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*memorial for William O. (Bill) Payne

** in memory of Lou Sand



The Cantata Singers

Will Wickham, Musical Director

BACH FESTIVAL 2009



**SUNDAY, MAY 10TH, 2009
4:00 P.M.**

**FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
1034 West Broad Street, Horseheads, NY.**



These programs are made possible with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts Decentralization Program administered locally by the **Arts of the Southern Finger Lakes.**

Program

- Wir haben einen Gott*..... (BWV 244a)
Motet VI: Lobet den Herrn alle Heiden.....(BWV 230)
O Jesu Christ, mein's Lebens Licht.....(BWV 118)
Trio Sonata 1 in E-flat.....(BWV 525)

Alla Breve
Adagio
Allegro

Intermission - a free-will offering will be taken

- Prelude in C Major* (arr. Ward Swingle) (BWV 870)
Canon..... (arr. Ward Swingle) (BWV 1073)
Organ Fugue..... (arr. Ward Swingle) (BWV 578)
Four Curmudgeonly Canons.....(PDQ Bach/Peter Schickele)
Quodlibet.....(BWV 524)
Dona Nobis Pacem.....(From the *Mass in B-minor*)
-

Concert Personnel

Organ – Dr. William Cowdery

Violin – Rebecca Ansel

Violin 2 – Colin Oettle

Double Bass – Jane Lazarovic

Cantata Singers

Soprano

Ruth Bruning
Robin Fitzgerald
Susan B. Hartney
Dorothy Hoos
Kathleen Lovell
Joy Judith McFarland
Susan Nagle
Susan Tanner

Alto

Phyllis Bishop
Shirley Brodginiski
Martha Horton
Lauren Janosco
Jane Poliseo
Cora Range
Cynthia Terry

Tenor

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

Bass

Joe Fiori
Stephen Nagle
Joe Ponzi
David Rosplock

Rehearsal Accompanist: Frances McLaren

Program Notes

Wir haben einen Gott der da hilft

We have here a first of sorts. The author of these notes has "reconstructed" this chorus based on a web of historical clues that seem to point all in one direction. Whether we have followed the clues correctly remains to be proven!

In 1717 Bach entered the service of Prince Leopold of Cöthen. In his own words he was happy in the job and hoped to "live out his years" in the service of Prince Leopold. But alas that was not to be. The Prince soon over-spent his budget and had to dismiss many of his musicians. Surely Bach saw the handwriting on the wall when in 1723 he applied for the post of Cantor in Leipzig and subsequently left Cöthen for the Leipzig position – a position which he did in fact hold to the end of his life. For several years after leaving Cöthen he retained the title of Kapellmeister and provided occasional music to the court; he even dedicated his first published work – the Partita No. 1 for keyboard – to the Prince's first son.

Sadly in 1729 Leopold died. On March 24 the court held an elaborate service in his memory. Bach provided a large cantata, *Klagt, Kinder, klagt es aller Welt* ("Mourn, children, let all the world mourn") consisting of nearly an hour's worth of music. The music is lost, but the printed libretto still exists. From the libretto we can tell that most of the music was not newly composed but borrowed – or "parodied" – from Bach's recent *Passion according to St. Matthew* using new words that paid tribute to the late Prince. Only one number in the cantata cannot be correlated to any music in the *Passion* and has remained so far unidentified: the chorus "Wir haben einen Gott der da hilft" based on Psalm 68:20.

Two years later in 1731, Bach wrote a chorus on Psalm 75:1, "Wir danken dir, Gott, wir danken dir" (BWV 29/1) for an official ceremony in Leipzig. (The Cantata Singers performed this work in 2007.) The music of the chorus is quite well known, for Bach reused it in his *Mass in B Minor*: first to the words "Gratias agimus tibi..." and again to the words "Dona nobis pacem." Scholars have long puzzled over these works, for a comparison of the music shows that none of them can have been borrowed directly from any other; rather all of them must have been borrowed from some common earlier source.

Here we come upon a new piece of the puzzle. Through a process of triangulation we can reconstruct a hypothetical "original" version of the music from the three later versions. As it happens, the "original" version fits remarkably well with the text of the lost chorus "Wir haben einen Gott" of 1729. Perhaps this chorus was indeed the original version of the music. If so, it makes sense that Bach would have waited two years – from 1729 to 1731 – to reuse it for a new purpose. It also makes sense that the words "Wir danken dir, Gott" would have reminded him of the words "Wir haben einen Gott" and prompted him to use the same music. One more small

point of coincidence: in Cöthen Bach repeats the chorus at the end of the first half of the cantata, and likewise in the Mass he repeats it – to the words "Dona nobis pacem" – at the end of the entire work. Time will tell whether our hypothesis holds up, but in the mean time we can relish the thought of reviving a great Bach chorus for the first time in 280 years.

Motet: Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden

Like most of Bach's motets, this one dates most likely from his years at the court of Weimar, 1708-1717, where he provided music for the court chapel. It sets Psalm 117, the shortest and one of the most cheerful of all the Psalms. Despite the Psalm's shortness Bach's music is quite ample, delighting at length in the joy of the text. The concluding Alleluia may be a later addition to the work; indeed it could be sung as an anthem all by itself.

Motet: O Jesu Christ, meins Lebens Licht

This motet comes from relatively late in Bach's life, about 1736-37. Its specific occasion is unknown. It is really just a setting of an old hymn tune, suitable for a funeral or burial service. The original hymn has ten verses. Bach set only the first verse, but presumably other verses may have been sung to the same music; today we will sing three verses.

Trio Sonata in E-flat Major

This cheerful work belongs to a very fine set of six sonatas that exist only in keyboard transcriptions; they are the famous "six organ trios" (BWV 525-560) that organists have long considered a mainstay of their repertory. Bach himself made the transcriptions. We have no trace of his original scoring. But since the sonatas work quite well when "re-transcribed" for strings, we can reasonably assume that Bach wrote them for a typical baroque string trio of some sort. It seems likely that he composed them during the years 1717-1723 when he worked as Kapellmeister to the court of Cöthen and was expected to provide chamber music on a regular basis. He made the organ versions in his early Leipzig years, about 1727.

The six sonatas have such universal appeal that many other instrumentalists have appropriated them; for example the well-known modern oboist Heinz Holliger has made a very beautiful and widely played recording of the whole set. Today we are playing the first of the six works. It is a perfect example of a courtly baroque trio sonata in every respect. It has three movements: fast – slow – fast. The two upper violin parts are given equal prominence, and there is lively contrapuntal dialogue among all the instruments.

Quodlibet

The Latin word *quodlibet* means "what-you-will" or "whatever." Since the time of the Renaissance the term has been used for compositions – mainly humorous – made up of bits and pieces of old music borrowed from "wherever." The venerable and ancient tradition continues right down to the present day in the notorious works of P.D.Q. Bach – and elsewhere.

Bach's Quodlibet – like most of them – is unique. It starts with a text worthy of Lewis Carroll, full of nonsense and offbeat illusions; alas we do not know its author. Bach's music serves mainly to set the words clearly and plainly. There are a few vague musical allusions. A couple of Latin phrases are set as parodies of Gregorian chant. At the words "a young sow" Bach writes over-the-top parallel octaves – a bit of poor counterpoint called a "sow" at the time. The last phrase, "All are invited to the pot roast: how's that for a pretty fugue!" is indeed a silly little fugue that modulates too far in the wrong key – almost.

The work dates from Bach's year in Mühlhausen, 1707-1708. The text suggests a jolly wedding and seems to allude to certain members of Bach's own family by name, but no occasion for the work has yet been firmly established. Perhaps it had something to do with a baking trough.

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