

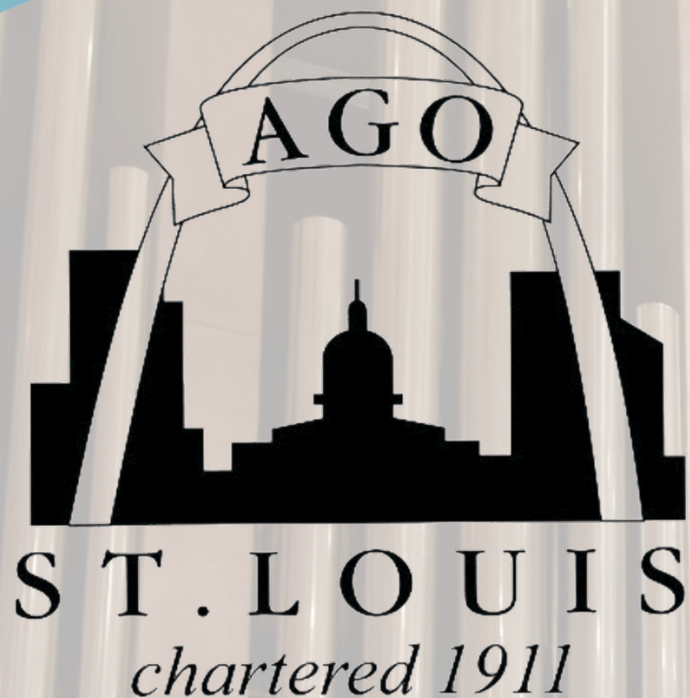
THE BACH SOCIETY
OF SAINT LOUIS

2026 ST. LOUIS BACH FESTIVAL
BACH & THE BAROQUE
ORGAN MASTERS

SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 2026
3:00 PM

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH





The chapter now known as the Saint Louis Chapter #633 of the American Guild of Organists (AGO) was originally chartered as the Missouri Chapter on October 23, 1911. In February of 1955, it officially became the Saint Louis Chapter. Saint Louis was privileged to host the 1948 AGO National Convention. The 1948 Convention was the first post-war convention and was organized largely by Dr. Howard Kelsey, former Washington University professor in the Department of Music in Arts and Sciences. The St. Louis Chapter, AGO, will be hosting the 2026 AGO National Convention July 6-10 as the country is also celebrating its 250th Anniversary.



For more information on membership in the American Guild of Organists, scan the QR code.



For more information about the 2026 National Convention, scan the QR code.

THE PROGRAM

Concerto in D Minor, RV 565, BWV 596

Antonio Vivaldi
(1678–1741)

- I. Allegro
- II. Grave
- III. Fuga
- IV. Largo e spiccato
- V. Allegro

Toccatà in F Major, BWV 540

J. S. Bach
(1685–1750)

David Sinden, organ

Nun freut euch, lieben Christen gmein, BWV 734

J. S. Bach

Fantasia super "Jesu, meine Freude", BWV 713

J. S. Bach

Sonata No.1 in E-flat major, BWV 525

J. S. Bach

- I. [Allegro]
- II. Adagio
- III. Allegro

Sarah Bereza, organ

Praeludium in E Major, BuxWV 141

Dieterich Buxtehude
(1637–1707)

Dritter Theil der Clavier-Übung (1739)

J. S. Bach

Kyrie, Gott Vater in Ewigkeit, BWV 669

Christe, aller Welt Trost, BWV 670

Kyrie, Gott heiliger Geist, BWV 671

Matthew Gerhardt, organ

PROGRAM NOTES

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) was not only an accomplished performer on the organ, but also a sought-after evaluator of new organ construction. With his vast expertise and knowledge of the instruments of his day, it is curious to modern organists that Bach seldom specified which sounds he desired the organist to use, or even which manual (keyboard) to play on.

Bach's transcriptions of works by **Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741)** and Johann Ernst are another place where Bach's technical instructions can be found. In his arrangement of Vivaldi's **Concerto in D minor, RV 565**, Bach "orchestrates" pitch levels for the manuals and the pedal of the first movement. He also calls for the addition of a low-pitched 32-foot stop during the first movement (either requiring great coordination from the organist or, more likely, the help of an assistant to pull the stop). The remaining movements, though lacking specific registration instructions from Bach, provide ample opportunity for various stop colors, techniques, ornamentation, and even improvisation.

The "gloriously massive" **Tocatta in F Major, BWV 540**, begins with rapid figuration played over a pedal point. After this, Bach introduces a "ritornello" section, then returns to the initial pedal toccata in a new key. The entire piece is spun out from the motives of the pedal toccata and the ritornello. Peter Williams notes, "the sustained energy of the toccata is incomparable in its very reliance on simple elements."

Today's performance of the Tocatta in F takes some inspiration from Bach's "Dorian" Tocatta, BWV 538, in which the composer notates a dialogue between two manuals of the organ throughout the work.

The **Fantasia super "Jesu meine Freude," BWV 713**, is written in a two-part form. The first section is a two- and three-part fugue. The second section, which is more freely imitative, is marked "dolce" and is in 3/8 time. The energetic **"Nun freut euch, lieben Christen gmein," BWV 734**, is unusual among Bach's chorale preludes in that it contains constant sixteenth notes in the hands. The "continuo-like" bass line, too, is notable, and makes it possible to imagine this piece as one of Bach's cantata movements. Both of these chorale-based works were conceived of as being played without organ pedal and are well-suited to some of the lighter, sweeter sounds of the organ.

J. S. Bach's Six Sonatas for organ were written around 1725-29, possibly as pedagogical pieces for his eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann Bach. **Sonata No. 1 in E-flat** and its companions are commonly referred to as "Trio Sonatas" since the pieces combine three lines of music throughout. The organ is uniquely suited to the performance of a trio texture by a single musician. The right and left hands can each play distinct sounds on separate manuals, with a third line played by the pedal.

Trio textures were frequently employed by J. S. Bach in his chorale preludes, but these Six Sonatas (a fully-fledged instrumental opus) are purely instrumental in conception and do not rely on any pre-existing chorale material. The structure of each sonata, fast-slow-fast, also pays tribute to common Italian instrumental forms. "In a single flash of inspiration," notes George Stauffer, "Bach invented a new organ genre and provided its most sublime representatives." The first movement of the Sonata No. 1 is the only movement in the set without a tempo marking provided by Bach, possibly another pedagogical puzzle for his son.

David Sinden

PROGRAM NOTES

Dieterich Buxtehude (1637–1707) was a Danish-born composer and organist active in North Germany in the middle Baroque period. Buxtehude was organist at the influential Marienkirche in Lübeck for nearly forty years, where the young Johann Sebastian Bach famously visited to learn from the master. As is typical for this type of piece, the **Praeludium in E Major** features alternating free sections, called *stylus fantasticus* or fantasy style, and stricter contrapuntal sections. The theme of the second section bears a strong resemblance to the English hymn tune *St. Anne* ("O God Our Help In Ages Past"). The alternating sections afforded Buxtehude ample opportunity to explore various compositional techniques.

Johann Sebastian Bach's collection known as the **Dritter Theil der Clavier-Übung** (Third Part of the Keyboard Practice) was published in 1739. The bulk of the collection is comprised of chorale preludes on Lutheran catechism chorales, as well as those from the Lutheran *Missa Brevis*. The texts of "**Kyrie, Gott Vater in Ewigkeit,**" "**Christe, aller Welt Trost,**" and "**Kyrie, Gott heiliger Geist**" stem from German translations of the troped *Kyrie fons bonitatis*, and the melodies developed from the plainchant melody. Bach composed each of these settings in *stile antico* style, as evidenced by the four-two meter, modal harmonic characteristics, and the contrapuntal devices employed throughout.

"Kyrie, God Father in eternity, great is your mercy; creator and ruler of all things, eleison" is the text of the opening chorale. The cantus firmus is presented in the soprano voice above a highly contrapuntal accompaniment, which is derived from the first two lines of the tune. Although the accompanimental theme reemerges in contrapuntal techniques such as inversion and *stretto*, it is not truly fugal in this prelude.

The text of the second chorale is "Christe, consolation of all the world, you alone have redeemed us sinners; Jesu, Son of God, you are our mediator at the highest throne; we cry to you in our heart's desire, eleison!" Once again, the accompaniment is contrapuntal and derived from the first two lines of the cantus firmus. The cantus firmus, however, is now in the tenor voice. This is quite possibly symbolic of Christ as the mediator between heaven and earth.

The third text is "Kyrie, God Holy Ghost, comfort and strengthen us most of all in faith, that, at the final end, we may joyfully depart from this distress, eleison!" Marked "Cum organo pleno" and in a dense five-voice texture, the melody of this prelude is in the bass (pedal). Near the end of the chorale, at the word "eleison," Bach employs a striking textural change. The note values of the accompanimental voices are suddenly augmented, and they begin to move by half-steps, thereby creating intense suspensions. This is a powerful moment, pleading for mercy in the hour of need.

Matthew Gerhardt

MEET THE MUSICIANS



Sarah Bereza is the Director of Music at Grace United Methodist Church in St. Louis, Missouri. She holds a bachelor's degree in organ performance, multiple master's degrees, and a PhD in musicology and a Certificate in Feminist Theory (Duke Univ.), with research focused on music and theology. Sarah's early music work includes research on Beneventan chant, solo and basso continuo performance as an organist and harpsichordist, and she serves as the president of the board for Early Music Missouri. She chairs the New Music Committee for the 2026 National American Guild of Organists Convention, which will be held in St. Louis this summer.

Sarah is also an active writer and speaker. She is the author of *Professional Christian: Being Fully Yourself in the Spotlight of Public Ministry* (Westminster John Knox Press: 2022) and other academic and trade publications; and she writes a newsletter focused on music and books at sarah-bereza.com.



Matthew Gerhardt serves as Kantor (Music Director) at St. Paul's Lutheran in Des Peres, where he oversees a robust music ministry. In addition to his work at St. Paul's, Matt enjoys playing continuo with the American Kantorei and other ensembles. Previously, Matt was Assistant Organist and Choir Director at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Indianapolis, Indiana. He received his Master of Music degree in Organ Performance from the Indiana University (IU) Jacobs School of Music in the organ studio of Dr. Janette Fishell.



During his time at IU, he studied improvisation with Bruce Neswick and Robert Nicholls. Matt received his Bachelor's degree in Parish (Sacred) Music from Concordia University Wisconsin, where he studied organ with Dr. John Behnke. Following his time at Concordia, Matt spent a year enrolled as a guest student at the Hochschule für Kirchenmusik in Herford, Germany. In Germany he studied organ and improvisation with Stefan Kagl and received the top score of 1,0 (excellent) on the MA-level organ performance exam.

MEET THE MUSICIANS



Noted for his “centered leadership and solid musicianship,” **David Sinden** has served as the Organist and Director of Music at St. Peter’s Episcopal Church in St. Louis, Missouri, for the last decade. He previously served in the same capacity at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church on Capitol Square in Richmond, Virginia. As an organist, Mr. Sinden has appeared at conventions of the Organ Historical Society, the Hymn Society of the United States and Canada, and the Anglican Association of Musicians.

Locally, he has appeared as organist with the Bach Society of St. Louis, Early Music Missouri, the Kingsbury Ensemble, and the St. Louis Chamber Chorus. He currently serves as Secretary/Treasurer of the Organ Media Foundation. He also served on two committees for the National Convention of the American Guild of Organists (AGO) in St. Louis this July. He is a past Dean of the Indianapolis Chapter of the AGO, and holds degrees in music from Oberlin College and Indiana University.



Music is central to worship at St. Peter’s Episcopal Church. Choral Evensong, a traditional Anglican service of scripture, prayer, and music, is offered October through April on the second Sunday of the month at 5:00 p.m., with Lessons and Carols for Advent and Epiphany in December and January. Evensong is part of a wider range of musical offerings at St. Peter’s. All services and concerts are free and open to the public.



*St. Peter’s Episcopal Church
110 North Warson Road
St. Louis, Missouri 63124
(314) 993-2306 | www.specstl.org*

2026 ST. LOUIS BACH FESTIVAL

MARCH – MAY 2026

THE BACH SOCIETY
OF SAINT LOUIS



UPCOMING EVENTS

YOUNG ARTIST SHOWCASE
SUNDAY, MAY 3, 2026 | 3 PM

A BEER WITH BACH
FRIDAY, MAY 8, 2026 | 7 PM

BACH'S MAGNIFICAT
SUNDAY, MAY 17, 2026 | 3 PM

THE BACH SOCIETY
OF SAINT LOUIS

Music Director and Conductor, A. Dennis Sparger

314.652.BACH
bachsociety.org
@bachsocietystl