



BACH CHOIR
OF PITTSBURGH



Celebrating our Return to Live Performances

The Spirituals of William Dawson

Thomas W. Douglas
Artistic Director



BACH CHOIR
OF PITTSBURGH

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BACH CHOIR OF PITTSBURGH

presents

UPROOTED

The Spirituals of William Dawson

Thomas W. Douglas
Artistic Director and Conductor

Jon Erik Schreiber
Associate Conductor

James Burns
Piano

Eastminster Presbyterian Church
250 North Highland Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15206
NOVEMBER 13 + 14



UPROOTED

A WELCOME

from Thomas W. Douglas, Artistic Director

Welcome to the beginning of an emotionally charged year and return to live singing born out of the nearly unspeakable events of the last many months.

Having survived this phase of the Covid pandemic, the Bach Choir of Pittsburgh offers a season entitled *Healing* in our celebration of the return to live performances. The texture of our national landscape this past year has revealed quite clearly the need for music to once again bridge seemingly insurmountable gaps as it has done throughout history.



The music was selected specifically keeping the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) in mind. *Uprooted* will speak clearly to the Black struggle through slavery, a time in our country that personally left my great-great grandfather nameless in all of our family records, simply and tragically listed as "born in slavery."

We hope and trust that this concert will inspire, challenge, delight and bring healing to you.

Thomas W. Douglas

A Note from our Choir Member

Erica Shadowsong

This is my first season singing with the Bach Choir. I was just so glad there was going to be a choir singing in person after all this time. When I saw that we were singing an entire concert of spirituals, I was surprised... I realized though I'd sung spirituals before, never had I been in a concert completely focused on them. I felt honored and enormously proud to have this music from my heritage being treated with such deep reverence and joy, as it deserves, and especially these particular arrangements. I find myself thinking of George Floyd and all the unexpressed grief of the past year, and singing *Soon Ah Will Be Done* feels like a prayer of comfort. The words as well as the music of these incredibly profound songs connect me with all the periods of American music and bring them to life. They call the soul to a hopeful place beyond, whether it's North to freedom, or to a heavenly kingdom where all are embraced by those they love. I'm so, so proud to be a part of this choir and to be able to sing in this concert.

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UPROOTED: The Spirituals of William Dawson

SAT, NOV 13 from 7:30PM – 9:00PM | SUN, NOV 14 from 4:00PM – 5:30PM

Eastminster Presbyterian Church, 250 North Highland Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Acapella spirituals arranged by William Dawson, also featuring solos and pieces by Harry Burleigh and Thomas W. Douglas.

OBSESSIONS: Great Opera Choruses

SAT, FEB 12 from 7:30PM – 9:00PM | SUN, FEB 13 from 4:00PM – 5:30PM

Maverick Hotel, 120 S Whitfield Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Famous recognizable opera choruses with a few less-familiar ones thrown in. From rousing to intimate, these choruses and operatic soloists will stir and heal the soul.

MONSTERS: Frankenstein Re-Imagined

SAT, APRIL 23 from 7:30PM – 9:00PM | SUN, APRIL 24 from 4:00PM – 5:30PM

The Oaks Theater, 310 Allegheny River Boulevard, Oakmont, PA 15319

A screening of the 1931 black and white film of Boris Karloff's iconic *Frankenstein*. This production is simply entitled *Monster* with a re-imagined score, including R&B and Hip Hop, compiled and created by Thomas W. Douglas and Jaron Crawford.

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2021-2022 SEASON

BACH CHOIR
OF PITTSBURGH

2



UPROOTED

The Spirituals of William Dawson

CHANEL HOLTE, SOPRANO

EUGENE PERRY, BARITONE

JAMES BURNS, PIANO

THOMAS W. DOUGLAS, CONDUCTOR

Ain'-a That Good News!

William L. Dawson

Steal Away

William L. Dawson

Chanel Holte, *Soloist*

In His Care-O

William L. Dawson

Chanel Holte, *Soloist*

Mary had a Baby

William L. Dawson

Chanel Holte, *Soloist*

Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen

William Stickles

Trio

Nicole Tascarella

Claudia Broman

Jon Erik Schreiber

Sence You Went Away

H. Leslie Adams

Chanel Holte, *Soloist*

Ezekiel Saw the Wheel

William L. Dawson

Christopher Neffshade, *Soloist*

Here is One

H. F. Mells

Eugene Perry, *Soloist*

(Mr. Perry's Grandfather)

Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit

William L. Dawson

Eugene Perry, *Soloist*



UPROOTED

The Spirituals of William Dawson

CHANEL HOLTE, SOPRANO
EUGENE PERRY, BARITONE
JAMES BURNS, PIANO
THOMAS W. DOUGLAS, CONDUCTOR

Intermission

Swing Low Sweet Chariot

Chanel Holte, *Soloist*

William L. Dawson

4 Spiritual Songs

1. The Old Rugged Cross
 2. Amazing Grace
 3. I Want to be Ready
 4. Jacob's Ladder
- Eugene Perry, *Soloist*

Thomas W. Douglas

Soon Ah Will Be Done

William L. Dawson

Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child

William Stickles

Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho

Trio

There is a Balm in Gilead

Professional Core
Chanel Holte, *Soloist*

William L. Dawson

Behold the Star

Chanel Holte, *Soloist*

William L. Dawson

Ride On King Jesus

Chanel Holte, *Soloist*

Hall Johnson

PROGRAM NOTES

ABOUT THE COMPOSER *contributed by Soprano, Claire Davidson*



William Levi Dawson (1899-1990), was an African-American composer, choir director and professor revered for his contribution to American choral music. Although he is best known for his arrangements of African-American spirituals, Dawson also composed chamber music and orchestral music, including his most important orchestral work, *Negro Folk Symphony*. Dawson consistently incorporated African-American themes and melodies into his compositions. As he once told an interviewer, "I have never doubted the possibilities of our music."

Born in Anniston, Alabama, Dawson ran away from home at the age of 13 to attend the Tuskegee Institute where he sang in the choir and played trombone in the college band and orchestra. After completing his education at Tuskegee, he became the Director of Music at Lincoln High School in Kansas City. He continued his education in Kansas City at the Horner Institute of Fine Arts where he convinced the then all-white school to allow him to earn his BA through one-on-one tutoring sessions. Dawson's outstanding talent in composition won him a scholarship to the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago where he earned a Master of Music degree in 1927.

In 1930, Dawson was invited back as a professor to the Tuskegee Institute where he played an integral role in founding the Music School and developing the Tuskegee Institute Choir into a world-renowned touring ensemble. The choir's first singers were organized by school founder Booker T. Washington who insisted on the singing of African-American spirituals by everyone at the weekly chapel worship services, a tradition that continues today. Dawson led the Choir into a new era in 1932 with their appearance at the opening of Radio City Music Hall in NYC which led to performances before American presidents, radio and television productions, and worldwide tours. His unique rhythmic arrangements of the spirituals brought a new rigorous style to the singing which helped to bring about a resurgence in popularity for spirituals. Gwynne Brown, Associate Professor of Music History

ABOUT THE COMPOSER **WILLIAM L. DAWSON**

at the University of Puget Sound, who is carrying out research on Dawson, commented in an interview, "He left a promising career as a trombonist in Chicago to return to Tuskegee and create a School of Music there. He was a devoted teacher and mentor to many young black musicians. He knew that the rigorous training he could provide would help make sure that their talents and potential wouldn't go to waste in a society that was ready to undervalue and discourage them. He spent more than three decades sharing his knowledge and musicianship with young musicians of all races all over the country." An example of that rigorous training is evident in his rehearsal notes for members of the All-Eastern Division Chorus in 1961. He writes: "There will be no time to teach notes, rhythms, or pronunciations. All rehearsal time will be needed for the fine points of performance such as interpretation, style and polish. Start learning now!"

Dawson's arrangements of spirituals, as sung in these concerts by the Bach Choir, are regularly performed by choirs around the world. Some of the accolades Dawson received during his lifetime include an American Choral Directors Association award for "pioneering leadership, inspiration and service to the choral arts," the Paul Heinecke Award from the Society of European Stage Authors and Composers (SESAC) given "in honor and recognition of his talent, achievement and devotion to American music ... whose spirit and purpose have transcended ethnic and international barriers," Dawson's induction into the Alabama Arts Hall of Fame, and an honorary Doctorate of Music from Ithaca College of Music in Ithaca, New York.

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BIOS



THOMAS W. DOUGLAS *Artistic Director*, is a compelling and passionate conductor having performed more than 250 opera, oratorio, orchestral and musical theater productions. As the Artistic Director of the Bach Choir of Pittsburgh he regularly receives accolades for innovative, creative and dramatically provocative productions. He was also the music director of the Newton Symphony in Kansas. Career highlights include conducting Webber's *Phantom of the Opera* in Basel, Switzerland, Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, the Pittsburgh premiere of the classic silent films

The Passion of Joan of Arc, with live orchestra and chorus, the U.S. premiere of David Chesky's *The Agnostic*, the rousing *Carmina Burana Africana*, Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and *Don Giovanni* and a production of *Ain't Misbehavin'* in Malaysia.

Douglas works regularly as Musical Director at Music Theater Wichita where he has done many productions including *Smokey Joe's Café*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Ragtime*, *Hairspray*, *The Full Monty*, *Miss Saigon*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Les Misérables* among many others. He has also conducted the Anchorage Opera, San Diego Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Des Moines Symphony Pittsburgh Symphony, at the City Theater, Pittsburgh Festival Opera, Canton Symphony, Wichita Symphony, Dallas Symphony and the River City Brass Band. In addition, Douglas has conducted classical guitarist and Latin Grammy winner Berta Rojas, Tony winner Kelli O'Hara, and Leslie Odom Jr., Tony winner for his role in *Hamilton*.

Thomas has enjoyed the stage roles of Amonasro in Elton John's *Aida*, Caiaphas in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, Balthazar in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. He has been a vocal soloist with the River City Brass, Pittsburgh Opera, Pittsburgh Symphony, Canton Symphony, the Children's Festival Chorus and sings frequently with jazz legend Joe Negri in his *Mass of Hope*. Douglas is the Director of Opera Studies and also Choral Activities at Carnegie Mellon University. This is his 18th season with the Bach Choir of Pittsburgh.

BIOS *Continued*



JON ERIK SCHREIBER *Associate Conductor*, is a teacher, singer and conductor with a background in vocal pedagogy, choral and solo song literature, and has experience in musical theater, folk and popular styles. With over two decades of experience directing high school choirs, church and community choirs, Schreiber is grateful for the rich and varied experiences leading and collaborating with all sorts of musicians young and old, challenged

and gifted, small groups and large. In addition to serving the Bach Choir of Pittsburgh as Associate Conductor, Schreiber teaches music and directs the Chorus at Pittsburgh Allderdice High School. He is the founding Artistic Director and Conductor of the Indiana Community Choir at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), and also maintains an independent studio of voice students. Above all, he is thankful for the opportunity to serve his family as a father and husband.



JAMES BURNS *Accompanist*, has been a frequent performer with groups such as the Opera Theater of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh Ballet Theater and the Mendelssohn Choir. As a pianist for the Civic Light Opera he has performed in over 100 musical theater productions. He has had the pleasure of bringing music to young students through his work with educational outreach programs for Gateway to Music and the Pittsburgh Opera. Burns holds piano

performance degrees from Oberlin Conservatory of Music, the Julliard School and a Masters degree in Sacred Music from Duquesne University. He is the organist at Westminster Presbyterian Church and Temple Emanuel.

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FaceBook / Instagram / Twitter: **BachChoirPGH**

SOLOIST *Baritone*



EUGENE PERRY has captured critical and popular acclaim on both sides of the Atlantic. Most recently, he sang in Matthew Barney's *KHU*, the second act of *Ancient Evenings* in Detroit, Michigan. Other recent engagements include the title role in Hans Werner Henze's *El Cimarron* at the Greenwich Music Festival, the world premiere of Anthony Davis's *Waconda's Dream* at Opera Omaha, Wagner's *Ring Cycle* at the Opera Theater of Pittsburgh and Long Beach Opera, and the world premiere of Philip

Glass's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, a production for Erfurt Opera in Germany. The opera was also performed with Amsterdam Opera, the Barbican in London and the Austin Lyric Opera. Perry has toured throughout Europe as Porgy in Barkhymer's production of *Porgy and Bess* and also performed the role with the Capetown Opera in South Africa.

Other engagements include a world premiere of Davis's *Amistad* with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, a world premiere of Glass's *Galileo Galilei* in Chicago and London, world premieres of Glass's *Sound of a Voice* and *Orpheus* at the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts and the world premiere of Glass's *The Penal Colony* in Seattle, Washington. Perry also performed *Don Giovanni* with the Atlanta Opera and the Peter Sellars' production *Seraphin* by composer Wolfgang Rihm with Stuttgart Opera, Escamillo in Bizet's *Carmen* with Dayton, Durham and Mobile Operas, and *Il Trovatore* with Opera Memphis. He performed in a new work by Amy Beach, *Cabildo*, part of the Great Performers Series at Alice Tully Hall. Other activities include *Don Giovanni* at Chautauqua Opera, Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha* in Linz, Austria, Adam's *The Death of Klinghoffer* in Brussels, Belgium and the world premiere of Noa Ain's *The Outcasts* at the Houston Grand Opera. Perry also performed numerous productions at the New York City Opera including Weisgall's *Esther*, the American premiere of Janacek's *From the House of the Dead*, *Turandot*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Streetscene*, *La Boheme* and *I Pagliacci*, telecast on PBS.

SOLOIST *Soprano*



CHANEL HOLTE is a soprano originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Vocal Performance from The Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 2019 where she studied with Mary Logan Hastings. Holte is a recitalist and opera singer who has portrayed roles such as the Countess from Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, has placed multiple times in competitions and has been a featured soloist with the Bach Choir of Pittsburgh and across the Northeast region.

about the



BACH CHOIR
OF PITTSBURGH

The Bach Choir of Pittsburgh was founded in 1934 to perform works of Johann Sebastian Bach exclusively. Under the leadership of Conductor and Artistic Director Thomas W. Douglas, the choir continues to evolve from a narrowly-focused ensemble to a larger, more inclusive choir that performs major choral works by composers from the Renaissance through the present.

Mission

The Bach Choir of Pittsburgh presents unique and moving interpretations of choral works to engage and captivate arts-loving audiences across the Pittsburgh region.

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NOVEMBER 13 + 14

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