



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 22, 2023

**AMERICAN BACH SOLOISTS ANNOUNCES THE 35th SEASON
WITH BOLDLY REFRESHED PROGRAMMING THAT BRINGS
THE BEST OF ABS TO DIVERSE AUDIENCES AND IN
CELEBRATION OF ARTISTIC DIRECTOR JEFFREY THOMAS’S
35 YEARS OF UNPARALLELED PERFORMANCES**

- New logos and a new name encompass all of the organization’s productions and special events
- “SF Baroque” brings American Bach’s newest performance style to new audiences
- Three Bach masterpieces — Mass in B Minor, Magnificat in D, and Saint John Passion — conducted by Jeffrey Thomas, “unsurpassed as a Bach interpreter”
- The exclusive debut of a newly composed work, specifically crafted for period instruments
- The 25th annual presentations of Handel’s *Messiah* in Grace Cathedral
- “Explorations” concert features Bach in the hands of Busoni, Liszt, and Saint-Saëns
- American Bach Soloists Academy returns after three-year hiatus
- Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen joins ABS to perform Bach solo cantatas
- “A Baroque Christmas” features Charpentier’s treasured “Midnight Mass”
- Christian Pursell is featured in “A Baroque New Year’s Eve at the Opera”

SAN FRANCISCO — **American Bach** is the new shortened name of one of America’s premiere music consortiums that includes **American Bach Soloists, American Bach Choir, American Bach Cantorei, American Bach Academy**, the **San Francisco Bach Festival**, and its newest performance platform called “**SF Baroque**.” The refreshed ethos of the organization puts its dynamic and captivating artists front and center in a variety of programs that showcase their incredible talents as they present some of the best of the Baroque that calls on their riveting performance styles and virtuosity.

The **2023–2024 Season** begins with American Bach’s **San Francisco Bach Festival** which this year takes place in four different concert venues, each chosen to be a perfect match for the festival programs. The 35th season continues with the annual **Gala Benefit, Holiday Programming, additional concerts throughout the great Bay Area, and the debut of SF Baroque!**

BAROQUE OLD & NEW (July 27 2023) — The San Francisco Bach Festival Opening Night Concert is a stunning program of music that captures the fun and vitality of the Baroque! **Concertos for two flutes, two violas, four violins, and harpsichord** will enthrall your senses. **Sarah Coit** — a recent recipient of The Jeffrey Thomas Award — will sing **Bach's ravishing Cantata 170** that *Classical FM* says is “so beautiful it's basically from another planet.” Voice and oboe d'amore blend together to express the work's title, “Delightful rest, beloved pleasure of the soul!” A unique aspect of this program will be the exclusive debut of a **newly composed work, specifically crafted for period instruments**. American Bach has sponsored a competition among composition students at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and the victorious piece will make its world premiere during this highly anticipated concert. This is an event that you won't want to miss!

EXPLORATIONS: BACH BEYOND BAROQUE (July 28 2023) — The passionate connections felt by 19th- and 20th-century composers to Johann Sebastian Bach and his legacy inspired some of the piano repertoire's most virtuoso compositions. In this program that presents transformations of Bach's music into brilliant bravura works, performed by the 22-year-old rising star pianist Oliver Moore, you'll hear one of the most exalted arrangements of **Bach's Chaconne in D Minor**, originally for solo violin: **Ferruccio Busoni's hypnotic transcription** is utterly mesmerizing. **Johannes Brahms** was inspired by a melody from **Handel**, and the resulting set of variations and fugue captures that particular Brahmsian texture that is like no other. **Camille Saint-Saëns'** short arrangement of the famous **Sinfonia** that came from one of Bach's solo violin partitas is thrilling. And the *crème de la crème* on this extraordinary program is **Franz Liszt's** monumental testament to the letters of Bach's name that correspond to four notes on the keyboard. The result is a towering masterpiece of depth and drama, the titanic **Prelude and Fugue on B-A-C-H**.

VIVALDI'S FOUR SEASONS FEATURING SF BAROQUE (July 29 2023) — *Come dressed as your favorite season!* And get ready for unforgettable experiences as **SF Baroque's** violinists will play each of **Vivaldi's “Four Seasons”** concertos while **moving throughout the room**, performing some of the wildest music of the Baroque from only an arm's distance away. **Specialty cocktails** will be designed for the night's theme, and **casual cafe-style seating offers easy mingling with the performers**. **SF Baroque** is American Bach's newest innovation in audience performance experiences. An offshoot of the core of American Bach Soloists, the group's name represents both the new ensemble's musicians and a bold new performance style that welcomes non-traditional classical music audiences and all who seek an informal, fun, and dramatically powerful adventure. This season, the events take place in the **spectacular Green Room in San Francisco's War Memorial and Performing Arts Center**.

BACH'S MASS IN B MINOR (July 30 2023) — Bach's Mass in B Minor is the pinnacle of Baroque repertoire and ABS's now renewed annual performances draw audiences to San Francisco from around the world. Under the **meticulous and insightful direction of Jeffrey Thomas**, these performances of the Mass in B Minor — **Johann Sebastian Bach's consummate masterwork** — bring eye-opening revelations of Bach's score that draws upon 35 years of his compositions. Recognized worldwide as one of the foremost interpreters of the music of Bach and the Baroque, Maestro Thomas continues to inspire audiences and performers alike through his keen insights into the passions behind musical expression. *Fanfare Magazine* proclaimed that “Thomas' direction seems just right, capturing the humanity of the music... there is no higher praise for Bach performance.”

AMERICAN BACH ACADEMY (August 5–13 2023) — The American Bach Academy returns after a hiatus of three years, offering a tuition-free advanced training program exclusively for emerging professionals and highly accomplished students of Historically Informed Performance Practice. **Public performances and events including free lectures and master classes** will be offered. Highlights are two performances by the **Academy Faculty** and a concert featuring **Bach's Magnificat in D** performed by all Academy participants. One of J.S. Bach's most joyous and universally popular works, the Magnificat in D Major, brings trumpets, timpani, oboes, flutes, and strings together in a glorious celebration of sound. Also on the program is the "**Trauerode**," Bach's tribute to a beloved heroine of Saxony, the Electress Christiane Eberhardine. Standing uniquely among his most extraordinary works, the cantata's **rich orchestration including two violas da gamba** supports the distinguished poetry of one of the greatest reformers of the German language of all time. Each group of instruments is featured in movements that include an astonishingly pictorial recitative depicting bells.

SPARKLE: STARRY NIGHT (October 21 2023) — American Bach's 21st Annual **Benefit Gala Concert, Auction, and Dinner** returns to the spectacularly ornate Flood Mansion at the top of San Francisco's Pacific Heights. An evening of Music, Gemstones, and Cosmic Glamour offers **fabulous cocktails, auction items, a splendid dinner**, and what promises to be **an absolutely knock-out private concert**, all in the extravagantly fun setting of a building with **amazing views of the San Francisco Bay**. The special event, in addition to raising support funds for American Bach, will honor Jeffrey Thomas and his 35 years as artistic director of American Bach. Optional black tie, diamonds, rubies, and strings of pearls are encouraged!

ARYEH NUSSBAUM COHEN SINGS BACH (November 3–6 2023) — The praise for the artistry of countertenor Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen is unending. The *San Francisco Chronicle* described him as "Extravagantly gifted... poised to redefine what's possible for singers of this distinctive voice type, and *Opera News* proclaimed him as "A rising star... ravishing... otherworldly." Aryeh will sing **two gorgeous Bach cantatas for solo voice**. With perhaps the most startling initial chord in any of Bach's compositions, the early cantata ***Widerstehe doch der Sünde* ("Stand steadfast against transgression")** is a work of outstanding sonority and chromatic harmony. Bach called upon his youthful inspiration and contrapuntal mastery to create a soul-stirring and compelling admonishment to do good. Unequivocally one of Bach's most moving and haunting solo cantatas, ***Ich habe genug* ("I have enough")** presents a soul who has experienced life's blessings and who, having seen and felt enlightenment, is ready to pass into the next realm, rejoicing in his readiness. The music tugs on our empathy and compassion while, at the same time, gently encourages our own wishes for bliss. Perfectly paired with Bach's cantatas, the program also includes the dynamic **Concerto in C Minor for Oboe & Violin** and the richly sonorous **Concerto Grosso in G Major by Georg Muffat**.

A BAROQUE CHRISTMAS (December 13 2023) — In this special abridged evening performance, *perfect for the whole family*, you'll hear the **Christmas portion (Part I) of Handel's *Messiah*** along with music of the season by Baroque composers including **Michel Richard de Lalande** and **Marc-Antoine Charpentier**. The finely tuned voices of the American Bach Choir and the polished sheen of sonorities brought by ABS's period-instrument orchestra soar within the majestic interior of San Francisco's Nob Hill landmark. Together with the best highlights of Handel's peerless composition, ABS will perform Charpentier's ***Messe de Minuit* ("Midnight Mass")**, one of the most treasured Christmas compositions from the Parisian Baroque.

HANDEL'S MESSIAH IN GRACE CATHEDRAL (December 14–15 2023) — No other Bay Area performances come close to offering the visual, aural, and emotional qualities that have made ABS's *Messiah* in Grace Cathedral so superlative. Featuring a stellar cast of vocal soloists — soprano **Mary Wilson**, countertenor **Eric Jurenas**, tenor **Steven Brennfleck**, and bass **William Meinert** — American Bach's annual tradition of performing Handel's *Messiah* in San Francisco's historic Grace Cathedral perennially provides a treasured December holiday event to capacity audiences. **A Bay Area holiday tradition now in its 25th year**, ABS's performances of Handel's timeless work have become an essential part of the musical year for many music lovers and have attracted audiences of more than 50,000 from around the world.

A BAROQUE NEW YEAR'S EVE AT THE OPERA (December 31 2023) — Back by popular demand, “A Baroque New Year's Eve at the Opera” will usher in the new year within **San Francisco's beautiful Herbst Theatre**. Start an early night on the town with a delightful program of **arias, duets, and instrumental music from Baroque opera** and concert, with plenty of time left for more celebrations in the evening or an early return home for a peaceful night. **Bass-baritone Christian Pursell** is the concert's headliner. Bring your family and friends to celebrate a New Year full of wonderful music.

MADNESS & MAYHEM FEATURING SF BAROQUE (January 26 2024) — Mad Scenes are among the most exciting moments in opera! Characters express their mental distractions with high notes, low notes, fast notes, and passionate conviction. In the hands of Baroque masters like **Handel** and **Vivaldi**, those moments create pinnacles of drama that tear at your heartstrings as if the characters are people that we know. **Mezzo-soprano Sarah Coit** will bring you unforgettable experiences as she moves throughout the room and among the audience, delivering gripping theatrics from only an arm's distance away. Of course, **specialty cocktails will be designed for the night's theme**, and casual cafe-style seating offers easy mingling with the performers. The performers are all part of **SF Baroque**, American Bach's newest innovation in audience performance experiences.

BACH'S SAINT JOHN PASSION (March 8–11 2024) — Celebrate the 300th anniversary of the creation of this masterwork! The great Passions of J. S. Bach remain unparalleled in their **dramatic impact and universally experienced emotional effects**. Bach took the genre to new worlds of expression, incorporating new Italianate operatic elements with the Lutheran tradition of sung chorales. The result is a **powerful force of rhetoric** that tells the Passion story reinforced by personalized illuminations. This is music that transcends cultural, religious, and theatrical boundaries between performers and audience members, drawing in listeners as historical participants. **Jeffrey Thomas, one of the Baroque music world's most celebrated Bach specialists**, brings his unique and insightful perspectives to the podium in definitive performances that are profoundly beautiful and moving.

BACH'S FAVORITE INSTRUMENTS (April 26–29 2024) — Bach's compositions for several different types of instruments were focused to a great extent on the instruments that he loved the most: **violin, violoncello, flute, oboe d'amore, and harpsichord**. This program presents those instruments in works by Bach himself. It is said that Bach played the viola and was as masterful at that as he was an unparalleled keyboard player. But Bach didn't write much for viola alone, so we turn to his friend and colleague **Georg Philipp Telemann** for his popular **Concerto in G Major for Viola**. The American Bach roster of amazing soloists will take turns in presenting this sound catalogue of JSB's best-loved instruments.

PROGRAM DETAILS:

Baroque Old & New

Thursday July 27 2023 7:30 p.m.

Herbst Theatre

401 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco

BLOW Chaconne in G Major

VIVALDI Concerto for 2 Flutes in C Major

TELEMANN Concerto for 2 Violas in G Major

BACH Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 in D Major

BACH *Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust*, Cantata 170

VIVALDI Concerto for 4 Violins in B Minor

plus World Premiere of a New Work for Period Instruments

Sandra Miller & Bethanne Walker, flutes

Ramón Negrón-Pérez & Yvonne Smith, violas

Corey Jamason, harpsichord • Elizabeth Blumenstock, violin

Sarah Coit, mezzo-soprano • Debra Nagy, oboe d'amore

Jacob Ashworth • Tatiana Chulochnikova • Tomà Iliev • YuEun Gemma Kim, violins

American Bach Soloists • Jeffrey Thomas, conductor

Explorations: Bach Beyond Baroque

Friday July 28 2023 7:30 p.m.

Barbro Osher Recital Hall at the Bowes Center

San Francisco Conservatory of Music

200 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco

BACH Prelude and Fugue in B-flat Minor

BACH arranged by SAINT-SAËNS Sinfonia to *Wir danken dir, Gott, wir danken dir*

BACH arranged by BUSONI Chaconne in D Minor

BRAHMS Variations and Fugue on a Theme by HANDEL

LISZT Prelude and Fugue on B-A-C-H

Oliver Moore, piano

Vivaldi's Four Seasons featuring



Saturday July 29 2023 7:30 p.m.

The Green Room

in the San Francisco War Memorial & Performing Arts Center

401 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco

VIVALDI "The Four Seasons" (*Le quattro stagioni*)

Jacob Ashworth • Tatiana Chulochnikova

Tomà Iliev • YuEun Gemma Kim

Bach's Mass in B Minor

Sunday July 30 2023 7:30 p.m.

Saint Mark's Church, 1111 O'Farrell Street, San Francisco

BACH Mass in B Minor

Hélène Brunet, soprano • Sarah Coit, mezzo-soprano

Agnes Vojtko, contralto • Aaron Sheehan, tenor

Christian Pursell, baritone

American Bach Soloists & Cantorei

Jeffrey Thomas, conductor

Academy Faculty Concerts

Saturday August 5 2023 7:30 p.m.

Friday August 11 2023 7:30 p.m.

Sol Joseph Recital Hall

San Francisco Conservatory of Music

50 Oak Street, San Francisco

Concert repertoire will be announced soon.

Elizabeth Blumenstock, violin • Corey Jamason, harpsichord

Steven Lehning, violone • Robert Mealy, violin

Sandra Miller, flute • Debra Nagy, oboe

Kenneth Slowik, violoncello

Bach's Magnificat in D Major

Sunday August 13 2023 4:00 p.m.

Caroline H. Hume Concert Hall

San Francisco Conservatory of Music

50 Oak Street, San Francisco

BACH Magnificat in D Major

BACH *Jesu, der du meine Seele*, Cantata 78

BACH *Laß, Fürstin, laß noch einen Strahl*, Cantata 198

American Bach Academy Orchestra & Singers

Jeffrey Thomas, conductor

Sparkle: Starry Night

21st Annual Benefit Gala Concert, Auction, and Dinner

Saturday October 21 2023 4:00 p.m.

Flood Mansion

2222 Broadway, San Francisco

An Evening of Music, Gemstones, and Cosmic Glamour, Honoring Jeffrey Thomas and his 35 years as artistic director. Black tie optional; diamonds, rubies, and strings of pearls encouraged.

Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen Sings Bach

Friday November 3 2023 8:00 p.m.

St. Stephen's Church, 3 Bayview Avenue, Belvedere

Saturday November 4 2023 7:00 p.m.

St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 2300 Bancroft Way, Berkeley

Sunday November 5 2023 4:00 p.m.

St. Mark's Church, 1111 O'Farrell Street, San Francisco

Monday November 6 2023 7:00 p.m.

Davis Community Church, 412 C Street, Davis

BACH *Ich habe genug*, Cantata 82

BACH *Widerstehe doch der Sünde*, Cantata 54

BACH Concerto in C Minor for Oboe and Violin

MUFFAT Concerto Grosso in G Major

Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen, countertenor

Stephen Hammer, oboe • Tomà Iliev, violin

American Bach Soloists • Jeffrey Thomas, conductor

A Baroque Christmas

Wednesday December 13 2023 7:30 p.m.

Grace Cathedral, 1100 California Street, San Francisco

HANDEL *Messiah* (Christmas portion – Part I)

CHARPENTIER "Midnight Mass" (*Messe de Minuit*)

LALANDE *Simphonies des Noëls*

Mary Wilson, soprano

Eric Jurenas, countertenor

Steven Brennfleck, tenor

William Meinert, bass

American Bach Soloists & Choir

Jeffrey Thomas, conductor

Handel's Messiah in Grace Cathedral

Thursday December 14 2023 7:30 p.m.

Friday December 15 2023 7:30 p.m.

Grace Cathedral, 1100 California Street, San Francisco

HANDEL *Messiah*

Mary Wilson, soprano

Eric Jurenas, countertenor

Steven Brennfleck, tenor

William Meinert, bass

American Bach Soloists & Choir

Jeffrey Thomas, conductor

A Baroque New Year's Eve at the Opera

Saturday December 31 2023 4:00 p.m.

Herbst Theatre, 401 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco

Baroque Opera Arias by Handel, Vivaldi, and Rameau

Christian Pursell, bass-baritone

American Bach Soloists

Jeffrey Thomas, conductor

Madness & Mayhem featuring



Friday January 26 2024 7:00 p.m.

The Green Room

in the San Francisco War Memorial and Performing Arts Center

401 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco

Mad Scenes from Baroque Opera

Sarah Coit, mezzo-soprano

Bach's Saint John Passion

Friday March 8 2024 8:00 p.m.

St. Stephen's Church, 3 Bayview Avenue, Belvedere

Saturday March 9 2024 7:00 p.m.

St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 2300 Bancroft Way, Berkeley

Sunday March 10 2024 4:00 p.m.

St. Mark's Church, 1111 O'Farrell Street, San Francisco

Monday March 11 2024 7:00 p.m.

Davis Community Church, 412 C Street, Davis

BACH Saint John Passion

300th Anniversary

Matthew Hill, tenor

Hélène Brunet, soprano • Agnes Vojtko, contralto

Steven Brennfleck, tenor • Jesse Blumberg, baritone

American Bach Soloists & Cantorei

Jeffrey Thomas, conductor

Bach's Favorite Instruments

Friday April 26 2024 8:00 p.m.

St. Stephen's Church, 3 Bayview Avenue, Belvedere

Saturday April 27 2024 7:00 p.m.

St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 2300 Bancroft Way, Berkeley

Sunday April 28 2024 4:00 p.m.

St. Mark's Church, 1111 O'Farrell Street, San Francisco

Monday April 29 2024 7:00 p.m.

Davis Community Church, 412 C Street, Davis

BACH Concerto in D Major for Harpsichord
BACH Concerto in A Major for Oboe d'amore
BACH Sonata in G Major for Two Flutes
TELEMANN Concerto in G Major for Viola
BACH Concerto in A Minor for Violin

Corey Jamason, harpsichord • Stephen Hammer, oboe d'amore
Sandra Miller & Bethanne Walker, flutes
Yvonne Smith, viola • YuEun Gemma Kim, violin
American Bach Soloists
Jeffrey Thomas, conductor

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