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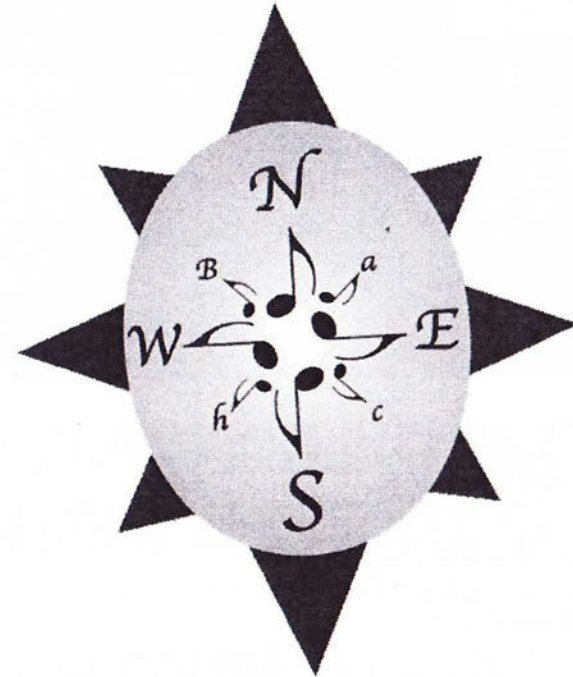
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The Cantata Singers
Will Wickham, Musical Director
present

FESTIVAL BACH 2008

"The Musical Compass of J.S. Bach"



SATURDAY, MAY 17TH
SUNDAY, MAY 18TH

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PROGRAM NOTES, SUNDAY, MAY 18TH

Two themes run through today's program. The first concerns influences on Johann Sebastian Bach by composers from "the south," as differentiated from the "north German school" of composers represented in yesterday's program. The second theme is a specific hymn tune: the German chorale *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, one of the great Easter hymns of the early Lutheran church.

Bach was unusual in absorbing influences from all sides, all nationalities, and even from past generations of composers. He was born into a family of musicians in Thuringia, a region of middle Germany relatively isolated from major cultural centers and economic capitals. Even as a young man he made it his goal to discover and study music from as many parts of Europe as possible, often copying and transcribing large quantities of music from distant sources that fell into his hands.

Johann Walter (1496-1570) belonged to a similar family of Thuringian musicians, and was in fact distantly connected to the Bach family by intermarriage. He studied at the University of Leipzig and was a close musical associate of Martin Luther (another great Thuringian) in nearby Wittenberg. He then entered the service of the Elector of Saxony and eventually became Saxon Kapellmeister, the highest musical official in the land.

Martin Luther, himself a learned musician, wrote both the tune and words of *Christ lag in Todesbanden*. He adapted it from a well known piece of Gregorian chant, the Easter sequence *Victimae paschali laudes*. It is likely that Walter learned the hymn directly from Luther. His setting heard on today's program is one of the earliest such polyphonic treatments of the tune in history.

Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706) came from Nuremberg, just south of Thuringia. His early years were spent much farther south in Vienna, where he was an organist in the St. Stephen's Cathedral, and was presumably exposed to "baroque" influences from Italy, including early opera and concert music. In 1677 he came north again, working in several Thuringian towns including Ohrdruf, where he taught Johann Christoph Bach, the oldest brother of Johann Sebastian. Whether or not Sebastian knew Pachelbel personally is a matter of question, but without doubt his brother passed on everything he learned from Pachelbel – including much of his music – when Sebastian lived with him in Ohrdruf between 1700 and 1705 (after the death of their parents).

Pachelbel's cantata on *Christ lag in Todesbanden* is one of his most impressive choral works. It sets Luther's full text with different music for each verse, each verse highly expressive and differentiated from the other verses. Some of the verses are based on Luther's original tune, while others use freely composed melodies and contrapuntal devices. The cantata as a whole is a sort of musical portfolio representing many sides of Pachelbel's multifaceted compositional skills.

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) took Europe by storm with the publication of his Opus 3, *L'Estro armonico (The Harmonic Inspiration)* in 1711 – arguably the

CONCERT PROGRAM

Christ lag in TodesbandenJohann Walter
1496-1570)

Concerto 9, *L'Estro armonico* (Opus 3)Antonio Vivaldi
(1678-1741)

Violin soloist: *Rebecca Ansell*

Christ lag in TodesbandenJohann Pachelbel
(1653-1706)

Intermission

A free-will offering will be taken

Concerto in D Major (after Vivaldi) (BWV 972)JS Bach
(1685-1750)

Christ lag in Todesbanden (BWV 4)JS Bach

TEXT & TRANSLATION

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Christ lag in Todesbanden
Für unsre Sünd gegeben,
Er ist wieder erstanden
Und hat uns bracht das Leben;
Des wir sollen fröhlich sein,
Gott loben und ihm dankbar sein
Und singen halleluja,
Halleluja! | Christ lay in death's bonds
handed over for our sins,
he is risen again
and has brought us life
For this we should be joyful,
praise God and be thankful to him
and sing alleluia,
Alleluia |
| 2. Den Tod niemand zwingen konnt
Bei allen Menschenkindern.
Das macht' alles unsre Sünd,
Kein Unschuld war zu finden.
Davon kam der Tod so bald
Und nahm über uns Gewalt,
Hielt uns in seinem Reich gefangen.
Halleluja! | Nobody could overcome death
among all the children of mankind.
Our sin was the cause of all this,
no innocence was to be found.
Therefore death came so quickly
and seized power over us,
held us captive in his kingdom.
Alleluia ! |
| 3. Jesus Christus, Gottes Sohn,
An unser Statt ist kommen
Und hat die Sünde weggetan,
Damit dem Tod genommen
All sein Recht und sein Gewalt,
Da bleibet nichts denn Tods Gestalt,
Den Stach'l hat er verloren.
Halleluja! | Jesus Christ, God's son,
has come to our place
and has put aside our sins,
and in this way from death has taken
all his rights and his power,
Nothing remains but death's outward form,
it has lost its sting.
Alleluia! |

4. Es war ein wunderlicher Krieg,
Da Tod und Leben rungen,
Das Leben behielt den Sieg,
Es hat den Tod verschlungen.
Die Schrift hat verkündigt das,
Wie ein Tod den andern fraß,
Ein Spott aus dem Tod ist worden.
Halleluja!

It was a strange battle
where death and life struggled.
Life won the victory,
it has swallowed up death
Scripture has proclaimed
how one death ate the other,
death has become a mockery.
Alleluia

5. Hier ist das rechte Osterlamm,
Davon Gott hat geboten,
Das ist hoch an des Kreuzes Stamm
In heißer Lieb gebraten,
Das Blut zeichnet unsre Tür,
Das hält der Glaub dem Tode für,
Der Würger kann uns nicht mehr schaden.
Halleluja!

Here is the true Easter lamb
that God has offered
which high on the trunk of the cross
is roasted in burning love,
whose blood marks our doors,
which faith holds in front of death,
the strangler can harm us no more
Alleluia

6. So feiern wir das hohe Fest
Mit Herzensfreud und Wonne,
Das uns der Herre scheinen läßt,
Er ist selber die Sonne,
Der durch seiner Gnade Glanz
Erleuchtet unsre Herzen ganz,
Der Sünden Nacht ist verschwunden.
Halleluja!

Thus we celebrate the high feast
with joy in our hearts and delight
that the Lord lets shine for us,
He is himself the sun
who through the brilliance of his grace
enlightens our hearts completely,
the night of sin has disappeared.
Alleluia !

7. Wir essen und leben wohl
In rechten Osterfladen,
Der alte Sauerteig nicht soll
Sein bei dem Wort Gnaden,
Christus will die Koste sein
Und speisen die Seel allein,
Der Glaub will keins andern leben.
Halleluja!

We eat and live well
on the right Easter cakes,
the old sour-dough should not
be with the word grace,
Christ will be our food
and alone feed the soul,
faith will live in no other way.
Alleluia

English Translation by Francis Browne

<http://bach-cantatas.com/Texts/Chorale012-Eng3.htm>

The 2008 Festival Bach is dedicated to the memory of
WILLIAM O. PAYNE, III
music director of the Cantata Singers 1975-1989.

Bill's talent, commitment to music and his love of the
Cantata Singers continue to inspire and inform our
performances. His was a great voice and talent that will
be missed. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

PROGRAM NOTES (CONTINUED)

single most influential musical publication of the entire baroque era. The twelve concertos of Opus 3 were widely admired and emulated, and they confirmed Italy as the great font of concert music. Bach was fortunate to obtain a copy of *L'Estro armonico* in 1713, when his patron Prince Johann Ernst of Weimar brought one directly from the publisher in Amsterdam. Bach immediately transcribed several of the concertos for the keyboard – not an easy feat considering that they were published in separate parts, not in full score. Bach's fascination with Vivaldi was to bear remarkable fruits as he began to compose his own concertos within the next few years, including such gems as the six "Brandenburg" concertos.

With Bach's cantata *Christ lag in Todesbanden* we step back a few years to 1707, when Bach auditioned for an organist's position in Mülhausen – a position he held just before entering service at Weimar in 1708. He played his audition on Easter Sunday, 1707 (April 24). We do not know the details of the event, but it seems likely that he composed *Christ lag in Todesbanden* especially for the occasion, and it is thus his earliest datable cantata.

It is not really a "cantata" in the usual sense, for it has no trace of "post-Vivaldi" Italian style that characterizes the great bulk of Bach's later vocal music. But it is firmly rooted in the style of Pachelbel, and in fact seems to be based directly on the older composer's own *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, which Bach may have had in his own collection of manuscript copies. The layout of verses is quite similar to Pachelbel's, and even the specific scorings of individual verses have similarities. The one great difference is that Bach uses Luther's original melody in every verse, as if to prove he could maintain variety despite constant reference to the same tune – a trait that foreshadows such later masterpieces as the Goldberg Variations and the Art of Fugue. Bach's *Christ lag in Todesbanden* is thus his own professional portfolio, standing at the threshold of his career, and proof positive of his far reaching skills ready to be of service in the wide world of music-making.

ORCHESTRA

Violin

Rebecca Ansel (Concert master)
Ellie Brown
Alice Hallstrom
Timothy Ball

Viola

Suzanne L. Miller
Aara Edwards

Cello

Abigail McHugh

Bass

Josh Kerr

Harpsichord/Organ

William Cowdery

CANTATA SINGERS

Soprano

Ruth Bruning
Susan B. Hartney
Dorothy Hoos
Kathy Lovell
Joy Judith McFarland
Susan Nagle
Susan Tanner

Alto

Loueda Bleiler
Shirley Brodginiski
Martha Horton
Frances McLaren
Jane Poliseo
Cora Range

Tenor

Bill Brodginiski
Michael Hartney
Felix Kapron
Thomas J. McCloskey
Gary Tucker

Bass

Joe Fiori
Cameron Hartney
Lee Martin
Stephen Nagle
David Rosplock

Rehearsal accompanist: Frances McLaren

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