

Schedule of Events 2026

www.peoriabachfestival.org

All events will be held at [Westminster Presbyterian Church](#), 1420 W. Moss Avenue, Peoria, Illinois 61606.



Sunday, May 31 – Bach Iben Organ Marathon (4:00 pm)

Freewill offering

Join us for our annual Bach organ concert, a tradition begun by Tom Clark Jones that now links the Gretchen R. Iben Concert Series with the Peoria Bach Festival. Hear works by Bach and his contemporaries performed on Westminster's magnificent Visser-Rowland organ, crafted by Dutch builder Pieter Visser. From intimate chorales to dazzling toccatas and majestic chords, this program opens a window into the spiritual and sonic world of Bach that continues to inspire musicians and listeners today.

Monday, June 1 – Young Musicians Concert (12:00 pm)

Freewill offering

Over the past 20 years hundreds of young musicians have courageously shared their talent, artistry, and love for great music at our annual Young Musicians Concert. This year we continue that joyful tradition by bringing together more outstanding students from across the region for an afternoon of solo and ensemble performances. From budding instrumentalists to emerging vocalists, these young artists offer a glimpse of the musical future—fresh, vibrant, and full of promise. Their dedication and talent make this one of the festival's most heartwarming events, celebrating both the legacy of Bach and the next generation who will carry it forward. To perform, download the application form available at our website and submit it by May 18.

Tuesday, June 2 – A Baroque Chamber Concert (7:30 pm)

ADMISSION – \$20 Adults/\$10 Students

The German musical world in the early 1700s was a lively web of collaboration, competition, admiration, and the occasional professional snub—and no one stood at the crossroads of these relationships more than Johann Sebastian Bach. Entitled *Friends and Rivals*, this program brings together the composers who shaped Bach's world, challenged his ambitions, and enriched his musical imagination. Played on period instruments, it will include music by Telemann, Handel, Graupner, Graun, and Fasch. *Friends and Rivals* invites listeners into that dynamic circle, illuminating the relationships that shaped one of history's greatest musical minds. Featured performers are Celina Boldray, baroque violin; Lisette Kielson, recorder; Blake Duncan, oboe, baroque oboe, and recorder; Stephanie Hunt, cello; and Polly Brecht, harpsichord. Join us for this unforgettable celebration of Baroque music, performed by exceptional musicians who bring history to life.

Wednesday, June 3 – Brahms Goes Baroque Featuring John Orfe, Piano (12:00 pm)

Virtuoso pianist John Orfe will lead us in a dazzling Bach-inspired journey, tracing the master's far-reaching influence across centuries and styles. The program will include arrangements by Brahms of music by Bach and Handel. The result will be a richly layered program—part homage, part reinvention—illuminating how Bach's spirit continues to spark creativity in every age.

Thursday, June 4 – Community Concert (12:00 pm)

Freewill offering

Once again, our vibrant community of college and amateur musicians will share with us their wonderful music. The Peoria Bach Festival's annual Community Concert celebrates these dedicated performers—people who make music not necessarily for a grade or a career, but for the sheer delight of learning, practicing, collaborating, and creating and sharing beauty. From expressive instrumental solos to intimate chamber ensembles, their offerings embody the heart of the festival: music made together, across generations, for the glory of God and the enrichment of all who listen. It is a joyful reminder that artistry flourishes wherever people gather to make music with gratitude and love. To perform, download the application form available at our website and submit it by May 18.

Friday, June 5

12:00 pm – Bach and the Organ: A Lecture/Demonstration Recital

Freewill offering

This year our lecture/demonstration recital explores the history, construction, tonal colors, and music of Bach's primary instrument, the pipe organ. Some of Bach's early organ music will be performed along with works by organists that he either knew or by whom he was influenced. The recital will conclude with organ works related to the choral music that will be performed on the 2026 Festival Concert later that evening.

6:45 pm – Pre-Concert Lecture

7:30 pm – 2026 Festival Concert

ADMISSION – \$20 Adults/\$10 Students (12 and under free)

Join us for our annual Festival Concert featuring the Peoria Bach Festival Orchestra and Choir. For over 20 years we have brought remarkable musicians together to perform the living legacy of the Bach family. This year's Festival Concert gathers that tradition into a single sweeping evening, tracing the family's musical brilliance across generations—from the elegance of courtly dance to the depth of sacred song. The program will begin with the *Orchestral Suite in G minor, BWV 1070*, long attributed to Johann Sebastian Bach but now widely credited to his eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann. The *Sinfonia Concertante* by Johann Christoph Bach will follow, a vibrant and rarely heard gem that showcases four soloists—flute, oboe, violin, and cello—set against a colorful ensemble of winds, strings, and continuo. After the intermission, the Peoria Bach Festival Choir will offer Johann Bach's poignant motet *Unser Leben ist ein Schatten* ("Our Life Is But a Shadow"), *Cantata BWV 78*, *Jesu, der du meine Seele* ("Jesus, You Who [Rescued] My Soul"), and the third chorale from *Cantata BWV 79*, *Nun danket alle Gott* ("Now Thank We All Our God"), scored for full winds, strings, and continuo. Featuring a duet for horns, this triumphant setting will send the audience out with gratitude, joy, and the unmistakable brilliance of Bach's musical world.