

21
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SEASON

YE SHALL HAVE A SONG

OCTOBER 17, 2021

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THE BACH SOCIETY

OF SAINT LOUIS

A. Dennis Sparger, Music Director and Conductor

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Concert Guidelines

Before you silence your cell phones and other electronic devices, be sure to check in and follow us on social media: Facebook, Instagram @bachsocietystl and Twitter @BachSociety



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.

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, conducting them in more than 175 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. It 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 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 the degrees Master of Arts in Choral Conducting and Bachelor of Music in Organ Performance, and faculty bestowed honors in music. He studied conducting and choral music with Trent Patterson, organ with William Partridge, and voice with Robert Ayllón. As Assistant Conductor of the Webster University Choirs, he assisted in preparing works such as Britten's *Cantata Misericordium and Rejoice in the Lamb*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Schubert's *Magnificat (D 486)*, Bach's *Cantata No. 131*, Duruflé's *Requiem*, Mozart's *Regina Coeli (KV 276)*, and Copland's *In the Beginning*.

Stephen has been Assistant Conductor of the Bach Society of St. Louis since 2013. In addition to singing with the chorus, he has conducted them in concert in works by Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Handel, Mendelssohn, Mozart, among others. Stephen was the music director for "A Classical Cabaret" at Jazz St. Louis—part of the 2019 St. Louis Bach Festival—along side his wife, Jamie, who was the director.

Stephen has worked in the field of sacred music for over a decade. He has served 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. At St. Clare he is responsible for the formation and training of over 400 liturgical ministers, and conducts the parish choir, men's schola, women's schola, and two children's 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 Muny 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 a proud union member of the American Federation of Musicians Local 2-197, and holds memberships with several professional organizations in the areas of liturgical and choral music.

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, PIANO



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’Conor, Joseph Kalichstein and Carole Tafoya.

On the piano faculty of Washington University, Sandra also accompanies the Washington University 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.



THE BACH SOCIETY OF SAINT LOUIS

THE BACH SOCIETY CHORUS
A. Dennis Sparger, Music Director and Conductor
Stephen Eros, Assistant Conductor
Sandra Geary, Piano

YE SHALL HAVE A SONG

Make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever.
Leonard Bernstein

Welcome

Melissa Payton
Executive Director

We sing in praise and with thanksgiving

Chorale:

Lobe den Herren, den mächtigen König der Ehren *Erneuertes Gesangbuch, Stralsund, 1665*
harmonized J.S. Bach 1685-1750)

Anthem

F. Melius Christiansen (1871-1955)

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!
All ye who hear,
Now to His temple draw near,
Join me in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;
Surely His goodness and mercy here daily attend thee:

Ponder anew

What the Almighty can do

If with His Love He befriend thee!

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore Him!
All that hath life and breath, come now with praise before Him!

Let the Amen

Sound from His people again;

Gladly for aye we adore Him.

Joachim Neander (1650-1680)

Translated by Catherine Winkworth, 1863



Nun danket alle Gott, *verse 1 sung in German*

Johann Crüger (1589-1662)

Verse 1 in English. The audience is invited to stand and sing. harm. J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

1. Now thank we all our God with heart, and hands, and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done, in whom His world rejoices;
Who from our mother's arms hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love and still is ours today.

Verses 2 & 3

harm. Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1947)

2. O may this bounteous God through all our lives be near us,
With ever-joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in his grace, and guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all ills in this world and the next.

3. All praise and thanks to God, the Father, now be given,
The Son, and Him who reigns with Them in highest heaven:
The one eternal God, whom earth and heav'n adore!
For thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore.

Martin Rinckart, 1636 (1586-1649)

Translated by Catherine Winkworth

We sing in memory of all who were lost to the pandemic

In Remembrance, from *Requiem*

Eleanor Daley (b. 1955)

Do not stand at my grave and weep.

I am not there, I do not sleep.

I am a thousand winds that blow,

I am the diamond glint on snow.

I am the sunlight on ripened grain,

I am the gentle morning rain.

And when you wake in the morning's hush,

I am the sweet uplifting rush

of quiet birds in circled flight.

I am the soft stars that shine at night.

Do not stand at my grave and cry.

I am not there. I did not die.

Mary Elizabeth Frye, 1932



We sing to honor all healthcare workers, teachers and scientists

Song of Triumph

Dale Grotenhuis (1931-2012)

Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord.
Just and true are all your ways:
You, O Lord, over all are King.
Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your Name?
For you alone are holy. Alleluia.
All nations shall come and worship before you,
for your mighty and holy acts have been revealed.

Revelation 15:3-4

Ubi caritas

Ola Gjeilo (b. 1978)

Sandra Geary, piano

Where there is charity and love, God is there.
The love of Christ has gathered us together.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Let us revere and love the living God.
And from a sincere heart let us love one another. Amen

10th c., France, adapted from John 13:34

We sing to honor all essential workers

Stephen Eros, conductor

I Will Lift Mine Eyes

Jake Runestad (b. 1986)

I will lift mine eyes unto the hills.
From whence comes my help?
My help comes from the Lord the maker of the heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot be moved.
He who keeps you will not slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is thy keeper. The Lord is thy shade upon the right hand.
The sun shall not harm you by day nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all evil. He will keep your soul.
The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in
from this day forth forever more.

Psalms 121



Hark, I Hear the Harps Eternal

Alice Parker (b. 1925)

Amy Mazzeo, soprano Webster Sterling, baritone
Hark, I hear the harps eternal ringing on the farther shore,
as I near those swollen waters, with deep and solemn roar.
Hallelujah, praise the Lamb,
Hallelujah, Glory to the great I AM.

And my soul though stained with sorrow, fading as the light of day,
passes swiftly o'er those waters to the city far away.
Hallelujah, . . .

Souls have crossed before me, saintly, to that land of perfect rest;
and I hear them singing faintly in the mansions of the blest.
Hallelujah, . . .

Hymn tune from the *Southern Harmony*, 1835

We sing in gratitude for all who work to keep us safe in our communities
America the Beautiful, *The American Hymn* Samuel A. Ward (1848-1903)

The audience is invited to stand and sing.

O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain!
America! America! God shed His grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea.

Women's voices

O beautiful for pilgrim feet, who stern, impassioned stress
A thoroughfare for freedom beat across the wilderness!
America! America! God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control, thy liberty in law.

Men's voices

O beautiful for heroes proved in liberating strife,
Who more than self their country loved, and mercy more than life!
America! America! May God thy gold refine,
Till all success be nobleness, and every gain divine.



All voices

O beautiful for patriot dream that sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam, undimmed by human tears!
America! America! God shed His grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea.

Katherine Lee Bates (1859-1929)

A Bridge over Troubled Water

Paul Simon (b. 1941), arr Clyde Sechler

Sandra Geary, piano

Sterling Webster, baritone

When you're weary, feelin' small,
when tears are in your eyes, I'll dry them all;
I'm on your side, oh, when times get rough and friends just can't be found,
like a bridge over troubled water I will lay me down.

When you're down and out, when you're on the street,
when evening falls so hard I will comfort you.
I'll take your part, oh, when darkness comes and pain is all around,
like a bridge over troubled water I will lay me down.

Sail on silver girl, sail on by,
your time has come to shine, all your dreams are on their way.
See how they shine, Oh, if you need a friend I'm sailing right behind,
like a bridge over troubled water I will ease your mind.

We sing to bring peace and comfort to all

We Shall Walk through the Valley in Peace

Moses Hogan (1957-2003)

We shall walk through the valley in peace.

For Jesus Himself will be our leader. We shall walk through the valley in peace.

We will meet our loved ones there.

For Jesus Himself will be our leader. We shall walk through the valley in peace.

There will be no trials there.

For Jesus Himself will be our leader. We shall walk through the valley in peace.

African American Spiritual



We sing in celebration of the music makers

Ode to Music

Malcolm Williamson (1931-2003)

Sandra Geary, piano

Music the oldest art, music the newest joy,
music made from strings and wood and brass and voices,
sings to delight, to comfort and inspire.

Music the oldest sound, music the newest skill,
reborn from strength and truth and thought and wisdom,
sings to delight, to comfort and inspire.

Music to which stars danced rejoicing in creation was the first celebration.
Music that Orpheus woke charming the waves of the ocean is a remembered story.
Music to which stars sailed voyaging and careening made the first constellation.

Music that Orpheus sang charming the birds of the forest is a remembered story.
Music to which stars bowed angelic salutation was the first inspiration.
Music that Orpheus made stilling the hearts of the shadows is a remembered story.

Music has not gone, music is ours to make, to share.
Bows, flutes, and trumpets wake, voices fill the air.

All listeners, singers join till all are one with sound,
one with the oldest art, one with the newest joy of celebration.

Ursula Vaughan Williams

We sing with gladness of heart

Finale from The Peaceable Kingdom

Randall Thompson (1899-1984)

Have ye not known? Have ye not heard?
Hath it not been told you from the beginning?
Have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?

The Prophecy of Isaiah XL: 21

Ye shall have a song as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept;
and gladness of heart as when one goeth with a pipe
to come into the mountain of the Lord.

The Prophecy of Isaiah XXX: 29



PROGRAM NOTES

For over a year and a half we have all found inspiration in the heroes who continue to serve despite the tremendous risks to their own health and lives. With immense gratitude, our concert today honors medical workers, policemen, firemen, emergency personnel, military, grocery workers, delivery persons, and so many more, for their selfless dedication.

Like everyone else, we thought this pandemic would be short-lived and began planning for our 2020-21 season—our 80th concert season and my 35th anniversary—already in April 2020. Instead, we all experienced months of isolation and sadness. Therefore, in planning for today's return concert, and with the help of our Music Advisors and especially my colleague Ron Klemm, we began to search for those pieces that would resonate with the many "groups" of our heroes who still serve so valiantly. Our greatest joy—the opportunity we've longed for all this time—is that our performance today will help you express your own emotions and to trust, as the Dolly Parton song says, "It's gonna be OK."

Our program begins with a chorale that is over 350 years old, "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty," in a harmonization by J.S. Bach, followed by the well-known choral setting by F. Melius Christiansen. This anthem is followed by harmonizations from three different centuries of another Lutheran chorale, one that was the original inspiration for this entire concert. The author of this hymn endured immense tragedy, yet his response was "Now Thank We All Our God."

By now, many of us have been affected by the death of a loved one or friend. The seriousness of this pandemic really struck home to the Bach Society Family with the loss of our board member Bob Elsperman. To reflect on all those lives we've lost, we present a beautiful poem by Mary Elizabeth Frye. "In Remembrance" was set to music by Canadian composer Eleanor Daley.

We honor the dedication of healthcare workers, teachers and scientists with Dale Grotenhuis' "Song of Triumph," a piece that proclaims "great and marvelous are your deeds," as well as Ola Gjeilo's beloved setting of the Gregorian chant "Ubi caritas"—"Where there is charity and love, God is there." In this new version the composer's own improvisations are re-created by our wonderful accompanist Sandra Geary.



How often has your life been touched by the many essential workers who continue to show up every day, following all the prescribed safety measures in order to bring some normalcy to our lives? Assistant conductor Stephen Eros leads the Bach Society Chorus in a new setting of Psalm 121, “My help comes from the Lord,” by Jake Runestad. This striking piece is followed by Alice Parker’s arrangement of a hymn tune from the Southern Harmony, 1835, “Hark, I Hear the Harps Eternal.” Surely all these workers deserve to hear the heavenly harps.

Consider the many folks who work unfailingly to keep us safe. We celebrate the commitment of police, fire, military and emergency care workers, with the stirring American hymn, “America the Beautiful.” If you can keep a dry eye during the third verse you are stronger than I am. Because these dedicated workers are always present during a difficult time, a time when someone needs a friend, I was immediately drawn to Paul Simon’s “A Bridge over Troubled Water.”

Several years ago the Bach Society Chorus performed Moses Hogan’s setting of the spiritual “We Shall Walk through the Valley in Peace.” (My son John created a stunning video of that performance that still can be seen on YouTube—check it out!). We all have a need for peace, and this spiritual truly delivers. While everyone has been suffering during this pandemic, musicians have felt an acute emptiness, recognizing that the very element that delivers hope and comfort so uniquely had to be suspended for so long. The Australian composer Malcolm Williamson created a vibrant setting of the poem “Ode to Music” by Ursula (Mrs. Ralph) Vaughan Williams to celebrate the joy of music. I am especially moved by the line “All listeners, singers join till all are one with sound.”

Our tribute to the heroes of this pandemic comes to a close with the title song of this concert. Using words taken from the Prophecy of Isaiah, Randall Thompson composed his choral cycle “The Peaceable Kingdom” in 1936, and the Finale boldly proclaims the message we have for you today: “Ye shall have a song...with gladness of heart.”

Our hope is that our music today will bring hope and comfort to each honoree, each performer, each audience member. That, after all, is our greater purpose.

A. Dennis Sparger



THE BACH SOCIETY CHORUS

SOPRANO I

Samantha Arten
Alexandra Billhartz*
Danielle Feinstein
Darcie Johnson
Rachel L.S. Jones
Karen Lohrman
Amy Mazzeo
Que Nguyen

SOPRANO II

Gwen Adams
Tristessa Brown
Carolyn Howk
Brittany Losh
Molly Magrath
Debbie Mann
Stephanie McSwain
Susan Niederer
Melissa Payton
Mary Beth Sheehy

ALTO I

Bonnie Brayshaw
Mary Kate File
Carin Gado Recks
Christa Hellert-Musick
Maggie Lowe
Alison Neace
Theresa Pancella*
Rosalind Stevens
Shephali Wulff

ALTO II

Nichole Black
Peggy Cantrell
Denise Field
Nancy Greene
Julie Ooms
Olivia Roland

TENOR I

Keith Fredlund
Alphie Kiu
Scott Meidroth
Freddie Rice
Darrell Steinbach

TENOR II

Seth Carruthers
Carlos Flores Ramirez
Peter Hensel
Duane Olson
Zachary Singer

BASS I

Richard Bell
Dan Denner
Stephen A. Eros
Greg Finch
Ronald Klemm
Micheal Lowe*
Kenneth MacPeck
Adrian K. Mason
Matthew S. McEuen
Sterling Webster

BASS II

Nicholas D. Bashaw
David T. Cox
Andrew Larson
Shawn Neace
Ken Tucker

* Young Artist

A. Dennis Sparger,
Music Director and Conductor

Stephen A. Eros
Assistant Conductor
Sandra Geary
Accompanist

Samantha Arten
Chorus Librarian



YOUNG ARTISTS



Alexandra Billhartz, soprano, is an artist with a love for opera and Baroque music and a native of New Baden, IL. She is thrilled to be serving as the Soprano Young Artist with the Bach Society of St. Louis this year! Ms. Billhartz is also serving as a Principal Artist with the Women's HOPE Chorale of St. Louis. Most recently, she has performed in the chorus with Winter Opera St. Louis in their 2020 production of *La fille du régiment* as well as the roles of Gretel (*Hänsel und Gretel*), Cercatrice Prima Sorella (*Suor Angelica*), Norina (*Don Pasquale*), Musetta (*La Bohème*), Despina (*Così fan tutte*), and Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*). She was also the soprano soloist in a 2018 performance of *Saint-Saëns' Oratorio de Noël* at First Presbyterian Church in Muncie, IN.

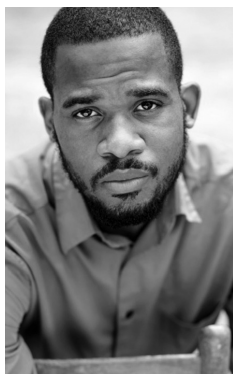
Ms. Billhartz has presented her research on Handel and the doctrine of the affections and the topic of opera adaptation throughout her graduate studies. She is a member of Sigma Alpha Iota, Pi Kappa Lambda, and Phi Kappa Phi. Ms. Billhartz earned her BM in Vocal Performance from the University of Evansville in 2016, graduating summa cum laude, and her MM in Vocal Performance from Ball State University in 2019. Upcoming performances include singing *Fiametta* with Winter Opera St. Louis in their 2022 production of *The Gondoliers*.



Theresa Pancella, mezzo-soprano, is thrilled and grateful to make her debut with the Bach Society of St. Louis this season as the Alto Young Artist. A St. Louis native, Theresa holds a Bachelor of Music in Music Theory from the University of Missouri – St. Louis, where she also studied piano, voice, and choral conducting. She is currently studying voice with Alison Neace. She was a cantor and choral scholar at the Cathedral Basilica for several years under the remarkable instruction of Dr. Horst Buchholz and sang for two seasons under his direction in St. Louis' only early music ensemble at the time: Pro-Arte.

Theresa, a lifelong singer and Catholic, has been passionate about and employed in the field of liturgical music for all of her young professional life; she currently works as the Director of Sacred Music at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Alton, IL. Most importantly, she is a big sister to two and godmother to one, and they are her greatest joys.

YOUNG ARTISTS CONT.



Micheal Lowe: Originally from Little Rock, Arkansas, Micheal Lowe has decided to make Saint Louis his home. He is currently a baritone young artist for the Bach Society of Saint Louis. In Saint Louis, he has performed with The Black Rep, The Actor's Studio, Mustard Seed Theater, New Line, R-S Theatrics, Winter Opera, and the Chamber Chorus of Saint Louis. His favorite operatic roles include: Ben in *The Telephone*, The Bonze in *Madama Butterfly*, Count Robinson in *Il Matrimonio Segreto*, Morales Cover in *Carmen*.

His favorite musical theater roles include: The Man in *Blues in the Night*, Patrolman in *Wait Until Dark*, Ensembles/US Foreman in *Les Miserables* and *Hairspray*, Ken in *Smokey Joe's Café*, Caleb in *Seven Brothers for Seven Brides*, Duane in *Hairspray*, and Henry/Seaman in *South Pacific*.

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