**July 8, 2020**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Contact:** Silagh White, 610-866-4382 x 116, silagh@bach.org

**BEL CANTO ANNOUNCES VIRTUAL CHORAL VILLAGE SUMMER PROGRAM**

The Bel Canto Youth Chorus of The Bach Choir of Bethlehem is seeking motivated youth for its adapted **Virtual** **Choral Village** summer program running July 27 - 31, 2020 online. Virtual Choral Village provides an opportunity for young people throughout the Lehigh Valley and beyond to explore and process their stories of Spring 2020 through music-making, conversing, drumming, improvising, and creating.

Artistic Director Joy Hirokawa commented, “These are such unusual times – even adults are struggling to know what to think. Virtual Choral Village offers creative young people a chance to sort out what they are thinking and feeling about living through COVID-19, economic upheaval, and racial reckoning, using their artistic impulses. We are actively seeking young people from a wide variety of backgrounds and circumstances, knowing that connecting with others will help them to process their own experience.”

Dr. Hirokawa will lead the vocal and improvisational portions of the program. World drumming will be taught by artist, Joseph Tayoun. Mr. Tayoun is an accomplished Middle Eastern percussionist and teaches at Independence Charter School in Philadelphia. Jennie Gilrain, who teaches with Touchstone Theater, Lehigh University, and the Bethlehem Area School District, will lead the youth in dialogue and community building.

The program is designed for youth entering grades 7 through 12 in the fall and runs daily from 10:00am to 5:00pn Eastern Standard Time. Tuition is $200.00 for the week. **Limited need based scholarships are available.**

For more information and to register, visit their website ([bach.org/belcanto](https://bach.org/belcanto)), or contact them at [(610) 866-4382 x116](tel:(610)%20866-4382) or email the program administrator, at [belcanto@bach.org](mailto:belcanto@bach.org?subject=Regarding%20Virtual%20Choral%20Village).

**THE BEL CANTO YOUTH CHORUS:** Founded by and under the direction of Dr. Joy Hirokawa since 1993, The Bel Canto Youth Chorus is comprised of auditioned treble singers from five counties in southeastern Pennsylvania, and has developed an international reputation for performing diversified choral repertoire at the highest standards of musical excellence and style.  In July, 2018, Bel Canto Youth Chorus officially merged with The Bach Choir of Bethlehem as its affiliated youth chorus. It provides an educational and artistic musical experience for children of diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds and nurtures a sense of accomplishment and community through the outstanding performance of their diverse choral repertoire. The choir has been invited to perform for numerous music conferences, including the Eastern Division ACDA (2010 and 2006), Eastern Division MENC, PMEA, AGO and Pennsylvania ACDA conferences.  In 2013, the choir completed a recording with the Bach Choir of Bethlehem for a Christmas CD that was released on the Analekta label. The choir was honored in July 2011 to be recognized as the winner of The American Prize in the Children’s Chorus category. The choir frequently collaborates with other artists, such as the *Bach Choir of Bethlehem, the Allentown Symphony, the Bucks County Choral Society,*and the*Lehigh University Choral Union*. They performed a Concert for Peace with Philadelphia based Atzilut in March 2009. In 2007, the choir was honored to be part of the Philadelphia premiere performance of John Adams’ *On the Transmigration of Souls*, presented by the *Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia* (Alan Harler, director). Tours have taken the choir to Central Europe, Italy, Ireland, Canada, England, Oregon, Brooklyn, Disneyworld, Ohio, and twice to Hawaii for the Pacific Rim Children’s Choral Festival under the direction of Henry Leck. In July, 2019, the group traveled to the U.K. to be part of the *International Children’s Choir Festival*, and performed at Canterbury Cathedral, Coventry Cathedral and Southwark Cathedral in London.

**For more information:** <https://bach.org/belcanto/>