



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE BACH SOCIETY OF SAINT LOUIS TO PRESENT POIGNANT RETELLING OF PASSION STORY ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN

*The Bach Society of Saint Louis will celebrate the 300th
anniversary of Bach's St. John Passion*

ST. LOUIS, (February 27, 2024) - The Bach Society of Saint Louis (BSSL) will present **Bach's St. John Passion** as part of its 83rd season at **First Presbyterian Church of Kirkwood** on **March 10, 2024**. Led by Music Director and Conductor, A. Dennis Sparger, featuring The Bach Society Chorus and Orchestra, the concert will showcase a group of internationally recognized Baroque soloists. The soloists include tenor Steven Soph as the Evangelist, bass Stephen Morscheck singing the words of Jesus, soprano Emily Donato, countertenor Jay Carter, tenor Gene Stenger and baritone Elijah Blaisdell.

Bach's St. John Passion is a poignant retelling of the Passion story that weaves together the narrative of Christ's last days with an intricate tapestry of profound emotions, transcendent harmonies and soaring melodies.

"The St. John Passion was Bach's first large-scale composition, and it received its first performance at the St. Nicholas Church at the Vespers service on Good Friday, April 7, 1724. It's a joy to celebrate the 300th anniversary of this musical and spiritual masterpiece here in St. Louis," says Music Director and Conductor A. Dennis Sparger.

The gorgeous backdrop of the stained-glass setting in the First Presbyterian Church of Kirkwood will enhance the music on Sunday, March 10, 2024, at 3:00 p.m.

Tickets (\$27-\$52) are available for purchase through The Bach Society website, bachsociety.org/stjohnpassion.

This concert is presented by the Lutheran Church Extension Fund with support from Guest Artist Sponsor Alayne and Greg Smith.



23 SEASON 24

THE BACH SOCIETY
OF SAINT LOUIS
Music Director and Conductor,
A. Dennis Sparger

BACH'S ST. JOHN PASSION
SUNDAY, MARCH 10, 2024 | 3 PM

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

Bach's St. John Passion

The Bach Society of Saint Louis Chorus and Orchestra

First Presbyterian Church of Kirkwood

Sunday, March 10, 2024, 3 p.m.

Tickets are \$27–\$52 with \$10 student tickets available at the door

ABOUT THE BACH SOCIETY OF SAINT LOUIS

The Bach Society of Saint Louis (BSSL) was founded in 1941 and is now in its 83rd season as St. Louis' oldest continuous choral society. BSSL is dedicated to performing [choral works](#) by Johann Sebastian Bach and other classical and contemporary composers. Under the direction of [Dr. A. Dennis Sparger](#), BSSL delivers a varied and exciting season to an ever more diverse public. The organization's mission is to provide stimulating and enriching musical and educational experiences for audiences and performers in the tradition of Johann Sebastian Bach. Each season, BSSL provides free concert tickets, education concerts, and masterclasses to area high school and college students. BSSL has a robust education program that offers free events and support to local teachers and students including the Young Artist Scholarship Program, Bach & Jazz, Finding Your Voice Program and more. Learn more at bachsociety.org.

ABOUT 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.

ABOUT STEPHEN MORSHECK (BASS)

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.

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.

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.

ABOUT 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, 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, 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. 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.

ABOUT 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 Masaaki 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.

ABOUT 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.

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.

ABOUT 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 Harlem 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.