



**BACH CHOIR
OF PITTSBURGH**

2023 - 2024 SEASON PRESENTS



A Consolation: Ein Deutsches Requiem

Johannes Brahms

February 17, 7:30 PM

February 18, 4:00 PM

Artistic Director: Thomas W. Douglas

*...comfort or cheer
in a time of distress or sadness.*



**BACH CHOIR
OF PITTSBURGH**

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BACH CHOIR OF PITTSBURGH

presents

A CONSOLATION

Ein Deutsches Requiem (A German Requiem)

Johannes Brahms

Thomas W. Douglas

Artistic Director and Conductor

*Dedicates this concert to the memory of
my colleague and friend Lance LaDuke*

Jon Erik Schreiber

Associate Conductor

Graham Fandrei

Baritone

Nicole Tascarella

Soprano

James Burns and Jack Kurutz

Piano

Featuring

*Alyssa Hensley, Harp; José Layo Puentes,
Bass; David Robbins, Timpani*

Visual Presentation by Ron Kludo

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about the



The Bach Choir of Pittsburgh (BCP) was founded in 1934 to exclusively perform works of Johann Sebastian Bach. The repertoire soon expanded to include other composers, and has even included music commissioned by the Bach Choir. Under the leadership of current Conductor and Artistic Director Thomas W. Douglas, the Choir continues to evolve, becoming more inclusive, innovative and diverse. Today, the Choir performs 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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PROGRAM

THOMAS W. DOUGLAS, Artistic Director and Conductor
JON ERIK SCHREIBER, Associate Conductor

- I. **Selig sind, die da Leid tragen**
(Blessed are those who mourn)
Graham Fandrei, Soloist, baritone
- II. **Denn alles Fleisch es ist wie Gras**
(For all flesh is like grass)
- III. **Herr, lehre doch mich, dass ein Ende**
(Lord, teach me, that I must have an end)
- IV. **Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen**
(How lovely are your dwellings)
- V. **Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit (You now have sorrow)**
Nicole Tascarella, Soloist, soprano
- VI. **Denn wir haben hie keine bleibende Statt**
(For here we have no permanent place)
Graham Fandrei, Soloist, baritone
- VII. **Selig sind die Toten**
(Blessed are the dead)

Program Notes by Choir Member Mike Friederich

Brahms started writing Ein Deutsches Requiem (A German Requiem) in 1865, just months after his mother died. In his time, requiems typically followed the format of the mass liturgy even in concert settings; choral parts were written in Latin and the themes focused on the salvation of the departed souls. Brahms chose not to follow this convention; while he used selected texts from the German Bible, he specifically omitted any references to Christian dogma, such as salvation. The main message of his German Requiem was that we must love and comfort each other when facing loss. His break with tradition foreshadowed the requiems written in the 20th Century, where composers used secular poetry and dedicated their works to all of humanity, and not just individuals.

Johannes Brahms was born in 1833 in Hamburg. His father, Johann Jakob Brahms, was a musician who found work in dance halls and cafes and as a regular bass player for the city's theater and philharmonic society. Brahms' father sent his children to private schools and they were given lessons in piano, cello, and horn. Johannes preferred the piano, and his father found him

Program Notes Continued

an accomplished teacher. He also received instruction in music theory from a respected composer and pianist, Eduard Marxsen. By his early teens, Brahms was giving recitals of complex works.

At fifteen, he began touring with an older Hungarian Jewish violinist, Ede Remenyi, who introduced him to a hybrid of Gypsy music, which would inspire many of Brahms' compositions. During the tour, Remenyi introduced Brahms to Franz Liszt in Weimar and then Robert and Clara Schumann in Düsseldorf. The Schumanns were impressed by the younger Brahms and helped promote his career and secure publishing of his works.

In 1862, Brahms moved to the cultural capital of Vienna, Austria, where he composed his requiem between 1865 and 1868. The first version, with six movements, was successfully performed at Bremen Cathedral on Good Friday, 1868.

Later, Brahms inserted the fifth movement to structure symmetry around the fourth movement, "How lovely is thy dwelling place." There are similarities in musical elements between movement 1 and 7, 2 and 6, and 3 and 5.

The German Requiem earned Brahms international recognition. The rest of his days were spent touring, visiting friends, and composing his many masterpieces. He died in 1897 at sixty-three. His lavish funeral was attended by notables from Paris, London and the music capitals of Germany.

Reference: The Indispensable Composers by Anthony Tommasini, 2018.

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and to First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh and
Rodef Shalom Congregation

Reflections on Brahms' *A German Requiem* by Choir Member Paul Tellers

I auditioned and joined the Bach Choir in 2017 after serving on the board for a number of years. The Bach Choir affords me, and about 70 other people, the chance to play a team sport—which I have never done. Some of our singers can make beautiful music as soloists, but together we make music that can be powerful, sublime, joyful, surprising . . . it goes on. And I get to be an important 1/70th of that music.

I've been thinking about why Brahms titled his requiem "German." Obviously he knew that he was German. I've learned that the young Brahms wanted to write music that would provide comfort to the living. He purposefully did not use the usual Requiem Mass format, which would be sung in Latin. He wrote his Requiem in the vernacular German so it would be immediately accessible to the people, and in this way he was ahead of his time. When I was a lad I had to learn a lot of Latin (by rote) to be an altar boy and serve Mass. By the time I retired at age 13, the Mass was being said in vernacular languages around the world. Today we see indigenous languages being revived in many different countries in an effort to relate language to the people, rather than to the hierarchy.

I hope that you are both moved and comforted by our presentation of the Brahms German Requiem.



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(Yes, I am the Bach Choir Executive Director, too!)

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In my heart forever
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Noto Earthquake Victims
Deep condolences
Catastrophe on January 1, 2024
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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* and 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 19th 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. and 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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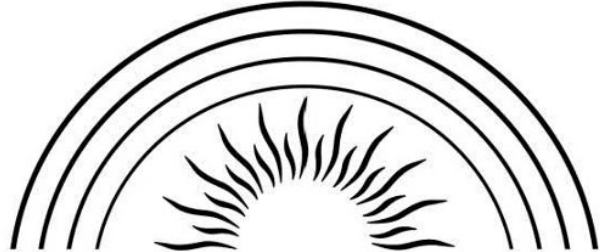
NICOLE TASCARELLA is a soprano who developed and crafted her long career through multiple genres. She began in church, where she discovered her voice and passion for music. Earning her Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in vocal performance from Houghton University, she studied under the guidance of Dr. Jean Reigles and Shirley Close. Among some of her credits are Beethoven's 9th Symphony, Mendelssohn's Elijah, The Witch from Into the Woods, and Anne Shirley from Anne of Green Gables. A native Western Pennsylvanian, Ms. Tascarella continues to

perform in the area. She is the Director of Music and Associate Pastor at Trinity Reformed United Church of Christ in Scottdale, PA, sings and plays piano with The Good Times Big Band, and is a Core Singer of the Bach Choir.



GRAHAM FANDREI is a Belizean-American performer who boasts a diverse national and international performance career. Graham's performances span from Rotterdam to Tokyo and Broadway, including La Boheme on Broadway, directed by Baz Luhrmann. He's been a soloist for various U.S. orchestras, opera companies, and chorales, and is a former member of Grammy-nominated Seraphic Fire. Graham continually performs in the Pittsburgh region, including performing the national anthem with the Pittsburgh Steelers, Penguins, Pirates, and

Riverhounds. Graham studied at the New England Conservatory and Juilliard.



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INSTRUMENTALISTS



ALYSSA HENSLEY is a professional musician, teacher, and arts administrator in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Ms. Hensley started music lessons at the age of seven with piano, harp, percussion, and anything else she could get her hands on. A Chicago native, Ms. Hensley holds a Bachelor of Music in Harp Performance from Northwestern University, and her Master of Music from Carnegie Mellon University, where she studies with Gretchen Van Hoesen. She has played with ensembles such as the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Nat28, Chicago Composers Orchestra, Northshore

Concert Band, West Virginia Symphony, Chamber Orchestra of Pittsburgh, Trio Cassatt, and Wires and Reeds. Ms. Hensley is an advocate for new music and serves on the board of directors for the Pittsburgh Chapter of the American Harp Society.



JACK KURUTZ a native of New York, is a performer, educator, and advocate of contemporary music. He is a founding member of Duo Junction (along with pianist Becky Billock), Piano4te, and the Living Room Chamber Music Project. He is also a member of IonSound Project, which will be performing at St. Vincent's College (PA) and Music on the Hill (RI) later this season. Mr. Kurutz received his undergraduate degree from the University of Miami and earned his Master of Music from New England Conservatory. In 2005, Kurutz completed an Artist Diploma from Carnegie

Mellon University, and coached with Ralph Zitterbart. In September 2007, Mr. Kurutz won First Prize, Artist Division, in the Liszt-Garrison International Piano Competition. He was a finalist in the 2009 Simone Belsky Competition and the 2010 Steinway Society of Massachusetts Competition. In addition to maintaining a private piano studio, he holds a teaching position at Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12.

INSTRUMENTALISTS



DAVID ROBBINS has earned two Bachelor of Science degrees from Duquesne University, one in Music Education and the other in Music Therapy. He also holds a Master of Music degree in Percussion Performance from Carnegie Mellon University. David has had the esteemed privilege of studying with renowned musicians of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, River City Brass Band, and various Aspen Music Festival and School Faculty. David has worked as a percussion accompanist for the Pittsburgh Ballet Theater School and its Creative Movement Residency, as well as Point Park

University's Dance Department. Moreover, he has participated in performances with the Bach Choir of Pittsburgh, Erie Philharmonic, and numerous orchestral, theater, and choral productions across Western Pennsylvania.



JOSÉ LAYO PUENTES is a versatile bassist based in Pittsburgh, PA. Originally from Los Teques, Venezuela, his music is rooted in folk, latin dance and classical music, and his collaborative spirit has made him indispensable to numerous touring ensembles. He currently performs nationally and internationally with Venezuelan violinist Eddie Marcano, and other recent work includes collaborations with Quantum Theatre (Pittsburgh, PA), the Panama Jazz Festival (Panama City), and singer/songwriter Emily Pinkerton (Albany, NY). Trained in Venezuela's

famed "El Sistema" program, José has toured as a classical bassist with Point Chamber Orchestra (Pittsburgh), Sinfónica Venezuela (Venezuela), Filarmónica de Caracas (Venezuela), Simón Bolívar (Venezuela), Jóvenes Arcos (Venezuela), and Camerata San Cristóbal (Venezuela). José holds an Artist Diploma in Jazz from Duquesne University, and a performance certificate from Carnegie Mellon University.



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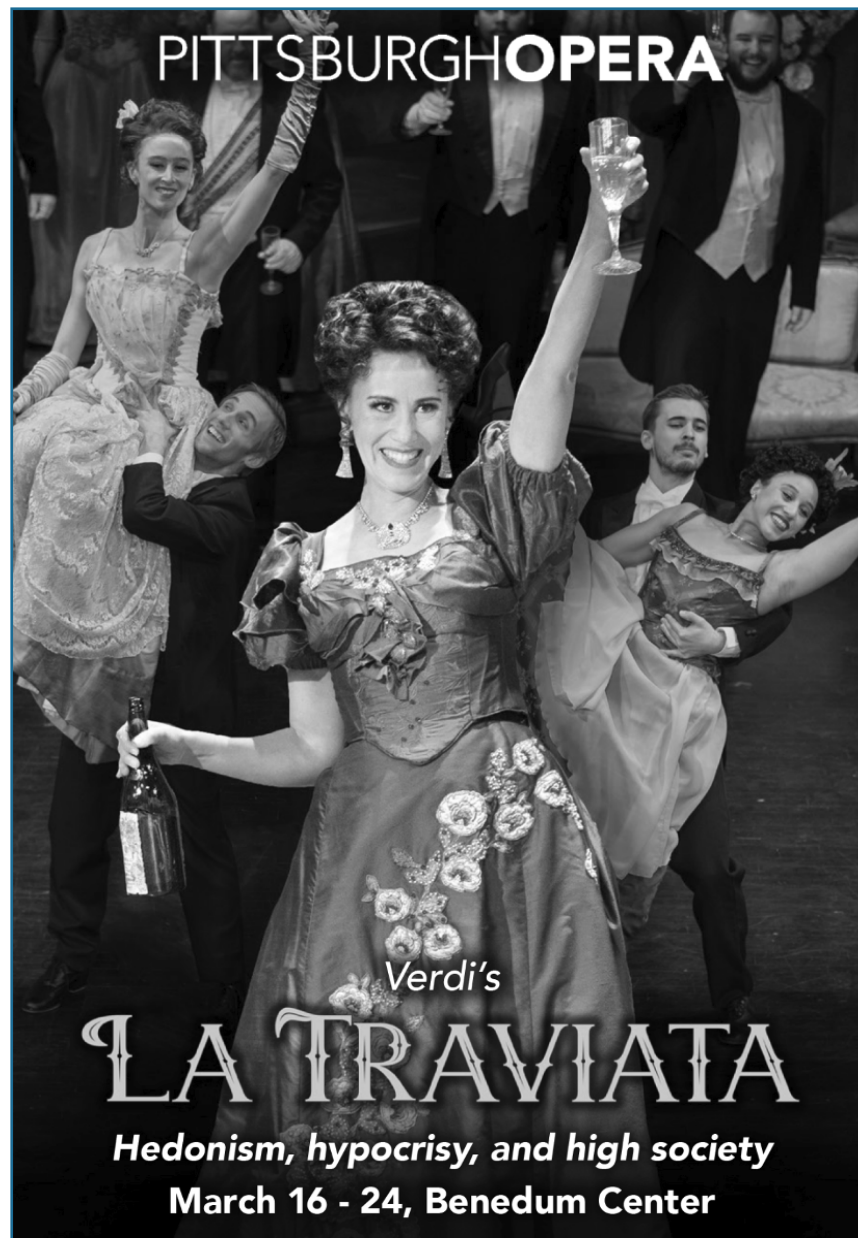


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Special guests: Fox Chapel High School Choir

Dec 08, 2023 7:30pm | St Andrew's Episcopal Church

Dec 10, 2023 3pm | Shadyside Presbyterian Church

Jonathan Dove's *The Passing of the Year*

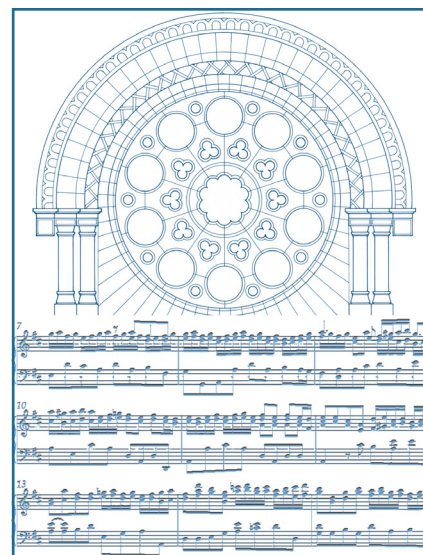
Special guests: The Pittsburgh Girls Choir

Feb 04, 2024 3pm | Shadyside Presbyterian Church

G. F. Handel's *Dettingen Te Deum*

June 5, 2024 7pm | Shadyside Presbyterian Church

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G. F. Handel's *Dettingen Te Deum*

June 5, 2024 7:00pm Shadyside Presbyterian Church

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Avery Greenaway
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Mary Jeffries

Tracy Keys *
Ceinwen King-Smith
Takako Kiyota-Petek
Mary Kate Mannion
Joanna Obuzor
Sarah Richards *

Erica Shadowsong
Polly Swanson +
Nicole Tascarella *
Dale Teplitz

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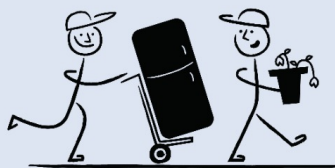


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