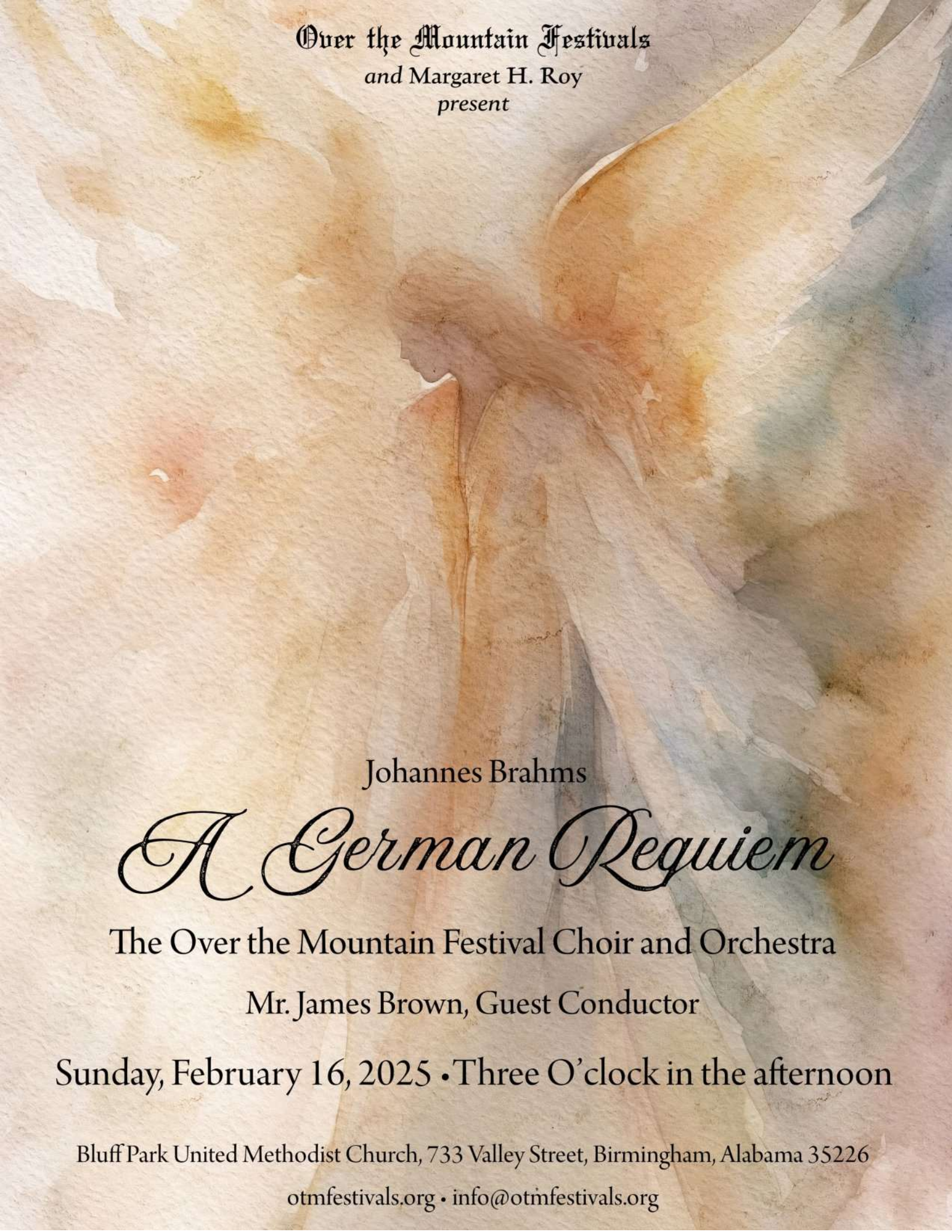




Over the Mountain Festivals  
and Margaret H. Roy  
present

Johannes Brahms

# *A German Requiem*

The Over the Mountain Festival Choir and Orchestra

Mr. James Brown, Guest Conductor

Sunday, February 16, 2025 • Three O'clock in the afternoon

Bluff Park United Methodist Church, 733 Valley Street, Birmingham, Alabama 35226

[otmfestivals.org](http://otmfestivals.org) • [info@otmfestivals.org](mailto:info@otmfestivals.org)

# Over the Mountain Festivals 2025

## A Warm Welcome

*Bruce Benson, the late pastor of St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, said, "The Church's music has been likened to a cathedral of sound — some of it, the wonderful towers and turrets and spiral staircases that enchant us; some, the well-appointed rooms that welcome us." The music we present this day might be compared to the foundation —grand, solid, sturdy; not meant to elicit a smile, but to create a sense of groundedness and support. It is sober, and yet it lets the singer soar! Our prayer is that it will bring glory to Jesus, the Savior, and ministry to you, the listener.*

It all began here 16 years ago.

On Valentine's Day 2009 (it fell on a Saturday), we presented our first Festival of Sacred Music. Helping us along the way that season were the wonderful members of Bluff Park United Methodist Church, including Betsy Britain and John and Sylvia Sumners. James A. Brown, Jr., (with his wife, Pam) was our first choral director, leading 93 singers and 22 orchestra members (many of whom are with us today). They delighted an estimated 500 guests with choral anthems and congregational hymns. And it wouldn't have happened without the Lord moving in the hearts of many generous supporters who believed in what we were about to do. It was a wonderful day!

Today, welcome, returning friends and new! In this, our 16<sup>th</sup> season, we want to express our gratitude to everyone who has supported us through their participation, professional advice, attendance, and financial support. It has been our joy to prepare and present our programs to you each year. We welcome the return of Mr. Brown to the podium as our Guest Conductor. He is the Director of Music and Worship at Independent Presbyterian Church of Memphis, Tennessee.

Along with Mr. Brown this season, we welcome Mrs. Cathy Shelton to OTM Festivals as our Festival Organist and Accompanist. You will enjoy getting acquainted with Mr. Brown, Mrs. Shelton, and our soloists in the pages that follow. We also welcome our singing friends from the Independent Presbyterian Church choir in Memphis. Other out-of-town singing guests hail from Nashville; Jackson, Mississippi; Huntsville; and Montgomery.

Today, we also remember two of our most faithful members, who passed away this past year — Mrs. Ellen Weems and Mrs. Judy Pelletreau. We honor their memory, send our love to their families, and thank them for sharing them with us. Mrs. Weems's son, Michael, is singing in our chorus today.

As many are aware, *A German Requiem* is a magnificent work containing seven interconnected movements. It has been requested by the Festival Chorus that all refrain from applause until the end of movement seven. At that time, feel free to show your appreciation as the Spirit leads.

And lastly, as we sing our congregational hymn together, remember the words of John Wesley, "Sing lustily and with a good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength."

*Please silence all electronic devices so that everyone may enjoy the performance without distraction.  
Any recording of this concert is strictly prohibited.*

## ***A German Requiem***

**Words of Welcome and Thanks**

Philip J. Capra, Jr., Executive Director

**Hymn No. 711**

Stanzas 1, 2, 5, 6

**For All the Saints**

*The Festival Choir and Congregation*

SINE NOMINE

arr. Arron Powell

***A German Requiem, Op. 45***

**Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)**

**I.** Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall have comfort. *Matthew 5:4* They that sow in tears shall reap in joy; who goeth forth and weepeth and beareth precious seed shall doubtless return with rejoicing and bring his sheaves with him. *Psalms 126:5-6*

**II.** Behold, all flesh is as the grass, and all the goodliness of man is as the flower of grass; for lo, the grass withereth and the flower thereof decayeth. *1 Peter 1:24* Now, therefore, be patient, O my brethren, unto the coming of Christ. See how the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early rain and the latter rain. So be ye patient. *James 5:7* But yet, the Lord's word endureth forevermore. *1 Peter 1:25* The redeemed of the Lord shall return again and come rejoicing unto Zion; gladness, joy everlasting upon their heads shall be their portion, and tears and sighing shall flee from them. *Isaiah 35:10*

**III.** Lord, make me to know the measure of my days on earth, to consider my frailty, that I must perish. Surely, all my days here are as an handbreadth to Thee, and my lifetime is as naught to Thee. Verily, mankind walketh in a vain show, and their best state is vanity; man passeth away like a shadow, he is disquieted in vain; he heapeth up riches and cannot tell who shall gather them. Now, Lord, O what do I wait for? My hope is in Thee. *Psalms 39:4-7* But the righteous souls are in the hand of God, nor pain nor grief shall nigh them come. *Wisdom of Solomon 3:1*

**IV.** How lovely is Thy dwelling place, O Lord of Hosts! For my soul longeth, yea fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my soul and body crieth out, yea, for the living God. O blessed are they that dwell within Thy house; they praise Thy name evermore. *Psalms 84:1-2, 4*

**V.** Ye now are sorrowful; howbeit, ye shall again behold Me, and your heart shall all be joyful, and your joy no man taketh from you. *John 16:22* Yea, I will comfort you as one whom his own mother comforteth. *Isaiah 66:13* Look upon me; ye know that for a little time labour and sorrow were mine, but at the last I have found comfort. *Ecclesiasticus 51:27*

**VI.** Here on earth have we no continuing place, howbeit we seek one to come. *Hebrews 13:14* Lo, I unfold unto you a mystery: we shall not all sleep when He cometh, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the trumpet. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. Then, what of old was written, the same shall be brought to pass. For death shall be swallowed in victory! Grave, where is thy triumph? Death, where is thy sting? *1 Corinthians 15:51, 52, 54, 55* Worthy art Thou to be praised, Lord of honour and might, for Thou hast earth and heaven created, and for Thy good pleasure all things have their being and are and were created. *Revelation 4:11*

**VII.** Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and that their works do follow after them. *Revelation 14:13*

## Program Notes

In the introductory measures, the somber notes of the low strings of the orchestra provide a solemn, steady cadence, evocative of a funeral procession. As the choir enters, its words are spoken, as it were, to the mourners, assuring them that those who mourn shall be comforted, for though they weep now, some day they shall again be joyful, for they shall see the departed return, rejoicing in Christ's presence.

In the second movement, we are reminded of the shortness of life and that all ultimately die; however, we have the enduring Word of God that assures us that the redeemed of the Lord will return to Zion, where there will be no more tears or sighing, but only joy and gladness.

Understanding now the brevity of life, the soloist and choir, in the third movement, ask our Lord to teach us just how quickly life passes and how transitory is our possession of any wealth. The believer's hope, we are told, is not in these things but in God, in whose hand our souls rest.

Movement four speaks of the rest and beauty found in God's presence. This is why the believer's soul longs and cries out for that ultimate, blissful existence in God's dwelling place.

Comforting words are given mourners in the fifth movement as they are assured that God comforts sorrowing ones just as a mother comforts her child.

In the sixth movement we are reminded that Christians have no continuing place on this earth, but rather, we anticipate the sound of the last trumpet when we shall be changed eternally into the incorruptible image of Christ. Then we shall have the final victory over death, the grave, and the sting of death. The chorus ends with the words of Revelation: "Worthy art Thou to be praised, Lord of honor and might."

The *Requiem* closes quite understandably, based on all that has been promised above, with the words of Psalm 116: "Blessed (happy) are the dead which die in the Lord; they rest from their labors and their works follow them."

## **A Brief History of *A German Requiem***

While the musical and textual seeds for *A German Requiem* germinated for almost nine years, their flowering came about in a relatively short nineteen-month period from February 1865 through August 1866. The sudden death of Brahms's mother on February 2, 1865, provided the stimulus that moved him to bring together his thoughts about death and certain of his musical ideas that had long lain undeveloped; the result was this, his most important choral work, the *Requiem*.

The first three movements were performed in 1867 at a concert of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna. Because of inadequate rehearsal time and a timpanist who completely drowned out the voices and other instruments in the third movement, the work was not well received. However, six movements – the present fifth movement was added later – were given at the cathedral in Bremen on Good Friday 1868 and were well rehearsed and enthusiastically received. Brahms was 35 years old at this time and still had two-thirds of his compositional life ahead of him. The success of the *Requiem* at this time firmly established his reputation as a first-rate composer. He added the fifth movement in 1869. Within a year, it was performed 20 or more times in Germany and Austria.

The composition of *A German Requiem* marked a radical departure from the traditional requiem form. Abandoning entirely the established requiem text, Brahms instead chose for himself the Scriptures that he wanted. Whereas the traditional requiem text left shrouded in mystery and doubt the question of the fate of the departed Christian, *A German Requiem* affirmed the biblical teaching that the dead in Christ are blessed and rest from sorrow, suffering, and pain in God's presence.

## **Reflections from Our Guest Conductor**

My first encounter with *A German Requiem* was as a first-year graduate student in choral music at the University of Georgia. It was the most challenging choral/orchestral work I had sung at that time. All of the choir members of the University's Music School, including several hundred students, sang, accompanied by the University Orchestra. Our guest conductor was considered one of the finest collegiate choral directors in the United States. The experience made a deep impression on me, but I didn't dream that I would have the opportunity to direct Brahms's *Requiem* a number of times as a church choir director in the years to come.

*A German Requiem* has become, in the intervening years, my favorite large-scale choral work, among many that I have heard, sung, and directed. During the past six months of preparation, I have been reminded many times of the power, beauty, and emotional and spiritual depth of the scriptural text set to uplifting, comforting, inspiring, joyful, and triumphant music by one of the most gifted composers of all time. Brahms wrote his *Requiem* to bring hope and comfort to the living, and he succeeded brilliantly in his mission.

This past spring, when offered the opportunity to direct this great masterwork, I accepted it immediately. I am indebted to the leadership of OTMF and to all the members of this choir from the Birmingham area and beyond, as well as to our excellent instrumentalists, for this privilege. I hope that this presentation brings great comfort and hope to all present concerning the eternal bliss, peace, and security offered in these timeless words of Scripture set to music of wonderful creativity, great beauty, and rare emotional and spiritual depth.

*Thank you for spending your Sunday afternoon with us.  
We hope you will plan to stay awhile to meet Mr. Brown, Mrs. Shelton,  
and our singers, who have diligently prepared to share this program with you – they would love to  
meet you.*

## Our Festival Conductor

**Mr. James A. Brown** served as our inaugural clinician in the 2009 season, then again for Festivals '11 and '15. We are pleased to welcome him again for Festival '25. His contribution to helping establish OTMF has been invaluable!

Mr. Brown presently serves as the Director of Music and Worship at Independent Presbyterian Church (IPC) of Memphis, a position held since 1993. Prior to coming to IPC, he was Director of Music at Briarwood Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, Alabama, for 16 years. Having received a BA in music from Samford University and an MME from the University of Georgia, he has taught music at all levels, from preschool through college. He has also planned and conducted church music sessions at divisional meetings of the American Choral Directors Association and has been a reviewer for *The Choral Journal*. Mr. Brown has served as a clinician for church and school choral music workshops across the Southeast, and his choirs have performed for regional, national, and international choral festivals and conferences and at churches throughout the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

James and his wife, Pam, who is the Director of Children's Choirs at Independent Presbyterian Church, have two married children and six grandchildren.

## Our Festival Organist and Accompanist

**Cathy Shelton** joins us as accompanist for the 2024–25 season. She taught choral music in Alabama public schools for 34 years, retiring in 2015 from Hoover High School, where she was the Assistant Choral Director, IB Music, and Piano Keyboard Lab teacher. She has music performance degrees from the University of Alabama (piano and organ) and from Northwestern University (piano, with an assistantship in choral accompanying). She has served as the organist at Edgewood Presbyterian in Homewood, at First Presbyterian Birmingham, and at First United Methodist Church Birmingham. Cathy currently teaches piano at the Vestavia Methodist Conservatory of the Arts and enjoys accompanying various choral groups.

Cathy and her husband, Rick, are the proud grandparents of three beautiful grandchildren.

## The Bluff Park UMC Organ

One of the treasures in the Bluff Park United Methodist Church sanctuary is the pipe organ. For many years, it was housed in the sanctuary of the McCoy United Methodist Church on 8th Avenue West in Birmingham, adjacent to the campus of Birmingham-Southern College. Many concerts and musical programs from the college were held there, along with worship and ordination services of the North Alabama Conference. Due to a changing neighborhood and declining membership, the McCoy Church closed in 1993. The Bluff Park Church was able to obtain the organ for use in its proposed new sanctuary. As the building plans were developed, it was removed from its original location, repairs were made, and some computerized mechanical upgrades were added.

## Our Festival Soloists

Soprano **Sadie Goodman** holds Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance and Master of Music Education degrees from Samford University, a Master of Music degree in Voice and Opera from Northwestern University, and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Alabama. Sadie has worked with Alabama-native composer Terre Johnson as the soprano soloist for the premieres of his works *Missa Femina* (2014) and *Song of the Captive* (2016). She was the featured soloist for the world premiere of his work for orchestra, chorus, and soprano, entitled *The Wind* (2017), at Carnegie Hall in New York City. She was the featured soloist for the Alabama Symphony's Christmas POPS concert this past December at the BJCC. For more than a decade Sadie has been a chorister, cantor, and soloist for daily masses broadcasted internationally on the Eternal Word Television Network, headquartered in Irondale. Over the Mountain Festivals commissioned Sadie and baritone Zachary Palamara to create the recital "Nativity in Song" in December 2022. In December 2023, a version of it was filmed by EWTN as a special program for cable television; it is also a CD and DVD available for purchase. She served on the faculty at Judson College for four years and currently lectures for the School of the Arts and the Division of Music at Samford University. Sadie has enjoyed more than a decade of friendship and musical collaboration with Over the Mountain Festivals and would like to thank Philip Capra, James Brown, and Zachary Palamara for a wonderful collaboration.

Baritone **Zach Palamara** has been an active member of the performing arts community since moving to Birmingham in 2009. He has had extensive solo and ensemble appearances through EWTN, Cahaba Chamber Chorale, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Colla Voce, Over the Mountain Festivals, Samford University, Opera Birmingham, the Alabama Symphony Orchestra Chorus, and numerous other churches and ensembles. Through EWTN he is featured on recordings such as "A Nativity in Song," "Great Hymns of the Faith," and "The EWTN Family Christmas Special," which have been broadcast on television and are available on CD and DVD. "A Nativity in Song" is a one-hour special featuring Zach and soprano Sadie Goodman and is available on demand on the EWTN website and app. In 2016, Zach was a featured soloist for the televised funeral mass for EWTN foundress Mother Angelica, which was viewed by millions worldwide. His favorite past musical and theatrical performances include *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, *Judas Maccabeus*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Così fan tutte*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Company*, and both *A Sea Symphony* and *Dona Nobis Pacem* by Vaughan Williams. Zach works for ServisFirst Bank as SVP, Special Assets Officer. He holds degrees from Susquehanna University, the Eastman School of Music, and UAB. He is married and has two beautiful daughters, ages ten and eight. Zach is also a proud and devoted member of the free men's fitness group F3 (fitness, fellowship and faith).

# The Festival Singers

## Sopranos

|                   |                   |                   |                      |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Deborah Barone    | Caroline Garrett  | Kathy Martin      | Jennifer Smithfield  |
| Brooke Bell       | Emilee Garrett    | Kim McRae         | Margaret Sprow       |
| Susan Bellis      | Kay Harris        | Nikki Mestre      | Laura Stewart        |
| Beth Branscome    | Melanie Haynes    | Amy Pfeil Neimkin | Mary Frances Wheeler |
| Janice Bricker    | Cindy Horner      | Linda Norris      | Emily Wiggins        |
| Elizabeth Calhoun | Brooke Jones      | Karen Pearson     | Gilda Wilkerson      |
| Jaana Clayhills   | Judy E. Jones     | Diane Popwell     | Georgia Winkler      |
| Elaine Clowers    | Susanne Leveille  | Abby Powell       |                      |
| Pam Coffey        | Sarah Lumpkin     | Arden Richards    |                      |
| Donna DePrine     | Lissa Lutenbacher | Holly Simmons     |                      |

## Altos

|                    |                |                   |                 |
|--------------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Dale Baldwin       | Deb Davis      | Amber Johnson     | Amy Plourde     |
| Lisa Berry         | Audrey Dawson  | Mindy Johnson     | Brenda Posey    |
| Marsha Borden      | Holly Dees     | Alice Krug        | Carol Reed      |
| Robin Callihan     | Risa Entrekin  | Sally Martin      | Ruth Robinson   |
| Dayna Camp         | Susan Ervin    | Debbie McCallen   | Anne Schultz    |
| Jackie Cantelmo    | Robyn Felton   | Emily McKelroy    | Becky Sharritt  |
| Teresa Posey Capra | Anna Flemming  | Karen McKelroy    | Jan J. Shultz   |
| Kitty Cashion      | Suzanne Harris | Cathy G. Moncrief | Diana Stoneberg |
| Lynn Coffey        | Wendy Hellings | Molly Pennington  | Vickie Talley   |
| Jan Conder         | Cathy Henry    | Naomi Perez       | Rachel Turner   |
| Cathy Crittenden   | Emily Horton   | Virginia Pilcher  | Carolyn Vaughn  |

## Tenors

|                |              |                   |                 |
|----------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Jonathan Brown | Don Lingle   | Van Oliver        | Terry Stoneberg |
| Cary Campbell  | Trent Marcus | Arron Powell      | Bill Tiemann    |
| Philip Capra   | Joe Marsh    | Don Shipp         | Patrick Tisdale |
| Rusty Chastain | Dan Medders  | Albert Smith      | Jay Vaughn      |
| Clint Early    | Mark Nabholz | Richard Stoneberg |                 |

## Basses

|                  |                   |                    |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Dave Balius      | Jim Emison        | Joe Jones          | Harold Simon      |
| Maynard Brothers | Mac Fernandez     | Bill Lawrence      | Stack Stachelski  |
| Mark Brown       | William Fernandez | Mark McKelroy      | Gerry Stewart     |
| Bob Chamberlain  | Tim Folse         | Troy Durrel Miller | Rolland Stoneberg |
| Mike Coffey      | George Fritsma    | Matthew Morgan     | John T. Tarvin    |
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| Shawn Dawson     | Philip Johnson    | Keith Silliman     | Paul West         |
| James Diaz       |                   |                    |                   |

## The Festival Orchestra

### First Violin

Daniel Szasz  
Mayumi Masri  
Serghei Tanas  
Will Ronning

### Second Violin

Sarah Dennis  
Tara Mueller  
Julianne Steele  
Hui Lim

### Viola

Tian Tian Lam  
Zak Enikeev  
Rene Reder

### Cello

Warren Samples  
Xi Yang

### Bass

Eion Lyons  
Tim Carroll

### Flute

Lisa Weinhold  
Barbara Harrington

### Oboe

Jim Sullivan  
Kelly Newport

### Clarinet

Brad Whitfield  
Amy Eich

### Bassoon

Tariq Masri  
Jack Sharp

### Trumpet

Nick Ciulla  
Harry McAfee

### French Horn

Adam Pandolfi  
Kevin Kozak  
Jeff Solomon  
Nina Tarpley

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Masa Ohtake  
Jared Rodin

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Jay Burnham

### Harp

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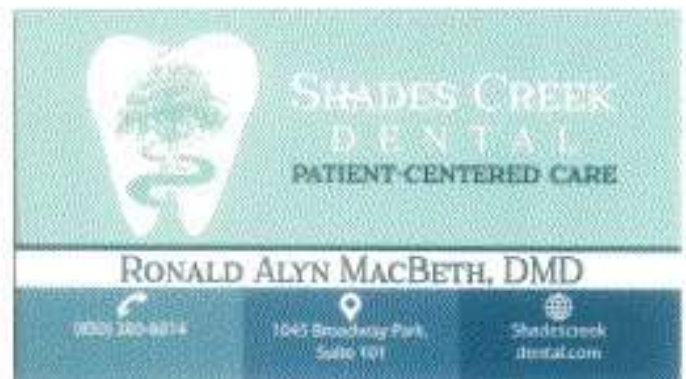


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Riverchase United Methodist Church for providing rehearsal space. Pastor Tony Johnson, Daniel deShazo, Cathy Hayhurst, Chris Higginbotham, and the gracious members of Riverchase United Methodist Church.

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## **What We Do and for Whom**

Over the Mountain Festivals exists to foster and perpetuate the singing of sacred choral music and to provide training and encouragement to directors of small choirs and their choristers, both adults and children, for the glory of God, for the edification of participants, and for the enjoyment of the community.

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Over the Mountain Festivals, Inc., is a 501(c)(3) and an Alabama nonprofit corporation.

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