

The Bach Choir of Bethlehem

Segment One Run Time: 22:18

Overview

Like a number of renowned artists who came before him, the music of Johann Sebastian Bach was not fully appreciated until after his death. Until recently, scholars believed that Bach's music was first revived in Europe in 1829. However, the discovery of the earliest known manuscript copied by a Bethlehem organist has led to the new view that Bach's music was sung in Bethlehem years before its European revival. More than a century old, the Bach Choir is one of the most respected choirs in the world. Many credit its initial founder, Mr. John Fredrick Wolle with initiating the Bach revival locally.



Discussion/Questions

1. What was the historical significance of March 27, 1900 and Bach's Mass in B Minor?
2. Do you think the fact that Bach wrote in Latin has contributed to the fact that his music is not very popular with children and teenagers today? Can you think of some other reasons why this might be the case?

Activities

1. Compare and contrast the music of Bach to your favorite modern music. Listen to samples of both as a class and discuss. Can you see any similarities that might support the idea that we still have use for older music in today's society, albeit in a slightly different form.
2. Research Johann Bach and put together a creative poster displaying your findings.

Spotlight: The Moravian Church - A History

When the Moravians first settled in Pennsylvania, they brought with them an appreciation for music that helped to prompt the revival of Bach. The Moravian church originated in ancient Bohemia and Moravia, or what is known today as the Czech Republic. The church was made up of followers of John Hus, a professor of psychology in Prague. In 1735, the Moravians traveled to America, finally settling in Pennsylvania in 1740 on the land of George Whitfield. After purchasing 500 acres of land in the area, they officially established the Moravian Church of Bethlehem. Not long after, the community of Bethlehem merged with the larger community of Nazareth, and congregations were established in other areas of Pennsylvania as well as New Jersey and Maryland.



As painted by Marie Nefong

As the years passed and the church grew, the Moravian Church in North America established two headquarters – a northern one in Bethlehem and a southern one in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. As of 2004, the Moravian Church officially has congregations in 16 U.S. states, as well as the District of Columbia and two provinces in Canada.

More information

Moravian Church in North America <http://www.moravian.org/>

Academic Standards

The Bach Choir of Bethlehem is specifically designed to address the Academic Standards for Arts and Humanities as set forth by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This program supports the successful achievement of standards 9.1 Production, Performance and Exhibition Music, as defined under grade 8 measurement criteria:

9.1.8 Production, Performance and Exhibition of Music

9.1.8 E Communicate a unifying theme or point of view through the production of works in the arts

9.1.8 F Explain works of others within each art form through performance or exhibition

9.1.8 I Know where arts events, performances and exhibitions occur and how to gain admission

