

S^{24 - 25}
Season



BRAHMS REQUIEM

SATURDAY, MARCH 22, 2025 | 3 PM
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What's new

See

Ken Wood at Houska Gallery

From May 26–July 7, Houska Gallery will feature the work of St. Louis artist and educator Ken Wood, whose printmaking practice explores the fundamentals of art and design. Wood's most recent works explore "the relationship of shape to shape and color to color using large simple gestures." The artist has previously shown work at The Print Center.



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A. DENNIS SPARGER, MUSIC DIRECTOR & CONDUCTOR



A. Dennis Sparger, Music Director and Conductor, 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. To date, he has 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 30 to cultivate future soloists. To date, over 70 young singers have been assisted by this program. He also established a professional core of paid Principal Singers, providing employment opportunities for singers with additional vocal training.

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. Dr. Sparger 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, ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR

Stephen Eros is a conductor, organist, pianist, and teacher who has built a career in the St. Louis area encompassing the traditions of Western classical, American musical theatre, and jazz music. Stephen completed a Master of Arts in Choral

Conducting and Bachelor of Music in Organ Performance at Webster University. In addition to his primary studies with William Partridge and Trent Patterson, he studied voice with Robert Ayllón, jazz piano with Carolbeth True, and collaborative piano with Joe Neske.

Stephen has been the Assistant Conductor of The Bach Society of Saint Louis since 2013, and he has worked in the field of sacred music for nearly two decades. He is the Director of Liturgy and Music at St. Clare of Assisi Catholic Church in O'Fallon, IL. There, he is responsible for the formation and training of over 400 volunteers, and he leads nearly 100 volunteer singers in the parish choir and two children's choirs in a robust, diverse repertoire. On the diocesan level, he has served as organist and choirmaster for pontifical liturgies at the Cathedral of St. Peter in Belleville and regularly assists the Chancery and Office of Worship with liturgies throughout the diocese.

As a collaborative pianist, he has worked with some of the finest companies in St. Louis, including The Muny, The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, and Union Avenue Opera, and serves on the collaborative piano faculty at Webster University.

Stephen is a lifelong resident of Belleville, IL. He resides with his wife and children in his grandparents' former home, next door to his favorite neighbors, his parents.



SANDRA GEARY, PIANIST

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 since 1993 and 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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Our concerts are professionally recorded, 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. Some songs are grouped together to create an emotional experience.

Thank you and enjoy the concert.

THE BACH SOCIETY CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA
A. DENNIS SPARGER, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR

Three light gray, wavy, horizontal lines that sweep across the top of the page, creating a sense of movement and grace.

BRAHMS
A GERMAN REQUIEM
OP. 45

SPONSORED BY
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GUEST ARTISTS
BETHANY WORRELL, SOPRANO
DAVID NEWMAN, BASS-BARITONE

3:00 P.M.
SATURDAY, MARCH 22, 2025

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
KIRKWOOD, MISSOURI

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)

A GERMAN REQUIEM

MUSIC OF COMFORT AND HOPE

As infants, many of us were comforted through singing. You won't remember, of course, but there's an excellent chance those "go to sleep" songs included a classic "lullaby." Believe it or not, that was your first exposure to the music of Johannes Brahms. Fast forward to today, we can find comfort and hope in his music once again.

During the early years of my teaching career, I attended several seminars for choral directors sponsored by the University of Illinois School of Music. Each event began with sessions by a voice specialist, followed by rehearsals of a major work led by a nationally-recognized conductor. It was at one of these seminars that I first encountered Brahms' *A German Requiem*, led by Robert Shaw, the most renowned choral conductor of the 20th century. Since then, I have conducted this magnificent work in 1978, 1983, 1990 and 1997. It has been a long wait to share this significant work with my singers and our audiences again.

Johannes Brahms was born in 1833 in the "Mitte" district of Hamburg, Germany, in a six-story tenement house which was ultimately destroyed in World War II. The eldest son of a freelance musician and seamstress, young Johannes showed an early interest in music. Lessons in violin were first provided by his father. Piano studies began in 1840, and by age ten Brahms was performing publicly. As a teenager, his teacher introduced him to the music of Bach and others, resulting in a life-long interest in music of earlier periods. In fact, this interest made an impact on many of his own compositions. Conductor John Eliot Gardiner states, "the gestation of 'Ein deutsches Requiem' coincided with Brahms' most intensive period of study of early music – music he either bought, subscribed to, copied out, annotated or actually conducted. Three composers stand out from the long list: Schütz, Bach and Handel." Donald Grout adds that like Schütz and Bach, Brahms "is inspired by a deep concern with man's mortal lot and his hope of Heaven."

Brahms' *A German Requiem* was completed in 1868 when the composer was only 35 years old, an early time to be thinking about mortality. It is thought by many that the death of his mother in 1865 prompted him to compose this work. The first three movements were performed in 1867 in Vienna but were not received well by the audience: it's reported that the timpanist played *fortissimo* throughout the final fugue in the third movement, obliterating all else. (Our timpanist is far more sensitive!) By 1868, however, movements 1-4, 6, and 7 were completed and performed to an enthusiastic audience in the Bremen Cathedral. However, as the text does not contain the name of Christ, the church authorities required "I know that my Redeemer liveth" and the Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's *Messiah* be included! Shortly after that performance, Brahms added the 5th movement which includes the soprano solo, and the work as we know it was performed the following year.

The requiems of Mozart, Verdi, and countless others are all based on the traditional liturgical text in Latin that focuses on prayers for the dead. Brahms' *A German Requiem*, however, was

written in the vernacular and focuses on bringing comfort and hope to the living. Baptized and confirmed in the Lutheran church, Brahms was well-acquainted with the Bible and drew upon it for many of his choral works. His choice of texts in *A German Requiem* affirms this lifelong relationship. With passages taken from Luther's translation of the Old and New Testaments (the same translation Bach used), Brahms assembled verses "from eleven different Biblical and Apocryphal books, with as many as five passages from four books in a single movement. Nonetheless, the disparate verses fit together as if they had been so conceived," notes Ron Jeffers. Brahms' intention to provide consolation to the living can be seen in key phrases:

*Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall have comfort
The righteous are in the hand of God
How lovely is Thy dwelling place, O Lord
Ye are now sorrowful...Yes, I will comfort you as one whom his own mother comforteth
We shall all be changed at the sound of the trumpet
Death shall be swallowed up in victory
Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord*

While there is a general tone of solemnity throughout the work, historian Karl Geiringer points out that each of the seven movements "closes in a mood of cheerful confidence or loving promise." This assurance is further supported by annotator Martin Ennis who observes an important difference from traditional requiems, "There is only one brief equivalent to the Dies Irae with its horrific depiction of the Last Judgement, but when the last trumpet sounds in the Brahms Requiem it is not to summon the dead before the judgement throne, but to proclaim the hope of resurrection and reunion after death."

From a humble beginning, Brahms developed into a famous concert pianist, a successful conductor, and one of the major composers of the nineteenth century. His symphonies, concertos, chamber music, piano works, and choral works are broadly performed to this day and continue to speak to a modern audience.

You may have heard this masterwork many times. Or perhaps today, just like that young conductor in Robert Shaw's seminar, you will be hearing it for the first time. Either way, as the words and music wash over you, I can assure you of a shared experience you won't soon forget. That, after all, is why we're here.

PROGRAM

THE AIM AND FINAL END OF ALL MUSIC SHOULD BE NONE OTHER THAN
THE GLORY OF GOD AND REFRESHMENT OF THE SOUL.

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Stephen Eros, Assistant Conductor

Canticle of the Word Incarnate

Stephen Mager

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
And the Word was God through whom all things were made.
In Him was Life, the Light of all, Light in the darkness, ere life began,
Light that no darkness ever can veil or overcome!*

Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Word become flesh, now dwell in our midst!

Fill us with grace and the truth of our God:

We have seen thy glory: God's sole begotten Son.

Gloria in excelsis Deo!

John 1:1-5

God Be in My Head

Howard Helvey (b. 1968)

*God be in my head and in my understanding;
God be in my eyes and in my looking;
God be in my mouth and in my speaking;
God be in my heart and in my thinking
God be at my end and at my departing. Amen.*

French, c. 1490

BE STILL, MY SOUL

JEAN SIBELIUS (1865-1957) ARRANGED BY MACK WILBERG

THE AUDIENCE IS INVITED TO STAND AND SING.



1.(women) Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side _
2.(men) Be still, my soul: thy God doth un - der - take _
3.(ALL) Be still, my soul: the hour is hast-'ning on _



Bear pa - tient - ly thy cross of grief or pain;
To guide the fu - ture as he has the past.
When we shall be for - ev - er with the Lord.



Leave to thy God to or - der and pro - vide; _
Thy hope, thy con - fi - dence let noth - ing shake; _
When dis - ap - point - ment, grief, and fear are gone, _



In ev - 'ry change he faith - ful will re - main.
All now mys - te - rious shall be bright at last.
Sor - row for - got, love's pur - est joys re - stored.



Be still, my soul; thy best, thy heav'n - ly friend _
Be still, my soul; the waves and winds still know _
Be still, my soul: when change and tears are past, _



Through thorn - y ways, leads to a joy - ful end.
His voice who ruled them while he dwelt be - low.
All safe and bless - ed we shall meet at last.

A GERMAN REQUIEM, OP. 45

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

BETHANY WORRELL, SOPRANO

DAVID NEWMAN, BASS-BARITONE

1. Selig sind, die da Leid tragen

Matthew 5:4; Psalm 126:5-6

Blessed are they that mourn

2. Denn alles Fleisch es ist wie Gras

1 Peter 1:24; James 5:7, 8a; 1 Peter 1:25; Isaiah 35:10

For all flesh is as grass

3. Herr, lehre doch mich

Psalm 39:4-7; Wisdom of Solomon 3:1

Lord, make me to know mine end

4. Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen

Psalm 84:1, 2, 4

How lovely is thy dwelling place

5. Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit

John 16:22; Isaiah 66:13; Ecclesiasticus 51:35

Ye now have sorrow

6. Denn wir haben hie keine bleibende Statt

Hebrews 13:14; 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52, 54, 55; Revelation 4:11

For here have we no continuing place

**7. Selig sind die Toten,
die in denn Herre sterben, von nun an**

Revelation 14:13

Blessed are the dead
which die in the Lord from henceforth

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GUEST ARTIST

BETHANY WORRELL SOPRANO



Praised by Opera News for her “gleaming tone,” soprano Bethany Worrell has performed in New York, Boston, Dallas, Pittsburgh, Chicago, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This season she looks forward to performing with The Bach Society of Saint Louis (Brahms’ *Requiem*), the University Missouri-St. Louis Orchestra (Poulenc *Gloria*), and the Orpheus Chamber Singers (concerts in San Antonio, Houston, Dallas, and Fort Worth). Operatically, Ms. Worrell performed roles with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Opera Theater of Pittsburgh, the North End Music and Performing Arts Center (NEMPAC) in Faneuil Hall, Boston Opera Collaborative, Opera del West, Longwood Opera, and MetroWest Opera. She frequently appears as a recitalist and soloist, having performed with the Detroit

Community Chorus, University of Michigan Baroque Ensemble, Metropolitan Chorale, Heritage Chorale, Atlantic Symphony, and the Boston Art Song Society.

A committed performer of contemporary art music, Dr. Worrell is featured on recordings of music by Lori Laitman, George Walker, James Caldwell, Thomas Oboe Lee, and Richard Toensing. In addition to being a featured recitalist on concert series in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Boston, she has curated more informal Opera on Tap concerts that reach a variety of new audiences.

Dr. Worrell is the Director of Vocal Studies and Assistant Professor of Voice at the University of Missouri – St. Louis. She holds degrees from the University of Michigan (DMA), New England Conservatory (MM), and Western Illinois University (BM).

www.bethanyworrell.com

GUEST ARTIST

DAVID NEWMAN BASS-BARITONE



Baritone David Newman enjoys an active and varied concert career throughout North America. Hailed as “electrifying” by the Washington Post and noted by The Philadelphia Inquirer for his “eloquent, emotional singing,” he is best known as a Baroque specialist. He has performed *Messiah* with Tafelmusik, Portland Baroque Orchestra, Jacksonville Symphony, and with Masterwork Chorus in Carnegie Hall; *St. John Passion* with the American Bach Soloists, Carmel Bach Festival, and the Bach Chamber Orchestra of Honolulu; and *St. Matthew Passion* with the Bach Society of St. Louis, San Francisco Bach Choir, and on tour with the combined forces of Santa Pro Musica and the Smithsonian Chamber Players.

In his debut with the Washington Bach Consort, Mr. Newman was noted by the Baltimore Sun for his “exquisitely phrased, velvet-toned *Mache dich, mein Herz*.” Other notable appearances include Bach’s *B Minor Mass* and *Christmas Oratorio* with The Bethlehem Bach Choir, *Coffee Cantata*, *Easter Oratorio*, and *Christmas Oratorio* with the Santa Fe Bach Festival, and Haydn’s *Creation* with The Honolulu Symphony. His European appearances have included the 2003 Berlioz Festival in Paris, *Le Tournoi de Chauvency* with Ensemble Aziman in Sarrebourg and Metz, and *Le Roi et le Fermier* with Opera Lafayette at the Opera Royale in Versailles.

He has appeared regularly as a guest artist with the Four Nations Ensemble, including performances in Lincoln Center and Merkin Hall, and has also performed with the Spoleto Festival, Opera Company of Philadelphia, Metropolitan Opera Guild, Opera Birmingham, Philadelphia Orchestra, and the Russian National Orchestra. He has recorded opera and oratorio for the Philips, Dorian, Analekta, K617 and Naxos labels. Mr. Newman teaches voice and music theory at James Madison University.

THE BACH SOCIETY OF SAINT LOUIS CHORUS

SOPRANO I

Samantha Arten
Julia Dinkins
Rachel LS Jones
Karen Lohrman
Debbie Mann
Gabrielle Pierle
Rita Schien*

SOPRANO II

Pamela Čayka
Laura Hanson
Jesi Hempstead
Carolyn Howk
Ellen Leaf
Heather Martin Cooper
Susan Niederer
Melissa Payton

ALTO I

Marissa Gibbons
Calista Goldwasser*
Maggie Lowe
Stephanie McSwain
Alison Neace
Rosalind Stevens

ALTO II

Katie Abraham
Kelly N. Beekman*
Nichole Black
Danielle Feinstein
Nancy Greene
Elizabeth-Lee Musch
Julie Ooms

TENOR I

Kurtis Heinrich
Will Kinsella
Avi Mazzeo
Scott Meidroth
Robert Miller
Darrell Steinbach

TENOR II

Seth Carruthers
Peter Hensel
Jacob Hinton
Alphie Kiu
Duane Olson
Zachary Singer

BASS I

Dan Denner
Stephen A. Eros
Greg Finch
Ronald Klemm
Scott MacDonald
Adrian Mason
Matt McEuen
Jack McFarling*
Dominic Pancella
Sterling Webster

BASS II

Nicholas D. Bashaw
David Troy Cox
Warren Frye
James Haessig
Kersten Horn
Shawn Neace
Allen Schwamb
Gary Voelker

Pianist: Sandra Geary

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* indicates 2024-25 Young Artist Award Recipient

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Lenora-Marya Anop,
concertmaster
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Adrian Walker
Ann Hirschl
Tova Braitberg
Rochelle Skolnick

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Manuela Topalbegovic
Joseph Kaminsky
Jessica Platt
Deberah Haferkamp
Kathleen Scarborough

VIOLA

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Anna Lackschewitz
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YOUNG ARTISTS

RITA SCHIEN SOPRANO



Rita Schien, soprano, is excited to return for another season with The Bach Society as a Young Artist. She is currently pursuing a degree in Vocal Performance at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, where she studies with Dr. Leslie Allnatt. At UMSL, Rita performs with the University Singers and Vocal Point, and she is actively involved in the Opera Theatre Program. In 2023, she won the Young Artist Concerto Competition at UMSL and earned second place in the Crescendo Program with Union Avenue Opera. Rita was also honored with the prestigious Presser Scholarship Award from UMSL's Music Department in May 2024. Beyond classical music, Rita is deeply engaged with the St. Louis Barbershop Community, serving as a section leader for The Recruits Chorus and for the Acappellooza Summer and Fall Festivals. She is thankful for the opportunities The Bach Society has provided to further her musical growth.

CALISTA GOLDWASSER MEZZO-SOPRANO



Calista Goldwasser, mezzo-soprano, joins The Bach Society of Saint Louis as a Young Artist for its 84th season. She holds a Master of Music from Webster University and a Bachelor of Music from DePauw University. This past year, Calista made debuts in the opera choruses of both Winter Opera of Saint Louis (*Don Giovanni*, *Naughty Marietta*) and Union Avenue Opera (*Carmen*) in addition to performing and stage directing with Webster's Opera Studio. This year, you can find her in the chorus of *Anna Bolena* with Winter Opera. Though opera is her primary passion, she also loves art song and early music, particularly from the French impressionist and baroque movements. In addition to performing, Calista teaches voice lessons with Patterson Performing Arts and is the primary instructor for The Bach Society's own "Finding Your Voice" outreach program. Calista looks forward to strengthening her relationship with The Bach Society both as a Young Artist and educator.

YOUNG ARTISTS

KELLY N. BEEKMAN MEZZO-SOPRANO



Kelly N. Beekman, mezzo-soprano, is a St. Louis native and a recent graduate from Webster University. She is honored to have been selected by The Bach Society of Saint Louis to be a part of their young artist program for her second consecutive season. She has devoted her life to music and performance, 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 received departmental honors for her tireless dedication to her craft and her outstanding performances in opera and jazz. She has performed with Union Avenue Opera in the chorus for *Carmen* (2024) and *Eugene Onegin* (2022). She was also in the chorus for *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *Anna Bolena* (2025) and *Manon Lescaut* and *Naughty Marietta* (2024) with Winter Opera St. Louis.

JACK MCFARLING BARITONE



Jack McFarling, baritone, is a recent graduate from Truman State University and is excited to begin his first season as a Young Artist for The Bach Society. After two seasons in the group, he decided to take on a new challenge and pursue this opportunity. Born and raised in St. Louis, Jack has had an interest in music throughout his life. He pursued computer science as well as general music at a collegiate level and has cherished the experience. He was awarded the Vocal Music Service Scholarship, rewarding his hard work and elevating him as a leader in multiple choirs at Truman State. He has received many other awards and honors in the music department, including a feature as a vocal soloist for the December 2021 Inauguration Ceremony. In addition to pursuing music with The Bach Society, Jack jumps at any opportunity to share with the world the music that has enriched his life so greatly.

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