

Soli Deo Gloria

FALL 2013

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MUSIC MINISTRY AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Bach & Britten

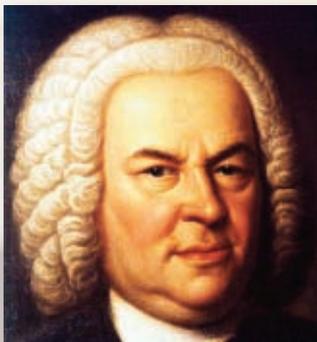
by Nick Bergin

This year's concert series will prominently feature the music of J.S. Bach and Benjamin Britten. While Bach is always in season, 2013 marks the centennial of Britten's birth; therefore, it is especially appropriate to program his music. On Sunday, November 10th at 12:20, Greg Thomas, tenor, Alex Vorhaus, treble, and Nick Bergin, piano, will perform Britten's *Abraham and Isaac*. The biblical account of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, is emotionally complex, to say the least, and Britten's evocative setting of the text portrays this brilliantly. The unique sound of a boy soprano makes the work all the more compelling.

Our Christmas concert on Sunday, December 15th at 4 pm will include Britten's *Ceremony of Carols*, a multi-movement work for three-part treble choir, soloists, and harp. The language of *Ceremony* is Middle English, and the poetry is drawn primarily from *The English Galaxy of Shorter Poems*. Many of Britten's contemporaries considered his skill at setting the English language to music to be unparalleled, and this kaleidoscopic opus does much to validate their convictions. Again, the purity of children's voices lends a distinctive freshness and beauty to an already appealing work.

Also during the Christmas concert, the Sanctuary Choir, along with members of the Nashville Symphony, will perform excerpts from J.S. Bach's cantata, *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*. This German title has been poetically translated in many different ways over the years, but the first two words say it all: "Wake up!" As I sit at my desk writing this at 2:30 on a Thursday afternoon, I realize that this command is sometimes easier uttered than followed. However, no music stirs the soul quite like Bach's, and this cantata in particular is sure to soothe your spirit in what is almost invariably a chaotic time of the year.

On Palm Sunday, April 13th at 4 pm, the Sanctuary Choir will perform Bach's *St. John Passion* with members of the Nashville Symphony. Though the word *epic* has lost some of its gravitas in recent years, it aptly describes Bach's magisterial setting of the passion narrative from the Gospel according to St. John. From the anguished cries of the opening chorus to the sublime and triumphant closing chorale, the piece takes listeners on a vivid journey through Jesus' betrayal, arrest, trial, crucifixion, and burial. With the possible exception of Bach's much lengthier *St. Matthew Passion*, there are few pieces of music that could more compellingly set the stage for Holy Week. This performance is not to be missed!



FALL MUSIC SCHEDULE

October 20
12:20 P.M.
FPC Sanctuary
12:20 Concert
Sarah Wofford and
Cody Muller

November 3
12:20 P.M.
FPC Sanctuary
12:20 Concert
The Vanderbilt
University Choir

November 10
12:20 P.M.
FPC Sanctuary
12:20 Concert
Benjamin Britten's
Abraham and Isaac

November 24
4:00 P.M.
FPC Sanctuary
Choral Concert
The Lads 'n Plaids

(continued on next page)

(Bach & Britten continued)

In addition to the works of Bach and Britten, this year's concert series will feature the Nashville Chamber Singers, organist Barry Jordan of Magdeburg, Germany, performances by members of the Sanctuary Choir, and much more. All performances are free and open to the public. Please investigate the schedule found in this newsletter, share it with your friends, and mark your calendars accordingly!



Please take a moment in the coming weeks to explore the music department's recently updated website. You can register for programs and dinners, learn about upcoming events, read archived music newsletters, and much more. music.fpcnashville.org

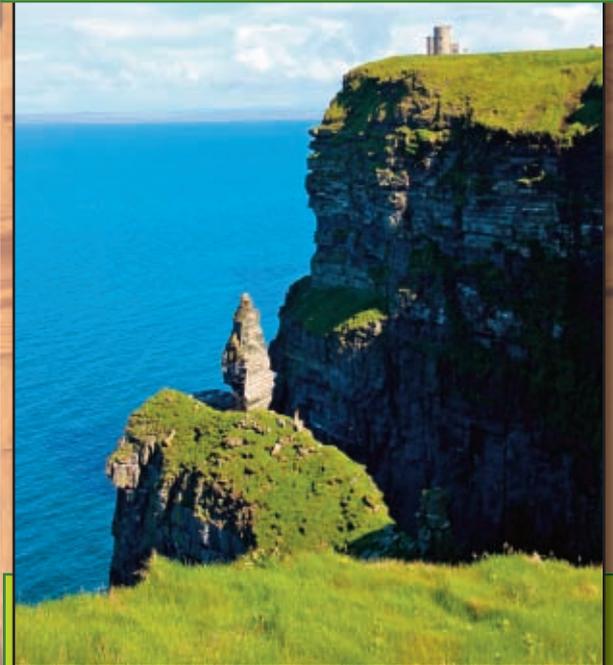


On Sunday, August 25th, the Sanctuary Chorale celebrated 15 years of musical ministry at First Presbyterian, inviting past members of the Chorale to participate in worship. The Chorale was formed in 1998 under the leadership of organist Kristin Lensch, who envisioned a dedicated choir for the 8:30 service. Some of the first members included Bill Caruso, Henry Cobb, Kathleen Dietz, David McQuiddy, Louis Rieke, Norm Stephenson, and Marsha Ann Stubbs. Kristin's dream has borne fruit through the skillful and talented Keith Moore, who has directed the Chorale for over 10 years. We have been blessed to share this ministry with many talented men and women. A reception for current and past members of the Chorale and their families was held in Courtenay Lounge following the 8:30 service.

- Kathleen Dietz

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IRELAND



The Sanctuary Choir will travel to Ireland from July 15 - 23, 2014. Highlights of the trip will include the scenic Ring of Kerry, the beautiful Cliffs of Moher, the cities of Dublin and Galway, and the lovely Kylemore Abbey, as well as performances in Galway, Connemara, and Dublin. Though the music department is initiating this journey, all members of First Presbyterian are welcome to join.

More information is forthcoming, but please do check your calendars and consider seizing this extraordinary opportunity for music-making and travel!

In the Loft - Nick Bergin

In mid-April I sent Tom Rhea an e-mail asking if he would be interested in being interviewed about his involvement with the music program at First Presbyterian Church. Tom sings bass in the Sanctuary Choir and is a stalwart member of the music committee. Also a physicist, Tom is quite the precise fellow, and to make my life easier, he simply typed out his answers to my questions. His responses are thoughtful and sincere, and I hope you will enjoy reading them!

NB: How long have you been singing?

TR: Well, since I consider the “cooing” of infants to be an early form of singing, I have been singing for longer than I care to admit. Before I joined the Sanctuary Choir at FPC, I would have thought that my experiences in the choirs at King College and Duke University would count for singing. However, at FPC I am in a group with such talented and splendid musicians that I am reluctant to call myself a “singer.” I don’t think I qualify. In the men’s sections there is a student preparing to be an opera soloist, a former Broadway soloist (that’s Broadway in New York, not Lower Broadway in Nashville), two professors of music at a nearby university and other professional and semi-professional vocal musicians including a tenor with two academic degrees in music. And the soprano and alto sections sport people with similar credentials. Plus, our conductor is a university music professor who studied under Robert Shaw and at Eastman. And, we have two

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“I praise God from whom all blessings flow, and I look for the day in which He will be praised by all creatures here below.”

organists from one of the best academic organ programs in the country. (This answers in the affirmative the modern version of the question that Nathanael asked Philip, “Can anything good come from Indiana?”) I have spent my life studying and working in science, but all these people are highly accomplished musicians. Every Sunday morning when I come to the choir room, I feel like I have wandered into the wrong place. This is for me an extraordinary treat. (When I was in graduate school, I spent a summer studying at Eastman also – Eastman

chemical company doing x-ray crystallography with a group of physicists – but that is a different story.)

NB: What brought you to singing, and who has influenced you?

TR: What brought me to the Sanctuary Choir was this: One Sunday morning at FPC I was in the congregation sitting next to the right aisle as we sang the first hymn, Luther’s “Ein’ Feste Berg.” The choir was standing in the aisle, and one of the sopranos (the DCE’s wife, no less) came over to me during the hymn and announced to me, “You need to be in the choir.” I was embarrassed. Everyone around me stared at me. My dad was a Presbyterian minister, and he taught me to sing hymns like I meant them, i.e., on pitch and loudly. I guess she heard me. The guy in front of me had heard me too and had told me, “God wants you in the choir.” After she said what she did, he turned around to me and said, “See, I told you.” So, I figured, I had better join the choir. It was only after I joined that I discovered that I was thoroughly outclassed.

NB: What is your favorite anthem? Favorite hymn?

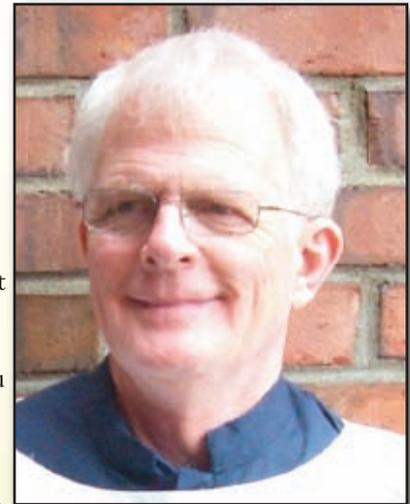
TR: My favorite “anthem” is Handel’s Messiah. When I first learned it at Duke, I figured that I wouldn’t have to waste time in Heaven learning it if I already knew it. No doubt we will all be singing it (and lots of other great music) often. My favorite hymn is “The Church’s One Foundation” because the lyrics constitute a terrific creed. Every line, every phrase, is a statement of faith and sound theology. (They don’t seem to write them that way anymore.)

NB: What is your most memorable experience of singing in the choir at FPC?

TR: Singing some of the great musical compositions of the church with the Nashville Symphony Orchestra. This spring we sang Mendelssohn’s Elijah – wonderful music, wonderful message. (This beats anything at Bonnaroo hands down.)

NB: How does singing relate to your spiritual life?

TR: I praise God from whom all blessings flow, and I look for the day in which He will be praised by all creatures here below.



Upcoming Concerts at FPC

Sunday, October 20, 2013 - 12:20 p.m.

12:20 Concert
featuring
Sarah Wofford, soprano
and Cody Muller, bass

Sunday, November 3, 2013 - 12:20 p.m.

12:20 Concert
featuring
The Vanderbilt University Choir,
directed by David Binns Williams

Sunday, November 10, 2013 - 12:20 p.m.

12:20 Concert
featuring a presentation of
Abraham and Isaac by Benjamin Britten,
sung by Greg Thomas, tenor
and Alex Vorhaus, treble

Sunday, November 24, 2013 - 4:00 p.m.

A Choral Concert
featuring
the Choirs of Montgomery Bell Academy
and Harpeth Hall High School
The Lads 'n Plaids

Saturday, December 7, 2013 - 7:00 p.m.

Nashville Chamber Singers
Christmas Concert

Sunday, December 15, 2013 - 4:00 p.m.

Glory to God in the Highest
FPC Sanctuary Choir and Orchestra
Christmas Concert

Sunday, January 19, 2014 - 4:00 p.m.

Adam Hayes/ Joel Treybig/Andrew Risinger
Trio Music for Trumpets and Organ

Monday, February 3, 2014 - 7:30 p.m.

Organ Concert
FPC Music Department and AGO/Nashville Chapter
jointly sponsored Concert featuring
Barry Jordan from Magdeburg,
Germany on the Beckerath Organ.

Friday, February 7, 2014 - 6:15 p.m.

FPC Sanctuary Choir and the Sam Levine Trio present a
Broadway Dinner Show: Ticketed Event

Sunday, February 16, 2014 - 12:20 p.m.

12:20 Concert
featuring
Irish Love Songs

Sunday, April 13, 2014 - 4:00 p.m.

Stained Glass Concert with
The Nashville Symphony Orchestra
FPC Sanctuary Choir and Nashville Symphony
Orchestra present
J.S. Bach's *The Passion According to St. John*

Sunday, May 4, 2014 - 4:00 p.m.

Nashville Chamber Singers
Spring Concert

Numerous special events are offered during the year.
The First Presbyterian Church Concert Series offers
outstanding programs featuring the finest quality music
in varied styles and genre. They are open to the public
without charge unless otherwise noted.
For more information, call the Music Ministry Office,
(615) 298-9517 or contact us via our online form.