

May '80

THE
FESTIVAL
BACH
1980

Grace Episcopal Church

WEST CHURCH AND DAVIS STREETS

ELMIRA, NEW YORK

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Elmira, New York
The Rev. Peter Courtney, Rector
Dr. Kent Hill, Organist and Choir Master

The Cantata Singers take pleasure in presenting their concerts without admission charge. The continuation of this practice is dependent largely upon your contributions at each concert.

DR. KENT HILL, ORGANIST

Saturday Evening, May 3, 1980, 8:00 p.m.

Re-creation of the

"Organ Concert for the Benefit of a Bach Monument"

played by Felix Mendelssohn in Leipzig in 1840

PRELUDE and FUGUE in E flat Major ("St. Anne") S. 552

CHORALE PRELUDE, Schmuecke dich, du liebe Seele S. 305

PASSACAGLIA in c minor S. 582

PRELUDE and FUGUE in a minor S. 543

PASTORALE in F Major S. 590

Prelude - Andante - Aria - Fugue à 3

TOCCATA in F Major S. 540

THE CANTATA SINGERS

Sunday evening, May 4, 1980 8:00 p.m.

MASS IN B MINOR

Johann Sebastian Bach

William O. Payne, III, Conductor

Janice Strain, *Soprano I*

Jean Doherty, *Soprano II*

Trafford Doherty, *Bass*

Gloria Kirk, *Contralto*

Edmund Dana, *Tenor*

I. MISSA

Kyrie

Kyrie eleison (chorus)

Christe eleison (duet: Soprano I & II)

Kyrie eleison (chorus)

Gloria

Gloria in excelsis (chorus)

Et in terra pax (chorus)

Laudamus te (aria: Soprano II)

Gratias agimus (chorus)

Domine Deus (duet: Soprano I & Tenor)

Qui tollis (chorus)

Qui sedes (aria: Contralto)

Quoniam tu solus (aria: Bass)

Cum Sancto Spiritu (chorus)

OFFERTORY

II. SYMBOLUM NICENUM

Credo

Credo in unum Deum (chorus)

Patrem Omnipotentem (chorus)

Et in unum Dominum (duet: Soprano I & Contralto)

Et incarnatus est (chorus)

Crucifixus (chorus)

Et resurrexit (chorus)

Et in Spiritum Sanctum (aria: Bass)

Confiteor (chorus)

Et exspecto resurrectionem (chorus)

INTERMISSION

III. SANCTUS

Sanctus

Sanctus Domine Deus (chorus)

Pleni sunt coeli (chorus)

IV. OSANNA, BENEDICTUS

AGNUS DEI et DONA NOBIS PACEM

Osanna

Osanna in excelsis (chorus)

Benedictus (aria: Tenor)

Osanna in excelsis (chorus)

Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei, qui tollis (aria: Contralto)

Dona Nobis Pacem

Dona Nobis Pacem (chorus)

SOLI DEO GLORIA

THE CANTATA SINGERS

William O. Payne III, Musical Director

SOPRANO

Susan Amisano	Jennifer Jack	Betsy Roll
Katie Barron	Carol King	Judith Sheasley
Ruth Bruning	Margaret Lembke	Hilda Shepard
Debbie Courtney	Kathy Lovell	Janice Strain
Jean Doherty	Lois McCann	Marylou Strong
Linda Harrison	Laura McGrath	Kay Kennedy Wack
Dorothy Hoos	Sr. Juliana O'Hara	

ALTO

Truuke Ameigh	Victoria Guest	Janet Mix
Nancy Basil	Claudia Hamlin	Gretchen Padgett
Eunice Bowers	Patricia Hauser	Cora Range
Carol Davis	Wendy Roe Hovey	Lou Sand
Diane Earle	Gloria Kirk	Florence Suffern
Gwendolyn C. Egan		

TENOR

Robert Badertscher	Jonathan Guest	Richard Sheasley
Edmund Dana	Paul Holland	Richard Wack

BASS

Richard Bauer	Marc Lovell	James Sanderson
Trafford Doherty	John Piasecki	Thomas Strain
Stuart Finch	Sidney Reed	Michael Wald
David Hauser		Norman Wilcox

REHEARSAL ACCOMPANIST

Judith Feipner

THE FESTIVAL CHAMBER PLAYERS

William O. Payne III, Conductor

VIOLIN I

Kenneth Fung
Edwin Mellander

VIOLIN II

Dan Fenstermacher
Gary Chollet

VIOLA

Kathryn Mellander
Alex Herzfeld

CELLO

Louise Foreman
Warren Bergman

BASS

Heather Hauser

BASSOON

Richard Bottcher
Julie Powell

FLUTE

Jeannette Wilson
Sallie Matteson

OBOE

David Hauser
Beatrice Baim

HORN

Guy Kinney

TRUMPET

James Ode
J. Jeffrey Stempien
Lauraine Carpenter

TYMPANI

Gary Mosteller

ORGAN

James Sanderson

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Grace Episcopal Church, Elmira, N. Y.

Music Department, Elmira City School District

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PROGRAM NOTES - ORGAN RECITAL

At the end of the concert season in 1840, Felix Mendelssohn embarked on what was to become a series of historical recitals featuring the works of composers such as Bach and Handel. Mendelssohn had shown a compelling interest in the works of Bach since his childhood, and as early as 1838 discussed the possibility of a concert to raise money for a bust of J. S. Bach, which would be placed in front of the St. Thomas school, next to the church where Bach had spent his last years. In his book on Mendelssohn, Eric Werner gives some delightful insight into Mendelssohn's preparation for the concert:

The master had practiced his pedal studies so diligently that he could 'hardly stand upright any more, and walked down the street in nothing but organ passages.' The concert brought in 300 Thalers profit, and after another similar undertaking, the memorial bust could be placed in 1843 directly under Bach's windows in the Thomas-schule.

The concert itself was an important precedent, and a strong influence in the revival of interest in the Bach organ literature. Some idea of the importance of the concert can be surmised from a list of people in attendance. Among them were the critic of the Leipziger Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung, the patriarch of music critics and Bach champion Rochlitz, Robert Schumann, and Hans von Bulow, all of whom were lavish in their praise of the concert. The Zeitung review stated

...Mendelssohn once more proved himself a distinguished organist and a great artist; it was a truly splendid artistic treat, for which we are all the more thankful as it is offered to us - alas! - so seldom...

Mendelssohn, then, had done for Bach's organ works what he had done eleven years earlier for the great St. Matthew Passion. In both instances he not only was responsible for reintroducing these great masterpieces, but also in setting a level of artistry which assured their continued popularity.

PROGRAM NOTES -- MASS IN B MINOR

When Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, died early in 1733, tradition required that all music in the churches had to cease until his successor, Frederick Augustus II, was crowned. For Bach this meant a relief of his duties in church music and he devoted the time to the composition of a five-part "Missa" in b minor. Following Lutheran usage, this consisted of the first two portions of the old Roman Catholic Ordinarium Missae, which comprised the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus (with Osanna and Benedictus), and the Agnus Dei. In form, therefore, the work is similar to the Missa brevis (short Mass) of the Protestant church service in the Baroque era, but because of its length (over an hour in performance), it was scarcely suitable for liturgical use.

Not until a few years before his death (c. 1747-48) did Bach expand the Missa brevis of 1733 into a full-scale Mass. To the Missa, comprising only the Kyrie and Gloria, he now added a Credo, which he set musically under the Lutheran designation "Symbolum Nicenum", and as a third part, he took over a Sanctus in D Major, which he had composed in 1724 for a Christmas service and which, in accordance with Protestant usage, comprised only the "Sanctus" and "Pleni sunt coeli". The Osanna and Benedictus, which belong with the Sanctus in the Roman Catholic Mass, were grouped with the concluding Agnus Dei and "Dona Nobis Pacem" to form a fourth and final section. The completed work, therefore, comprises four sections as distinct from the five sections of the Roman Catholic Mass.

Bach extended the compass of his Mass about three and a half times (as compared with older Masses) to a total of two thousand four hundred ninety-two measures. These monumental proportions called for a detailed articulation of the work. To this end, Bach adopted the customary numerical division into choruses and solo arias (omitting recitatives) of the Neapolitan cantata mass. In the disposition of the separate sections, he follows first the textual classification on Invocation, Praise, and Confession. So, for example, he expounds the passages devoted to praise largely in exultant choruses with full orchestra, including trumpets and drums. These are the massive pillars which carry the great edifice of the work. Their key of D Major, established by the three trumpets in D, is in no way over-exploited in its frequent recurrence: for it returns each time with fresh radiance, enhanced by the tonal contrast of the intervening sections which are mostly solo arias.

Beside the principle of textual division, Bach also used the formal structural principle of contrast in the meaningful arrangement of the individual movements. This is at once demonstrated at the start of the work, in the Kyrie. In accord with the text, it falls into three sections. The restrained middle section, for two sopranos and a small instrumental complement, is framed by two big choral-orchestral minor-key sections which in turn are mutually contrasting in style, key, thematic material, and dimensions. The first very extended and more concertante section in b minor with its monumental homophonic opening and instrumentally conceived fugal theme is matched with a polyphonic third section in f-sharp minor, only half as long and written in the manner of a motet.

From the contrapuntal web of the Kyrie, the Gloria rises firmly with the instrumental brilliance of three trumpets and drums and an exultant theme progressing in fourths in 3/8 time. Within this long Gloria, which falls into nine sections, we again encounter the contrast principle. The brilliant first section (Gloria in excelsis) in D is immediately followed by the more solemn "Et in terra pax" in 4/4 time in the sub-dominant key, G Major. This at first omits the trumpets and

drums and only gradually, after a lengthy fugue, builds to a jubilant close. The succeeding sections show the logical interchange of solo and tutti numbers, the consistency of which is broken in only one place: in order to end the Gloria with a tutti section (Cum Sancto Spiritu), Bach allows two solo sections, contrasted in key and scoring, to follow one after the other.

The "Symbolum Nicenum" represents the summit of architectural skill. The inverted symmetry and cyclic arrangement of the nine sections with the "Crucifixus" at the center relates to the Cross as the symbol of the Christian faith. The outer formal framework is built of two choruses at the beginning and two at the end. The first pair (Credo and Patrem Omnipotentem) belong together in content, as do the last pair (Confiteor and Et exspecto). The first section of each pair is worked in strict counterpoint with the ancient chorale theme as the cantus firmus, and with no independent instrumental parts. The second sections show a freer compositional technique and a richer instrumental accompaniment. As inner cyclic frames, Bach chooses two sections for soloists: the "Et in unum Dominum", set as a canon at the unison ("unum") for soprano, contralto, two oboi d'amore, and strings, and the "Et in Spiritum Sanctum", for bass and two oboi d'amore. In the center of the great structure stand three choruses "Et incarnatus est", "Crucifixus", and "Et resurrexit", which express in the most affecting manner the nucleus of the story of Christ: Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection.

Here is revealed the measure of intensity with which Bach interprets in music the graphic as well as the theological content of the text. Through the descending motion of the sung melody line from the words "Et incarnatus", and of the accompanying motive in the unison violins, he symbolises the incarnation of God who descends from Heaven in the person of Jesus Christ to redeem mankind. Bach underlines this central event and propounds it theologically through the symbolism of numbers which, as Fritz Feldmann has been able to show, has played a part in Mass settings since the time of the Netherlands composers. Besides the number 3 of the Trinity, the numbers 5 as symbol of Christ on the Cross (5 wounds) and 7 as the symbol of the Creator, Heaven, and the Holy Spirit have particular significance. The hidden indication of the 7 and 5 occurs in the "Et incarnatus est", for instance in the total number of measures ($49=7 \times 7$) and in the already mentioned falling string motive which has five notes and is played thirty-five times (7×5). In the "Crucifixus", the fifth section and the very heart of the "Symbolum Nicenum", the 5 is at the center as the symbol of the Cross. An inexorable, falling ostinato motive descends in five semitones in the basso continuo, the chromaticism serving as an emphatic figurative expression of the Passion. Above this, symbolising the pain of Christ on the Cross, the separate choir voices one after the other sing the profoundly expressive five-note "Crucifixus" motive, with use being made of the chromatic second suspension and the dissonant intervals such as the diminished third. The section ends with the "Sepultus est" (buried), graphically indicated in the chromatic, falling soprano line and the unusually deep register (hypobole) all in the dark piano tone of the choir voices gradually dying away (a capella).

The following, firmly rhythmic "Et resurrexit" in D Major affords the strongest possible contrast. The bright exultation in the extremely high registers of both the chorus and orchestra (hyperbole) makes it all the more impressive. The joy of His resurrection is conveyed through the radiant sound of the full orchestra with trumpets and drums, the dancing upbeat triple rhythm, and the long, joyful coloratura of the choir voices which enter fugally after a short instrumental interlude. The sections which follow the "Symbolum Nicenum" also show

Bach's formal artistry, both in the structural planning and in the subtle shaping of the details, the latter largely inspired by the text.

The ultimately inexplicable greatness of Bach's b minor Mass lies in the unique synthesis of contrasting elements of the utmost diversity and in an overall unity, which is equally evident in the structural artistry of the cyclic form of the individual sections as well as in the Mass as a whole. In this unique blend of spontaneously affecting music and mystical esoterism lies the special significance of the most splendid of all Bach's works. Nearly one hundred eighty years ago, while the Mass was still in manuscript and yet to be first published, the German educator and publisher, Hans Georg Nageli described Bach's monumental achievement as "the greatest musical work of art of all the ages and all peoples". We can but stand in total awe and wholeheartedly agree.

Herman Rauhe

English translation:

Miriam Verhey-Lewis