



## Festival Finale soprano soloist **Jennifer Ellis Kampani** in conversation with Elizabeth Blumenstock:

Jennie performs in the Festival Finale concert on Sunday June 25. She has given concerts regularly in the Festival and at the Winter Musicale over recent years.

For more information and to buy tickets visit the Festival's website: [bmf-cdm.org](http://bmf-cdm.org)

**EB:** Musicians have memories of being part of thrillingly satisfying and moving concerts, whether as a personal “best,” the repertoire, or the group “feeling” in the performance. If we are lucky, all three! Can you share such an experience in your life, and express what made it so memorable?

**JEK:** There are so many concerts I have felt this way about. It is usually because of wonderful and talented colleagues on stage with me. It is impossible to have this “feeling” with the wrong people. I guess that is true in most of our experiences in life! The most recent time this all came together was this past February when I finally had the chance to sing at



Carnegie Hall with colleagues that I have been close to and shared the stage with for over 20 years. The group *El Mundo* did a program of Guatemalan music in the lovely Weill Recital Hall. The room was perfect, the week of rehearsals back in NYC (where I lived for 6 years) were fun, and the concert itself felt like I was coming home. Back to a program that I have loved and sing better each time. Back to fellow musicians that are like family to me. And I was looking out into an audience filled with familiar faces from my time in NYC and my real family who came into town for the occasion.

---

**EB: Tell me about the most recent good book you have read, or film you have seen, and why do you hope others should consider reading/seeing it?**

**JEK:** Hands down the best book I have read in years: *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver. I remember loving her book *The Poisonwood Bible* that I read in my 20s so I picked this up from my local bookstore knowing nothing about it. *Demon Copperhead* is a boy from the mountains of Appalachia who is a true survivor—through foster families, violence, drug use and institutional poverty. I was devastated when it ended and have been thinking about him and all of the vivid characters ever since. The writing is stunning and the story is told only through the eyes of this flawed and lost boy.

— (continues over)



**EB: What place in the world, as yet unseen by you, are you determined to visit, and what fascinates you about it?**

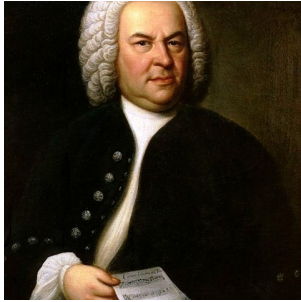
**JEK:** I want to hike the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu with my husband and our two boys. They are always up for an adventure and a great age to travel with at 11 and 14. We want to stay active and experience different cultures. The scenery looks amazing and the trek is challenging but possible. But really I will be happy exploring any new place with my family.

---

**EB: If you could time-travel to Leipzig, what would you like to ask Bach, and what would you like to tell him?**

**JEK:** I vividly remember driving in the car with my parents and sister when I was a kid listening to *Mr. Bach Comes to Call*. I don't know if it was on a cassette or we happened to hear bits on the radio, but I will never forget my first introduction to his music. Perhaps that is the exact moment when I decided I would be a singer and one who specialized in the music of the Baroque. It changed my life to hear *Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring* in the car that day. No question Bach is the one composer whose music I would listen to on a deserted island, and the music that I would like played at my funeral—preferably at A=415 with Baroque instruments and wonderful singers.

To ask him—I would really like to know if he was totally the devout Christian most people believe him to have been. Did his faith enable him to be a



transcendent composer and musician? Or was it Bach's mathematical and theoretical mind? As someone who is not religious, I find Bach's music spiritual and it offers me solace and comfort in ways that other composers do not. Is that profound depth from the composition itself, or through Bach's connection with God and Christianity while he composed?

*All opinions expressed are the interviewer's and interviewee's own, and do not necessarily reflect those of the Baroque Music Festival, Corona del Mar.*

"A Bach Kaleidoscope" June 18-25, 2023, at beautiful venues in the Newport Beach area, Orange County, CA.

Subscriptions, tickets & full details at [bmf-cdm.org](http://bmf-cdm.org)