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# ROBERT DALE CHORALE

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## Notes

Dr. Steven Thomas, Music Director  
102 Shady Lane Road #350 • Chinchilla, PA 18410 • (570) 871-0350  
[www.robertdalechorale.org](http://www.robertdalechorale.org)

## Dear Friends of Choral Music,

Happy March! In these waning days of winter, the slow return of light and warmth means the annual NEPA Bach Festival is just around the corner. The singers of the Chorale, the members of the Bach Festival Orchestra and I have all been hard at work getting everything ready, and soon we'll be able to present to you what promises to be another terrific series of concerts. This year's festival includes:

- an Organ Concert featuring Kevin O'Malia, who is Director of Music at First United Methodist Church of Germantown, PA and organist at Temple B'nai Shalom in East Brunswick, NJ.
- a Chamber Music Concert that features works by J. S. Bach, Dave Brubeck, and Benjamin Britten, including Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 2*.
- a performance of one of the great masterworks of Western music: Bach's *B Minor Mass*.

It's going to be an amazing Festival, and I know you'll want to experience it all!

I am very excited to be able to present our guest organist, Kevin O'Malia, to our Bach Festival audience. Mr. O'Malia has earned

degrees from Westminster Choir College, has studied privately with renowned area organist Mark Laubach, and has performed in the United States, Great Britain and France. For more on Mr. O'Malia and the program he will be presenting, please see the article later in this newsletter.

This year's Chamber Concert presents a fascinating variety of works. We will celebrate Benjamin Britten's centenary with a performance of his *Simple Symphony*, and commemorate the life of Dave Brubeck with a movement from his Bach-inspired *Chromatic Fantasy* for string quartet. John Michael Vaida will play the Chaconne from Bach's *Partita No. 2* for solo violin in a special arrangement for voices and violin that highlights the chorales hidden in the violin part. And the signature work on the program is Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 2*, which will feature Ralph Dudgeon on trumpet, Tom Heinze on oboe, Sophie Till on violin, and Ed Wargo on flute.

The Bach Festival concludes with a performance of a work that is arguably Bach's greatest masterpiece. The *B Minor Mass* is huge, full of complexity, symmetry and stunning beauty. Performing it is like scaling a holy mountain - there are stunning



Photo credit: Pamela Suchy, Scranton Times-Tribune

vistas on the way up, and the view from the top is a life-changing experience. Featured soloists for the performance are Kathy Brink, Lauren Cuccia, Larry Hickernell, Gina Lupini, Ellen Rutkowski, Kathleen C. Shucosky and Charles Unice.

We finish the season in May with "A Night at the Oscars," the latest in our series of collaborations with the Doug Smith Jazz Trio. This Pops Concert features songs that won an Oscar for best song, along with some that didn't win but perhaps deserved to.

Of special note is that we will publicly unveil the Chorale's new name at our Pops Concert in May. I can't wait to finally share the name with you, as we mark the end of an era and celebrate the beginning of a new one!

Sincerely,

*Steven Thomas*



## Spotlight on... *John Vaida*

### **NYC Violinist Comes Home to Bach Chamber Concert**

Born into a local, musical family, John Vaida grew up hearing and singing Bach, Brahms, and Handel, and began playing the violin at the age of two. Today, he is a professional violinist and violist based in New York City, and it is quite fitting that the Robert Dale Chorale is welcoming him home to perform at this year's Bach Festival Chamber Concert.

Mr. Vaida has concertized throughout the United States and Europe as a recitalist, orchestral player, and concertmaster. As a chamber musician and soloist, he

has performed with the likes of the Eastman Chamber Music Society and in major venues such as Carnegie Hall. He has also appeared on numerous radio and television programs including WVIA-FM's "Music from St. Stephen's." Currently, he is Artist-in-Residence and faculty member at Wyoming Seminary in Kingston, PA, a member of the Florestan Piano Quartet, and is Adjunct Professor of Violin at Misericordia and Wilkes Universities.

With a Bachelor's of Music degree from Duquesne University and a Master's of Music degree in Performance and Literature from the Eastman School of Music, Mr. Vaida will be treating this year's chamber concert audience to a very intriguing performance approach of the *Chaconne* from Bach's Partita No. 2 in D minor for solo violin.

The *Chaconne* is believed to have been written as a musical commemoration upon the death of Bach's wife. As Mr. Vaida explains, it is a piece inspired by "baroque dance form, in triple meter with an emphasis on the second beat, in which there is a series of chord progressions which are repeated

and used as a template for variation." Hidden within are several Lutheran chorales, including *Christ lag in Todesbanden* and *Jesu, meine Freude*. Credit for researching the musical structure of the work goes to Professor Helge Theone.

Though he has played it before, Mr. Vaida's performance of the *Chaconne* at this year's Bach Festival will feature a different twist. In order to bring out these embedded chorales, a small group of singers from the Robert Dale Chorale will accompany him. The vocal parts will be added on top of the violin to bring out the hymn fragments. By performing the piece in this fashion, Mr. Vaida hopes to offer first time listeners an "insight into the original," and intends that those familiar with the piece will "gain new insight and find new inspiration."

In conclusion, Mr. Vaida shares that he would like to thank Steven Thomas and the Robert Dale Chorale for giving him the opportunity to perform the *Chaconne* for the Bach Festival audience. Assuredly, it will be to the audience's delight. ♪

## **28th Annual NEPA Bach Festival**

**Celebrating the music of J.S. Bach and his contemporaries with three concerts over two days**

### **ORGAN CONCERT**

A concert of organ works by J.S. Bach as well as those he influenced

*Featuring Kevin O'Malia, Director of Music at First United Methodist Church, Germantown, PA and organist at Temple B'nai Shalom, NJ*

**Saturday, March 16th 4:00 pm**  
Elm Park United Methodist Church - Scranton  
Free Admission - Offering Gladly Accepted

### **CHAMBER MUSIC CONCERT**

Presenting Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No.2* and *Chaconne* from *Partita No. 2*

*Featuring Tom Heinze, Sophie Till, Ed Wargo, Ralph Dudgeon and John Michael Vaida, as well as the full Bach Festival Orchestra*

**Saturday, March 16th 8:00 pm**  
St. Luke's Episcopal Church - Scranton

### **CHORAL CONCERT**

A performance of Bach's *B Minor Mass*

*Featuring the Robert Dale Chorale, the Wilkes University Chamber Singers, and the Bach Festival Orchestra, under the direction of Dr. Steven Thomas*

**Sunday, March 17th 3:00 pm**  
St. Luke's Episcopal Church - Scranton



## Spotlight on... Kevin O'Malia

### Organist Traces Bach's Profound Presence in Music History

Kevin O'Malia is looking forward to playing at the NEPA Bach Festival this year. You might say he also looks forward to giving his audience a bit of a music history lesson about Johann Sebastian Bach.

"I want to give the audience a sense of J.S. Bach and his place throughout music history - not only focusing on his own works, but also showing his influence on other composers since his time." To accomplish this, Mr. O'Malia's program starts with works by Bach that reflect the influence of German composer Dietrich Buxtehude and Italian Baroque master Antonio Vivaldi. Their musical presence will be heard, respectively, in J.S. Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in E flat, BWV*

552 and Vivaldi's *Concerto in A minor, RV 522*, transcribed for the organ by Bach.

In turn, Bach's impact on the composing world has been profound, notably pioneered by another standout German composer, Felix Mendelssohn, in whose works, Mr. O'Malia points out, "we can hear Bach's musical imprints on structure, harmony and texture ... through his use of form and counterpoint." On the program will be Mendelssohn's *Sonata No. 3*, showcasing an extravagant chorale-fantasia, promising a rich and colorful listening experience from the organ at Elm Park United Methodist Church.

The program will also trace the universal development of the chorale prelude for organ since Bach's time, demonstrated by the work of later composers including Johannes Brahms (German), Flor Peeters (Belgian) and Marcel Dupré (French). As Mr. O'Malia explains, this part of the program will be "representing three other time periods and national schools of composition; this set will show how universal the influence of Bach's musical style has been on generations of composers."

Finally, the Bach Festival audience will be introduced to present-day Latvian/Canadian composer Imant Raminsh, whose

unusual, contemporary style manages to maintain "polyphony and points of imitation... straight from Bach's tradition!"

This program is sure to demonstrate the widespread impact that Bach's enormous talent had on classical musical traditions throughout the centuries. As for Kevin O'Malia, Bach has been and continues to be a favorite composer: "Both his timelessness and timeliness impact me as a performer, church musician and in my improvisations. It is my hope that my program will be living testimony to this legendary composer!"

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An area native, Kevin O'Malia earned both a Bachelor and Master of Music degree from Westminster Choir College where he concentrated on organ, choral conducting and church music history. He also studied privately with renowned area organist Mark Laubach.

Mr. O'Malia is Director of Music at First United Methodist Church of Germantown, PA, organist at Temple B'nai Shalom in East Brunswick, NJ, and maintains a private organ/piano studio. He has performed in the United States, Great Britain and France, and has appeared on the National Public Radio production, *Pipedreams*. 🎵

#### For Bach Festival Tickets, Information and Donations:

Call (570) 871-0350 or visit [www.robertdalechorale.org](http://www.robertdalechorale.org)

Now accepting PayPal and credit card payments online!

#### Chamber and Choral Music Concerts:

\$15 general admission

\$12 seniors or WVIA members

\$ 7 students

Free for children under 12 when accompanied by a parent



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## What's In a Name?

Beginning in the fall of 2013, the Chorale will have a new name. We're not revealing the name just yet – you'll have to wait for the official unveiling at our last event of the season, this spring's Pops Concert. But since many of you have been loyal members of our audience for so long, and are used to our current name, we feel that we owe you a little time to get used to the idea.

It isn't a move we make lightly. The Chorale has had the same name for all of its existence, and much of our historical identity is bound up in that name. It is drawn from the name of our founder, Robert Dale Herrema, and we have borne it proudly for 35 seasons.

But much has changed over the past decade. Not only has the Music Director changed, but a majority of the singers and many board members are also relatively new. As the Chorale has evolved, the name which originally was perfect now no longer fits us quite as well.

After discussing the idea on and off for several years, the Chorale's Board of Directors decided this past summer that it was time to make a change. We decided that the new name needed to convey a sense of what it is we do, to reflect the personality of the group, and to be distinctive. We also hoped to be able to find a name that could provide some measure of continuity and that would have a connection to the region we serve. We believe we have found a name that does all these things, one that – like our current name – will come to be associated with the great choral music that we bring to Northeast Pennsylvania.

Please stay tuned, and join us at our annual Pops Concert on Friday, May 10 at Shopland Hall in the Scranton Cultural Center.

## Robert Dale Chorale

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Robert Dale Chorale presents

# A Night at the Oscars with the Doug Smith Jazz Trio

**Friday, May 10, 2013**  
**Shopland Hall at the**  
**Scranton Cultural Center**

This year's annual Pops Concert features Oscar winners, and losers, in a cabaret-style program amid a relaxed yet sophisticated atmosphere. Come join us!

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