

## **Bach Birthday Competition – First Lutheran Church of Boston**

### **COMPETITION DESCRIPTION AND RULES**

rev. 2023-09-26

First Lutheran Church of Boston is pleased to announce a chamber music competition for high school and undergraduate college student teams in the greater Boston area, to take place on February 24, 2024. Winning teams will perform a 30–40-minute-long program on March 23 as part of the annual Boston Bach Birthday all-day concert series at First Lutheran. Cash prizes may be awarded to the top-scoring teams. The Boston Bach Birthday has been ongoing since 2008 and is free for the public. It is always scheduled on the Saturday closest to March 21—J.S. Bach's birthdate.

#### THE COMPETITION

There are two rounds of the competition, taking place in January and February.

1. A recorded pre-screening round due by January 15 from which up to 12 teams will be selected to perform in the live performance round.
2. A live performance round of selections from the submitted pre-screening program at First Lutheran Church on February 24. The team will play a piece of their choice, and the jury will ask for one or more additional selections from the program submitted in the pre-screening round.

#### ELIGIBILITY

The competition has two categories, one for **high school student teams** and one for **undergraduate student teams**. Members of each team must:

- currently be studying at a school in the greater Boston area, or within a 70-mile radius of the city (including portions of Rhode Island and New Hampshire); and
- comprise either all high school students OR all undergraduate students; teams cannot contain a mix of high school and undergraduate students.

There is no restriction on field of study (or undergraduate major), and no requirement for students to be currently studying applied music.

Team members selected for the live portion of the competition must be the same as those who auditioned. All members of winning teams are required to be present for the live performances on March 23.

First Lutheran Church is located close to the Boston Public Garden, at 299 Berkeley Street, Boston. It can be accessed by either the Charles Street (Red Line) or Arlington (Green Line) or the Back Bay train station.

## REPERTOIRE

All teams are required to program a mix of chamber and solo music. Program length should be no longer than 40 minutes and consist of at least three pieces of music by Johann Sebastian Bach or contemporaries. Team members should contain at least one keyboard player and at least one other instrumentalist. An additional instrumentalist or a singer must complete the team. The program must contain the following:

- A) A chamber music piece for three players: either two obbligato instruments with keyboard, or a singer with obbligato instrument and keyboard (preferably from one of Bach's cantatas).
- B) Keyboardists must perform one of the following:
  - a suite (French or English); or
  - a set of chorale variations; or
  - a prelude-fugue combination, either from the Well-Tempered Clavier (Book I or II) or from Bach's organ works.
- C) Instrumentalists must perform one of the following:
  - a partita; or
  - an unaccompanied sonata; or
  - an accompanied sonata with the keyboardist.
- D) Singers must perform one of the following:
  - a paired recitative and aria with an obbligato instrumentalist and keyboardist; or
  - an accompanied aria (e.g. from the Anna Magdalena Book).

## EDITIONS

It is expected that candidates will use the most current Urtext editions of each work performed in the competition. While candidates may perform from photocopies for the sake of convenience, candidates must also bring one copy of the original scores of the works they perform. The competition cannot be held liable for any law infringement committed by a candidate using illegal copies.

## APPLICATION

Application to the Boston Bach Birthday Competition must be submitted via e-mail. A complete application consists of the following:

- completed application form (application form available here)
- application fee of US \$75 (details below)
- photocopy of a birth certificate, passport, or ID card verifying each team member's identity and birth date
- private YouTube links to video recordings of the team's selected program
  - a combined video/audio recording showing all performers from the front, provided via private YouTube link, of the following works by Bach:
    - a fast and a slow movement from one trio sonata, or a recitative and aria from one of his cantatas;
    - a complete keyboard suite, or a set of chorale variations, or a prelude/fugue combination (in the same key) from the Well-Tempered Klavier, or any prelude, toccata, or fantasia and fugue set for organ; and
    - a fast and a slow movement from one sonata or partita, with or without accompaniment

Applicants should send these items in a single e-mail to [secretariat@bbioc.org](mailto:secretariat@bbioc.org). Attach supporting documents to the e-mail in .doc, .docx, .pdf, or .jpg format as necessary. Incomplete applications will not be accepted. If you do not receive a personal acknowledgement from the competition secretary within two days, you may email [secretariat@bbioc.org](mailto:secretariat@bbioc.org). Upload your competition recordings to YouTube and provide unlisted links to each recording in your application e-mail. The completed application e-mail must be submitted no later than **January 15, 2024**.

## APPLICATION FEE

The application fee is US \$75. The application fee is to be remitted free of all charges for the recipient by January 15, 2024 to the following bank account with the notation "Purpose of payment: Boston Bach Birthday Competition 2024 + *Name of team participants*":

- Recipient: BOFAUS3NXXX (BIC/Swift Code)
- ABA routing: 026009593
- Account number: 004617363372
- Bank address: Bank of America, N.A., 222 Broadway, New York NY 10038
- Payment may also be made by credit card (Visa, MasterCard, American Express) supplying the card number and its expiration date, or by PayPal or Zelle. The application fee is non-refundable.

## VIDEO RECORDINGS

Each piece in the recorded round will be presented via an unlisted YouTube link to a combined video/audio recording, taken from the front, showing all players. The recordings may be from a live performance or supplied from a separate private session. No extraneous noise from an audience is allowed. Each piece and each movement of the trio sonata should comprise a separate recording and unlisted link. No cuts are allowed within pieces or movements.

Remember that the judges will decide whether you will be invited to take part in the competition on the strength of your recorded performance alone. It is in your interest to ensure that your recorded performance is of the highest technical quality. To this end, the video and audio may be taken from different sources (i.e., the audio may come from e.g. suspended microphones that produce higher-quality audio than the video camera can provide), but the video and audio should be synchronized in the final recording.

## NOTIFICATION

All applicants will be notified of their acceptance or non-acceptance to the live round via e-mail.

## JUDGING

The pre-selection committee will select up to 12 candidate teams to participate in the live round of the competition on the basis of the submitted video recordings.

The jury for the live rounds consists of nationally and/or internationally recognized musicians. The jury's decisions are final and exclude any legal recourse. Judges will be available to give feedback to competitors who are not selected for the Boston Bach Birthday performances. No contact is permitted between a competitor and the jury during the competitor's active involvement in the competition. A personal exchange regarding the technical and artistic performance of the participant is permitted only after he or she has been eliminated from the competition or has won a prize. Even then, a discussion regarding procedural matters relating to the competition (in particular, voting behavior) is inappropriate. Judges' comments are not to be quoted in press materials.

## BACH BIRTHDAY PROGRAM

The order in which the competitors play is to be scheduled by the music committee at First Lutheran Church.

## ASSISTANTS

The competition will appoint one page-turner, if requested, for the live performance round at First Lutheran Church.

## PRACTICE SCHEDULING

The keyboardist may request time to become familiar with the First Lutheran instruments. A maximum of one hour is available, at the discretion of the music staff of the church. No one other than the competitor, team members, and designated on-site monitors or assistants may be present during official practice times.

#### PRIZES

Prizes in the amounts of \$300, \$225, and \$150 may be rewarded to the top-scoring teams. The jury reserves the privilege of awarding multiple winners.

#### BROADCASTING

The Organizer reserves the right to make audio and video recordings of all the performances during the Competition and to use them in connection therewith. Recordings of the Boston Bach Birthday performances may be broadcast live and/or later (over the radio and internet). Competition participants shall not be entitled to claim any remuneration for these recordings. Recordings arranged by or for participants are not allowed.