

**“a choral sound that is cohesive yet transparent, warm, and expressive”**

Niels Swinkels, *San Francisco Classical Voice*, April 2015

CALIFORNIA BACH SOCIETY  
Paul Flight, Artistic Director

presents

## **A Bohemian Masterpiece** **Zelenka's *Missa Votiva***

with a Baroque consort and vocal soloists:

**Rita Lilly** and **Elizabeth Kimble**, soprano; **Gabriela Estephanie Solis**, alto; **Chris McCrum**, tenor; **Sepp Hammer**, baritone

**Friday, October 16, 2015**, 8pm, at St. Mark's Lutheran Church  
1111 O'Farrell Street at Franklin, San Francisco 94109

**Saturday, October 17, 2015**, 8pm, at All Saints' Episcopal Church  
555 Waverley Street at Hamilton, Palo Alto 94301

**Sunday, October 18, 2015**, 4pm, at First Congregational Church  
2345 Channing Way at Dana, Berkeley 94704

Doors open 30 minutes prior to each performance.

Tickets: \$33 (discounts for advance purchase, seniors, students, and under 30)

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**Palo Alto, September 17, 2015** – The California Bach Society opens its 45th anniversary season with Jan Dimas Zelenka's "**Missa Votiva**." Director Paul Flight leads the 30-voice chamber choir, a Baroque ensemble of strings, oboes, and bassoon, with soloists Rita Lilly and Elizabeth Kimble (soprano), Gabriela Estephanie Solis (alto), Chris McCrum (tenor), and Sepp Hammer (baritone).

The Baroque ensemble is comprised of early music specialists, including Lisa Weiss (violin), Rachel Hurwitz (violin), Amy Haltom (viola), Katie Hagen (viola), Aki Nishiguchi (oboe), Glenda Bates (oboe), Georgeanne Banker (bassoon), Farley Pearce (cello), Lynn Tetenbaum (violone), and Yuko Tanaka (organ).

The **Missa Votiva** is, for the most part, festive and vivacious. Zelenka scored this work for chorus and soloists, with a standard Baroque orchestra of strings, oboes, bassoon, and continuo. It is notable for the theatrical, operatic flourishes in the chorus parts and solo arias. Although written in a minor key, it is neither sad nor foreboding, although it definitely has a number of dramatic moments. Notably, the orchestration, which is vigorous

and sometimes restless, impels the forward movement of various sections, even where the vocal writing is slow-moving and homophonic.

Jan Dismas Zelenka was born in Prague on October 16, 1679, the son of an organist and schoolmaster. Appointed as violone player in the Dresden court orchestra, Zelenka began composing sacred music for the Catholic Elector of Saxony around 1710. Denied the position of Kapellmeister in 1733, he was later appointed Church Composer, a subordinate position which likely prevented public appreciation of his work. His forte was liturgical church music, and his work was complex and ornate; he was out of fashion in the court which favored opera. Zelenka was held in high esteem by his musical contemporaries such as Bach, but some of his works were never performed during his lifetime. Zelenka was reported to be stubborn, reserved, and fervently religious—traits which may have cost him the recognition he so richly deserved.

Zelenka's pieces are characterized by very daring compositional structures, unusually long phrases full of varied musical ideas, spirited harmonic invention (especially chromatic progressions), syncopation, and a generous use of counterpoint. His works are often virtuosic and difficult to perform, but always fresh and surprising. In particular, his writing for bass instruments is far more demanding than that of other composers of his era. As Zelenka was himself a violone player, he was known to write fast-moving continuo parts with driving and complicated rhythms. Although it is unlikely that Zelenka spent a great deal of time in Italy, he was quite aware of other European musical styles, and his work can sound quite Italianate, reminiscent of Vivaldi and Pergolesi. He was a unique compositional figure, once again providing proof that there was much more to the later Baroque era than Bach and Handel.

### **The Program:**

“Missa Votiva” by Jan Dismas Zelenka (1739)

### **Biographies:**

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The **California Bach Society**, a 30-voice chamber chorus, has established a reputation for its interpretations of Renaissance and Baroque choral music and has been specializing in historically informed performances since 1998. The appointment of artistic director Dr. Paul Flight in 2006 has resulted in highly successful concert seasons. He has enthralled audiences and critics with his thoughtful and refreshing programming, and has become well respected for bringing lesser-known Baroque masterworks to Bay Area stages. In February 2013, Leon Chisholm of *San Francisco Classical Voice* wrote: **“In recent years, the California Bach Society has become a prospector of Baroque gold. Its concerts have brought forth exquisite, rarely heard works by forgotten masters from the lost frontier, to the delight of its audiences.”**

Artistic Director **Dr. Paul Flight**—a noted choral conductor, teacher, and singer—is in his tenth season with the California Bach Society. A former member of such distinguished ensembles as the Waverly Consort, Theatre of Voices, Pomerium Musices, and the New York

Collegium, he brings a wealth of expertise to CBS. Critics have praised Dr. Flight's conducting acumen, stating: "**Flight has made of the choral group a professional ensemble capable of every expressive nuance and glorious ensemble sound.**" In addition, he is the artistic director of Schola Cantorum San Francisco, a professional chamber choir, and the founding director of Berkeley-based Chora Nova. For nine years Dr. Flight was principal conductor of the Madison Early Music Festival, where he directed masterworks by Bach, Handel, Telemann, Vivaldi, Purcell, Dufay, and Guerrero. He has twice been a visiting professor of music at the University of California at Berkeley, directing the music department's top choral ensembles. As a visiting professor at Mills College, he has lectured on opera, and music history and form. He conducted an operatic double-bill production of Gustav Holst's *Savitri* and Darius Milhaud's *Les malheurs d'Orphée* for Mills College. Dr. Flight received his doctorate from Indiana University, where he studied conducting with Robert Porco. He has recorded a program featuring the music of Croce for *Harmonia*, a nationally syndicated radio show, and appeared as a guest on KALW radio's performing arts program *My Favorite Things* as well as KALW's *Open Air*.

**Elizabeth Kimble** (soprano) is an active singer, teacher, conductor, and composer based in San Francisco. Since moving to the Bay Area she has performed with a wide variety of ensembles, including the San Francisco Symphony Chorus, Cappella SF, the California Bach Society, Volti, and the International Orange Chorale. A versatile performer, she has performed repertoire ranging from opera to folk music, but primarily focuses on oratorio and choral works, with a special emphasis on contemporary and sacred music. Elizabeth holds a Masters Degree in Composition from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and Bachelor Degrees in Composition and Voice Performance from Baldwin-Wallace University.

**Rita Lilly**, soprano, has been lauded by *The New York Times* for "possessing a voice of strength, clarity, and virtuosity" and by *San Francisco Classical Voice* for "having a pure, silvery voice with plenty of color." As a native New Yorker, she has appeared as a featured soloist with the American Boychoir, American Classical Orchestra, Artek, and the New York Consort of Viols, among others. As the soprano soloist of the Waverly Consort, she toured throughout the U.S. and abroad and was featured on live broadcasts on New York's WNYC, WNCN, National Public Radio, and Radio-Canada.

Since coming to the Bay Area, Ms. Lilly has been a soloist with the Albany Consort, American Bach Soloists, Berkeley Community Chorus, Berkeley Early Music Festival, California Bach Society, Chora Nova, Contra Costa Chorale, Les Graces, Magnificat, San Francisco Bach Choir, San Francisco Choral Society, San Francisco Renaissance Voices, and Sacramento Baroque. She has recorded on the EMI/Angel, Musical Heritage, Naxos, and Musicmaster labels.

Ms. Lilly is presently the music director of Lafayette Christian Church and the voice teacher for the Pacific Boychoir Academy. She is also the voice teacher and coach for the San Francisco Early Music Society Baroque Summer Workshop and maintains an active vocal studio in her home.

**Gabriela Estephanie Solis**, alto/mezzo-soprano, is a rising young musician in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her past accomplishments include winning first place in the Senior Vocal division of the Music Teachers' Association of California VOCE competition as well as first place in the Art Song and Oratorio divisions of the San Francisco Bay Area NATS

competition. In the summer of 2013 she performed as a soloist in Bach's *Mass in B Minor* and Biber's *Missa Salisburgensis* at the American Bach Soloists Festival and Academy, and returned as a soloist in 2014.

In the spring of 2015 Ms. Solis performed the role of Endimione in San Francisco State University's production of Cavalli's *La Calisto* and was also the alto soloist in Vivaldi's *Gloria* and Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* under the direction of Derek Tam. She frequently performs with early music ensembles such as the American Bach Soloists and the California Bach Society, and currently studies with Christine Brandes. Ms. Solis received her B.A. in English and Music from Santa Clara University, magna cum laude, and was the recipient of the university's Arrigo and Catherine Descalzi Prize for artistic growth and dedication to the art of music.

**Chris McCrum**, tenor, has performed with a number of Bay Area ensembles, including American Bach Soloists, Philharmonia Baroque Chorale, California Bach Society, San Francisco Choral Artists, and the San Francisco Symphony Chorus. Chris has been the tenor soloist and section leader at several local churches, including St. Ignatius Church in San Francisco, St. Stephen's Church in Belvedere, and St Paul's Episcopal Church in Burlingame. Chris started his singing career as a boy chorister in Oxford, England, where he sang with the New College and Pembroke College choirs.

**Sepp Hammer's** voice has been described as "powerful" (*BostonEdge*) and as showing "warm baritone gravity" (*The Boston Globe*). As a soloist with the California Bach Society, he has appeared in Charpentier's *Messe des Morts*, Du Mont's *Magnificat*, Bach's cantata *Aus der Tiefe rufe ich, Herr, zu dir*, and Schütz's *Symphonae Sacrae*. His other concert engagements include Bach's *B Minor Mass* with the UC Berkeley Chamber Chorus, Vaughan Williams' *Five Mystical Songs* with Contra Costa Chorale, Zelenka's *Gloria* with Chora Nova, Rutter's *Mass of the Children* with Solano Symphony, and Fauré's *Requiem*, Brahms' *Requiem*, Schubert's *Mass in G Major*, and Bach's *Magnificat*.

On the opera stage, Sepp has appeared in recent seasons as Pistol in Verdi's *Falstaff* with Cinnabar Theater, Malatesta in Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* with North Bay Opera, and in the role of Wagner in Gounod's *Faust* with Opera San Jose. He holds a master's degree in Vocal Performance from the New England Conservatory.

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