

## Trinity Cathedral resumes Wednesday Brownbag Concerts & Choral Evensongs

by Daniel Hathaway



Trinity Cathedral will resume its Wednesday programming on October 6, including the Noontime Brownbag Concerts and 6:00 pm Choral Evensong services, with some modifications that reflect the current state of the pandemic.

“It’s a different chapter of unusualness,” music director Todd Wilson said in a telephone conversation. Rather than offering the popular lunchtime concerts

every week, Trinity will host the performances twice a month.

“We settled into the every-other-week Brownbag Concert format last year, and I’m guessing that live audiences are going to be coming back rather slowly. It seemed to make sense to continue that pattern for the foreseeable future. My hope is that a year from now we’ll be in a much more normal and easy-to-predict place,” Wilson said.

Patrons who attend the Wednesday noon programs in person will find some new protocols in place. “We’ll be doing low-key check-ins with proof of vaccination, and no lunches will be permitted. Sad stuff, but we’re not even allowed to serve coffee after church right now.” The alternative is to attend online, and all of Trinity’s programs will be live streamed.

However audience members elect to attend, the fall Brownbag Series will feature the Cathedral’s new chancel organ, created by Ohio’s Muller Organbuilders from previous instruments by E.M. Skinner and Aeolian-Skinner, though COVID-19 has scaled back some of Wilson’s plans. “I’d like to have planned some bigger programs, but I didn’t want to do those with only 125 people allowed in the building.”



The opening concert on October 6 will feature Wilson and associate organist Nicole Keller in Leo Sowerby's *Comes Autumn Time*, a selection of dances by Calvin Hampton, and the Theme and Variations from Charles-Marie Widor's Fifth Symphony, as well as "some little pieces by George Shearing and Edwin LeMare's beautiful *Londonderry Air* — to shamelessly show off all the juicy stops like the harp and chimes," Wilson said.

On November 17, a second concert celebrating the new organ with Wilson and Keller back on the bench will also feature the brass of BlueWater Chamber Orchestra in music by Karg-Elert, Guilmant, Gabrieli, and Mouret. (The organ will be formally dedicated at a Choral Evensong service on Sunday, November 7 at 4:00 pm.)

Other noontime performances this fall include pianist Nathan Carterette (October 20), the big band Gabriel's Horns (November 3), "A Jazzy Christmas" with Jennifer Cochran and Gateway Band (December 1), the sopranos and altos of the Cathedral Choir in Benjamin Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols* with harpist Jody Guinn (December 8), and conditions permitting, the annual *Messiah Sing* (December 15).

"I don't know how *Messiah* is going to work," Wilson said. "Right now we can only have up to seventeen people in the choir." Which brings us to Trinity's services of Choral Evensong, the iconic Anglican musical service which is sung on a daily basis by many of England's cathedral and college chapel choirs, and which will be offered this fall at Trinity in-person and by live stream every Wednesday from October 6 through December (click [here](#) for the full schedule).

"Evensong is what choir folks have missed the most over the last 18-19 months," Wilson said, noting that in order to resume services beginning on October 6, the music staff has done a huge amount of personnel juggling. "We've set up an Excel spreadsheet to keep track of who's available. It's meant a lot of extra work."

Choristers will remain masked even while singing. “It’s a bit of a drag,” Wilson said, “but I’m thrilled to be able to work with choirs again, so I shouldn’t complain too much.”



Visitors to Trinity’s Choral Evensong web page can read British concert pianist Stephen Hough’s reflections about the unassuming nature of this Anglican tradition:

*Evensong hangs on the wall of English life like an old, familiar cloak passed through the generations. Rich with prayer and scripture, it is nevertheless totally non-threatening. It is a service into which all can stumble without censure—a rambling old house where everyone can find some corner to sit and think, to listen with half-attention, trailing a few absent-minded fingers of faith or doubt in its passing stream.*

*Most religious celebrations gather us around a table of some sort. They hand us a book, or a plate, or speak a word of demanding response. They want to ‘touch’ us. Choral Evensong is a liturgical expression of Christ’s *Nolle me tangere* – ‘Do not touch me. I have not yet ascended to my Father’ (St. John 20:17). It reminds us that thresholds can be powerful places of contemplation; and that leaving someone alone with their thoughts is not always denying them hospitality or welcome.*

*Published on ClevelandClassical.com September 29, 2021.*

*Click here for a printable copy of this article*

[Return to the Front Page.](#)