

Choir School NEWS

A NEWSLETTER FOR ALUMNI & FRIENDS OF SAINT THOMAS CHOIR SCHOOL



SUMMER 2023

Congratulations to the class of 2023: (l to r) David, Constantin, Frankie, Jovon, Nathan, and Grayson

PHOTO: LISA HANCOCK

To the Class of 2023

We have wrapped another successful year at Saint Thomas Choir School, culminating with a wonderful celebration of individual and collective accomplishments during our Prize Day ceremony and Leavers Service. In this edition of the Choir School News, you will learn about much of the activity of the spring and the myriad ways we continue to thrive and move from strength to strength. We hope you will all remain part of that journey, keeping our past connected to our future, and, as always, focusing on the people who make this school so special.

The Prize Day Address, given by Dr. Eric Rice. Dr. Rice is Professor and Head of the Music Department at the University of Connecticut, where he teaches music history and directs the Collegium Musicum. His books are *Music and Ritual at Charlemagne's Marienkirche in Aachen* and *Young Choristers, 650-1700* (co-edited with Susan Boynton), the first scholarly volume dedicated to the history of professional child singers. His articles have appeared in numerous journals, and he has received fellowships to pursue archival research in Germany and France. Raised in Brooklyn, New York, Rice discovered early music at Bowdoin College and earned a PhD in Musicology and a Certificate in Medieval and Renaissance studies from Columbia University. He taught at Brandeis University for two years before joining UConn's faculty in 2003.



Commencement speaker Eric Rice

Excerpts from Dr. Rice's Commencement Address: Each of you is now leaving this wonderful school and headed to another one. If history is any guide, some of you will be singers and otherwise involved with music professionally for the rest of your lives, while others may well have a different path before you. Not only is this as it should be, but this too is part of

the tradition that I've been mentioning. Not every student in the choir schools or members of the clergy. In this connection I think it's worth reflecting not so much on the power of music, which I think you understand quite well, but also on the universality of what you have learned. Said another way, you have learned a lot about music but you have also learned *from* music.

What have you learned? First, you have learned to listen, for it is only through attentive listening that a musician can participate well in a given musical texture. You will, I'm sure, continue that attentive listening, not only for intonation, rhythmic precision, and the like, but also for the purposes of empathy and understanding of others. Second, you have learned to be an individual, to use your individual voice both literally in singing and also for the expression of your own thoughts. You will need to be true to that individuality, but you will also need to consider, as you've been doing, how your voice contributes to a larger whole.

Fortunately, the third thing you've learned is exactly that kind of contribution: to collaborate with others. In my own long experience as a singer, among the things I valued the most were long term relationships with stand partners. These were fellow singers whose voices I came to know so well that I knew how to complement them vocally, how to be the halo around someone else's edge, how to breathe in a certain passage because I knew that nobody else was going to breathe there—the kind of collaboration that involves adapting your individuality to the wider context of the moment. Without the strength that comes from your individuality you cannot collaborate effectively to create a greater whole.

Without listening, none of it works. You cannot function as an individual or as a collaborator.

So in short, remember that you have learned to listen, you have learned to use your own voice, and you have learned

to collaborate. These are skills that are universally useful and applicable. Whatever your future engagement with music, I know these skills will be of great benefit. Congratulations, class of 2023, and may your music long resound.



The graduates perform Palestrina's *Sicut Cervus*

Celebrating our Graduates

Congratulations to the six young men who make up the Saint Thomas Choir School class of 2023. We look forward to following their future paths and hope they will return to visit.

David C. hails from New York, NY and joined the choir school in fourth grade. In the fall he will attend Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts in New York, NY.

Grayson H. hails from Montclair, NJ and joined the choir school in third grade. In the fall he will attend the Loomis Chaffee School in Windsor, CT.

Constantin L. hails from New York, NY and joined the choir school in fifth grade. In the fall he will attend Regis High School in New York, NY.

Nathan M. hails from Salem, MA and joined the choir school in fourth grade. In the fall he will attend The Peddie School in Hightstown, NJ.

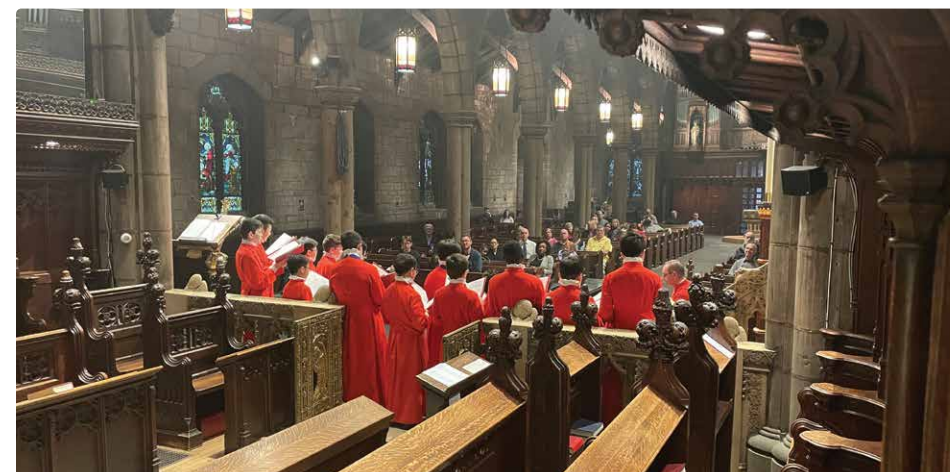
Jovon P.-B. hails from Brooklyn, NY and joined the choir school in fourth grade. In the fall he will attend Saint James School in Hagerstown, MD.

Francis S. hails from Madison, CT and joined the choir school in fourth grade. In the fall he will attend Interlochen Arts Academy in Interlochen, MI.

Philadelphia Treble Festival

The boy choristers enjoyed a day of music-making at St. Mark's Church, Locust Street in Philadelphia on the first Saturday of May. The Rev. Sean Mullen, '81, rector of St. Mark's, summed up the feeling of all participants; standing in the church garden as strains of young voices could be heard, Sean remarked that his idea of heaven was a beautiful day in a garden and the sound of children singing together in the church.

Jeremy Filsell directed the choirs in rehearsals throughout the day and the joint Evensong, accompanied by Robert McCormick, director of music at St. Mark's. The schedule included lunch and snack breaks graciously prepared and served by the host parish. Other participants in the event were the Boys' and Girls' Choir of Saint Mark's, Robert McCormick, director; and Choristers of St. Paul's in Chestnut Hill, Andrew Kotylo, director; St. David's in



Boys from the choir school had the opportunity to present a short recital after Evensong.

A Look Back at Recent Choir Tours

Spring 2014 Tour to Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Nebraska under the direction of John Scott. This would turn out to be John Scott's final tour with the choir.



Dr. Filsell directs young singers from the Philadelphia area in rehearsal.

Wayne, Elaine Sonnenberg, director; and St. Thomas in Whitemarsh, Michael Smith, director.

Our thanks to all who made the day a success and we look forward to future opportunities to bring young singers together as many churches work to rebuild their chorister programs after the pandemic.

Summer 2015 Stephen Buzard and Benjamin Sheen named interim co-directors of music after the sudden and untimely death of John Scott. Both had been assistant organists under John Scott and performed invaluable service during a difficult time.

Spring 2016 Choir tour to Virginia, Tennessee, and Alabama under the direction of Stephen Buzard and

Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys Fall Domestic Tour

Organist and Director of Music Jeremy Filsell will lead the full choir on their first domestic tour since 2019. The tour includes concerts in Florida, Tennessee, and Georgia. Dr. Filsell and the choir have eagerly awaited the time when COVID-19 would reach a state that allowed a safe tour. The itinerary is below.

Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2023 | 7:30 p.m.

St. Boniface Episcopal Church
5615 Midnight Pass Road
Siesta Key (Sarasota), FL 34242
www.bonifacechurch.org

Friday, Oct. 6, 2023 | 7 p.m.

St. George's Episcopal Church
4715 Harding Rd.
Nashville, TN 37205
www.stgeorgesnashville.org/inexcelsis

Sunday, Oct. 8, 2023 | 7 p.m.

Peachtree Road United Methodist Church
3180 Peachtree Road NW
Atlanta, GA 30305
www.prumc.org/worship/music/

As some may require a purchased ticket (yes, even of parents and alumni), please check for information regarding tickets and parking.



Benjamin Sheen; separate performances at the national conventions of both the American Guild of Organists in Texas and the Association of Anglican Musicians in Connecticut.

Spring 2019 Tour to Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas under the direction of Daniel Hyde.

Camp Incarnation | June 1-7, 2023



The outdoor chapel by the lake was the perfect setting for a compline service to end the day.



Thanks to Miss Hodge, an obsession with needlepoint took the camp by storm.



Whether in the water or on the beach, everyone enjoyed daily time at the waterfront.



A Camp Incarnation classic: knot-tying with Dr. Gilbert.



Students learned wilderness survival skills in bushcrafting class with Mr. Wentling.

Commencement Exercises & Graduation Dinner Saturday, June 10, 2023



The trophies await the 104th commencement exercises.



Grades 3-7 attend the ceremonies.



Graduates and their families joined with faculty and staff for a celebratory dinner at the school.



And, cake in school colors to celebrate the Class of 2023.



A final photo op with the graduating class.



After the valedictory Eucharist service, Sunday, June 11

Premiere of American Lamentations by Trevor Weston '81



Alumni celebrate with Trevor. Back row, L-R Dana Marsh '79, Trevor Weston '81; Jonathan Parke '81; Tom Godfrey '80. Front Row, L-R: David Willis '80; Stephen Schafer '80; Chad Newsome '81; Bob Lukomski '81.



Alumnus Trevor Weston shares his story as a chorister and composer with the boys who premiered the work.



Head of School Christopher Seeley engages Trevaor in a conversation with invited guests.

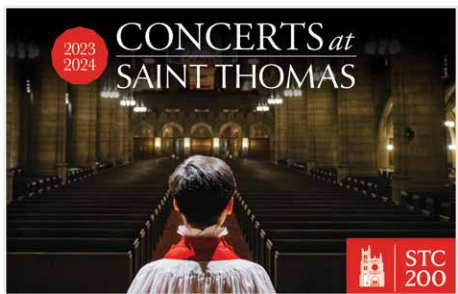
Approximately twenty years after he received his first professional commission from Gerre Hancock and Saint Thomas Church, choir school alumnus Trevor Weston, class of 1981, worked with Jeremy Filsell to create a large work, *American Lamentations*, which focuses on the Episcopal Church's historical relationship with enslavement and racial inequality.

Blog critic Jon Somer wrote, "Under the direction of Jeremy Filsell, the boys and men of the choir along with the always polished

St. Luke's Orchestra and organist Nicolas Haigh, made this wide-ranging, finely wrought, sometimes harsh and difficult music shine. The subject matter deserves no less."

Trevor visited the choir school on the day of the performance for a meeting with the choristers and a conversation with Head of School Christopher Seeley. Alumni and parents of alumni, as well as members of Saint Thomas Church attended the later dialogue with Weston and Seeley.

Concerts at Saint Thomas Announces the 2023-2024 Season



This fall, we will celebrate the bicentennial of Saint Thomas Church, so in keeping with that spirit of festivity, this season's concerts honor several important occasions. To open the season, pianist Asiya Korepanova will play Sergei Rachmaninoff's *Études-Tableaux*, commemorating the 150th anniversary of the composer's birth. In October, following its first domestic tour since 2019, the Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys will mark the parish's milestone with a free concert of music associated

with and written for Saint Thomas Church. The Grand Organ Series will kick off in November with Renée Anne Louprette, with additional performances by Stephen Tharp and a special Keyboard Extravaganza for Organs and Piano featuring Jeremy Filsell, David Briggs, and Wayne Marshall. The two annual *Messiah* performances with New York Baroque Incorporated will be followed by Christmas on Fifth Avenue, featuring the boys of the Saint Thomas Choir.

In March of 2024, we begin a new partnership with the Modus Operandi Orchestra and conductor Justin Bischof with a concert featuring Jeremy Filsell playing Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto No. 3* and the choir singing Francis Poulenc's *Stabat Mater*. Holy Week Musical Meditations include performances by organist Iain Quinn and the three-part vocal ensemble ModernMedieval Voices.

In May, the choir once again collaborates with the Modus Operandi Orchestra for a program celebrating the centenary year of American composer Peter Hallock, a west-coast contemporary of Gerre Hancock. Works by Ralph Vaughan Williams, Randall Thompson, and Richard Strauss will complete this program to close the season.

As always, choir school alumni can enjoy half-off tickets to all concerts throughout the season using the promo code ALUMNI when selecting tickets. Choir school Parents and Families can also enjoy their exclusive discount and front-row access to concerts featuring the boys of the Saint Thomas Choir using their "Choir Families Package." For ticketing or package-related questions, please email us at concerts@saintthomaschurch.org.

TICKETS | SaintThomasChurch.org/concerts

News & Notes

*Come, labor on.
No time for rest, till glows
the western sky,
till the long shadows o'er our
pathway lie,
and a glad sound comes with
the setting sun,
"Servant, well done!"*

JANE DOBLE KER, MOTHER OF RAB KER '73 It is with a mixture of sadness and gratitude that the choir school shares the news of Jane Doble Ker's death on March 14, 2023, at her home in New Canaan, CT at the age of 99 years. Jane lived a rich and inspiring life that encompassed joining the Marine Corps in 1943 (she referred to boot camp as "good fun"), later becoming a proponent of education, conservation, and historic preservation while raising three children, and enjoying sewing and needlepoint. Saint Thomas Choir School is fortunate to have had her serve in leadership of the institution as a trustee and board member. For a complete obituary, please visit Legacy.com and search by name and state.

THE CLASS OF 1973 celebrates the 50th anniversary of their choir school graduation and plans to celebrate this fall. We're hearing from members of the class and hope that other classes will also plan to gather. Class years ending in either a 3 or 8 (1953, 1958, etc. through 2003, 2008, and 2013), are especially encouraged to attend the reunion. Watch the school's social media pages for dates and more information.

SCOTT OSBORN '73, is mostly retired but continues special projects in his field of graphic design.

DANA BAILEY '73, writes that he and Karen (finally) made a two-week trip to Alaska, through Denali National Park, Anchorage, and a cruise to Vancouver. Their trip included train cars with glass ceilings, buses, boats, and a helicopter seeing bears, salmon, and bald eagles. They also took a trip to Texas where they were selected as extras on "The Chosen," which he highly recommends for your viewing.

JEFF STANARD '73, reports that he has had 50 eclectic and interesting years since his graduation from the choir school and that he'll share all the details at the reunion.

"Professionally, I have done a myriad of things. I have owned 2 restaurants, been a salesman and sales manager, I spent 17 or so years in the financial services industry...even made MDRT. I owned a contracting company and have had the opportunity to express creativity in very cool ways. I have spent the past 10ish years as a handyman, considered a 'traveling artisan' by most of my clients. I don't measure my success by what I do to make money. Photos of three remarkable children, grandchildren, and other relations will be shared at the reunion!"

Alumni, we want to hear from you!

Send *your* news and updated contact information.

alumni@choirschool.org

DALLAS BOYS' COURSE



Congratulations to rising eighth grade student, **CHRISTIAN G.** '24, TX, who was awarded the honor of Head Chorister for this summer's RSCM Boys' Course

at St. Michael and All Angels Church in Dallas, Texas. **HARRISON B.**, class of 2022, was named Head Senior Chorister.

Faculty Comings & Goings

With gratitude we say farewell to **MRS. RUTH COBB**, who has served as our interim director of admissions for the past sixteen months. Ruth returned to the choir school after serving as director of admissions from 2002-2014. She helped rekindle relationships and succeeded in breathing new life into our enrollment efforts in the midst of the pandemic. We welcome **MS. NORA THOMSON** to the choir school as the new director of outreach and enrollment. Nora comes to us from The Dwight School where she has been serving as the director of early childhood admissions. She is a trained musician and lifelong choral singer who knows well the transformational experience of the serious study of music.

The choir school also celebrates the eighteen year tenure of science teacher **DR. MATTHEW GILBERT**. Always known as "Dr. G" and famous for his lunchtime science questions of staggering breadth and depth, he came to the choir school from the world of research and found his calling as a teacher. He leaves to join the faculty at Emma Willard School in Troy, NY, closer to his family.

Calendar of Events

All events take place at Saint Thomas Church unless otherwise specified. For complete information regarding the details of events and services, please refer to saintthomaschurch.org/events or choirschool.org.

SUN., SEPT. 10, 2023

First choral services of the 105th academic year

OCT. 2-8

Full choir domestic tour to Tennessee, Georgia, and Florida (see pg. 3 for further information)

OCT. 12-15

Saint Thomas Church bicentennial events

FRI., OCT 13

The Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys in concert, Jeremy Filsell, conductor (see pg. 6 for further information)

Contact Us

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Christopher Seeley
Head of School

Ruth S. Cobb
Interim Director of Admission

Nora Thompson
Director of Outreach and Enrollment

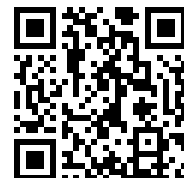
Margaret White
Assistant Director of Enrollment

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