

MEDIA CONTACT

James Stahlman, Marketing and PR Manager
(415) 621-7900 ext. 206
jstahlman@americanbach.org

For immediate release

San Francisco CA
September 12, 2011



Jeffrey Thomas, Artistic Director

**AMERICAN BACH SOLOISTS ANNOUNCES
2011-12 CONCERT SEASON**

Tickets are now on sale for the **23rd Concert Season of American Bach Soloists** (ABS), which takes the ensemble's namesake as its inspiration, centering on the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. Building on the success of ABS's first annual **Summer Bach Festival & Academy**, held this past July at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, the 2011-12 season presents a broad selection of Bach's music, from familiar masterworks to some lesser-known gems.

"The launch of San Francisco's newest Bach festival proved an ideal inspiration for the upcoming season's concert programs," says Jeffrey Thomas, ABS's music director. "Following the great excitement that the festival generated among performers and audiences alike, it seemed only natural to build on this energy in the coming year by presenting a full season that focuses on Bach's immortal music."

This past summer's Bach Festival & Academy incorporated one major work by George Frideric Handel (the opera *Ariondante*) amid the Bach repertory. Similarly, ABS's 2011-12 season also includes a work by Handel—in this case, the annual performances of Handel's *Messiah*, presented December 15-16, 2011, in the splendid atmosphere of San Francisco's Grace Cathedral. Continuing a cherished holiday tradition, this year's *Messiah* features a stellar quartet

of vocal soloists (soprano Mary Wilson, countertenor Ian Howell, tenor Charles Blandy making his ABS debut, and baritone Jesse Blumberg) along with the American Bach Choir and ABS's outstanding period instrument specialists.

The first Bach program in the new year will be the masterful *St. Matthew Passion*, presented February 24-27, 2012, and featuring soprano Cecilia Leitner making her ABS debut, countertenor Jay Carter, alto Danielle Reutter-Harrah, tenors Derek Chester and Aaron Sheehan, and baritones Jesse Blumberg and Robert Stafford, along with the American Bach Choir and the Pacific Boychoir. San Francisco Classical Voice reported that ABS's last presentations of this work were "propelled by the riveting performance of tenor Wesley Rogers as the Evangelist." Rogers will return to reprise the role along with ABS Young Artist Competition winner, baritone Joshua Copeland, as Christus. For these concerts ABS uses a rarely performed 1740s manuscript version of the Passion, which brings fascinating new details to the performances, including the use of soloists for the dramatic ensemble scenes and different voice part assignments for some arias, creating an intensified experience of Bach's masterful composition. The 1740s version also includes the use of one of Bach's favorite keyboard instruments, the *lautenwerk* or lute-harpsichord, an extremely rare hybrid that was described by an 18th-century harpsichord builder as sounding "like a lute, but as loud as three."

March and April turn the spotlight on Bach's double concertos, with performances of several works featuring an array of instrumental pairs: the *Concerto for Oboe & Violin in C Minor*, the *Concerto for Two Violins in D Minor*, and the *Concerto for Two Harpsichords in C Major*. Two other works expand the number of soloists, with the *Concerto for Three Violins in D Major* and the famous *Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G Major*, for nine soloists. These pieces epitomize Bach's masterful development of the concerto form across a range of wind, string, and keyboard instruments. The performances, to be held March 30-April 2, 2012, also showcase the virtuosity of several outstanding soloists, including violinist and ABS Young Artist Competition winner Andrew Fouts, as well as oboist John Abberger, violinist Katherine Kyme, and harpsichordists Corey Jamason and Leon Schelhase.

The season concludes with Bach's lavish *Easter Oratorio*, along with a selection of outstanding cantatas including *Christ lag in Todesbanden BWV 4* and *Ein feste Burg ist unser*

Gott BWV 80, performed May 4-7, 2012. Soloists include soprano Kathryn Mueller (making her ABS debut), alto Judith Malafronte, tenor Jon Lee Keenan (also in his ABS debut performances), and baritone Mischa Bouvier. A dynamic work of great dramatic power, the *Easter Oratorio* brings the characters of Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Peter, and John to the forefront, complete with opulent orchestrations that include the brilliance of trumpets and timpani as well as the sweet strains of pastoral recorders. The cantatas, meanwhile, span a broad stylistic and chronological range, from one of Bach's earliest works (and earliest forays into the cantata genre), *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, to the quintessentially noble *Ein feste Burg is unser Gott* ("A Mighty Fortress is our God").

Two other events also highlight the ABS schedule. The season begins with a Gala "Evening in Old Leipzig" on Saturday, September 24 at 5:30 pm, featuring soprano Christine Brandes, and continues on Sunday, September 25 with a free performance of Bach's *Orchestral Suite No. 2 in B Minor* and "*Non sa che sia dolore*," featuring Brandes and Janet See, part of Cal Performances' "Fall Free for All" at the University of California-Berkeley.

The concert season culminates with the **American Bach Soloists Festival & Academy**, held July 12-22, 2012, at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, featuring performances of Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, Rameau's *Pygmalion*, and Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*.

For more on the ABS 2011-12 schedule of concerts, visit americanbach.org/concerts

~ ~ ~

The American Bach Soloists engage and inspire audiences through historically informed performances, recordings, and educational programs that emphasize the music of the Baroque, Classical, and Early Romantic eras. Founded in 1989, the ensemble has achieved its vision of assembling the world's finest vocalists and period-instrument performers to bring this brilliant music to life. For more than two decades, Jeffrey Thomas has brought thoughtful, meaningful, and informed perspectives to his performances as Artistic and Music Director of the American Bach Soloists. *Fanfare Magazine* proclaimed that "Thomas' direction seems just right, capturing the humanity of the music...there is no higher praise for Bach performance."

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

For tickets, please visit americanbach.org/tickets or call (415) 621-7900.

December 2011

HANDEL'S *MESSIAH*

Mary Wilson, soprano - Ian Howell, countertenor
Charles Blandy, tenor - Jesse Blumberg, baritone

Thursday, December 15, 2011, 7:30 pm

Grace Cathedral, 1100 California Street at Taylor SAN FRANCISCO

Friday, December 16, 2011, 7:30 pm

Grace Cathedral, 1100 California Street at Taylor SAN FRANCISCO

February 2012

BACH'S *ST. MATTHEW PASSION*

Wesley Rogers, tenor (Evangelista) – Joshua Copeland, baritone (Christus)
Cecilia Leitner, soprano - Danielle Reutter-Harrah, alto
Jay Carter, countertenor
Derek Chester & Aaron Sheehan, tenors
Jesse Blumberg & Robert Stafford, baritones
American Bach Choir & Pacific Boychoir

Friday, February 24, 2012, 8:00 pm

St. Stephen's Church, 3 Bayview Avenue at Golden Gate, BELVEDERE

Saturday, February 25, 2012, 8:00 pm

First Congregational Church, 2345 Channing Way at Dana, BERKELEY

Sunday, February 26, 2012, 7:00 pm

St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 1111 O'Farrell Street at Franklin, SAN FRANCISCO

Monday, February 27, 2012, 8:00 pm

Davis Community Church, 412 C Street at Fourth, DAVIS

continued...

March/April 2012
BACH'S DOUBLE CONCERTOS!

John Abberger, oboe
Andrew Fouts & Katherine Kyme, violins
Corey Jamason & Leon Schelhase, harpsichords

Friday, March 30, 2012, 8:00 pm
St. Stephen's Church, 3 Bayview Avenue at Golden Gate, BELVEDERE

Saturday, March 31, 2012, 8:00 pm
First Congregational Church, 2345 Channing Way at Dana, BERKELEY

Sunday, April 1, 2012, 7:00 pm
St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 1111 O'Farrell Street at Franklin, SAN FRANCISCO

Monday, April 2, 2012, 8:00 pm
Davis Community Church, 412 C Street at Fourth, DAVIS

May 2012
BACH'S EASTER ORATORIO & FAVORITE CANTATAS

Kathryn Mueller, soprano - Judith Malafronte, alto
Jon Lee Keenan, tenor - Mischa Bouvier, baritone

Friday, May 4, 2012, 8:00 pm
St. Stephen's Church, 3 Bayview Avenue at Golden Gate, BELVEDERE

Saturday, May 5, 2012, 8:00 pm
First Congregational Church, 2345 Channing Way at Dana, BERKELEY

Sunday, May 6, 2012, 7:00 pm
St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 1111 O'Farrell Street at Franklin, SAN FRANCISCO

Monday, May 7, 2012, 8:00 pm
Davis Community Church, 412 C Street at Fourth, DAVIS