



# Bach & More

**The Bach Festival Society of Winter Park presents its 72nd annual concert honoring the great composer and others.**

BY G.K. SHARMAN



Satire and sophistication share the limelight as the 72nd season of the Winter Park Bach Festival gets under way this winter, Feb. 17 - March 3.

First up, PDQ Bach sets out to prove that classical music isn't stuffy or terminally serious.

PDQ, according to his bio, is a fictional 18th-century composer who was the "last and least" of Bach's many offspring.

He wasn't a terrible musician, apparently, but "someone who just didn't quite get it," says Bach Festival Society of Winter Park Artistic Director and Conductor John V. Sinclair.

For 40 years, PDQ has been the alter ego of Peter Schickele, who in real life is an accomplished and respected composer and arranger of more "serious" music.

He doesn't like the word "serious" though. It implies that the music is heavy and full of furrowed brows, he says, and that rock and jazz aren't serious. He considers his own compositions to be light and lyrical, not stuffy.

People should lighten up about music, he maintains.

"In the past, classical music was treated as if there wasn't any humor in it at all," Schickele says — which, in his opinion, made it ripe for a good spoof.

The secret of satire or parody, he says, is to understand and have respect for the genre you're poking fun at. Others were already having their comedic way with rock and similar genres, and besides, he didn't feel for them the way he did for Bach, Mozart or Beethoven.

PDQ "is a satire of love," he explains.

Performances include Bach standards, of course, with more popular, recognizable tunes in the background, as well as spoken humor and plenty of visual comedy.

The "Vegas Years" show that he's bringing to Central Florida "brings a com-

The Bach Festival Choir and Orchestra



Artistic Director & Conductor John V. Sinclair

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*—John Sinclair*

pletely tacky, Vegas-style presentation to classical music," he says.

It opens with him in a flashy Vegas outfit instead of his usual coat and tails. The Bach Festival Orchestra and the Chamber Singers also get to join in the fun.

Schickele started composing in his teens and played the bassoon in a Fargo, N.D., symphony while in high school. He first began spoofing Bach with his class-

mates at Julliard back in the 1960s. The first public concert was in 1965.

"When we started, I had no idea this would go on for 40 years," he recalls. "The fact that it has, and that I'm still having a good time with it, is one of the things I think the audience responds to."

You don't have to be a big Bach fan to appreciate PDQ, though a basic knowledge of classical music can deepen the enjoyment.

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gets,” Sinclair says. “It helps to just like classical music and not take yourself too seriously. If you can do that, you’ll really like this guy.”

**From Satire to Sophistication**

On the opposite end of the spectrum is the Festival’s presentation of *Music of the Moravians*, performed by the choir and orchestra.

The Moravians were the first sophisticated musicians in the early American colonies, explains Sinclair, who has been studying and conducting their music for years.

In a time and place when most music was very simple, the Moravians appreciated complex European classicism. They were the only ones playing Bach’s music on this continent in the late 1700s, he says, and inaugurated the first Bach festival in Bethlehem, Pa.

They also imitated European music in

their compositions, which he characterized as sounding like Haydn or a not-so-refined Mozart. Their most popular form was the anthem, generally scored for a mixed chorus backed by a string orchestra and organ, and occasionally joined by flutes and horns. They were usually three- to five minutes long and included two large choral sections with an instrumental interlude, introduction and coda.

Their music was very important to them, Sinclair says, but society at large — then and now — hardly knows them. That’s because the Moravians themselves were industrious, kind and very musical, but lousy at self-

promotion, he says — qualities that still hold true.

After the performances, the choir and orchestra will record a number of the Moravian anthems, in collaboration with the Moravian Music Foundation. They are “fabulous pieces,” Sinclair says, and there are no modern recordings of them.

Sinclair’s fascination with Moravian music goes back several years. He conducted a couple of concerts for the Moravian Music Foundation and was later asked to be a continuing conductor — a rare privilege from an organization that preferred to rotate conducting duties. He was also



Peter Schickele

The Bach Festival Orchestra





## Bach Fest on Schedule

### ***PDQ Bach: The Vegas Years***

3 and 8 p.m. Feb. 17  
Knowles Memorial Chapel

### ***Handel's Heroes and Heraldry***

3 and 8 p.m. Feb. 18  
Knowles Memorial Chapel  
Pre-concert talk by Dr. John V. Sinclair, who will share his insights into the works of Handel and discuss how the choir and orchestra prepared for the performances.  
2 and 7 p.m.  
Bush Auditorium, Rollins College

### **Music of the Moravians**

8 p.m. Feb. 24  
Knowles Memorial Chapel  
Pre-concert talk by Dr. Nola Knouse, director of the Moravian Music Foundation. She will discuss the history and importance of the pieces being performed and the significance of recording the music.  
7 p.m.  
Bush Auditorium, Rollins College

### **Festival Lecture**

Miles Hoffman, NPR music commentator  
10 a.m. Feb. 24  
Tiedtke Concert Hall

### **J.S. Bach's *The Passion According to St. John***

3 p.m. Feb. 25  
Knowles Memorial Chapel  
Pre-concert talk by Ann Dubsy, soloist and news editor of the Austrian Broadcast Corp.  
2 p.m.  
Bush Auditorium, Rollins College

### **Paul Jacobs Organ Recital**

3 p.m. March 3  
Knowles Memorial Chapel

For information or tickets, contact the Bach Festival Society of Winter Park at 407.646.2182 or visit [www.bachfestivalflorida.org](http://www.bachfestivalflorida.org).

named a Hugh McKean scholar to research the music.

"What started out as an academic interest turned out to be a passion," he says.

### **Bach Additions**

PDQ and Moravians are worthy additions to the lineup, but no Bach Festival is complete without some classic favorites. This season's schedule includes Handel's *Heroes and Heraldry* and J.S. Bach's *The Passion According to St. John*. The St. John is one of the most important works by the Festival's namesake, while the Handel program includes works that audiences often don't get to hear.

The Bach Festival Society also recently received a grant from the Mari-

lyn Horne Foundation to host solo soprano Keri Akema. She will spend a five-day residency with the Festival, doing workshops at four area high schools, as well as a free public performance.

Guests in the Festival's "Great Performers" series this season are pianist Garrick Ohlsson and violinist Midori, both of whom are also performing in this year's "Great Performers at Lincoln Center" series in New York City.

Another change this season is the person at the top of the organizational chart. Elizabeth "Betsy" Gwinn, the Festival's new executive director, began work last May.

Gwinn, who has a wealth of

experience in administration for non-profits, was formerly planning administrator at the Orlando Museum of Art, where her responsibilities included strategic and annual planning and project development.

The Bach Festival is a "sleeping giant" she comments, with an amazing volunteer choir.

"People are just so committed to what this organization does," she says.

As administrator of what the *New York Times* recently singled out as one of the premier Bach Festivals in the country, she plans to focus on fundraising and marketing.

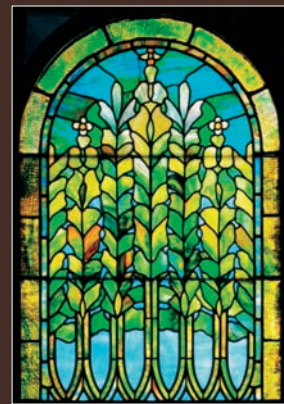
"I want to make sure the marketing matches the artistic product," she says.

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G.K. Sharman is a freelance writer and editor whose work appears frequently in various venues, including Orlando Sentinel, South Florida Parenting Magazine, AbsolutelyFlorida.com and Authorlink.com. She shares a house in Sanford with two cats.

**Bach Festival Society**  
OF WINTER PARK

Majesty, Masterworks & More  
February 17-March 3, 2007



72nd Annual Bach Festival