

AN EVENING WITH BRAHMS



October 26, 2025 | 5 PM

National Presbyterian Church | Washington, DC

Gretchen Kuhrmann, Conductor and Artistic Director

With Special Guests:

Danielle Talamantes, soprano

Kerry Wilkerson, baritone

*This concert is sponsored in part by a generous donation
from Tim & Keri Johnston in memory of their son, Andrew.*

CHORALIS

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CONCERT PROGRAM

St. Anthony Variations, Op. 56a

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

(Variations on a Theme by Josef Haydn)

Theme – Chorale “St. Anthony” – Andante

- I. Poco più animato (Andante con moto)
- II. Più vivace (Vivace)
- III. Con moto
- IV. Andante con moto (Andante)
- V. Vivace (Poco presto)
- VI. Vivace
- VII. Grazioso
- VIII. Presto non troppo (Poco presto)

Finale – Andante

“Nimrod” from *Enigma Variations*

Edward Elgar (1857–1934)

INTERMISSION

Ein deutsches Requiem, Op. 45

Johannes Brahms

- I. Selig sind, die da Leid tragen
- II. Denn alles Fleisch, es ist wie Gras
- III. Herr, lehre doch mich
- IV. Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen
- V. Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit
- VI. Denn wir haben hie keine bleibende Statt
- VII. Selig sind die Toten

Patrons are kindly requested to silence cell phones, pagers, and watches during the performance. Any taking of photographs or unauthorized recording of this concert is strictly prohibited.



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FIRST MOVEMENT

Selig sind, die da Leid tragen,
denn sie sollen getröstet werden.

— *Matthäus 5:4*

Die mit Tränen säen,
werden mit Freuden ernten.

Sie gehen hin und weinen
und tragen edlen Samen,
und kommen mit Freuden
und bringen ihre Garben.

— *Psalms 126:5, 6*

SECOND MOVEMENT

Denn alles Fleisch es ist wie Gras
und alle Herrlichkeit des Menschen
wie des Grases Blumen.
Das Gras ist verdorret
und die Blume abgefallen.

— *1. Petrus 1:24*

So seid nun geduldig, lieben Brüder,
bis auf die Zukunft des Herrn.
Siehe, ein Ackermann wartet
auf die köstliche Frucht der Erde
und ist geduldig darüber,
bis er empfahe
den Morgenregen und Abendregen.
— *Jakobus 5:7*

Aber des Herrn Wort bleibt in Ewigkeit.
— *1. Petrus 1:25*

Die Erlöseten des Herrn werden
wieder kommen
und gen Zion kommen mit Jauchzen;
ewige Freude wird über ihrem Haupte sein;
Freude und Wonne werden sie ergreifen
und Schmerz und Seufzen wird weg müssen.
— *Jesaja 35:10*

FIRST MOVEMENT

Blessed are they that mourn:
for they shall be comforted.

— *Matthew 5:4*

They that sow in tears
shall reap in joy.

He that goeth forth and weepeth,
bearing precious seed,
shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,
bringing his sheaves with him.

— *Psalms 126:5, 6*

SECOND MOVEMENT

For all flesh is as grass,
and all the glory of man
as the flower of grass.
The grass withereth,
and the flower falleth away.

— *1 Peter 1:24*

Be patient, therefore, brethren,
unto the coming of the Lord.
Behold, the plowman waiteth
for the precious fruit of the earth,
and hath long patience for it,
until he receive
the early and latter rain.

— *James 5:7*

But the word of the Lord endureth for ever.
— *1 Peter 1:25*

And the ransomed of the
Lord shall return,
and come to Zion with songs
and everlasting joy upon their heads:
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.
— *Isaiah 35:10*

THIRD MOVEMENT

Herr, lehre doch mich,
daß ein Ende mit mir haben muß,
und mein Leben ein Ziel hat,
und ich davon muß.

Siehe, meine Tage
sind einer Hand breit vor dir,
und mein Leben
ist wie nichts vor dir.
Ach wie gar nichts sind alle Menschen,
die doch so sicher leben.

Sie gehen daher wie ein Schemen,
und machen ihnen viel vergebliche Unruhe;
sie sammeln und wissen nicht
wer es kriegen wird.

Nun Herr, wess soll ich mich trösten?
Ich hoffe auf dich.

— *Psalm 39:5-8*

Der Gerechten Seelen sind in
Gottes Hand
und keine Qual rühret sie an.
— *Weisheit Salomos 3:1*

FOURTH MOVEMENT

Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen,
Herr Zebaoth!

Meine Seele verlangt und sehnet sich
nach den Vorhöfen des Herrn;
mein Leib und Seele freuen sich
in dem lebendigen Gott.

Wohl denen, die in deinem Hause wohnen,
die loben dich immerdar.

— *Psalm 84:2, 3, 5*

THIRD MOVEMENT

Lord, make me to know mine end,
and the measure of my days,
what it is:
that I may know how frail I am.

Behold, thou hast made my days
as a handbreadth;
and my age
is as nothing before thee:
verily every man at his best state
is altogether vanity.

Surely every man walketh in a vain shew:
surely they are disquieted in vain:
he heapeth up riches,
and knoweth not who shall gather them.

And now, Lord, what wait I for?
My hope is in thee.

— *Psalm 39:4-7*

But the souls of the righteous are in the
hand of God,
and there shall no torment touch them.
— *Wisdom of Solomon 3:1*

FOURTH MOVEMENT

How amiable are thy tabernacles,
O Lord of hosts!

My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth
for the courts of the Lord:
my heart and my flesh crieth out
for the living God.

Blessed are they that dwell in thy house:
they will be still praising thee.

— *Psalm 84:1, 2, 4*

FIFTH MOVEMENT

Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit;
aber ich will euch wieder sehen
und euer Herz soll sich freuen
und eure Freude soll niemand von
euch nehmen.

— *Evangelium Johannes 16:22*

Sehet mich an:
Ich habe eine kleine Zeit
Mühe und Arbeit gehabt
und habe großen Trost funden.

— *Jesus Sirach 51:35[27]*

Ich will euch trösten,
wie Einen seine Mutter tröstet.

— *Jesaja 66:13*

SIXTH MOVEMENT

Denn wir haben hie keine bleibende Statt,
sondern die zukünftige suchen wir.

— *Hebräer 13:14*

Siehe, ich sage euch ein Geheimnis:
Wir werden nicht alle entschlafen,
wir werden aber alle verwandelt werden;

und dasselbige plötzlich,
in einen Augenblick,
zu der Zeit der letzten Posaune.
Denn es wird die Posaune schallen,
und die Toten werden auferstehen
unverweslich,
und wir werden verwandelt werden.

Dann wird erfüllet werden
das Wort, das geschrieben steht:
Der Tod ist verschlungen in den Sieg.

FIFTH MOVEMENT

And ye now therefore have sorrow:
but I will see you again,
and your heart shall rejoice,
and your joy no man taketh
from you.

— *John 16:22*

Ye see how
for a little while
I labor and toil,
yet have I found much rest.

— *Ecclesiasticus 51:27*

As one whom his mother comforteth,
so will I comfort you...

— *Isaiah 66:13*

SIXTH MOVEMENT

For here have we no continuing city,
but we seek one to come.

— *Hebrews 13:14*

Behold, I shew you a mystery;
We shall not all sleep,
but we shall all be changed,

in a moment, in the twinkling
of an eye,
at the last trump:
for the trumpet shall sound,
and the dead shall be raised
incorruptible,
and we shall be changed.

Then shall be brought to pass
the saying that is written:
Death is swallowed up in victory.

Tod, wo ist dein Stachel?

Hölle, wo ist dein Sieg?

— 1. Korinther 15:51, 52, 54, 55

Herr, du bist würdig

zu nehmen Preis und Ehre und Kraft,

denn du hast alle Dinge erschaffen,

und durch deinen Willen haben sie das Wesen

und sind geschaffen.

— Offenbarung Johannes 4:11

SEVENTH MOVEMENT

Selig sind die Toten,

die in dem Herrn sterben, von nun an.

Ja der Geist spricht,

daß sie ruhen von ihrer Arbeit;

denn ihre Werke folgen ihnen nach.

— Offenbarung Johannes 14:13

O death, where is thy sting?

O grave, where is thy victory?

— 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52, 54, 55

Thou art worthy, O Lord,

to receive glory and honor and power:

for thou hast created all things,

and for thy pleasure they are

and were created.

— Revelation 4:11

SEVENTH MOVEMENT

Blessed are the dead

which die in the Lord from henceforth:

Yea, saith the Spirit,

that they may rest from their labors;

and their works do follow them.

— Revelation 14:13

As I reflect on the numerous occasions I've had the privilege of conducting Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem*, I am consistently struck by the same sense of excitement and fulfillment. This masterpiece, timeless in its depth and beauty, continues to inspire and resonate with those who know it intimately. The musical brilliance in every measure is undeniable. Even as a young composer, still in the process of contemplating his first symphony, Brahms had an extraordinary understanding of orchestral color. He knew how to use both instruments and voices to express the profound meaning embedded in the text he so carefully selected. The craftsmanship of this work is tender, loving, and deeply personal. Written for friends, not for the concert hall, every bar reflects that intimacy and purpose. Even now, as I prepare it once again, I discover new layers of meaning and beauty within its pages.

This performance is particularly meaningful to me, as it marks my final opportunity to bring this masterwork to life with Choralis. Over the course of 26 seasons, it has held a special place in our hearts, and this will be our fifth time performing it together. While there are countless musical moments that I cherish, it is impossible to choose a single favorite. However, the fugues at the end of movements II, IV, and VI—exuberant in their energy and complexity—always stand out. If I had to select one movement that defines the essence of the work, it would undoubtedly be movement VII. Without it, the piece would feel incomplete. Yet, as a standalone work, I believe movement VI will forever hold a unique place in my heart. There is no more compelling setting of the text, *"The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, incorruptible."*

I chose Brahms' requiem to open the season because I knew that closing with it would be emotionally overwhelming for all involved, given the farewell and parting of ways between me and this remarkable chorus. My German upbringing, fluency in the language, deep connection to Hamburg—the city of Brahms' roots—and my understanding of the special bond between Brahms and the Schumanns, have always made the experience of preparing this piece particularly rich for the singers. Beyond its timeless beauty and healing qualities, this requiem represents something even more profound: a true, loving friendship. Brahms wrote it to console those he loved most dearly, and to celebrate life, not death. He sought to lift the hearts of the grieving, offering them joy and solace through the text he chose from his children's Bible. His music speaks directly to the human soul, transcending grief and inviting all to resonate with its message of hope. In my humble opinion, Brahms achieved these aims—and so much more—masterfully.

PROGRAM NOTES

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897) ***Variations on a Theme by Joseph Haydn, Op. 56a. 1873*** **by Margaret Shannon**

Today's performance of the Brahms Requiem is preceded by two sets of variations, one by Brahms, the other by Elgar, the second influenced by the first. As was ever thus, an archivist was the source. In November 1870, music historian Karl Ferdinand Pohl invited Brahms to view unpublished manuscripts he had found in Vienna's Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde. So taken by a movement in a Partita in B-flat, based on a melody noted on the score as "Choral St. Antoni," the soon-to-be forty-year-old Brahms copied it down that day, a *coup de foudre* having occurred to him for a set of variations.

Two years would pass before he began work on the *Variations*. And when he did, Brahms created two separate and independent versions simultaneously — one for two pianos and one for orchestra. He completed the piano version in August 1873 and played it with Clara Schumann. Then on November 2, 1873, he led the Vienna Philharmonic in the orchestral version. The great acclaim that greeted this premiere launched his international reputation as an orchestral composer, after years of feeling that Beethoven was "standing over my shoulder."

But what about that theme he had copied that day in the library? Certainly not by Haydn, according to his biographer, H.C. Robbins Landon, who opines "not one note was by Haydn" and posits that "one of his students, perhaps Pleyel was the real author." The true source of "St. Anthony's Chorale" remains shrouded in Vienna archives. It is good to have some "known unknowns."

Haydn's *Variations* include a theme, eight variations, and a final passacaglia. They are scored, for piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contra-bassoon, 4 horns (2 in E flat, 2 in B flat), 2 trumpets, timpani, triangle, and the usual complement of strings.

Dr. Richard Brooda, writing in the Kennedy Center's April 2009 *Playbill* for a National Symphony Orchestra performance led by Kurt Mazur, captures the audacious climax of one of the greatest independent orchestral compositions of the nineteenth century.

PROGRAM NOTES

"The finale is constructed as a passacaglia on a recurring five-measure ostinato derived from the bass supporting the theme. This fragment, repeated many times in the low strings before it migrates into the higher instruments, generates both an irresistible rhythmic motion and a spacious solidity as the finale progresses. It leads inexorably to the spine-tingling moment when... the original theme bursts forth triumphantly in the strings as the woodwinds strew it with ribbons of scales."

Edward Elgar (1857–1934) ***Variations on an Original Theme (Enigma), Opus 36*** **by Margaret Shannon**

What began as a passing suggestion by his wife in response to his improvisations at the piano not only secured Edward Elgar's international reputation as "the spirit of England," but remain, 125 years after its first performance on June 18, 1899, at St. James's Hall in London, one of the most beloved of classical instrumental works.

The *Variations* are truly "a riddle wrapped in an enigma." More than one, in fact. The riddle of the identity of the fourteen people and a dog featured in the *Variations* has been mostly solved. But Elgar hinted that a second, musical, enigma lay within. It has been described as "a popular tune that does not itself appear in the *Variations* but of which the theme is the counterpoint." Seventy-five years after British codebreakers at Bletchley Park broke the riddle of the Enigma machine, a German cryptographic encoding device, Elgar's musical enigma, which he revealed to no one, remains unsolved.

His *Variations* are dedicated "to my friends pictured within." The emotionally profound ninth variation "Nimrod" conveys a sense of solemn reflection and is dedicated to Augustus J. Jaeger, Elgar's friend and editor who encouraged him as he struggled to secure a lasting reputation as a serious composer in the German Romantic tradition of Brahms, whose own *Variations* opened this concert. Today "Nimrod," together with Samuel Barber's "Adagio for Strings," has become the elegiac music of national mourning and personal farewells. *Ave atque vale, Maestra!*

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Johannes Brahms
***Ein deutsches Requiem*, Op. 45**
by Gretchen Kuhrmann

Brahms was not a religious man. Long after he made his name with *Ein deutsches Requiem*, one of the most personal and deeply spiritual works of any century, Dvořák would remark: "Such a great man! Such a great soul! And yet he believes in nothing!" But Brahms was not spiritually superficial, nor was he a true agnostic. Even into his old age he would often pick up the children's Bible he was given in his youth and read from it at length. It was from that very book that he selected the passages for his first major choral and orchestral work, taking not the standard requiem texts, but others for which he had special fondness.

I have had many years of experience with this piece of music and have come to realize that to truly understand this work, one must understand the relationship shared between Johannes Brahms and both Robert and Clara Schumann. Brahms had a troubled childhood. His family was not well off, supported by his amateur musician father, who worked as a *Bierfiddler* (pool hall fiddler) in the bars around the red-light district St. Pauli in Hamburg. His mother was seventeen years older than his father, and the marriage was not warm. His older sister was sickly and troubled, and the family was not particularly close-knit. They sent their middle child, Johannes, out into the world to earn money for the family when he was barely 13 years old. The job of choice, because it paid well and because Johannes possessed superior musical skills, was playing dance tunes on the piano in the bars for sailors and their prostitutes. Brahms later intimated to friends that he was molested and abused by the women and the men each night, and routinely sent home drunk since he was allowed to have free beer. This lasted for more than a year before doctors advised his parents to put a stop to it and send him out to the country during the summer for what the Germans refer to as a "cure" or healing time. The scars from the bar experience were indelible, so Brahms would never marry and had trouble expressing his feelings to people he loved throughout his entire life.

BEGINNINGS

On October 1, 1853, the 20-year-old composer, at the urging of his friend, violinist Josef Joachim, arrived at the Schumann home in Düsseldorf to play

PROGRAM NOTES

for the maestro. Robert Schumann was one of the towering figures of German Romantic music and his wife, Clara Wieck Schumann, was an extraordinary concert pianist — a rarity for a woman in those days. Schumann founded and ran *Die neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (The New Journal for Music), which explored the music scene in Europe and promoted progressive composers. After hearing Brahms play some of his pieces, with both Schumanns sitting spell-bound for hours, Schumann wrote an article with an almost Messianic proclamation, declaring Brahms the new champion of music:

"... And he is come, a young blood by whose cradle graces and heroes kept watch. He is called Johannes Brahms... He bore all outward signs that proclaim to us, 'This is one of the elect.' Sitting at the piano, he proceeded to reveal to us wondrous regions.... His playing was full of genius and transformed the piano into an orchestra..."

That evening after Brahms left, Schumann entered into his journal: "Visit from Brahms (a genius)." Never before had a composer debuted upon the world stage with an introduction like that. It would take Brahms years after the proclamation to fulfill it in public opinion, the pressure of the article was so great.

Brahms was drawn into the Schumann family and became one of them. He spent hours playing with the children, discussing music with Robert and Clara, composing with them, playing duets with Clara and enjoying the companionship of fellow musicians who would come to the house for evenings of chamber music or simply for fellowship. This was the family life he had missed as a boy. These people mentored and adored him. He received great encouragement and genuine feedback on all of his efforts and was connected to all the great musicians of the time through their network. When Brahms swept into their home that autumn day, he saw the bright, hopeful, public side of the famous couple. But Robert was not well when they met, and soon after, his condition deteriorated rapidly. In February of 1854, he threw his wedding ring into the Rhine River and then afterwards, himself, because he heard music in his head that would not stop. Witnesses pulled him out and he was sent to an asylum in Endenich, near Bonn, at his own request. The situation went from grim to horrible over the course of the next years. Clara leaned on Brahms for support — emotionally overwrought by her husband's condition, she went back on the tour circuit to provide for her seven children, the latest of whom was born after

his father went into the hospital. Robert never saw his young son Felix. Brahms would stay with the children while Clara was on tour and take care of them, teach them their piano lessons and write to Clara. He went to visit Robert on her behalf several times because the doctors felt a visit from Clara might be too emotionally stressful for her husband. This went on for months. In July of 1856, the doctors sent for Clara and told her if she wanted to see Robert alive, she should come immediately. Brahms accompanied her to Eendenich where they found a frail and vacant Schumann. He recognized Clara and they visited together, declaring their love for each other. In Robert's mind, Brahms would take care of his Clara and the children when he was gone. He died on July 29, 1856, as a result of complications brought on by his schizophrenia and depression.

INSPIRATION

Like his first symphony, the German Requiem took years to take its final shape and it began, in a sense, as piano music. The second movement of the requiem came first and was originally part of a sonata. After Schumann attempted suicide, the music that Brahms was moved to write was like a funeral march. The music developed first, unsatisfactorily as a symphony, then into part of his first piano concerto with the funeral march left unused for years. Schumann already heard veiled symphonies and exhorted Brahms to let "the powers of the masses of chorus and orchestra lend him their forces." His suggestion was both wise and prophetic, as time would soon prove. In the ten years that followed Schumann's death, Brahms and Clara had become extraordinarily close and had horrible fights where Brahms said terrible, hurtful things to her. Though they always seemed to forgive each other, damage was done to their friendship. Brahms had been engaged to a young woman and broke her heart by calling it off abruptly. His father left his mother and sickly sister alone in Hamburg, and Brahms had been turned down for the position of Music Director of the Hamburg Philharmonic not once, but twice. Brahms moved to Vienna. He had written several pieces during this time but had yet to write a major symphonic work or symphony and had not fulfilled Schumann's prophecy in the music world.

In February 1865, Brahms received a telegram from his brother telling him to come home at once if he wanted to see his mother before she died. Brahms immediately set off for Hamburg, but arrived too late. He now knew what to do with the leftover music inspired by Schumann's suicide attempt and subsequent death. For some time he had been thinking of writing a choral tribute to

his mentor, but now, with a death in his own family, he set to work in earnest on a requiem, reworking the funeral march and composing five other movements in a matter of months. He mailed Clara a draft of the fourth movement, "How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place, O Lord of Hosts" and Clara remarked in a letter that: "I am most moved by the Requiem. It is full of thoughts at once tender and bold." The first three movements of the Requiem were premiered in Vienna on December 1 in 1867. It was received with mixed reviews. The first two movements were applauded, but one reviewer noted that: "... During the concluding fugue of the third movement, surging above a pedal point on D, (one) experienced the sensation of a passenger rattling through a tunnel in an express train." However, Brahms felt wedded to this effect as an expression of the text and remarked back, "The souls of the righteous are in God's hands and no torment shall touch them."

COMPLETION

On Good Friday in 1868, Brahms, now thirty-four, performed *Ein deutsches Requiem* for the first time in Bremen. This performance consisted of the six completed movements, minus the fifth movement. Clara attended the performance and was escorted into the church by Johannes himself, who then took the podium. By the fourth movement, many listeners were in tears. Clara was particularly moved as she heard the prophetic words of her husband ringing in her ears, and at last the true genius of Brahms revealed itself for all to see and hear. She wrote about the performance, "It was such a joy as I have not felt for a long time." Music lay at the heart of their friendship and could heal everything that had passed between them. With this piece, Brahms became immediately revered in his native Germany.

At the suggestion of his colleague Karl Reinthaler, who had prepared the chorus for the first performance of the requiem, Brahms wrote a fifth movement with a soprano solo. The full requiem as we know it, with seven movements, was premiered in Leipzig in 1869 but Brahms was on tour and could not attend the performance. Whereas the first six movements came to life through his feelings for his mentor Robert Schumann and his dear friend, Clara, the fifth movement was solely inspired by the memory of his mother, Christiana Brahms. Brahms did not choose the standard Latin text for a requiem mass, as he tells us in his seldom read subtitle, *Ein deutsches Requiem, nach Worten der heiligen Schrift* (A German Requiem, after words from the Holy Scriptures).

Brahms had misgivings about the adjective “German,” thinking that he might have more appropriately referred to it as a “human” requiem since he wanted all mankind to embrace the music. Despite criticism from Reinthaler, Brahms also deliberately avoided any references to Jesus Christ. The views expressed in the requiem are unquestionably Christian, but Brahms did not want to label them so blatantly and therefore stopped short in the scriptures every time Christ was mentioned. To open the piece, Brahms used a technique he employed in his second Serenade where he eliminates the violins, giving the leading string material to the violas, thereby sustaining a dark, somber mood. This is how he begins *Ein deutsches Requiem*. There are occasional flickers of light in the flutes and harp arpeggios, but it is the weight of Brahms’ grief we remember most. Having no symphonies to his credit yet when he wrote the requiem, the composer’s orchestration shows remarkable maturity and a sense of balance and color. He did receive advice on orchestration from both Clara and Josef Joachim, whose musical opinions he held very dear.

Interesting to note, not only did Brahms shun the traditional requiem text from the Latin rite, but he also changed the purpose of the piece. The first movement contains the text, “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Here, Brahms is solely concerned with the living — those who have been left behind. As the work progresses in seven movements, he takes the listener through all the stages of grief and eventually focuses on the “heavenly reward” and rest from their labors, for “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.” He was the first composer to use the New Testament and offer true consolation to the grief-stricken. Undoubtedly this is among the many remarkable qualities that make this piece so powerful. The Requiem became an immediate success in Brahms’ own lifetime and has continued to be one of the most popular and beloved choral works of all times for both the listeners and the musicians. Despite his Northern German defenses, Brahms would be touched by the fact that the true “humanness” of this work is so apparent to so many for so long.

ABOUT CHORALIS

CHORALIS was established by Artistic Director Gretchen Kuhrmann in 2000 to nurture a passion for choral music through excellent choral performances, professional development opportunities for young soloists and conductors, education and training for young choristers, and community outreach events. Over 100 singers perform across two ensembles: Choralis, an auditioned SATB chorus and Échos, a semi-professional chamber group. Lauded by reviewers from *The Washington Post* and other publications, Choralis annually presents a season of choral masterworks as well as works by contemporary composers and world music.

MEET THE ARTISTS



GRETCHEN KUHRMANN: Where Vision Meets Voice

Gretchen Kuhrmann is celebrated for a conducting style *The Washington Post* praised as “clear, discreetly expressive leadership that lets the music, not the ego, command attention.” In 2000, she founded the Choralis Foundation and transformed it from a local chorus into an ensemble of national and international significance, encompassing the flagship Choralis choir, the professional chamber group Échos, and nationally recognized youth and education initiatives.

Her programming is marked by ambition and advocacy. She has commissioned and premiered works by leading composers including Bob Chilcott, Cecilia McDowall, Francis Pott, and Gary Davison. Under her baton, Choralis gave U.S. premieres of Pott’s *The Lost Wand*, McDowall’s *A Winter’s Night* and *Angel of the Battlefield*, and Chilcott’s *Mary Mother*, *Gloria*, and *The Rainbow*, the latter two commissioned and premiered in Washington, D.C. She also led the commissioning and world premiere of Davison’s *Shadow Tides* and helped bring Chilcott’s *Requiem* to national attention through a Chorus America-featured performance.

MEET THE ARTISTS

Her discography includes *In Winter's Arms: Seasonal Music by Bob Chilcott*, noted for its clarity and "immaculate choral blend." Critics have consistently cited her precision and expressive command in works ranging from Brahms and Fauré to contemporary repertoire.

Kuhrmann credits her teachers—Richard Cox, Bill Carroll, Hilary Apfelstadt, Stan Engebretson, and J. Reilly Lewis—with instilling in her a responsibility to pay it forward. That influence shaped her deep commitment to mentorship. Long before such initiatives were common, she created conducting internships, residencies, and training programs for emerging conductors and solo artists. She has also been a powerful force in breaking gender barriers, proving that women can lead large mixed-voice ensembles at the highest artistic level and inspiring new leadership models across the country.

Under her artistic direction, Choralis has recorded commercially, toured internationally, collaborated with orchestras such as the National Philharmonic, and performed at major national conferences. Today, the ensemble is recognized for its commissioning, high audition standards, and adventurous programming—an artistic identity shaped by Kuhrmann's clarity, musical intelligence, and collaborative spirit.

Kuhrmann holds performance degrees (conducting) from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and George Mason University. In her personal time, she enjoys cooking, travelling, visiting family around the world, and quality time with her husband, Ron, and their menagerie of pets, including her beloved pot belly pigs, Margaret and Victoria.

As she concludes her tenure with Choralis, her influence is reflected in the musicians she has trained, the composers she has championed, and the standard of excellence she has elevated in the region and beyond. For Kuhrmann, music is not simply performance—it is connection, generosity, and community brought to voice.

MEET THE ARTISTS



GRACE CHO is a visionary arts leader who seamlessly blends artistic excellence with innovative marketing technology. With expertise spanning fundraising, artistic programming, and business development, she is a trusted consultant and thought leader in the arts industry.

She is also the founder and former Executive Director of the New Orchestra of Washington (NOW), where she spearheaded groundbreaking programs that expand access and equity in the arts. She established Beyond Our Dreams, an educational partnership with local schools that brings high-quality music education to diverse communities, and Music for the Global Majority, a bold initiative that amplifies underrepresented voices in classical music and reimagines DEI practices in the field. Through these efforts, she continues to create lasting impact, ensuring that classical music remains inclusive and relevant for all.

Grace's entrepreneurial drive is deeply rooted in her artistic background. Grace started her career as a performer, having earned her doctorate in piano performance and appeared on prestigious stages including Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, and Seoul Arts Center. Whether on stage or behind the scenes, Grace is shaping the future of the arts and culture sector through bold leadership and innovation.



TODD FICKLEY is the Organist of National Presbyterian Church and founder of "The Bach Project." Equally comfortable at the podium, harpsichord, piano, and organ, Mr. Fickley's career spans over 35 years performing across the United States, Europe, and Israel. He collaborates with a wide variety of ensembles, such as the National Symphony Orchestra, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, The Washington Ballet, the National Philharmonic, and the Three Notch'd Road baroque ensemble. He also performs frequently as part of the innovative Seipp/Fickley Trumpet and Organ Duo.

MEET THE ARTISTS

A native Washingtonian, he began his organ studies already as an accomplished pianist at the Washington National Cathedral under Bruce Neswick. At the age of 23, Mr. Fickley was made a Fellow of the American Guild of Organists (AGO). He also holds the AGO Choirmaster Diploma as well as the M.A. in Organ Performance with High Distinction from the University of Wales.

A prize-winning organist and specialist in the music of J.S. Bach, Mr. Fickley has been featured numerous times on NPR and PRI. In 2014 he launched "The Bach Project," a cycle of concerts performing all of Bach's organ works, the first time in almost a quarter of a century that such a project has been undertaken in the DC area. The first album on the MSR Classics label was praised in Fanfare Magazine as "some of the most enthralling Bach organ playing you are likely to hear anywhere by anyone." The Project has taken him to Germany in 2015 and 2018 researching and performing on historic organs.

He is frequently seen as a recitalist, accompanist, and concerto soloist on all three keyboard instruments. He also is in demand as a conductor and lecturer in the Washington DC metro area, and enjoys teaching privately. He is an Officer in the Order of St. John, and a member of the National Society of Washington Family Descendants, and the Sons of the American Revolution.



GREG MUGIONE is a graduate from Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania and The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC receiving degrees in Music Education and Piano Pedagogy, respectively. He has been mentored by Galen H. Deibler, Dr. Barbara English Maris, Dr. James Litzleman, and the late Cyril M. Stretansky.

Mugione began his career teaching K-8 General Music at St. Catherine Labouré School in Wheaton, Maryland, and also taught piano classes and private lessons at The Academy of Fine Arts.

As a performer he has played concerts and accompanied artists throughout the Washington, DC metro area, including the Kennedy Center and the White

MEET THE ARTISTS

House. As a member of the faculty for over two decades, Mugione currently serves as the Chair of the Performing Arts Department at McLean School in Potomac, Maryland where he directs three choruses, teaches a drama class and directs two major drama productions each year. He is the piano accompanist for Catholic liturgies sponsored by Dignity-Washington.

Mugione has been a member of Choralis and Échos since 2007.

As an avid Lionel Electric Trains enthusiast, he is a member of the Train Collectors Association's Eastern Division. His collection includes toy trains from the 1920s to the present. He enjoys spending time with his partner, Brad, and dog, Chesska.



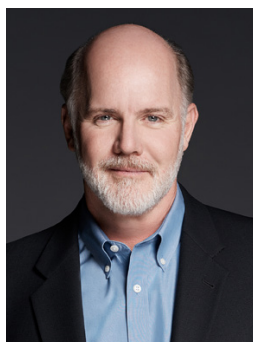
"A velvety, dark-hued soprano that has a limpid seductiveness appropriate to this music!" noted of Mexican-American soprano, **DANIELLE TALAMANTES**. The 2024-25 season included Haydn's *Creation* with the New Dominion Chorale, a duo recital with husband, bass-baritone Kerry Wilkerson with Opera Roanoke, *Close Encounters with Music*, and the Sitka Music Festival, a featured recital with Lyric Fest of Philadelphia, and the Brahms *Requiem* at the National Presbyterian Church.

Recent season performances include a five-city Alaska recital tour (Sitka Music Festival and Juneau Jazz & Classics) with the Pensacola Symphony, an Opera Gala with the Meridian Symphony, Rossini *Petite Messe Solennelle* with the Washington Master Chorale, a recital at The American Church in Paris, France Verdi's *Requiem* and Villa-Lobos *Bachianas Brasileiras No 5* with Pensacola Symphony and the NC Master Chorale, Britten's *War Requiem* with Opera Roanoke, Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass* with Choral Arts of Washington, Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the National Philharmonic, a world premiere with Washington National Opera's production of *Written in Stone*, a turn as Mimi in Puccini's *La bohème* with Jacksonville Symphony and the Northern Lights Festival, and three world premieres: *Mosaic for Earth* by composer Dwight Bigler at her Alma Mater, Virginia Tech, the rhapsody written especially for Talamantes based on

MEET THE ARTISTS

T.S. Eliot's iconic poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* with the National Philharmonic, and the stunning oratorio *Kohelet* first with the Washington DC Master Chorale and then the Santa Clara Master Chorale; the latter two works by acclaimed composer Henry Dehlinger. Other recent performances include Frasquita in Bizet's *Carmen* and Anna in Verdi's *Nabucco* with The Metropolitan Opera, Beatrice in Catán's *Il postino* with VA Opera, Marzelline in Beethoven's *Fidelio* with Princeton Festival; Violetta in *La traviata* with Hawaii Opera Theater and Finger Lakes Opera, the title role of Susannah with Opera Roanoke; Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* with Cedar Rapids Opera Theater; and a debut at Spoleto Festival USA as Sergente in Cavalli's *Veremonda*.

Professional recordings include *At That Hour: Art Songs* by Henry Dehlinger on the Avie Record Label, *Canciones españolas*, and *Heaven and Earth: A Duke Ellington Songbook* on the MSR Classics label.



KERRY WILKERSON, bass-baritone, has been hailed by *The Washington Post* as an “exuberant” performer with the “amber tone of a lyric baritone and the imposing weight demanded by Handel’s low-lying writing.” In June 2017, he made a triumphant Carnegie Hall debut as the baritone soloist in Vaughan Williams’s *Sancta Civitas*, garnering rave reviews. His dynamic career has taken him across the U.S. and Europe, earning acclaim for his powerful performances in operas, oratorios, and recitals.

Recent operatic highlights include Wilkerson’s portrayal of the Herald in Verdi’s *Otello* with the Pacific Symphony, as well as his performances as Alcindoro/Benoit in Puccini’s *La bohème* with the Jacksonville Symphony and the Northern Lights Music Festival. A highly sought-after concert soloist, Wilkerson has captivated audiences in Handel’s *Messiah* with the National Symphony Orchestra and the La Jolla Symphony; Vaughan Williams’s *Five Mystical Songs* at American University; Rachmaninoff’s *The Bells* with the Spokane Symphony; and Kodály’s *Te Deum* with the Oregon Music Festival, among many others. His repertoire

MEET THE ARTISTS

also includes iconic works such as Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, Brahms's *Requiem*, Fauré's *Requiem*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, and Mozart's *Requiem*, all delivered with commanding artistry in venues across the country.

Together with his wife, soprano Danielle Talamantes, Wilkerson regularly performs in recitals, their recent collaborations taking them to the American Church in Paris, prominent venues in Virginia and North Carolina, and the Northwest Bach Festival in Spokane, Washington. In the 2024/25 season, the duo brought their celebrated program of American music to Opera Roanoke, Willow Valley (PA), and the Sitka Music Festival (AK), while Wilkerson made his debut with the Greensboro Symphony as the bass soloist in Mozart's *Requiem*.

Wilkerson's distinguished career includes singing with the United States Air Force Singing Sergeants, the United States Army Chorus, and the renowned Robert Shaw Festival Singers. A familiar and respected figure in the Washington, D.C., music scene, he is a frequent collaborator with esteemed ensembles such as the National Philharmonic, the City Choir of Washington, the New Dominion Chorale, and the Oratorio Society of Virginia.

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Every effort has been made to ensure this list is complete and accurate.
If your name has been misspelled or omitted, please accept our apologies
and contact Jeannette Oliver, Chorus Manager, at joliver@choralis.org
so the error may be corrected.*

**CHORALIS GIVES BACK:
OCTOBER'S FEATURED CHARITY PARTNER
HOPE FOR GRIEVING FAMILIES**



Did you know that Choralis partners with and highlights a different charity at each concert we present throughout the season? Our partner charities are very important to us and we hope you enjoy learning about each of them.

The inspiration for Hope for Grieving Families stemmed from the loss of a loving man, husband, father, son, brother, son-in-law, uncle, grandson, cousin, nephew and dear friend to so many, C.A.M.

Wagner. In 2008, C.A.M. was diagnosed with a rare and aggressive leukemia that he fought valiantly for 5 years with the help of Johns Hopkins Hospital before finally going home to be with his beloved Savior. Along that journey, he touched many lives with his unwavering faith and helped so many in their own battles with cancer.

Becky Wagner, C.A.M.'s widow, and mother to their three precious, beautiful children, searched deeply for a way to both honor C.A.M. while helping others who have experienced the painful loss of a close loved-one. In 2014, the first annual Hope for Grieving Families Family Fun Day was formed. Families joined together to enjoy an afternoon of fun family activities and support one another. It became clear that this event was meaningful to many and should continue and grow in years to come.

Since 2013, the number of families attending Hope Family Fun Festival has quadrupled in attendance. In 2019, we began offering monthly activities that are enriching and fun for kids, and offer parents time to get to know other parents navigating the grief journey as well. Creating a community where nobody feels alone is what Hope For Grieving Families is about.

Please visit their website to learn more!
HOPEFORGRIEVINGFAMILIES.ORG

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