

23
24 SEASON



BRANDENBURG CONCERTOS
SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 2024 | 3 PM
Salem United Methodist Church

PRESENTED BY TAD AND CATHERINE EDWARDS

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.

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THE BRANDENBURG CONCERTOS

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3 PM
SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 2024
SALEM UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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*The aim and final end of all music should be none other than
the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul. -- Johann Sebastian Bach*

THE BACH SOCIETY CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Lenora-Marya Anop, Concertmaster and Leader

Concerto No. 3 for Harpsichord. BWV 1054, in D Major
Charles Metz, Harpsichord

- I. (No tempo indication)
- II. Adagio e piano sempre
- III. Allegro

Concerto No. 2. BWV 1047, in F Major
Lenora-Marya Anop, violin Catherine Edwards, flute
Eileen Burke, oboe David Sanderson, trumpet

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante
- III. Allegro assai

INTERMISSION



Concerto No. 5. BWV 1050, in D Major

Catherine Edwards, flute Lenora-Marya Anop, violin

Charles Metz, harpsichord

I. Allegro

II. Affettuoso

III. Allegro

Concerto No. 3. BWV 1048, in G Major

I. (No tempo indication)

II. Adagio

III. Allegro assai

PROGRAM NOTES

In the month before he began his highly respected position as Capellmeister in Anhalt-Cöthen (1717-1723), Johann Sebastian Bach spent four weeks in jail for "too stubbornly" forcing the issue of leaving his position in Weimar after the Duke refused his request to leave. Fast forward four years into Bach's tenure as Capellmeister, and we see Prince Leopold's new bride, who had little interest in music, influence the Prince to make reductions in the music budget, thereby decreasing Bach's ability to thrive. Despite being bookended by these two low moments, Bach's time in Anhalt-Cöthen is recognized as one of the most supportive and rewarding periods of his life

Prince Leopold highly regarded his composer and provided ample opportunity for Bach to blossom. "The prince was not only a generous patron," writes scholar David Schulenberg, "but was genuinely knowledgeable about music, playing violin and viola da gamba in a tradition of European sovereigns who attained near-professional capability as musicians." An orchestra of about sixteen exceptional players was maintained at the Red Palace in addition to a handful of servants and town musicians who could be called upon when needed to augment these forces. The Prince held regular performances of chamber music in the palace's Hall of Mirrors for the royal family or visiting guests, or sometimes for his personal pleasure. And Bach was the shining jewel in his crown.

In addition to providing new music for the Prince, Bach accompanied Leopold on trips throughout Germany where his fame as a virtuoso organist and harpsichordist was widely spread. But a more important benefit of these trips was the opportunity for Bach to meet an international assortment of composers and performers and, like a musical sponge, soak up a variety of styles. For example, the Italian concerto style of Vivaldi often seeps through in his Brandenburg concertos, and the French style, with its contrasting dances, is prevalent in the First.

During the Prince's journey to Berlin in the spring of 1719, Bach met Christian Ludwig, Margrave of Brandenburg. After hearing Bach play, the Margrave asked Bach to send him some of his compositions. Two years later, Bach gathered six concertos he had composed between 1718 and 1721 and sent their full scores and orchestral parts along with a dedication in French to the Margrave, all enclosed in a green leather folder. But with only six players, these pieces were of little use to the Margrave's orchestra. Alas, the folder was never opened!

In his 2023 release, "Bach Against Modernity," Michael Marissen explains that the "Brandenburg" designation was not attached to these works by Bach himself but added by Bach's biographer Philipp Spitta in the 19th century. Marissen adds, "We can be grateful that Bach and Spitta were unaware that Ludwig's true primary title was Margrave of Schwedt: The "Schwedt" Concertos doesn't have much of a ring to it."

These beloved concertos along with Bach's unaccompanied works for violin and cello stand "at the zenith of his Cöthen period," writes Bach scholar Peter Wollny. Each of these works can be described as a concerto grosso, meaning a group of soloists (the concertino) is pitted against a larger ensemble (the tutti). Perhaps written as a vehicle to highlight some of the finest players in his orchestra at Cöthen, each Brandenburg Concerto is quite unique in style and features different solo instruments. And while the Margrave of Brandenburg never heard them, they were certainly heard at the Red Palace in Cöthen. During his tenure there, Bach composed countless other instrumental works, including a three-movement Violin Concerto in E major, BWV 1042, which the Bach Society performed in 2011. More on that in a moment.

A decade later, when Bach was engaged as director of the collegium musicum in Leipzig, it's quite likely the Brandenburg Concertos were heard at the renowned Zimmerman's Coffee House. In addition to other works written for performance at Zimmerman's, Bach wrote seven concertos for a single harpsichord, three concertos for two harpsichords, two for three harpsichords, and one for four harpsichords! However, all these works remained virtually unknown until 1850, when they were published to commemorate the centenary of Bach's death.

3. BWV 1054, D Major

Like all composers of the Baroque period, Bach occasionally re-used previously composed material, making changes, and breathing new life into his works. His adaptation of the Violin Concerto in E major, composed during his 1717-1723 tenure in Cöthen, replaced the violin solo with the harpsichord. Identified now as Harpsichord Concerto No. 3, BWV 1054, it retains all the inspiration of its predecessor but is lowered by a full step to stay within the range of the keyboard's limitations.

2. BWV 1047, F Major

Composed in 1718, this concerto features trumpet, flute, oboe and violin as the concertino, or solo group. Hans-Joachim Schulz suggests that this unique combination arose from Bach's "love of experimentation." And while all four instruments are in about the same range, their tonal colors are quite distinct. After the opening main theme, we hear solo violin, violin and oboe, oboe and flute, and flute and trumpet, with each passage separated by short reflections of the opening theme by the tutti, or larger ensemble. In the second movement the trumpet and strings are silent, and a simple but contemplative two-bar motif is passed among the remaining soloists and continuo. The trumpet returns in the lively third movement, presenting the subject of a fugue which is followed by oboe, violin, and flute, and at long last joined by the tutti in bar 47.

5. BWV 1050, D Major

Described as "the most forward-looking 'Brandenburg'" by Musicologist Adélaïde de Place, Concerto 5 was written between 1720 and 1721, and "chronologically is probably the latest of the six." In addition to flute and violin, the concertino also includes the harpsichord. And while the harpsichord was well known as a solo instrument or continuo instrument, its solo position in a concerto is quite new. In fact, the "capriccio-like" cadenza at the end of the first movement has made this work an important part of the keyboard concerto repertoire. While Bach generally led his ensemble while playing the viola, he surely must have intended this virtuosic harpsichord for himself. The reflective second movement is scored for only the three solo instruments and abounds in canonic writing. The third movement, marked Allegro, is more like a gigue or fast dance; it begins with violin alone, adds flute and finally harpsichord. The tutti does not appear until bar 29 and it is quite rollicking to the end!

3. BWV 1048, G Major

Our program closes with the shortest and most familiar of the Six, composed in 1718. Rather than the expected concertino-tutti dialogue, Bach selects three groups of three instruments each--violins, violas, and cellos (plus the continuo), resulting in a rich palette of sound. The work opens with an energetic statement of the ritornello theme by all the players before the quick exchanges between the three groups. The third movement is in binary form with each section repeated; it, too, is lively and full of virtuosic playing. But in between the first and third movements is a mystery! The second movement consists of only two chords. What was Bach thinking? An improvised cadenza by the violin? By the harpsichord? An insertion from another work? We'll never know for sure.

Today we are all the beneficiaries of a generous gift by the Benjamin F. Edwards family to underwrite this performance, and we are most grateful.

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LENORA-MARYA ANOP

CONCERTMASTER AND LEADER

Dr. Anop enjoys a busy performing career as a soloist, chamber musician, concertmaster, and orchestra leader. She is the Concertmaster of The Bach Society of Saint Louis Orchestra (since 2000), the Salem Chamber Orchestra, and the Orchestra of the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Louis.



Recent projects include her recording entitled *Bach Unlocked* following her composing and assembly of a scholarly violin edition of J. S. Bach's Cello Suites Nos. 1 & 2. Recent concerto appearances include works by Mozart, J. S. Bach, Vaughan Williams, Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, as well as soloing while leading The Bach Society of Saint Louis Orchestra in a sold-out performance of the complete cycle of J. S. Bach's *Brandenburg Concerti*. Truthful to Bach's intentions, she performed *Brandenburg Concerto #1* in rare fashion: on a period-appropriate *Violino Piccolo* which she had made for her.

Additional recent performance highlights include multiple solo and chamber music performances in Carnegie Recital Hall (NYC), as well as concerts in Italy at the InterHarmony International Music Festival, performing with the internationally celebrated cellist Misha Quint, the international competition winning violinist Andrey Baranov, violist Anna Sarova and pianist Antonio diCristifano, to name a few.

Dr. Anop began her violin studies at age 3 in Denver, Colorado, as one of the very first Suzuki violin students in the United States. She earned her Bachelor of Music B.M. with Honors in Performance from the New England Conservatory of Music, her Master of Music M.M. degree from Yale University, and her Doctor of Musical Arts D.M.A. degree from the University of Michigan.

Dr. Anop is Professor of Violin and Director of Strings at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. A passionate, dedicated and accomplished pedagogue, Lenora's talented and capable students have been appointed to teaching and orchestral positions worldwide. Dr. Anop now teaches many students, grand-students – and great grand-students - as former students send their students to train with her knowing that they will have an exceptionally dedicated mentor.

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 the Union Avenue Opera's crescendo program and earning a role in the chorus of their 2022 production of Eugene Onegin. 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: Tigress and Panther.

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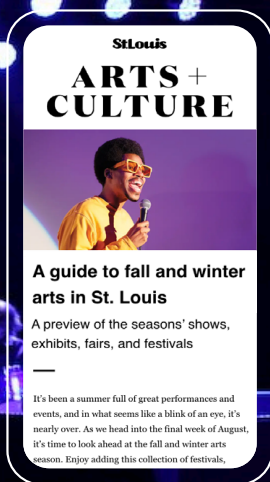
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