



# VOICEMAIL

February 2017

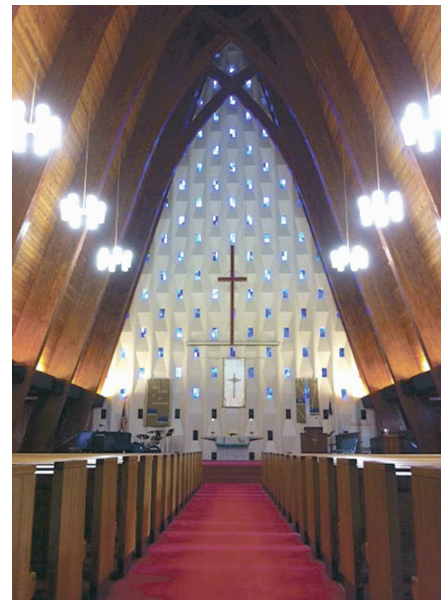
## Baltic Christmas Concert Delights

A jewel in our crown of new venues this season was the United Methodist Church of St. Mark, situated in Florissant. Its Scandinavian-inspired architecture was an ideal host for our Baltic Christmas, and to demonstrate just how appropriate it was we arranged for arctic temperatures and snow on the ground. However, those hardy souls who joined us found a warm reception inside, and were treated to some exquisite, if unfamiliar, repertoire.

Nearly every Baltic nation was represented (sorry, Lithuania), with particular highlights originating in Poland (a Renaissance *Magnificat* for three choirs) and Estonia (*Seven Magnificat Antiphons* by Arvo Part). But a high point of the program was surely a new version of *In The Bleak Midwinter*, specially commissioned from Latvian 'bernu brinums' (i.e., wunderkind), **Eriks Esenvalds**. This deceptively simple carol is scored for double choir, and has that rare quality of sounding familiar without being derivative. It is sure to find numerous admirers once it appears in print.

Thanks to Channel Nine, it's still possible to sample some of this Christmas repertoire because it was filmed for the weekly show *Arts America*, and is now accessible on the KETC website at <http://www.ninenet.org/blogs/arts-america/>.

*Philip Barnes*



Interior, St. Mark's United Methodist Church.

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## The Saint Louis Chamber Chorus

PO Box 11588

Clayton, MO 63105

(636) 458-4343

[www.chamberchorus.org](http://www.chamberchorus.org)

# Message from the President

Welcome to 2017 and the second half of our season! We rely on many people to make the Chorus special—including our singers (whom you see throughout our concerts), our concert support volunteers (whom you see on your way into the concerts), and others whom you may see but not realize their importance to the organization. I would like to recognize key people in each of these categories who deserve particular mention at this time.

**Linda Ryder**, our Executive Director, has steered this ensemble for 20 years, during which time we have grown in professionalism and organization thanks to her leadership. As you may know, Linda has announced her retirement at the end of this season. We will miss her deeply, and we will share more with you about her unparalleled contribution to the Chamber Chorus at our final concert in May.

**Laura Frank** will succeed Linda as our Executive Director. We conducted a wide search for candidates during the fall, and we were delighted to hear from so many highly qualified people. After reviewing all of the applications, Laura was appointed for her expertise, commitment, and promise. We are excited to welcome her, and are confident she will maintain and indeed build upon Linda Ryder's legacy. You will hear more about Laura at the beginning of next season.

**Bob Martyn** is in that third category of people who contribute time, energy and love of this group as board members. Bob has given us four valuable years in which his counsel at meetings—pragmatic, clear and straightforward—has been so helpful. We will miss his participation as a board member, but look forward to continuing our close relationship with him as a faithful and committed supporter of the Chorus.

Have a wonderful spring. We hope to see you at our final two concerts.

*Dick Brickson*

## Meet the Singers — Brian Prange

Brian is thrilled to be a new member of the St. Louis Chamber Chorus' bass section, and to be singing again since moving from the Chicago area. Brian grew up in Morrison, Illinois, a small town a couple of hours west of Chicago. After getting his start singing in grade school and high school, Brian took up choir and musicology in college as a much needed change of pace to his biomedical engineering studies at Northwestern University.

Thrust into the "real world" in his first engineering job after college, he quickly recognized the powerful effect that can be achieved by making great music with others. In 2008, Brian was presented with an opportunity to reunite with a childhood friend, **Mark Tomasino**, and be a founding member of a choir group in Chicago called the Wicker Park Choral Singers. Brian sang with them for over seven years. The group prided itself on making exceptional music readily available to all members of the Chicago community—including concerts in many areas around the city, concerts and open rehearsals for various school groups, and several appearances for Chicago's "Caroling at Cloud Gate" series.



Brian Prange

Brian was in a long term relationship with **Stephanie Lecci** (he calls her "the best lady ever"), when she was given an opportunity to move to St. Louis to become a producer at St. Louis Public Radio. Brian made a change in his career to move to St. Louis too. He now works at Young Dental Manufacturing, a company that makes many of the accessories on display when you walk into a dentist's office. He is in charge of product development at the company, so he hopes that all the new and amazing things to be seen there in the future will be from him!

During the move, Brian heard the St. Louis Chamber Chorus, and was excited to know that this choir performed the type of music that he is passionate about. He also saw that the choir performed concerts in a variety of locations around the city; another important concept for him. Brian and Stephanie got married last November, five years from the day that they had their first date. They currently live in Lafayette Square with an extremely stubborn and adorable dachshund, Tina, and look forward to many more incredible years in their new adopted city of St. Louis.

*Gill Waltman*

## Meet the Singers — Rebecca Margolis

Becca's love of music began from day one! She was born and raised in Allentown, Penn., and was always very vocal as a child. She entertained her parents by "singing" for the duration of every car trip. She studied piano, voice, and flute, and performed at local retirement homes throughout her childhood. Her mother is an excellent piano player and accompanied her in those performances. In high school and college Becca was involved in orchestra, jazz band, chorale, chamber chorus, and a capella musical groups. She also sang in Regional and District Chorus events.



Rebecca Margolis

Becca earned a BA in Spanish and Latin American Studies and a minor degree in Vocal Performance at American University and an MA in Professional Language and Intercultural Studies in England at the University of Leeds. As a Spanish major, she studied abroad during her junior (Chile) and senior year (Costa Rica). She sang in a local chorus and opera group in Chile, and with the affiliated university choir in Costa Rica. During college, Becca went on a choir tour to Spain and Portugal, and then to Russia two years later. She also joined the university choir while completing her masters' degree in England. She loves to travel, and including trips with her family, has already visited 24 countries!

After her return from England she immersed herself in jazz singing. She says "I was so inspired by artists like Billie Holiday, Norah Jones, Sarah Vaughan and

Etta James, and studied seriously to find my jazz voice. It is still one of my absolute favorite genres to sing!" She has also composed music for hand bells, string quartet, chorale and more contemporary pieces.

In February 2016, Becca moved to St. Louis. She currently works in corporate relocation at SIRVA Relocation as a Global Assignment Consultant assisting companies relocating their employees around the world. She looked around for a local choir and received a response from **Linda Ryder** saying they needed an alto alternate for their final concert.

Becca says, "I really had no idea what I was trying out for, and feel so lucky that I virtually stumbled into the SLCC! It is such a gratifying experience to sing with Phillip and the choir—the group continuously pushes me to step up to the challenge of mastering beautiful yet sometimes unfamiliar music, and in turn to become a better musician. As my professional life is not focused around music, I am so thankful that I have this opportunity to keep music in my life in such a focused and regimented manner!"

Becca loves to be outdoors and active—hiking, biking, roller-blading, or skiing. She has a black belt in martial arts, and recently became certified as a fitness class instructor!

*Gill Waltman*

## New CD Recording Planned

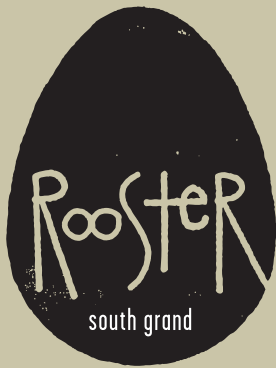
At the end of this month, the singers will gather for an intensive series of four recording sessions, in order to make our next CD. **Gary Cole** of Regent Records will be flying here from the UK to produce this new anthology, titled *St. Louis Classics*, and will be working with our own **Martha Shaffer** (Assistant Producer) and **Daniel Ruder** (Engineer), to put together a collection of some of our most memorable repertoire, much of which you will have heard over the past eighteen months. As with our earlier Regent recordings, the venue will be Second Presbyterian Church in the Central West End whose acoustic has proven ideal for our sound.

We are most grateful to **Dr. Margaret S. Albin-Wilson** for her generous financial support which has made this project possible. Look for the new CD to be available by the end of this year.

# Noteworthy Notes

## After the Concert

Join us after the concert for dinner at Rooster at 3150 South Grand. Enjoy great music, then head to dinner to enjoy good food and with good friends. Be sure to let your server know that you are with the Chamber Chorus, and a portion of your check will be donated to the Chorus.



Suntrup family

## New Esenvalds Commission

Those fortunate enough to attend the Baltic Christmas concert in December heard an extraordinary new composition by Latvian composer and teacher **Eriks Esenvalds**. The work was commissioned by **Kristine Suntrup** as a gift to her husband **Craig** to mark the occasion of their 25th wedding anniversary and to celebrate their beloved children, Kelly, Elizabeth, Craig, Sydney and Grayson.

Based on **Christiana Rosetti's** much-loved poem *In the Bleak Midwinter*, this new setting of her verses was as harmonious and moving as the more familiar carol and quite captivated the audience. The singers found great delight in singing this new composition, none more so than Kris herself, one of our very own sopranos.

Kris approached Philip nearly two years before her 25th anniversary to inquire about a commission. Her thought was to give her husband and children a gift that could potentially live on, that they could "claim" as theirs and even pass on to future generations; their own family Christmas song. Kris said, "Giving my family a song is like giving them my heart for that's how important choral music is to my life. It's the most personal gift I could possibly give. I can't even begin to describe the anticipation of hearing the piece for the first time let alone the emotion of performing it. I will forever treasure the process of bringing to life a piece of music to share with the world. And now when I say 'that's our song,' I really, really mean it."

*Gill Waltman*

For more information about concerts, tickets or auditions:

PO Box 11588, Clayton, MO 63105  
(636) 458-4343  
[www.chamberchorus.org](http://www.chamberchorus.org)

Graphic Designer, Amanda Verbeck  
Cover Photo, William A. Bascom

Advance Ticket Purchases:

Buy tickets online at our website  
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or contact  
Linda Ryder, SLCC Exec. Director  
(636) 458-4343

For questions, comments or to submit ideas/articles for VoiceMail newsletter:

Gill Waltman, Editor  
(314) 941-4455  
[grh@slu.edu](mailto:grh@slu.edu)