Mendelssohn, Bach, and the Chorale

4 pm | Sunday
October 26

MENDELSSOHN CLUB OF PHILADELPHIA
Alan Harler, Conductor
with The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia
Michael Stairs, organ

Girard College Chapel
2101 S. College Avenue | Philadelphia

MAJOR FUNDING PROVIDED BY
THE PEW CENTER FOR ARTS & HERITAGE
Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia

February 8, 2015 at 4pm

Girard College Chapel
2101 South College Avenue
Philadelphia
Tickets - mcchorus.org

The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia

Susanna Phillips, soprano
Marietta Simpson, mezzo-soprano
Yusuke Fujii, tenor
Eric Owens, bass
Michael Stairs, organ
Alan Harler, Conductor

Online Tickets
General $28
Preferred $38
Senior – with id $22
Student – with id $15

Bach / Mendelssohn St. Matthew Passion

Major funding provided by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage
Sing with us, O sing with us!

I’m thrilled to welcome you to Mendelssohn Club Chorus’s first concert performance of the 2014-2015 season. Thank you for coming to this program of Bach, Mendelssohn and the Chorale, the fourth in our popular BIG SING! programs. It’s always a delight to share our music-making with our audience, and this program promises to be one of our most compelling and fascinating BIG SING! events.

Our program today is an examination of the chorale — we are very fortunate to have our Artistic Director Alan Harler offering insights into this musical form. It’s a pleasure to be able to join with you in singing some of the most beautiful chorales ever written by J.S. Bach and Felix Mendelssohn, the tunes of which are sure to be familiar to many of you.

Today’s program also offers a preview of our upcoming North American premiere of Bach’s transcendent St. Matthew Passion, as it was re-envisioned by Felix Mendelssohn in the mid-19th century. We very much look forward to your joining us again, here in the magnificent Girard College Chapel, on Sunday, February 8th, 2015, when Mendelssohn Club Chorus will present this glorious work, with internationally acclaimed soloists Eric Owens, Susanna Phillips, Marietta Simpson and Yusuke Fujii.

As always, we are most grateful to you, our audience, for making possible this shared experience of music-making. We deeply appreciate your ongoing support of our artistic vision through your participation in our performances and through your financial contributions. A very special thanks to the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, whose funding has made possible our programming of today’s BIG SING! and our North American premiere of the Bach/Mendelssohn St. Matthew Passion.

With every good wish to you all — let’s SING together!

Charlotte E. Sibley

Chair, Mendelssohn Club Board of Directors

P.S. Please mark your calendars for A Feast of Carols, our beloved program of holiday favorites on December 13th, and for TURBINE, an exciting collaboration with the Leah Stein Dance Company set on site at the Philadelphia Water Works, and featuring a new commissioned work by composer Byron Au Yong, on May 16 and 17, 2015.
BIG SING!
Mendelssohn, Bach, and the Chorale

PROGRAM

The Passion Chorale

O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden .................. Johann Crüger
Jessica Beebe, soprano
Cory O’Neill Walker, tenor

Mein G’müth ist mir verwirret .................. Hans Leo Hassler

Three chorales from the St. Matthew Passion...............J. S. Bach
O Haupt, voll Blut und Wunden*
Erkenne mich, mein Hüter*
Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden

O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden .................. Felix Mendelssohn
1. Chorus
2. Aria
A. J. Walker, baritone
3. Chorale

American Tune ............................... Paul Simon
Sonja Bontrager, Rebecca Thornburgh, vocals
Ross Bellenoit, guitar
Donald St. Pierre, piano

Aus tiefer Noth* ............................... Felix Mendelssohn

Organ Sonata No. 3 in A Major .................. Felix Mendelssohn
Michael Stairs, organ
At the Singakademie

Johanna Sebus .................................................. Carl Friedrich Zelter

   Erin Swanson, soprano
   Jean Bernard Cerin, baritone
   Ryan Tibbetts, bass
   Donald St. Pierre, piano

Verleih uns Frieden* .......................................... Felix Mendelssohn

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O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde groß* ...................... J. S. Bach
Chorale Prelude: O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde groß ....... J. S. Bach
   Michael Stairs, organ

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St. Matthew Passion: O Mensch, bewein ..................... J. S. Bach
O Lamm Gottes unschuldig* .................................. J. S. Bach
St. Matthew Passion: Kommt, ihr Töchter .................... J. S. Bach

   Alan Harler, conductor

Mendelssohn Club Chorus
Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia
   Michael Stairs, organ
   Donald St. Pierre, piano

* The audience is invited to join in the singing of these chorales.

Sunday, October 26, 2014
4:00 pm
Girard College Chapel
Philadelphia

This concert is made possible by a generous grant from the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage.
The use of recording or photographic equipment during this concert is strictly prohibited. Please silence audible cell phones and alarms.
PROGRAM NOTES

At six in the evening on March 11, 1829, Berlin’s musical wunderkind Felix Mendelssohn sat down at the piano in the Berlin Singakademie’s new hall, raised his baton, and gave the downbeat to what has become one of the most famous and historically significant concerts of all, the first public performance in nearly a century of Bach’s magnificent *St. Matthew Passion*. The performance was two years in the making and had generated intense public anticipation. The hall was packed with an audience estimated at 1000 people, including such luminaries as the King and Crown Prince of Prussia, explorer and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt, poet Heinrich Heine, and philosopher G. W. F. Hegel; an equal number of people were turned away at the door. The audience was entranced by the beauty and dramatic power of the *Passion*, and the performance ignited a revival of interest in Bach’s music that continues to this day.

In 1841, Mendelssohn presented a revised and slightly enlarged version of the *St. Matthew Passion* in the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, where it had been premiered by Bach. On February 8, Mendelssohn Club will recreate this historic concert, its first hearing in North America. This afternoon’s concert, in Mendelssohn Club’s popular Big Sing format, will set the stage for that performance. You’ll be introduced to some of the music from the *St. Matthew Passion*, learn the role that chorale tunes play in its structure (and even sing a few chorales), and see how Bach influenced Mendelssohn and how Mendelssohn approached Bach’s music. And we’ll trace some of the remarkable story of how an 18-year old pianist and composer became convinced that he should present Bach’s masterpiece to the world, a story which includes a family with an almost proprietary regard for Bach’s music, a bricklayer who became the most influential musician in Prussia, and an amateur chorus that was considered Berlin’s greatest musical gem despite rarely appearing in public performance.

The idea of a Bach revival suggests that Bach had somehow fallen into obscurity, which isn’t quite accurate. As in his own lifetime, Sebastian Bach was mostly known as a virtuoso organist and teacher. (In the early 19th century, he was invariably called Sebastian Bach to distinguish him from his five sons who also became musicians.) He was largely represented by his keyboard music; his four-volume *Keyboard Works* had been published during his lifetime and *The Well-Tempered Clavier* was widely available in manuscript. Most keyboard players would have studied Bach, but despite his keyboard music’s melodic and harmonic inventiveness, it was considered more like exercises than recital material. Bach’s five musician sons did much to keep his musical tradition alive, but again more through exposing their pupils to his music than performing it in concert. Of Bach’s incredible output of sacred vocal music, almost none was published and very little was widely known. In 1789, for example, Mozart visited Leipzig, where Bach had written most of his sacred
music, and the cantor of the Thomasschule surprised him with a performance of Bach’s double-choir motet Singet dem Herren ein neues Lied (Sing to the Lord a New Song). Mozart was entranced by the beauty and intricate construction of the piece, which he had not known before, and he spent the balance of the day poring over Bach manuscripts in their collection.

Mendelssohn’s own family was so steeped in Bach’s music that when his older sister Fanny was born, his mother Lea exclaimed that she had wonderful fingers for Bach fugues! (And indeed, she did. Fanny was an accomplished pianist and talented composer in her own right and, at age 13, played Bach’s entire Well-Tempered Clavier from memory at a recital.) Felix’s great-aunt Sara was a virtuoso harpsichord player who studied with Wilhelm Friedemann Bach (the eldest son) and premiered Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach’s (the second son) Concerto for Harpsichord and Piano. Felix’s great-aunt Fanny (for whom his sister was named), his grandmother Bella and his mother all studied with Johann Philipp Kirnberger, Sebastian Bach’s most distinguished student, a composer and music theorist who wrote an influential textbook on the art of composition. It was great-aunt Fanny who started hosting musical salons showcasing both local and visiting musicians and heavily featuring the music of Sebastian Bach, a tradition carried on by Mendelssohn’s mother and sister in turn.

When Mendelssohn was eight, he and Fanny were sent for composition and music theory lessons to Carl Friedrich Zelter, director of the Singakademie zu Berlin and the city’s most respected musician. Zelter was the son of a master stonemason who owned his own brickworks and acted as a contractor for the wealthy and socially well-connected. Zelter was drawn to music at an early age, and his father arranged piano and violin lessons, but insisted that Zelter learn a trade because the life of a professional musician was still precarious at best. Zelter obligingly was apprenticed and eventually became a master mason himself, but he also kept up his musical activities, playing violin in a theater orchestra and writing choral works which were sometimes performed. When Zelter’s father died, he took over the business, but used it to fund his musical career. He eventually found a theory teacher in Carl Friedrich Fasch, the founder and then-director of the Singakademie.

Fasch was the son of a more famous (and, sadly, more talented) composer. He studied with C. P. E. Bach and succeeded him as harpsichordist at the royal court. He started what would become the Singakademie in 1791. It began as a sort of “singing tea,” where people socialized as much as sang. The chorus was drawn mainly from amateur musicians in the wealthier strata of society as well as a few professional musicians, the only two classes of people who would have had access to musical training. Mendelssohn’s great-aunt Sara had been a member, as was his father Abraham. Fasch initially rehearsed them mostly with his own music, but began introducing Bach motets after a few years. There was no thought of public performances; the chorus learned and rehearsed music for its members’ own edification and satisfaction.
When Fasch recruited his student Zelter into the organization, things began to change. Zelter lobbied for a permanent rehearsal venue and succeeded in obtaining space in the Academy of Fine Arts building, which also gave the chorus its name. Zelter assumed the leadership of the Singakademie when Fasch died in 1800. He added a men’s chorus and an instrumental ensemble, and expanded their repertoire to include Handel oratorios as well as more Bach sacred music. The reputation of the Singakademie as an outstanding choral ensemble continued to grow, despite the very few public performances it gave. Its rehearsals were open to the public (Beethoven attended one in 1796), it presented some private performances, and it traditionally presented a public Good Friday performance. But under Zelter, the Singakademie largely held to its charter, to provide “practical study of musical works for the edification of the mind.”

Zelter’s approach to Bach was a complicated one. He revered the composer and had acquired a vast collection of Bach manuscripts with the Singakademie (including ones donated by Abraham and great-aunt Sara). He was a highly regarded teacher, and his students (which also included future opera composers Otto Nicolai and Giacomo Meyerbeer) were thoroughly grounded in Bach’s music, studying harmonic structure, counterpoint, figured bass and chorale writing from Kirnberger’s textbook. He introduced a great deal of Bach’s sacred music to the Singakademie, including the complete St. John Passion and parts of the St. Matthew Passion and B-minor Mass, but he often altered Bach’s music, simplifying rhythmic and harmonic passages, sometimes even making his edits on Bach autograph manuscripts. He reserved Bach’s more intricate music, which he called “the bristly bits,” for private study with his more advanced singers. He strongly opposed presenting Bach’s music in public performance, expecting that the general public could not appreciate the beauty and subtlety of his music. He considered himself a guardian of Bach’s legacy, which could best be served by exposing talented amateur musicians to his works.

It was Mendelssohn’s grandmother Bella who undertook the difficult task of extracting Zelter’s manuscript copy of the St. Matthew Passion from his grasp so she could have it copied and presented to her grandson on his fifteenth birthday. Mendelssohn was delighted with the score and began an intense study. It may have been his friend Julius Schubring who planted the seed for its performance. Schubring, then a young divinity student and member of the Singakademie (and later librettist for Mendelssohn’s oratorios St. Paul and Elijah), complained to Mendelssohn that he found it difficult to think of Bach’s music “as aught but a dry arithmetical sum.” Mendelssohn immediately fetched his Matthew Passion score and began playing and singing. His sisters and Schubring joined in, and Schubring was entranced by the dramatic power and sweep of the music. Mendelssohn proposed they should meet regularly to sing through the Passion, and began recruiting additional performers, starting with Eduard Devrient, another friend from the Singakademie who was also a soloist at the Berlin Opera. They eventually assembled a small chorus and instrumental ensemble, mostly Singakademie members. Sometime in 1828, Mendelssohn and Devrient concluded that they should
perform the *Passion* in public, with Mendelssohn conducting and Devrient singing the part of Jesus, and using the forces of the *Singakademie*. Obtaining Zelter’s consent was a major obstacle, but Mendelssohn and Devrient answered his every objection and eventually won his grudging acquiescence. Devrient recruited colleagues from the opera as soloists and Eduard Rietz, Mendelssohn’s violin teacher and former member of the royal chapel orchestra, helped recruit instrumentalists.

Set for vocal soloists, double chorus and double orchestra, the *St Matthew Passion* was Sebastian Bach’s largest and most intricate composition. It was first performed in a Good Friday service on April 11, 1727 at the *Thomaskirche* in Leipzig. It was expanded for a Good Friday performance in 1736 and revised several times again until a final version was produced in 1746. It is not clear if Bach’s congregation in Leipzig recognized that they had heard one of the towering achievements in Western music. There are no contemporary accounts of the performance. The town council, to whom Bach was responsible, merely reprimanded him for failure to perform some other task and docked his salary. He wrote, “The authorities are odd and little interested in music,” and when he died, the search committee for his replacement was instructed to look for “a teacher, not a musician.” Bach, however, clearly regarded his *Matthew Passion* highly. He took great care in preparing the autograph manuscript, drawing in bar lines with a straightedge and using red ink to write the scriptural text and the music of the chorale *O Lamm Gottes* (*O Lamb of God*), which appears as a cantus firmus in the opening movement of the *Passion*.

The idea of a historically correct performance of the *St. Matthew Passion* would have been alien to Mendelssohn. Mendelssohn used the full 150-member *Singakademie*, while Bach probably used no more than 30 singers, including soloists. There were no oboe d’amore or oboe da caccia players (and no one would even know how to construct an oboe da caccia until the 1970’s!) so Mendelssohn substituted clarinets for the antique instruments. His score contained no figured bass for the recitatives, so he provided his own harmonizations (which turned out to differ from Bach’s in a number of places), and played the continuo himself on the keyboard rather than using the organs that Bach had specified. Unaware of many Baroque musical conventions, he added Romantic markings for dynamics and shadings which supported the dramatic and emotional content of the music. But the biggest change he made was to cut about one third of the numbers in the *Passion*. Bach’s *Passion* text drew from three sources: the Scriptural narrative, chorales, and original text written by his librettist Picander (the pen name of the poet Christian Friedrich Henrici). Picander’s text consists mostly of reflections on the events of the *Passion*, and Bach set them as recitatives and arias. The chorales, which were well-known church hymns, served to bring the audience into the story, each one set to a different harmonization to suggest the emotion and feelings of the *Passion* at that point. Mendelssohn’s idea was to pare down the *Passion*.
to its essential dramatic story, and he cut some ten arias and six chorales, in
the process reducing the *Passion* to a more manageable two hours of music.
While purists (and there were none in 1829) might be aghast at his changes,
his concept was musically sound and captured the essence of Bach’s mighty
*Passion*. It proved revelatory to his audiences, who had never experienced
the power and emotional intensity with which Bach had imbued the *Matthew
Passion*. Perhaps more sure of his audience in the 1841 revival at the historic
*Thomaskirche* in Leipzig, Mendelssohn restored a chorale and four arias that
had been cut in the 1829 performance.

Chorales are central to the structure of the *St. Matthew Passion*. Eight chorales
are heard, either standing alone or as part of a larger movement, but none
more prominently than *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden*, familiar to us as the
hymn *O Sacred Head, So Wounded*. Bach set all six verses, and it appears five
times during the *Passion* at key moments. It may be surprising to know that
the melody actually started out as a 17th century love song by Hans Leo Has-
sler called *Mein G’müt ist mir verwirret* (My feelings are all confused) taken
from a collection called *Lustgarten* (Garden of Delight). The hymn text by
Paul Gerhardt is based on a medieval poem which addresses all the members
of the crucified Christ’s body, and was set by Johann Crüger to a rhythmically
simplified version of Hassler’s original tune.

Mendelssohn had embarked on a grand tour of Europe immediately after
conducting the second performance of the *Matthew Passion*, and he wrote
his three-movement cantata *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden* in 1830 in Vienna.
He selected the first and last verses of the hymn for the outer movements
of the cantata, set for the chorus. The second movement, with a text from
an unknown source, is set for bass solo, and Mendelssohn had his friend
Devrient’s voice in mind when he composed it. The hymn tune appears as
a cantus firmus for the sopranos in the first movement, is briefly quoted in
the second movement, and is set fairly conventionally in the final movement.
Hassler’s unusual melody neither starts nor ends on a root tone, and there is
an inherent ambiguity which allows the tune to be cast either in a major or
a minor key. Mendelssohn delighted in this tonal ambiguity, writing to his
younger sister Rebecka that “no one will be able to discern whether it will be
in C-minor or E-flat.”

Mendelssohn was a virtuoso organist as well as pianist. At sixteen, he had
charmed audiences in Paris with the beauty of Bach preludes (then unknown
to them), and his grand tour began in England, where he played a series of
organ recitals, dazzling listeners with both the dexterity and expressivity of
his pedal technique. It was an English organist, Thomas Attwood, who re-
quested a set of organ voluntaries that became the *6 Organ Sonatas*, published
in 1845. The *Sonata No. 3*, the first to be composed, opens with a maestoso
introduction based on the processional Mendelssohn wrote for his sister Fan-
ny’s wedding. It then moves to a complex double fugue which is set above
the chorale tune *Aus tiefer Noth* (Out of the depths I cry unto Thee) in the
pedal. The hymn is Martin Luther’s paraphrase of Psalm 130 and appeared
in the first Lutheran hymnal in 1524.
Zelter was a close friend of Goethe and had set a number of his poems to music. Goethe was pleased with the settings and proposed to write some dramatic ballads specifically as libretti for lieder or cantatas. One such piece was *Johanna Sebus*. The poem was written in 1809 as a memorial for a seventeen year old girl who had carried her mother to safety when floodwaters engulfed their village, and then had been swept away as she returned to try to rescue a neighbor and her three young children. Zelter completed his setting the following year. It is a strophic setting, with narrative solos for baritone, bass and soprano separated by shorter choral statements. The English version used here is a metrical, if not entirely convincing, 1853 translation by Edgar Alfred Bowring.

Mendelssohn was given a copy of the Lutheran hymnal while he was in Vienna and was struck by the power and beauty of Luther’s own chorales. He conceived a project to compose a series of cantatas based on the hymns. The cantata *Verleih uns Frieden* (Grant us peace) was written the next year, with Mendelssohn setting Luther’s paraphrase of the famous *Dona nobis pacem* prayer to his own soaring melody. Mendelssohn set only the first verse of the hymn, which is heard first with the bass voices, then in a bass-alto duet featuring a beautiful countermelody, and then in four-part harmony, with the last line repeated softly in a double canon.

— Michael Moore
THE TEXTS

**Bach: O Haupt wie Blut und Wunden**

O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden,  
voll Schmerz und voller Hohn,  
O Haupt, zu Spott gebunden  
mit einer Dornenkron.  
O Haupt, sonst schön gekrönet  
mit höchster Ehr und Zier,  
jetzt aber so verhöhnet,  
gegrüßet seist du mir!

O Sacred Head, now wounded,  
With grief and shame weighed down,  
Now scornfully surrounded,  
With thorns thy only crown;  
How pale thou art with anguish,  
With sore abuse and scorn!  
How does that visage languish,  
Which once was bright as morn.

— Paul Gerhardt

**Bach: Erkenne mich, mein Hüter**

Erkenne mich, mein Hüter,  
mein Hirte, nimm mich an!  
Von dir, Quell aller Güter,  
ist mir viel Guts getan.  
Dein Mund hat mich gelabet  
mit Milch und süßer Kost,  
dein Geist hat mich begabet  
mit mancher Himmelslust.

Recognize me, my Guardian,  
My Shepherd, accept me!  
From you, source of all goodness,  
Much good has been done for me.  
Your mouth has refreshed me  
With milk and sweet food,  
Your spirit has endowed me  
With many heavenly delights.

— J. W. Alexander

**Hassler: Mein G’müth ist mir verwirret**

Mein G’müth ist mir verwirret,  
Das macht ein Jungkfrau zart,  
Bin gantz und gar verirret,  
Mein Hertz das kränkt sich hart.  
Hab Tag und Nacht kein Ruh  
Führ allzeit große Klag,  
Thu stets seuffzen und weinen,  
In trauren schier verzag.

I’m all mixed up;  
this a tender maid has done to me!  
I’m totally lost;  
my heart is sick and sore.  
I get no rest by day or night,  
my pain is always so great.  
I’m sighing and crying all the time;  
I’m almost in despair.

— translation courtesy of the  
San Francisco Bach Choir

**Bach: Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden**

Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden,  
so scheide nicht von mir,  
wer ich den Tod soll leiden,  
so tritt du denn herfür!  
Wenn mir am allerbängsten  
wird um das Herze sein,  
so reiß mich aus den Ängsten  
kraft deiner Angst und Pein!

When I one day must depart from here  
Then do not depart from me,  
When I must suffer death  
Then step forward next to me!  
When most full of fear  
I am in my heart,  
Then snatch me from my fears  
By the strength of your agony and pains.
Mendelssohn: *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden*

1. Chorus

O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden,  
voll Schmerz und voller Hohn.  
O Haupt zu Spott gebunden,  
mit einer Dornenkrön.  
O Haupt sonst schön gekrönet,  
mit höchster Ehr und Zier.  
Jetzt aber höchst verhöhnet,  
gegrüßet seist du mir!

O head so bruised and wounded,  
With pain and bitter scorn.  
O head, in spite surrounded  
With stinging crown of thorns.  
O head once crowned with glory  
With highest power and grace.  
But now oppressed and weary,  
I greet you in distress!

2. Aria

Du desses Todeswunden  
die sünd'ge Welt versohnt,  
den sie dafür gebunden,  
den sie mit Schmach gekrönnt!  
Der Schmerzen litt und Plagen  
für mich am Kreuze hier,  
der meine Sünd getragen,  
gegrüßet seist du mir!

You whose tormented body  
Redeemed the sinful world,  
Whom they had bound so gladly,  
Whom they with shame had crowned!  
Who suffered grief and passion  
For me upon the cross,  
Who bore all my transgressions,  
I greet you in distress!

3. Chorale

Ich will hier bei dir stehen,  
verachte mich doch nicht.  
Von dir will ich nicht gehen,  
wenng mir das Herz schon bricht.  
Wenn ich einst werd erblassen,  
in letzter Todespein,  
alsdann will ich dich faßen,  
und noch dein eigen sein.  
Amen.

I long to stand here with you,  
O let me not depart.  
For I will never leave you  
Though grief may break my heart.  
When death one day comes o’er me  
With all its fear and pain,  
Then I would hold you near me,  
And ever be your own.  
Amen.

Bach: *Aus tiefer Noth*

Aus tiefer Noth schrei’ ich zu dir!  
Herr Gott, erhör mein Rufen!  
Dein gnädig’n Ohren kehr zu mir,  
und meiner Bitt’ sie öffne!  
Denn so du willst das sehen an,  
was Sünd’ und Unrecht ist gethan,  
wer kann, Herr, vor dir bleiben?  

From deep distress I cry out to you!  
Lord God, hear my voice!  
Turn your gracious ears toward me,  
And hear my plea!  
If you regard the sins  
And the evils that have been done,  
Who, Lord, can stand before you?

Zelter: *Johanna Sebus*

The dam breakdown, the ice-plain growls,  
The floods arise, the water howls.  
“I’ll bear thee, mother, across the swell  
’Tis not yet high, I can wade right well.”  
“Remember us too! In what danger are we!  
Thy fellow lodger, and children three!  
The trembling woman! – Thou’rt going away!”  
She bears the mother across the spray.

“Quick! haste to the mound, and awhile there wait,  
I’ll soon return, and all will be straight.  
The mound’s close by, and safe from the wet;  
But take my goat too, my darling pet!”  
The dam dissolves, the ice-plain growls,  
The floods dash on, the water howls.  
She places the mother safe on the shore;  
Fair Susan then turns tow’rd the flood once more.
“Oh whither? Oh whither? The breadth fast grows.
Both here and there the water o'erflows.
Wilt venture, thou rash one, the billows to brave?”
“They shall, and they must be preserved from the wave!”

The dam disappears, the water growls,
Like ocean billows it heaves and howls.
Fair Susan returns by the way she had tried,
The waves roar around, but she turns not aside;
She reaches the mound, and the neighbor straight,
But for her and the children, alas, too late!

The dam disappear'd, like a sea it growls,
Round the hillock in circling eddies it howls.
The foaming abyss gapes wide and whirls round,
The women and children are borne to the ground;
The horn of the goat by one is seized fast,
But, ah, they all must perish at last!
Fair Susan still stands there, untouched by the wave;
The youngest, the noblest, oh, who now will save?
Fair Susan still stands there, as bright as a star,
But, alas! all hope, all assistance is far.
The foaming waters around her roar,
To save her, no bark pushes off from the shore.
Her gaze once again she lifts up to Heaven,
Then gently away by the flood she is driven.

No dam, no plain! to mark the place
Some straggling trees are the only trace.
The rushing water the wildness covers,
Yet Susan’s image still o’er it hovers.
The water sinks, the plains re-appear.
Fair Susan’s lamented with many a tear.
May he who refuses her story to tell,
Be neglected in life and in death as well!

—translation by Edgar Alfred Bowring

Mendelssohn: *Verleih uns Frieden*

*Verleih uns Frieden gnädiglich,*
*Herr Gott, zu unsern Zeiten.*
*Es ist doch ja kein and’rer nicht,*
*der für uns könnte streiten,*
*denn du, unser Gott, alleine.*

Graciously grant us peace,
Lord God, in our time.
There is none other who will fight for us, but you, our God, alone.

Bach: *O Mensch bewein dein Sünde groß*

*O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde groß,*
*darum Christus seins Vaters Schoß äußert und kam auf Erden;*
*von einer Jungfrau rein und zart für uns er hie geboren ward,*
*er wollt der Mittler werden.*
*Den Toten er das Leben gab,*
*und legt’ dabei all Krankheit ab,*
*bis sich die Zeit herdrange,*
*daß er für uns geopfert würd’, träug unserer Sünden schoere Bürd,*
*wohl an dem Kreuze lange.*

O man, bewail your great sin,
For this Christ from his Father’s bosom Went forth and came to earth; Of a virgin pure and gentle, He was born here for us, He was willing to become the mediator, To the dead he gave life, And in this way put aside all illness, Until it came to the time That he would be sacrificed for us, Bear the heavy burden of our sins, For a long time indeed on the cross.
Bach: O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig

O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig,
am Stamm des Kreuz’ geschlachtet,
allzeit erfund’n geduldig.

Wie wohl du warrest verachtet;
all’ Sünd’ hast du getragen,
sonst müßten wir verzagen.

Erbarm’ dich unser, O Jesu.

O Lamb of God, most stainless!
Who on the cross didst languish,
Patient through all Thy sorrows.
Though mocked amid Thine anguish;
Our sins Thou bearest for us;
Else had despair reigned o’er us.
Have mercy upon us, O Jesu!

— translation by Catherine T. Winkworth

Bach: Kommt, ihr Töchter, helft mir klagen

Kommt, ihr Töchter, helft mir klagen,
Sehet – Wen? – den Bräutigam,
Seht ihn – Wie? – als wie ein Lamm!
Sehet – Was? – seht die Geduld,
Seht – Wohin? – auf unsere Schuld;
Sehet ihn aus Lieb und Huld
Holz zum Kreuze selber tragen.

O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig
Am Stamm des Kreuzes geschlachtet,
Allzeit erfunden geduldig.

Wie wohl du warrest verachtet.
All’ Sünd hast du getragen,
Sonst müßt Ihr verzagen.

Erbarm dich unser, o Jesu!

Come, you daughters, help me to lament,
See – Whom – the bridegroom,
See him – How? – like a lamb!
See – What? – see his patience,
See – Where? – our guilt;
See how from love and grace
He bears the wood of the cross himself.

O Lamb of God, innocent
Slaughtered on the beam of a cross,
Always found to be patient,
No matter how much you were despised.
All our sins you have borne,
Otherwise we would have to despair.
Have mercy on us, O Jesus!

Save the date!

mendelssohn medley 2015

The ninth annual event blending glorious song & musical conversation,
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Meet Artistic Director Alan Harler, and hear selections of choral
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Sunday, April 12, 2015, 4 pm
A very special afternoon, not to be missed — please mark your
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Invitations will be mailed in mid-February.
www.mcchorus.org/wp/mendelssohn-medley
Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia

Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia, one of America’s oldest musical ensembles, is performing in its 141st consecutive season. It began in 1874 as an eight-voice male chorus founded by William Wallace Gilchrist, one of the most important musical figures in nineteenth century Philadelphia. The chorus rapidly expanded, and was able to provide more than three hundred singers for the 1916 American premiere of Mahler’s Eighth Symphony with the Philadelphia Orchestra under the direction of Leopold Stokowski. Since then, Mendelssohn Club has earned a prestigious reputation by giving the first performance outside the Soviet Union of Shostakovich’s Thirteenth Symphony and the Philadelphia premieres of Brahms’ German Requiem, Prokofiev’s Ivan the Terrible, Scriabin’s First Symphony, Bartók’s Cantata Profana, and the full orchestral version of Britten’s War Requiem, among many others.

Under the dynamic leadership of Artistic Director Alan Harler, the 140-voice Mendelssohn Club is known for its professional productions of choral/orchestral programs, as well as performances in guest engagements with prominent area orchestras. Harler’s programs combine new or rarely heard works with more traditional works in order to enhance the presentation of each and to provide the audience with a familiar context for the new experience. Dedicated to the ongoing vitality of the choral art, Mendelssohn Club and Alan Harler have made a significant commitment to the commissioning of new choral music, and have commissioned and premiered fifty-five new works since 1990. This commitment has earned Mendelssohn Club two ASCAP/Chorus America Award for Adventurous Programming. Mendelssohn Club has also been honored with an award from the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations for “bringing the community together in song” through Harler’s multicultural concert programming.

Mendelssohn Club also explores interdisciplinary concert presentations and, in May 2005, presented the Philadelphia premiere of Richard Einhorn’s 1994 cantata Voices of Light with the 1928 silent film masterpiece by Carl Dreyer,
The Passion of Joan of Arc. The November 2006 co-production of Carmina Burana with the Leah Stein Dance Company was the first dance collaboration in Mendelssohn Club’s recent history. This collaboration continued in 2009 with battle hymns, with a score by David Lang and a choreography for the full chorus and nine professional dancers, and last season’s immersive multimedia presentation Anthracite Fields, with a score by Julia Wolfe, choreography for the full chorus, and scenography and projection by Jeff Sugg.

Alan Harler, Artistic Director

Alan Harler became Mendelssohn Club’s twelfth Music Director in 1988 and was named Artistic Director in 2009. Maestro Harler served for three decades as Laura H. Carnell Professor and Chairman of Choral Music at Temple University’s Esther Boyer College of Music. He has appeared at the Festival Casals in San Juan, Puerto Rico and the Aspen Choral Institute, and has given master classes and conducted performances in Taiwan, China and South Africa. He currently serves as a Conducting Mentor with the Conductors Guild, making himself available for consultation with young conductors internationally.


In 2004, Alan Harler received the Emanuel Kardon Foundation Award for “contributing to the vitality and excellence of the Philadelphia arts community.” In 2007, Harler received the Elaine Brown Award for Lifelong Service to Choral Music, given by the American Choral Director’s Association. In 2009, he was honored with Chorus America’s prestigious Michael Korn Founders Award for Development of the Professional Choral Art, and the Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia’s Honorary Lifetime Membership for a Distinguished Contribution to the Musical Life of Philadelphia.
Michael Stairs was born in Milo, Maine and vividly remembers loving the sound of a pipe organ at the two services per Sunday at his father’s church in Gardiner. Against his father’s wishes, he began studying piano in Presque Isle at age ten but paid for the first year of lessons by picking potatoes vigorously. After high school in Erie, PA, he went on to Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey. There he accompanied the 300-voice Symphonic Choir under the batons of great conductors such as Leopold Stokowski and Leonard Bernstein. He studied organ with George Markey and Alexander McCurdy and improvisation with Alec Wyton. He then went on to earn the coveted Artist’s Diploma from the Curtis Institute of Music, studying organ with Alexander McCurdy and piano with Vladimir Sokoloff.

Michael retired in June 2012 from twenty-five years of teaching Upper School Music at The Haverford School, where he was awarded the first Grace and Mahlon Buck Chair in the Performing Arts. Under his direction, The Glee Club and small vocal ensemble, The Notables, have toured twelve overseas countries. Stairs retired in January of 2008 as organist/choirmaster at Bryn Mawr’s Church of the Redeemer after serving twenty-five years in that post. He has now returned as Organist Emeritus under the leadership of Dr. Michael Diorio. Michael serves on the boards of the Friends of the Wanamaker Organ, The Garrigues Foundation and The Presser Foundation where he chairs the Advancement Committee.

Riccardo Muti appointed Stairs to do the organ work for the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1985. He has since been a featured soloist with this ensemble in various locations ranging from New York’s Carnegie Hall to Tokyo’s Suntory Hall. Maestros Christoph Eschenbach and Charles Dutoit featured Michael in several concerts on Verizon Hall’s Dobson organ, the largest mechanical-action concert hall pipe organ in North America. He has been a member of the Allen Artists program for several years.

Michael will be soloist three times this season with the Philadelphia Orchestra. His most recent album from Girard College’s magnificent Æolian organ is titled *Sacred and Profane*. It is a double CD produced through his new company with partners Rudy Lucente and Douglas Backman: Stentor Music Services.
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* Small ensemble for Hassler Mein G’müth ist verwirret.

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Under the leadership of Artistic Director Alan Harler, Mendelssohn Club has become a chorus whose audiences know to expect the unexpected. The Alan Harler New Ventures Fund was established in 2007 in honor of Alan Harler’s first 20 years as Mendelssohn Club’s Artistic Director, to assure the continuation of his landmark initiatives and adventurous programming. To contribute to the Alan Harler New Ventures Fund please use any of the payment methods outlined on our website (www.mcchorus.org).

The Mendelssohn Club Board of Trustees has allocated portions of this growing fund to a number of significant ventures: the March 2009 commissioned piece by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Jennifer Higdon, On the Death of the Righteous, paired with the Verdi Requiem; battle hymns, the June 2009 collaboration with the Leah Stein Dance Company and Pulitzer Prize-winning composer David Lang; and the 2011 commission of Rollo Dilworth’s Rain Sequence, which was supported by a special gift to the Alan Harler New Ventures Fund. The Fund also supported the production of Metamorphosis, a commercially produced CD featuring three recent Mendelssohn Club commissioned works: Higdon’s On the Death of the Righteous, Andrea Clearfield’s Golem Psalms, and James Primoch’s Fire-Memory/River-Memory.

Contributors to the Alan Harler New Ventures Fund

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Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia
Commissions and Premieres under Artistic Director Alan Harler

2014
Donald St. Pierre – *Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day*
*Based on the traditional folk carol*

Julia Wolfe – *Anthracite Fields*
Folk cantata commissioned for chorus and folk/classical chamber orchestra

2013
Donald St. Pierre – *Watchman, Tell Us of the Night*
Setting of the traditional carol for soprano solo, chorus and brass

Jeremy Gill – *Before the Wrestling Tides*
Based on the poetry of Hart Crane and commissioned for performance with Beethoven’s Choral Fantasy

2012
Donald St. Pierre – *In the Company of Angels*
Cantata with a text taken from the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg

Thomas Whitman – *At War’s End*
Setting for chamber chorus

Robert Moran – *Angele Dei*
World premiere of Moran’s setting of St. Anselm’s Prayer to One’s Guardian Angel for chorus and chamber orchestra

Robert Moran – *Trinity Requiem*
Written for the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy; originally commissioned by Trinity Wall Street for treble voices and now reset for full chorus and treble voices.

Donald St. Pierre – *Morning Has Broken*
A cantata inspired by the famous hymn, with a text by Thomas Traherne

Andrea Clearfield – *Tse Go La*
Based on folk music used in the Buddhist traditions of Nepal and collected by the composer

2011
Rollo Dilworth – *Rain Sequence*
A traditional spiritual and settings of poems by Langston Hughes and Paul Laurence Dunbar

2010
Donald St. Pierre – *Three Carols*
Settings of three traditional English carols

Robert S. Cohen – *Sleep, Little Baby, Sleep*
Setting of a poem by Christina Georgina Rossetti

2009
Donald St. Pierre – *A Visit From St. Nicholas*
Setting of the famous Christmas poem by Clement C. Moore

David Lang – *battle hymns*
Commissioned with the Leah Stein Dance Company for performance at the historic Armory of the First Troop Philadelphia City Cavalry

Peter Hilliard – *Consider Krakatau*
Commissioned with the Philadelphia Gay Men’s Chorus and Anna Crusis Women’s Choir for a concert event sponsored by the Equality Forum

Robert Maggio – *Into the Light*
Commissioned with the Philadelphia Gay Men’s Chorus and Anna Crusis Women’s Choir for a concert event sponsored by the Equality Forum

Cynthia Folio – *Voyage: I, Too, Can Sing a Dream*
Commissioned with the Philadelphia Gay Men’s Chorus and Anna Crusis Women’s Choir for a concert event sponsored by the Equality Forum
Jennifer Higdon – *On the Death of the Righteous*  
Commissioned for performance with the Verdi Requiem; text taken from a sermon of John Donne

2008 Anthony Mosakowski – *Resonet in Laudibus*  
Setting of the famous medieval Christmas carol premiered at the From Heaven on High holiday concerts

Pauline Oliveros – *Urban ECHO: Circle Told*  
Improvisational soundscape performed in collaboration with the Leah Stein Dance Company at the Live Arts Festival / Philly Fringe

Maurice Wright – *Vox Humana*  
For chorus and bass soloist with electroacoustic sound

2007 Donald St. Pierre – *Caido se la ha un Clavel / A Carnation Has Fallen*  
Setting of a Nativity poem by the Spanish writer Luis de Góngora

2006 Donald St. Pierre – *little tree*  
Setting of a Christmas poem by e. e. cummings

Jan Krzywicki – *Fortuna*  
Commissioned to be paired with Carl Orff’s *Carmina Burana*

Andrea Clearfield – *The Golem Psalms*  
Music based on the legend of the Golem of Prague with an original libretto by Ellen Frankel, scored for baritone solo, chorus and orchestra

2005 Donald St. Pierre – *A New Song*  
Based on a traditional Norwegian folk hymn

Kim D. Sherman – *The Happiest and Unhappiest of Men*  
Text taken from the writings of Beethoven and set for chorus and orchestra

2004 Donald St. Pierre – *Agnus Dei*  
Commissioned to complete the text of Mozart’s unfinished Mass in C minor

Jay Krush – *Fanfare Felix*  
Processional written for Mendelssohn Club’s 130th Anniversary Season

2003 Donald St. Pierre– *Billings with Brass*  
Arrangements of hymns by William Billings

Charles Fussell – *High Bridge*  
Large scale work for soprano, alto, tenor and bass soli, chorus and orchestra and based on the poetry of Hart Crane

2002 Donald St. Pierre – *Love Came Down at Christmas*  
Text taken from the poetry of Christina Rossetti and set for chorus and children’s choir

2001 Donald St. Pierre – *Memento mori*  
Written to be paired with Stravinsky’s *Les Noces*

1999 Donald St. Pierre – *Ite missa est*  
Commissioned to be performed with Beethoven’s Mass in C Major

Alice Parker – *Sing Now of Peace*  
Written for Mendelssohn Club’s 125th Anniversary

Jay Krush – *A Fanfare for the Chorus*  
Processional written for Mendelssohn Club’s 125th Anniversary performance of the Verdi Requiem

1998 James Primosch – *Fire-Memory/River-Memory*  
Text based on the poetry of Denise Levertov and set for chorus and orchestra
1996  Donald St. Pierre – *Songs of Sweet Accord*
Commissioned to be paired with Britten’s *Ceremony of Carols*; American folk hymns set for men’s voices

Roberto Sierra – *Lux æterna*
Commissioned to be performed with the Brahms German Requiem

1995  Donald St. Pierre – *Shepherd*
Based on an American folk hymn

Jan Krzywicki – *Lute Music*
Composed for the Eastern European multicultural holiday concert *Golden Voices of the East*

Shui-Lung Ma – *America, Our Home*
Written for the 125th Anniversary of Philadelphia’s Chinatown celebration

Jonathan B. Holland – *Symphony (of Light)*
Written for the African-American multicultural concert *The Forgotten Generation*

Robert Moran – *Winni ille Pu*
Set for chorus and orchestra with a text taken from a Latin version of the famous A. A. Milne stories

1994  Kim D. Sherman – *A Winter Solstice Ritual*
A choral processional written for the 1994 holiday concerts

Cynthia Folio – *Touch the Angel’s Hand*
Text taken from Fra Giovanni’s famous letter of consolation and set for chorus and orchestra

Robert Stern – *Returning the Song*
Composed for the Chinese multicultural program *Voices From the Bamboo Grove*

1993  Charles Fussell – *Invocation*
Text taken from a poem by May Sarton; Mendelssohn Club’s performance was featured on NPR’s First Art program

Ricky Ian Gordon – *Towards Independence*
Music taken from the play of the same name, which was premiered at Philadelphia’s American Music Theater Festival

1992  Jack Délano – *La Rosa y el Colibrí*
Set for chorus and solo trumpet and written for the Hispanic multicultural concert *Songs of the New World*

Charles Fussell – *Specimen Days*
Large scale work for baritone, chorus and orchestra and based on the writings of Walt Whitman; commercially recorded on the Koch International label

1991  Jan Krzywicki – *Poem*
A choral vocalise inspired by the poetry of Robert Frost

Byung Chul Choi – *The Apostle Song*
Commissioned for the Korean multicultural program *An American Seoul*

Robert Moran – *Agnus Dei and Ite missa est*
Written to complete the text of Mozart’s unfinished Mass in C minor

1990  Osvaldo Golijov – *Cantata de los Inocentes*
Written for performance with Britten’s *St. Nicholas Cantata*

Robert Moran – *Requiem: Chant du Cygne*
Written to be paired with the Mozart Requiem with text drawn from Mozart’s last words; critically acclaimed recording by Alan Harler and Mendelssohn Club on the Argo label
CHORAL ARTS
PHILADELPHIA

PRESENTS:

J. S. Bach’s Christmas Oratorio
A Historically-Informed New Year’s Eve Matinee Performance

Johann Sebastian Bach compiled his so-called “Christmas Oratorio” BWV 248 – a collective of six Cantatas that were performed during the major Feasts of the Christmas Season, starting on Christmas Day and ending on the Feast of the Epiphany – for the Christmas Season of 1734 in Leipzig. Rarely heard in its entirety, Choral Arts Philadelphia is excited to bring this stunning piece of music back to Philadelphia.

New Year’s Eve
Wednesday, December 31, 2014
Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral
13 South 38 Street, Philadelphia PA

Parts I - III
4:00 - 5:30 pm
Intermission (food & drink concessions will be available for purchase)

Parts IV - VI
6:30 - 8:00 pm

Tickets (before November 13, 2014):
Student (under 18 & students with ID): $10
Senior (age 65+): $20
General Admission: $30

(starting November 13, 2014):
Student: $15
Senior: $30
General Admission: $45

This program is made possible in part by a generous grant from the Presser Foundation.

Visit www.choralarts.com for tickets and more information
BIG SING: Mendelssohn, Bach, and the Chorale
October 26, 2014 | 4pm
Girard College Chapel
2101 South College Avenue
Philadelphia, PA
with The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia and Michael Stairs, organ
Alan Harler, Conductor

A Feast of Carols
December 13, 2014 | 5pm
St. Paul’s Episcopal Church of Chestnut Hill
22 East Chestnut Hill Avenue
Philadelphia, PA
with The Mendelssohn Brass and Michael Stairs, organ
Alan Harler, Conductor

Glorious Sound of Christmas with The Philadelphia Orchestra
December 18, 19 & 20 | 7pm
Verizon Hall, The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts
260 South Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA
Bramwell Tovey, Conductor
Tickets: Exclusively through the Kimmel Center Box Office

Bach/Mendelssohn: St. Matthew Passion
February 8, 2015 | 4pm
Girard College Chapel
2101 South College Avenue
Philadelphia, PA
featuring soprano Susanna Phillips, mezzo-soprano Marietta Simpson, tenor Yusuke Fujii, and bass Eric Owens
with The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia and Michael Stairs, organ
Alan Harler, Conductor

Bach/Mendelssohn Symposium
January 2015
More details coming soon.

TURBINE
May 16 & 17, 2015 | 6:30pm
The Water Works
640 Water Works Drive
Philadelphia, PA 19130
with Leah Stein Dance Company
Byron Au Yong, Composer
Alan Harler, Conductor

Major funding for Bach/Mendelssohn and BIG SING events provided by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage

Tickets and more information available at mcchorus.org

Expanding choral art for over 140 years through artistic excellence, new works, and cross-genre performance.