

**REFRACTED BACH:
THE DESSOFF CHOIRS,
LED BY MUSIC DIRECTOR CHRISTOPHER SHEPARD,
PRESENTS A MIDWINTER FESTIVAL
JANUARY 31 TO MARCH 3**



FESTIVAL FOCUSES ON THE GENIUS OF J. S. BACH AND GENERATIONS OF MUSICIANS INFLUENCED BY HIM, AND CULMINATES IN A PERFORMANCE OF BACH'S MASS IN B MINOR ON MARCH 3

FEATURED ARTISTS INCLUDE VIOLINIST TODD REYNOLDS, OBOIST LIBBY VAN CLEVE, AND PIANISTS STEVEN RYAN AND CATHERINE VENABLE

NEW YORK, NY – Johann Sebastian Bach and the generations of musicians influenced by him will be the focus of **Refracted Bach**, a five-part festival, culminating in a performance of Bach's towering masterpiece the Mass in B Minor. The Festival will be presented by **The Dessoff Choirs** in venues around New York City from **January 31 to March 3, 2012**. "In this festival, we view all music through the prism of Bach, exploring repertoire from Palestrina to the cutting edge of today's music," says Dessoff's Music Director Christopher Shepard, a leading Bach interpreter and scholar of Bach performance in America.

In addition to the full performance of the Mass by The Dessoff Choirs and the period-instrument ensemble **Arcadia Players** on **March 3**, the festival kicks-off with a lecture on **January 31** by renowned Bach scholar George B. Stauffer, followed by *Stile Antico* on **February 3**, a performance featuring choral and instrumental works from the 16th to the 21st

centuries; the New York premiere of contemporary English composer Robin Holloway's *Gilded Goldbergs* for two pianos on **February 7**; and a participatory reading on **February 11**, open to all choral singers, of movements from Bach cantatas that he refashioned for the Mass in B Minor.

The Festival

The Midwinter Festival — the first of its kind for Dessoff, which is now in its 87th season — was inspired by the group's unique history, according to Shepard: "Dessoff, more than any other New York ensemble, can claim early music as its own because our founder, Margarete Dessoff, and her successor, Paul Boepple, were both instrumental in introducing Americans to Medieval and Renaissance music at a time when that repertoire was virtually unknown here." Boepple was also known, says Shepard, for premiering works by leading composers of his time: "To this day, combining the old and the new is at the core of Dessoff's mission." The Festival will feature several contemporary works, including the American premiere of William Hawley's *Tota Pulchra Es Maria* and the New York premiere of Robin Holloway's *Gilded Goldbergs*.

- **Tuesday, January 31: Why Bach Matters**

The festival's opening lecture, entitled **Why Bach Matters**, will be given by **George B. Stauffer**, Dean of the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University and author of numerous books on Bach, including *J. S. Bach: The Mass in B Minor* (Yale University Press). The lecture, sponsored, in part, by the Thiemann-Wicker Foundation, is intended to place Bach in an historical context and to frame the festival's centerpiece, the Mass in B Minor. The lecture will be held at **Liederkrantz Concert Hall, 6 East 87th Street at 7:30pm**.

- **Friday, February 3: "Stile Antico"**

Led by Christopher Shepard, "Stile Antico" is a concert of choral and instrumental works that explores how composers of many periods — including Bach himself — have been inspired by earlier styles of music. Bach arranged Palestrina's *Missa Sine Nomine a 6*, two movements of which will be presented in this concert, alongside music by another Baroque master, Grzegorz Gerwazy Gorczycki. Also on the program are works by Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Reger, all of whom drew inspiration from Bach. The concert also features contemporary pieces: the American premiere of *Tota Pulchra Es Maria* by William Hawley (b. 1950); two works by Ingram Marshall (b. 1942): *September Canons*, a piece for solo violin inspired by the events of September 11, 2001, performed by Todd Reynolds, for whom the work was written, and *Holy Ghosts* for solo oboe d'amore, written for and performed by Libby Van Cleve; and *Komm Jesu, Komm* by Sven-David Sandström (b. 1942). The concert takes place at the **Church of St. Paul the Apostle, Ninth Avenue & 59th Street at 8pm**.

- **Tuesday, February 7: Gilded Goldbergs**

Performed by pianists **Steven Ryan** and **Catherine Venable**, Robin Holloway's *Gilded Goldbergs* receives its New York premiere. The work was initially written so that the composer could play Bach's virtuosic *Goldberg Variations* on two pianos with friends, but it eventually grew into a concert-hall piece. *Gilded Goldbergs* has been described as "a real jeu d'esprit" (*bach-cantatas.com*), and "a Goldbergs for the 21st century," by a composer who is "infinitely inventive ..." (*classical.net*). The premiere takes place at **Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall at 7:30pm**.

- **Saturday, February 11: Cantatas Reflected In The Mass In B Minor**

All singers are invited to the festival's penultimate event: a Bach Cantata Sing-In at which Christopher Shepard will conduct Bach cantata movements that the composer refashioned for the Mass in B Minor. The inspiration for this event underscores Dessoff's commitment to provide opportunities for choral singers who wish to explore the musical canon in depth. "I think many of the thousands of singers who live in New York will enjoy this day tremendously," says Shepard. "It's a chance to sing great music, and also to learn and be amazed at Bach's endless inventiveness and genius." The Sing-In will take place at **Immanuel Lutheran Church, Lexington Avenue & 88th Street at 2pm**.

- **Saturday, March 3: Mass in B Minor**

The festival concludes with Bach's crowning masterpiece, the Mass in B Minor, BWV 232. The performance, led by Christopher Shepard, will feature The Dessoff Choirs and soprano soloists Susan Consoli and Sabrina Learman, mezzo-soprano Sarah Rose Taylor, tenor Matthew Anderson, and baritone Thomas Jones. They will be joined by the period-instrument group **Arcadia Players**, led by artistic director Ian Watson. This performance will mark Arcadia's New York City debut. The concert takes place at the **Church of St. Mary the Virgin, 145 West 46th Street at 8pm**.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Christopher Shepard, music director of The Dessoff Choirs

Dessoff's current music director Christopher Shepard has been closely associated with the choral music of Johann Sebastian Bach. He founded the Sydneian Bach Choir and Orchestra in Sydney, Australia, and was music director of *BACH 2010*, a project to perform all of Bach's choral cantatas. Under Mr. Shepard's direction, the ensemble performed over 75 cantatas, as well as the two *Passions*, *Mass in B Minor*, and *Christmas Oratorio*. A Sydney reviewer wrote of the cantata series that "these well-attended events, using a fine choir and perceptive soloists, are high points in our musical terrain."

In addition to the music of J.S. Bach, Mr. Shepard has conducted many staples of the choral-orchestral repertoire, and he has commissioned and premiered a number of new choral works in both Australia and America. With The Dessoff Choirs, he has prepared the choir for performances at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center and Radio City Music Hall, including a performance of Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe* with the Juilliard Orchestra under the direction of Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Mr. Shepard concurrently serves as Music Director of St John's Episcopal Church in Stamford, Connecticut.

Arcadia Players, Ian Watson, artistic director

Arcadia Players is a professional ensemble of musicians founded in 1989 by Margaret Irwin-Brandon, with the assistance of founding patron T. Marc Futter. Currently under the direction of Ian Watson, who played an important role in the British Baroque revival, Arcadia presents a series of concerts each year in several communities in western Massachusetts, performing chamber music, opera, orchestral, and choral repertoire, including highly acclaimed performances of Handel's *Messiah*. The group also regularly collaborates with vocal ensembles throughout New England, and is currently the ensemble-in-residence at the Massachusetts Center for Interdisciplinary Renaissance Studies at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst.

Todd Reynolds, violin

Composer, conductor, arranger, violinist, and electronic musician, **Todd Reynolds** is a longtime touring and recording member of Bang On A Can, Steve Reich and Musicians and Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Project. Collaborations run the gamut from Todd Rundgren and Joe Jackson to Kenny Werner and Betty Buckley to Meredith Monk and Scanner. A forerunner in the expansion of the violin beyond its classical and "wood-bound" tradition, Mr. Reynolds is a founder of the critically acclaimed string quartet Ethel, with whom he wrote and toured internationally for its first seven years.

Libby Van Cleve, oboe

Oboist **Libby Van Cleve** has been called "the double reed queen of the new music world" by the *Hartford Courant*, and is recognized as one of the foremost interpreters of chamber and contemporary music for the oboe. She performs regularly with chamber groups including Chez Vees and Solisti St. Francis. Her solo English horn and oboe d'amore performances of music by Ingram Marshall are featured on the internationally acclaimed CD *Dark Waters*. She has also recorded as soloist for the New Albion, CRI, Aerial, and Centrediscs labels, and with chamber ensembles for the Tzadik, New World, OODisc, Braxton House, What Next?, CRI and Artifacts labels.

Steven Ryan, piano

For thirteen seasons, **Steven Ryan** has been Dessoff's accompanist and featured keyboard soloist. He has played celesta with the Berlin Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall; piano, harpsichord, and portative organ with Dessoff; and synthesizer with the Moody Blues. Conductors he has collaborated with include Vladimir Ashkenazy, Charles Dutoit, Neemi Järvi, Sir Neville Marriner, Gerard Schwarz, and Maxim Shostakovich. Mr. Ryan is a regular accompanist at Montclair State University, working with the choirs and in voice studios. In recent years he has performed in Russia and France, and played several solos with the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra and the Greater Trenton Symphony Orchestra.

Catherine Venable, piano

Catherine Venable has been a pianist on Broadway for *The Light in the Piazza*, *Curtains*, *Sondheim on Sondheim*, *Wonderful Town* (as Brooke Shields's rehearsal accompanist), *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Apple Tree*, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, *Anything Goes*, *The Radio City Music Hall Christmas Spectacular*, *My Fair Lady* with the New York Philharmonic, *Casino Paradise* at Jazz at Lincoln Center, and *Where's Charley?* at *Encores! Great American Musicals in Concert at Town Hall*. Catherine is a staff accompanist at New York University and New Jersey City University. She made her Weill Recital Hall debut in 2008 accompanying tenor Brian Cheney.

George B. Stauffer, lecturer

George B. Stauffer is Dean of the Mason Gross School of the Arts and Professor II of Music History at Rutgers University. He is known internationally as a scholar, performer and writer on the music and culture of the Baroque era and the life and works of J.S. Bach in particular. Educated at Dartmouth College, Bryn Mawr College, and Columbia University, he has published eight books on Baroque music and Bach including, most recently, *Bach: The Mass in B Minor* (Yale University Press, 2003) and *The World of Baroque Music* (Indiana University Press, 2006). He has also contributed to *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, *Collier's Encyclopedia*, *Early Music*, *Bach-Jahrbuch*, and many other American, European, and Asian publications. In addition, he has written for *The New York Times* and *The Weekly Standard*. As a speaker, Mr. Stauffer has lectured at Harvard, Yale and Princeton universities, and the University of Leipzig. He is presently at work on the volume *Why Bach Matters*.

ABOUT THE DESSOFF CHOIRS

Tracing its roots back to 1924, when Margarete Dessoff and Angela Diller founded the Adesdi Chorus of women's voices and, soon after, a mixed chorus called the A Cappella Singers of New York, The Dessoff Choirs continues to make its home in New York City. An independent chorus not affiliated with any religious or community group, Dessoff has established a reputation for pioneering performances of choral works from the Renaissance era through the 21st century. The "s" in Choirs connotes the group's various ensembles, ranging from the large Symphonic Choir that appears with major orchestras, to the smaller Chamber Choir featured in more intimate works.

With Kent Tritle, Dessoff released its first CD, *Reflections*, which featured the world premiere of Paul Moravec's "Songs of Love and War" and works by Robert Convery, John Corigliano, and Ned Rorem, an effort that helped earn the group the 1999 ASCAP/Chorus America Award for Adventurous Programming. In December 2009, Dessoff released its second CD, *Glories on Glories*, under the direction of James Bagwell, also available as digital download from multiple online retailers.

TICKETS: \$5-55, children under 12 free. For discounted festival packages and individual tickets, please visit dessoff.org, or call (212) 831-8224.

PROGRAMS

WHY BACH MATTERS

Tuesday, January 31, 2012, 7:30pm

Liederkranz Concert Hall

6 East 87th Street, New York City

George B. Stauffer, lecturer

Tickets: \$10-20; children 12 & under, free. Order at dessoff.org or (212) 831-8224

Sponsored, in part, by the Thiemann-Wicker Foundation.

"STILE ANTICO"

Friday, February 3, 2012, 8:00pm

Church of St. Paul the Apostle

Ninth Avenue & 59th Street, New York City

The Dessoff Choirs

Christopher Shepard, conductor

Libby Van Cleve, oboe d'amore

Todd Reynolds, violin

PALESTRINA (ARR. J.S. BACH)

GORCZYCKI

WILLIAM HAWLEY

INGRAM MARSHALL

SVEN-DAVID SANDSTRÖM

Missa Sine Nomine a 6

Stabat Mater

Tota Pulchra es Maria (American premiere)

O Magnum Mysterium

Two Motets

Holy Ghosts (Libby Van Cleve, solo oboe d'amore)

Komm, Jesu, Komm

INGRAM MARSHALL
REGER
MENDELSSOHN

September Canons (Todd Reynolds, solo violin)
O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden
Warum toben die Heiden, Op 78 No. 1

Tickets: \$15-35; children 12 & under, free.

Sponsored, in part, by Lisa M. Madsen, in remembrance of Russell & Esther Madsen and Cecil & Margaret Sprague

GILDED GOLDBERGS

Tuesday, February 7, 2012, 7:30pm

Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall
154 West 57th Street, New York City

Steven Ryan, piano
Catherine Venable, piano

ROBIN HOLLOWAY

Gilded Goldbergs (New York premiere)

Tickets: \$15-35; children 12 & under, free.

CANTATAS REFLECTED IN THE MASS IN B MINOR

Saturday, February 11, 2012, 2:00pm

Immanuel Lutheran Church
Lexington Avenue & 88th Street, New York City

A sing-in, open to all singers, of cantata movements that Bach refashioned for the Mass in B Minor. Music is provided for all participants.

Tickets: \$5-10; children 12 & under, free.

J.S. BACH'S MASS IN B MINOR

Saturday, March 3, 2012, 8:00pm

Church of St. Mary the Virgin
145 West 46th Street, New York City

The Dessoff Choirs
Christopher Shepard, conductor
Susan Consoli, soprano
Sabrina Learman, soprano
Sarah Rose Taylor, mezzo-soprano
Matthew Anderson, tenor
Thomas Jones, baritone
Arcadia Players

J. S. BACH

Mass in B Minor, BWV 232

Tickets: \$20-55; children 12 & under, free.

Refracted Bach: The Dessoff Choirs' 2012 Midwinter Festival is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

PRESS TICKETS: For press tickets, artist bios or images, please contact Danielle Green: 917.339.7188, dgreen@cohndutcher.com.

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