockes' Passion and clearly "placed the guilt on each of us as sinners." Sorrell affirms, "This was also Luther's view." Bach poses the central question each one of us must ask: "Is it someone else...or am I, a sinner, responsible for Christ's death?" One need only look in the score for the answer: already in the third chorale the congregation of believers asks, "who dared to strike my Lord?" And Bach replies for all of us, "Ich, ich und meine Sünden" (I, I and my sins)."

In Closing. As Christ's body is laid in the tomb, Bach provides a closing lullaby so that He may "rest well." But then, after this closing Epilogue, he adds a simple chorale to affirm the promise of our risen Lord and our hope for life eternal. In this brief final moment, Bach preaches to the faithful that, through Christ's sacrifice and grace, we will come face to face with our Savior in that final day. There is no moment like this in all of music history.

In 1724 as well as today, 300 years later, Bach's passion connects with listeners in a unique and tri-fold way: we hear the Passion story of the Christ who suffered and died for our sins, we ponder what each step along His path means to us individually, and we connect to other believers through music we have known and shared our entire lives.

THE PASSION ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN

PART ONE

PROLOGUE

1. Herr, unser Herrscher Chorus
Lord, our Master, whose glory is honored in all the lands

THE BETRAYAL AND ARREST IN THE GARDEN

- 2a. Jesus ging mit seinen Jüngen Evangelist, Jesus
Jesus went with his disciples over Kedron's brook
- 2b. Jesum von Nazareth Turba chorus
Jesus of Nazareth!
- 2c. Jesus spricht zu ihnen Evangelist, Jesus
Jesus said to them
- 2d. Jesum von Nazareth Turba chorus
Jesus of Nazareth
- 2e. Jesus antwortete Evangelist
Jesus answered
3. Chorale- O große Lieb Chorus
O great love without measure
4. Auf daß das Wort erfüllet würde Evangelist, Jesus
And thus might the scripture be fulfilled
5. Chorale - Dein will gescheh Chorus
Your will be done, Lord
6. Die Schar aber und der Oberhauptmann Evangelist
The troops then bound Jesus
7. Von den Stricken meiner Sünden Alto Aria
To free me from the bonds of sin

PART TWO

PROLOGUE

15. Chorale - Christus, der uns selig macht Chorus
Christ, who makes us blessed and has done no wrong

THE INTERROGATION BY PILATE AND SCOURGING

- 16a. Da führten sie Jesum Evangelist, Pilate
Jesus was led to the governor's headquarters.
- 16b. Wäre dieser nicht ein Übeltäter Turba chorus
Were he not an evildoer, we would not have brought him to you!
- 16c. Da sprach Pilatus zu ihm Evangelist, Pilate, Jesus
Pilate said to them
- 16d. Wir dürfen niemand toten Turba chorus
They replied "Our laws allow us to put no man to death."
- 16e. Auf daß erfüllet würde das Wort Jesu Evangelist, Pilate, Jesus
That thus might be fulfilled Jesus' words
17. Chorale - Ach, großer König Chorus
O mighty King, great for all times
- 18a. Da sprach Pilatus zu ihn Evangelist, Pilate, Jesus
Then Pilate said to Jesus
- 18b. Nicht diesen, sondern Barrabam! Turba chorus
Not Jesus! Release Barabbas!
- 18c. Barrabas aber war ein Mörder Evangelist
Barabbas was a murderer
19. Betrachte, meine Seel Bass Arioso
Consider, my soul, with anxious delight, with bitter joy
20. Erwäge, wie sein blutgefärbter Rücken Tenor Aria
Consider, then, his back, so wounded

THE CONDEMNATION OF JESUS

- 21a. Und die Kriegsknecte flochten eine Krone Evangelist
The soldiers made him a crown of thorns
- 21b. Sei begrüßet, lieber Judenkönig! Turba chorus
"All hail, mighty 'king!'"
- 21c. Und gaben ihm Backenstreiche Evangelist, Pilate
And the soldiers struck him
- 21d. Kreuzige, kreuzige! Turba chorus
Crucify him! Crucify him!
- 21e. Pilatus sprach zu ihnen Evangelist, Pilate
Pilate said to them
- 21f. Wir haben ein Gesetz Turba chorus
We have a law, and by that law he must die
- 21g. Da Pilatus das Wort hörte Evangelist, Pilate
Now when Pilate heard this, he became more afraid
22. Chorale - Durch dein Gefängnis, Gottes Sohn Chorus, Audience
Only through your imprisonment shall our freedom come
Lyrics can be found after the program
- 23a. Die Juden aber schrieen und sprachen Evangelist
Once more the crowd cried out
- 23b. Lässest du diesen los Turba chorus
If thou let this man go free, you are no friend of Caesar's
- 23c. Da Pilatus das Wort hörte Evangelist, Pilate
And when Pilate heard this, he led Jesus out
- 23d. Weg, weg mit dem Turba chorus
Away with Him! Crucify Him!
- 23e. Spricht Pilatus zu ihnen Evangelist, Pilate
Pilate said to them
- 23f. Wir haben keinen König, denn den Kaiser Turba chorus
We have no king but Caesar
- 23g. Da überantwortete er ihn Evangelist
And so Pilate delivered Jesus to them
24. Eilt, ihr angefochtenen Seelen Bass Aria and Chorus
Hasten, ye embattled souls

THE CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH OF JESUS

- 25a. Allda kreuzigten sie ihn Evangelist
And there they crucified him
- 25b. Schreibe nicht: der Juden König Turba chorus
Do not write 'King of the Jews'
- 25c. Pilatus atwortet Evangelist, Pilate
And Pilate answered
26. Chorale - In meines Herzens Grunde Chorus
In my heart of hearts are your name and cross alone
- 27a. Die Kriegsknechte aber Evangelist
The soldiers, having crucified Jesus
- 27b. Lasset uns den nicht zerteilen Turba chorus
We mustn't tear this.
- 27c. Auf daß erfüllet würde die Schrift Evangelist, Jesus
That the Scripture might be fulfilled
28. Chorale - Er nahm alles wohl in acht Chorus
He thought of everything in his last hour
29. Und von Stund an nahm sie Evangelist
And from then on, the disciple looked after Jesus' mother
30. Es ist vollbracht! Alto Aria
It is fulfilled
31. Und neiget das Haupt und verschied Evangelist
And he lowered his head, and was gone
32. Mein teurer Heiland, laß dich fragen Bass Aria and Chorus
My dearest Savior, let me ask you...

THE VEIL OF THE TEMPLE

33. Und siehe da, der Vorhang im Tempel zerriß Evangelist
And behold, the veil of the temple was torn
34. Mein Herz, in dem die ganze Welt Tenor Arioso
My heart, the whole world is sharing Jesus' suffering
35. Zerfließe, mein Herze Soprano Aria
Dissolve then, my heart, in a flood of tears

THE BURIAL OF JESUS

36. Die Juden aber, dieweil es der Rüsttag war Evangelist
The Jews, because it was Passover
37. Chorale - O hilf, Christe, Gottes Sohn Chorus
O help us, Christ, Son of God
38. Darnach bat Pilatum Joseph von Arimathia Evangelist
Then there came before Pilate Joseph of Arimathia

EPILOGUE

39. Ruht wohl, ihr heiligen Gebeine Chorus
Rest well, ye holy body for which I weep no longer
40. Chorale - Ach Herr, laß dein lieb Engelein Chorus
O Lord, when comes that final day

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Rehearsal space is generously provided by the
Episcopal Church of St. Michael and St. George, Clayton.

St. John Passion #11

English text revised
by David Gordon


J. S. Bach

Soprano/Alto




1. Who was it, Lord, did smite Thee, Thy
2. My sins and e - vil do - - ing Are

Tenor/Bass




S/A




good with ill re - quite Thee, So foul - ly treat - ed
like the sands be - strew - ing The might - y o - cean's -

T/B




S/A




Thee? For Thou art no - of - fen - der, Nor -
shore. These sins it was - that brought Thee Thy -

T/B




S/A




didst mis - ter - sin, sur - ren - der; From
Thee The

T/B




S/A



e - vil of do - ing Thou art free.
host of tor - ments that Thou bore.

T/B



St. John Passion #22

English version revised
by David Gordon

J.S. Bach

Soprano/Alto

Tenor/Bass

S/A

T/B

S/A

T/B

S/A

T/B

S/A

T/B

Our free-dom, Son of God, - a - rose When
Thou wast cast - in pri - son. And
from the dun - geon that Thou chose Our
free-dom has - a - ris - en. Didst Thou not choose - a -
slave - to be, We would be slaves - e - ter - nal - ly.

Detailed description: This is a musical score for a vocal duet, Soprano/Alto (S/A) and Tenor/Bass (T/B). The score is in G major (three sharps) and 4/4 time. It consists of five systems of music. Each system has a vocal line for S/A and a bass line for T/B. The lyrics are: 'Our free-dom, Son of God, - a - rose When Thou wast cast - in pri - son. And from the dun - geon that Thou chose Our free-dom has - a - ris - en. Didst Thou not choose - a - slave - to be, We would be slaves - e - ter - nal - ly.' The music features various rhythmic values including quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, as well as rests and fermatas. The bass line often provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines.

INTRODUCING



A NEW PODCAST

Bach Talk, presented by The Bach Society of Saint Louis, invites you on an enlightening journey into the timeless world of Johann Sebastian Bach. Classical music radio veteran Ron Klemm guides you through this monthly podcast, delving into a vibrant community that keeps Bach's music alive. Beyond the concert stage, we uncover fascinating stories, offer musical insights and present profiles of the people that breathe life into Bach's compositions.

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GUEST ARTIST

STEVEN SOPH, TENOR



A "superb vocal soloist" (The Washington Post) with "impressive clarity and color" (The New York Times), tenor Steven Soph performs concert repertoire spanning the Renaissance to the modern day.

In 2023-2024, Steven performs at Lincoln Center with the American Classical Orchestra in Bach's *Mass in B minor*; at Boston's Symphony Hall with the Handel and Haydn Society in Handel's *Israel in Egypt*; with the Tucson Symphony and Pro Musica

Colorado in Handel's *Messiah*; with the Bach Society of St. Louis and Lincoln, Nebraska's *Abendmusik* as Evangelist in Bach's *St. John Passion*; at the University of Iowa in Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*; with Washington D.C.'s The Thirteen in Monteverdi's "*Lost*" *Vespers of 1650*; at Philadelphia's Penn Arts Live in a program featuring works of Salamone Rossi; and with Tulsa's Oklahoma Bach Choir in BWVs 61, 62, 65, and 70. He joins the Baroque Music Festival, Corona del Mar and returns to the Oregon Bach Festival and the Bach Festival of Winter Park.

Steven also appears with Vancouver BC's Leonids, Providence's Ensemble Altera, Washington Bach Consort, Tucson's True Concord, Yale Choral Artists, Kansas City's Spire, and Orlando's Bach Vocal Artists. He earned degrees from the University of North Texas and Yale's School of Music. www.stevensoph.com

GUEST ARTIST

STEPHEN MORSCHECK, BASS-BARITONE



Bass-baritone Stephen Morscheck maintains an active performing schedule which has recently included the title role of Elijah in Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with the Champaign Urbana Symphony, the bass solos in J. S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with the South Dakota Symphony, the role of Jesus in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with the St. Louis Bach Society, and Raphael in Haydn's *The Creation* with East Texas Symphony, and Winston-Salem Symphony.

Mr. Morscheck has appeared with the Alabama Symphony, Boulder Philharmonic, Costa Rica Philharmonic, Dallas Bach Society, Duke University Chapel, Festival de Saint-Denis, Knoxville Symphony Society, Laudate Deum Chamber Choir of Lausanne, Switzerland; Music of the Baroque, Pacific Symphony, Roanoke Symphony, Santa Fe Symphony, Southwest Florida Symphony, and Rochester Chamber Philharmonic.

Opera engagements include appearances with Arizona Opera, Atlanta Opera, Dallas Opera, Florentine Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Kentucky Opera, Liceu Opera Barcelona, Los Angeles Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Metropolitan Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Opéra de Montréal, Santa Fe Opera, Spoleto Festival USA, Teatro Real Madrid, and Washington National Opera.

Mr. Morscheck graduated from Wheaton College, completed advanced degrees from the University of Michigan School of Music and is a professor of Vocal Studies at the University of North Texas College of Music.

GUEST ARTIST

EMILY DONATO, SOPRANO



Soprano Emily Donato, born and based in Brooklyn, NY, enjoys connecting with audiences through performances of music ranging from Baroque to Contemporary works. Most recently, Ms. Donato was awarded first prize in the 2023 Handel Aria Competition, and was a member of the 2023 Virginia Best Adams Quartet at the Carmel Bach Festival. She made her Carnegie Hall Stern Auditorium debut in May 2023 as the soprano soloist in Bach's *B Minor Mass* with the Oratorio Society of NY conducted by

Maestro Kent Tritle, and has appeared as a soloist with Voices of Ascension led by Maestro Dennis Keene.

In 2021, she was awarded first prize in the Lyndon-Woodside Oratorio Competition. In 2019, Ms. Donato appeared as a featured soloist in Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass* on Yale Schola Cantorum and Juilliard415's Scandinavian Tour. Later that year, she performed J.S. Bach *Cantata 82A Ich Habe Genug* with Maestro Masaaki Suzuki and members of Juilliard415 at the Japanese Ambassador's residence in New York City.

Ms. Donato has also worked with conductors David Hill, Nicholas McGegan, Simon Carrington, and Leon Botstein. Emily is a graduate of the Yale Voxtet program directed by tenor James Taylor, and completed her undergraduate degree at Bard College.

GUEST ARTIST

JAY CARTER, COUNTERTENOR



Jay Carter has earned a reputation as one of America's finest countertenors, and as a leading interpreter of Baroque repertoire. Carter has appeared as a soloist with acclaimed conductors and organizations that specialize in Baroque music including Maasaki Suzuki and the Bach Collegium Japan; Nicholas McGegan and the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra; John Scott and the Choir of Men and Boys, St. Thomas Church. He has also frequently appeared with modern orchestras presenting

Baroque and Contemporary repertoire, including The Cleveland Orchestra, The National Symphony Orchestra, Houston Symphony, and the Saint Louis Symphony. In summers he is a member of the Bach Virtuosi, a summer festival in Maine made up of leading Bach performers from America and Germany. This season he will appear as a soloist at the Leipzig Bach Fest with Bach Collegium San Diego.

As a recitalist, Carter frequently presents programs that feature Art Song repertoire from outside the standard countertenor repertoire by composers like Butterworth, Finzi, Hahn, and Wolf. He is also an avid ensemble collaborator and conductor, having led Kantorei (Westminster Choir College), and he currently leads the Kansas City-based chamber ensemble Musica Vocale. He holds degrees in music from William Jewell College, Yale School of Music, and the University of Missouri Kansas City, Conservatory of Music. He has held academic appointments on the voice faculty of William Jewell College and Westminster Choir College, and currently maintains a studio at the Conservatory of Music, Theatre, and Dance at the University of Missouri Kansas City.

GUEST ARTIST

GENE STENGER, TENOR



Hailed as an “impressive tenor” (The New York Times) who sings with “sweet vibrancy” (*The Cleveland Plain Dealer*) Gene Stenger is one of the country’s most called upon Bach specialists who is also heralded for his performances of oratorios by Handel, Haydn, Mendelssohn, and Mozart.

Mr. Stenger’s 2023-2024 season includes solo debuts with the Washington Bach Consort (Bach’s *St. John Passion*), Winston-Salem Symphony (Handel’s *Messiah*), North

Carolina Baroque Orchestra (Handel’s *Messiah*), Baltimore Choral Arts Society (Bach’s *Magnificat*), and Resonance Works Pittsburgh (Bach’s *Magnificat* & Esmail’s *This Love Between Us*). He makes returning solo appearances with the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra (Handel’s *Messiah*), Bach Society of St. Louis (Bach’s *St. John Passion*), Colorado Bach Ensemble (Bach’s *Mass in B Minor*), Upper Valley Baroque (Bach’s *St. John Passion*), Bach Collegium at St. Peter’s NYC (Bach’s *St. John Passion*), *Bach Vespers* at Holy Trinity New York (BWV 75 & 165), and a return solo quartet performance of David Lang’s *the little match girl passion* at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Originally from Pittsburgh, PA, Gene holds degrees from Yale University’s School of Music, and Institute of Sacred Music, Colorado State University, and Baldwin Wallace University Conservatory of Music.

GUEST ARTIST

ELIJAH BLAISDELL, BARITONE



An early and new music specialist, baritone Elijah Blaisdell performs with ensembles across the country as both a soloist and chorister.

Elijah is the featured soloist on the 2019 Grammy Award winning album *Zealot Canticles* with The Crossing, and premiered Julia Wolfe's new work, *UnEarth*, with them and the New York Philharmonic this past season.

Additional recent highlights include *Voices Out of Darkness*, a concert of Bach Cantatas with the Portland Baroque Orchestra, performances of the new choral-theater work *Aniara* with The Crossing at the Haarlem Choral Biennale and The Helsinki National Opera, The Adams Fellowship with The Carmel Bach Festival, Milhaud's *Service Sacré* with St. George's Choral Society, and *Coffee Cantata* and *Dido and Aeneas* with Madison Bach Musicians.

He also performs with The Gamut Bach Ensemble, The Sante Fe Desert Chorale, Trinity Church Wall Street in New York, and Grammy-nominated Ensemble True Concord. Elijah holds a Master of Music in Vocal Performance from New England Conservatory and lives in New York City.

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Orchestral musicians are members of the American Federation of Musicians, Local 2-197.

Chorus Auditions for the 2024-2025 Season will be held in June.

There will be open seats in 2nd Alto, 1st Tenor and 2nd Bass.

Visit bachsociety.org/audition later this spring for dates and info.

YOUNG ARTISTS

RITA SCHIEN SOPRANO I



Rita Schien, Soprano, is thrilled to join The Bach Society as a Young Artist. Rita is currently studying Vocal Performance at the University of Missouri- St. Louis under the instruction of Dr. Leslie Allnatt. At UMSL, She sings with University Singers, Vocal Point, and Opera Theater. Rita is the President of the Choir Program at UMSL and has received multiple awards for her outstanding efforts in both the choral and vocal department. Over the past year, Rita has worked for The St. Louis Children's Choir, as an Ensemble Assistant, and has gotten involved with the Barbershop Harmony Society. She has served as the Tenor section leader for The Recruits chorus and for Acappelloza Summer/Fall. In 2023, Rita placed 10th in the International Varsity Barbershop Quartet contest with her quartet Evening Glow. Rita is grateful to have been given the opportunity to grow as a musician with The Bach Society.

SARAH COLLINS SOPRANO II



Sarah Collins is a senior at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, and is working towards her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance. At SIUE, Sarah is a student of Dr. Marc Schapman. She began studying classical voice as a member of Opera Theatre of St. Louis's Artists in Training Program while she was in high school, and fell in love with the art. Her most recent performances were that of Despina in The Three Little Pigs with Opera Edwardsville and Maurya in Riders to the Sea with SIUE. She was also featured as a young artist at the Southern Illinois Music Festival. She recently won second place in Union Avenue Opera's Crescendo Competition. Sarah would like to thank her friends and family for their unwavering support in her musical endeavors.

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YOUNG ARTISTS

KELLY BEEKMAN ALTO



Kelly Beekman is a St. Louis native and a recent music graduate from Webster University. She is thrilled to be working with The Bach Society of Saint Louis for their 2023-2024 season. Joining her first choir when she was six, she has devoted her life to music ever since, dazzling audiences with her captivating stage presence and astounding voice in many genres, including classical, jazz, musical theater, and contemporary pop and rock. She was a recipient of the Christine Brewer Annual Scholarship in Vocal Music Performance. She also received departmental honors for her tireless dedication to her craft and her outstanding performances in opera and jazz. Other achievements include participating in Union Avenue Opera's crescendo program and earning a role in the chorus of their 2022 production of Eugene O'Neill. Upcoming roles include chorus for two Winter Opera St. Louis productions, *Manon Lescaut* and *Naughty Marietta*.

PARKER MILLER BARITONE



Parker Miller (He/They) is Honored to be a Young Artist with The Bach Society in their '23-'24 season. He's currently completing his Bachelor's Degree in Music Theory with a Principle Vocal Study at the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL) with plans to pursue a Master's Degree in Conducting or Music Direction soon thereafter. Parker was raised in music, beginning piano lessons at 5, and quickly developing a love for studying music and singing. He recently traveled to Louisville, Kentucky for the Barbershop Harmony Society's International Convention, singing baritone with the Ambassadors of Harmony (AOH) who took home 1st place in the Chorus championship. Recently, his quartet, *Momento*, ranked 9th in the world in the Next Generation Youth Quartet Contest and also earned the 139th Street award, netting them a prize of \$10,000 due to their "Novice Quartet" status. He also worked on the administrative team for the Acapellooza Summer Camp hosted by UMSL and AOH which brings students together to grow as musicians and people through barbershop singing. When he's not enveloped in music, school, or work, he spends his time writing, playing *Dungeons and Dragons*, and caring for his two beautiful daughters: *Tigris* and *Panther*.

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