

The Seattle Chamber Singers

GEORGE SHANGROW, MUSICAL DIRECTOR & CONDUCTOR

PRESENT

Sunday, October 27, 1985

Blessed Sacrament Church

Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden..... BWV 230

Con moto moderato

Komm, Jesu Komm..... BWV 229

Lento
(Vivace)
(Allegretto)
Chorale, Andante

Fürchte dich nicht..... BWV 228

without tempo indication
Fugue with Chorale

Der Geist hilft unsrer Schwachheit auf..... BWV 226

(Andante con moto)
(Allegro non tanto)
Alle breve
Chorale

i n t e r m i s s i o n

Jesu meine Freude..... BWV 227

Chorale
(Poco Adagio)
Chorale
Andante- ornamented chorale: Trio
(L'istesso tempo)
(Allegro ma non tanto)
Chorale
(Andante)
(Allegretto)
(Poco Adagio)
Chorale

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied..... BWV 225

(Allegro moderato)
Chorale, with Andante sostenuto
(Poco allegro)
(Allegro vivace)

PROGRAMS NOTES by Kay Verelius

The Harvard dictionary of music defines "motet" as an unaccompanied composition based on a sacred text, often divided into movements or sections according to text, tempos, or both. That definition well fits the motets from the Roman Catholic vesper services of the 15th and 16th centuries, but the Germans, beginning with Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672), created their own variety of styles, and did not hesitate to use instruments or solo singers. They also freely used their own language. It was a custom in Leipzig for the family of a prominent citizen who died to hold a memorial service on the Sunday afternoon after the death. Both the order of service and the music were prescribed, with a severe or formal motet taking its place in the following sequence: Hymn, Sermon, Motet, Collective Prayers, Blessing. Johann Sebastian Bach wrote many, many motets for such memorial services during his time as Cantor at Thomaskirche in Leipzig (1723-1750), but only six of them survive.

Lobet den Herrn alle Heiden is the earliest of those six motets, composed in 1723, either just before leaving Köthen, or soon after arriving in Leipzig. It is the only motet without a chorale, and it does not have any exact sections or text breaks. It is, therefore, sometimes argued that it is not really a motet. But it makes a lovely contrast to the others, and certainly fits within the vocal style of the rest. Bach wrote out a continuo part for this piece and, in fact, his personal copy of the entire work still exists.

Jesu meine Freude, another of the very early motets, is the only five-part motet. It is in eleven sections, and is assembled into such perfect symmetry, that music theory books and history books always cite this motet with awe and respect. Six sections are from the chorale by Johann Franck; these alternate with five verses from Paul's letter to the Romans. The heart of the message is resignation to the death being the will of God. Bach selected the Biblical portions knowing that they would serve as the text of the sermon during the memorial service, thereby providing the integration that he considered essential to "a well-regulated church music." After the sixth and central section is reached, the music swings back full circle, and repeats the original sequence in reverse order. The chorale appears in all the odd numbered movements and is absent in all those with Biblical verses. Numbers 1 and 2 are repeated almost exactly as Numbers 10 and 11, framing the work symmetrically.

A similarly striking symmetry is found in Fürchte dich nicht, though not on quite as involved a scale. The fugue begins at the exact half-way point of the work, thus musically dividing the work into two equal sections. The lower three voices present and develop this fugue while the sopranos float over the top of it all with a truly beautiful chorale. The text is based on two verses from Isaiah and two stanzas from a hymn by Gerhardt. The motet is written for two 4-part choruses.

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied is based on Psalm 149 and 150, and on a chorale by Johann Graumann ("Nun lob' mein Seel' den Herren"). For double chorus, the mood throughout becomes more and more jubilant. The major fugue in the closing section has been compared to the "pleni sunt coeli" in Bach's b-minor Mass. This motet, too, has Bach's amazing symmetry. The fugue with text "Die Kinder Zion..." is laid out in A-B-C-B-A form with exactly the same number of measures on either side of the axis. Mozart heard this motet performed in Leipzig in 1789 and with a look of shock on his face said "my whole soul seemed to be in my ears. Here is music one can learn from!"

Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf presents an interesting contrast to the other five. Though it can stand alone as an a cappella piece, an entire set of string and wind parts exist in Bach's own handwriting. The Schmieder catalog, which is the source for all the Bach Werke Verzeichnis (BWV) numbers, enters this motet twice! Once as an a cappella piece and again as an orchestrally accompanied work. The text comes from the book of Romans, chapters 8, 26, and 27.

Komm, Jesu Komm is the most gentle and melancholy of the motets. It is for double chorus and uses the opening and closing stanzas of a hymn by Paul Thymoth (which was based on John, 14:6). The theme is submission to the will of God (much the standard for any of the funeral motets) and the soul's salvation through faith. The final 4-part chorale is one of the most perfect expressions of faith. As with all the choral music of Bach we perform, we stress the importance of reading the text along with listening to the music. Bach was the master of combining the two levels of communication, and you shouldn't miss this treat.

After Beethoven's death, court appointed catalogers of his personal library found very little music by composers other than Beethoven himself. However, among his personal possessions was a bound copy of five motets by Bach. These were published by Peters in Leipzig in 1803. This is not to infer that Beethoven valued these motets above other music, but rather, is evidence that the Bach motets have been held in esteem for a long time—well beyond the "rediscovery" of Bach's music led by Felix Mendelssohn in the mid-1800's. The editions we use for today's performance are Peters vocal scores and instrumental parts from the Neue Bach Gesellschaft Editions by Bärenreiter Verlag.

Regarding our use of instruments for four of the six motets: most musicologists agree that supporting instruments were certainly used by Bach. (After all, parts and scores in Bach's hand have been preserved for Der Geist... and Lobet den Herrn...). The instruments would not only have given the obvious support for good intonation, but add to the varieties of color of sound. Karl Geiringer's critical biography of Bach mentions the use of instruments quite emphatically: "Despite the lack of specific instrumental parts in the original scores, these were not performed only by voices.... It seems certain that an organ or harpsichord, a basso continuo and occasionally some additional instruments doubling the higher voices were used for the performances of the motets." So, peace be unto all purists!

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IT'S STILL THE BACH YEAR, AND SO MUCH IS STILL IN STORE. MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- NOVEMBER 3, 8:00 pm** **A MUSICAL OFFERING.** One of Bach's most scholarly and fascinating works will be presented in a lecture/concert fashion. Guest musicologist is Prof. Vladimir Chaloupka. **AT THE BROADWAY PERFORMANCE HALL—CAPITOL HILL**
- NOVEMBER 17, 8:00 pm** **CANTATA SUNDAY:** Featured are BWV 26, Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig; BWV 79, Gott der Herr ist Sohn und Schild; and BWV 150, Nach dir Herr verlanget mich. **UNIVERSITY UNITARIAN CHURCH 6556 35th NE**
- NOVEMBER 24, 8:00 pm** **THE ART OF FUGUE.** Hear the ultimate mastery of this musical form by Bach, in a new orchestration by George Shangrow and Robert Kechley. **BROADWAY PERFORMANCE HALL—CAPITOL HILL**
- DECEMBER 7, 8:00 pm** **THE CHRISTMAS ORATORIO.** Your choice of two complete performances. What other Christmas piece could you want to hear in 1985—the Bach year!?
- DECEMBER 8, 2:00 pm** **BLESSED SACRAMENT CHURCH—5041 9th NE**

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GEORGE SHANGROW, MUSICAL DIRECTOR & CONDUCTOR

Choir One

Soprano

LAILA ADAMS
SHANNON AHERN
LAURIE FLINT
CATHERINE HAIGHT
PAMELA HILL
JILL KRAAKMO
NANCY LEWIS
JUDY MAHONEY
LIESEL ROMBOUTS
JEANNE VAN BRONKHORST

Alto

DELL GOSSETT
LUANN HARGIS
SUZI MEANS
LAURIE MEDILL
JANET ELLEN REED
MARGARET SMITH
CLAIRE THOMAS
KAY VERELIUS
DEBORAH WOOLLEY

Tenor

JOHN ADDISON
RONALD HAIGHT
STEPHEN KELLOGG

Bass

JOHN BEHR
GUSTAVE BLAZEK
WILLIAM CULBERT
DEXTER DAY
MARK HAIGHT
WILLIAM IRVING
ROGER SCHMEEKLE

Choir Two

JANE BLACKWELL
CRISSA CUGINI
KYLA DEREMER
KATHE KERN
STEPHANIE LATHROP
MARGARET MARSHALL
KASSI MUNGER
BARBARA PARSONS
ELENA RICHMOND
NANCY SHASTEEN
HEATHER SMITH
SUSANNA WALSH

MARTA CHALOUPKA
GLORIA DERBAWKA
KRISTINA HAIGHT
MARY BETH HUGHES
RUTH LIBBEY
NEDRA SLAUSON
LUNA WILCOX

CHRISTOPH SAHM
JERRY SAMS
GENE PATTERSON

ANDREW DANILCHIK
JOHN DIPPEL
JOHN EDWARDS
CRAIG FRYHLE
BRIAN MCGEE
ROBERT SCHILPEROORT
RICHARD WYKOFF

Assisting Instrumentalists

Strings

FRITZ KLEIN, Violin I
REBECCA SOUKUP, Violin II
ROBERT SHANGROW, Viola
GARY ANDERSON, Cello
JO HANSEN, Bass

DANIEL WILLIAMS, Oboe
SHANNON HILL, Oboe and English Horn
DAVID BARNES, English Horn
MONA BUTLER, Bassoon