

**THE BROADWAY SYMPHONY/
SEATTLE CHAMBER SINGERS**

George Shangrow, *Conductor*

Mass in b-minor
BWV 232
Johann Sebastian Bach

June 9, 1985

3:00 p.m., Meany Hall

Bach's Mass in b-minor

Program notes by Kay Verelius

Johann Sebastian Bach has been called a musician's musician, but that may be a dangerous statement, implying that Bach is too lofty, too subtle to be appreciated by the untrained listener. Through the presentation of the BACH YEAR in Seattle, the members of the Broadway Symphony and the Seattle Chamber Singers hope to show that Bach is not an intelligence test but, rather, that his music may be enjoyed at any level. Bach was unquestionably a genius of the highest order, but he was a composer in the business of pleasing his public and his patrons, as well as himself.

Returning to the "dangerous statement" above, the description is true in two ways. Bach's fugues and inventions have become compulsory for those concerned with mastering the theory of music, and his art of linear writing (counterpoint) is so perfect it is a model for every musician. His harmonic vocabulary is so great that it prepared the way for two centuries of music. Secondly, Bach's work is challenging and a reward to the self when performed well. His works are often deep in emotion and passion, but there are no printed directions to indicate this. It has been up to performers to discover and bring out these qualities in Bach's music.

The liturgy of the mass, or Eucharist service, of the Christian church was settled by the Middle Ages. Though the introit, prayers and offertory varied according to the church calendar, the Ordinarium remained the same: *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Credo*, *Sanctus*, *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei*. Therefore, those were the sections destined to be set to music. The word mass, as used by musicians, refers to these unalterable portions of the liturgy. The more famous surviving masses are like high peaks of achievement in musical composition — they represent all the new ideas and musical experimentation of their time.

The sixteenth century polyphonic period reached a glorious height with unaccompanied choral writing. Among the outstanding composers were Palestrina, Byrd and Victoria. These masses were followed in time by works that experimented with adding instruments to the chorus and exploiting the solo voice. Harmony, for its own sake, was developed. By the mid-eighteenth century many, many elements of contrast and expression had been introduced into music for the Church, and Bach gathered together all these new elements (along with his personal formal development of counterpoint) and composed his *Mass in b-minor*. His mass stands alone on its own peak and is not overshadowed by anything, before or since.

The Reformation brought many sweeping changes to the religious practices of most of Germany, including

the elimination of the Latin liturgy. The Lutheran church did retain the Eucharist, or communion office, as the principal service for Sundays and festivals, but retained only the *Kyrie* and *Gloria* sections of the Ordinarium. The Lutherans called these two sections "Missa"; it is, in fact, **only** these two sections of Bach's *b-minor Mass* that were titled *Missa*. Bach wrote the *b-minor Mass* in four distinct sections, each with its own title page — there was no general title page for the whole work. The title "*Missa Solemnis*" was affixed after Bach's death by one of his sons.

The *Kyrie* and *Gloria* (*Missa*) were composed in 1733 as part of an application to become the court composer to the King of Saxony (who was a Roman Catholic). Bach was not granted the title at this time (he did later receive it!), but he chose to complete his *b-minor Mass* anyway — though over an extended period of time. The *Credo* (Nicean Creed) and the *Sanctus/Benedictus/Osanna* were written between 1734 and 1738 when Bach was in his early fifties. The *Agnus Dei* is the closing section of the Mass, and it is a re-working of an earlier composed cantata.

Bach subdivided each of the six sections of the traditional mass format, so that there are actually twenty-four defined numbers in the work. Several of them are re-arrangements from cantatas. The *Gratias Agimus* and *Dona Nobis Pacem* (both having the same music) are from the opening chorus of Cantata 29, *Wir danken dir*. The fast section of the *Credo's et expecto resurrectionem* is from Cantata 120, *Jauchzet, ihr erfreuten Stimmen*. The *Crucifixus* in the *Credo* is originally part of Cantata 12, written in 1714.

It is curious that Bach wrote a Latin mass at all. The *b-minor Mass* is not appropriate for the Roman Catholic service because Bach altered some of the canonical text. It is equally inappropriate for Lutherans since the piece goes so far beyond the *Kyrie/Gloria Missa*. Also, the work is very long — not really practical to use liturgically. A possible explanation for his composing the entire mass (beyond what was intended for the courtly title) was Bach's dedication to his craft. Writing to a text so exacting and explicit in its meaning, while possessing a limitless imagination, must have posed an intriguing challenge. Whatever his reasons, coupled with his sincere devotion to God, Bach produced a work so vast and beautiful, that it transcends church denominational differences and rises as a universal statement of faith.

Joseph Machlis, a twentieth century musicologist, says of Bach's *b-minor Mass*, "While excerpts may serve as an introduction to the work, only a hearing of it in its entirety will reveal the vast terrain that has here been subjected to the creative will."

Mass in b-minor
BWV 232
Johann Sebastian Bach



THE BROADWAY SYMPHONY/
SEATTLE CHAMBER SINGERS

George Shangrow, *Conductor*

featured soloists

Polly Detels
Soprano

Barton Green
Tenor

Sara Hedgpeth
Alto

Greg Abbott
Bass

I. KYRIE

- 1 Kyrie eleison.
- 2 Christe eleison.
- 3 Kyrie eleison.

*Lord have mercy upon us.
Christ have mercy upon us.
Lord have mercy upon us.*

II. GLORIA

- 4 Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.

Glory be to God on high and peace on earth to men of good will.

- 5 Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te.

We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we adore Thee, we glorify Thee.

- 6 Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.

We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory.

- 7 Domine Deus, rex coelestis, Deus pater omnipotens, domine fili unigenite, Jesu Christe altissime, domine Deus, agnus Dei, filius patris.

Lord God, heavenly king, almighty Father, the only begotten son, Lord Jesus Christ most high, Lord our God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father.

- 8 Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis, suscipe deprecationem nostram.

Thou Who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us, receive our prayer.

- 9 Qui sedes ad dextram patris, miserere nobis.

Thou Who art seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

- 10 Quoniam tu solus sanctus, tu solus dominus, tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe.

For Thou alone art holy, Thou alone art the Lord, Thou alone art the most high, Jesus Christ.

- 11 Cum sancto spiritu in gloria Dei patris. Amen.

With the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

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III. CREDO

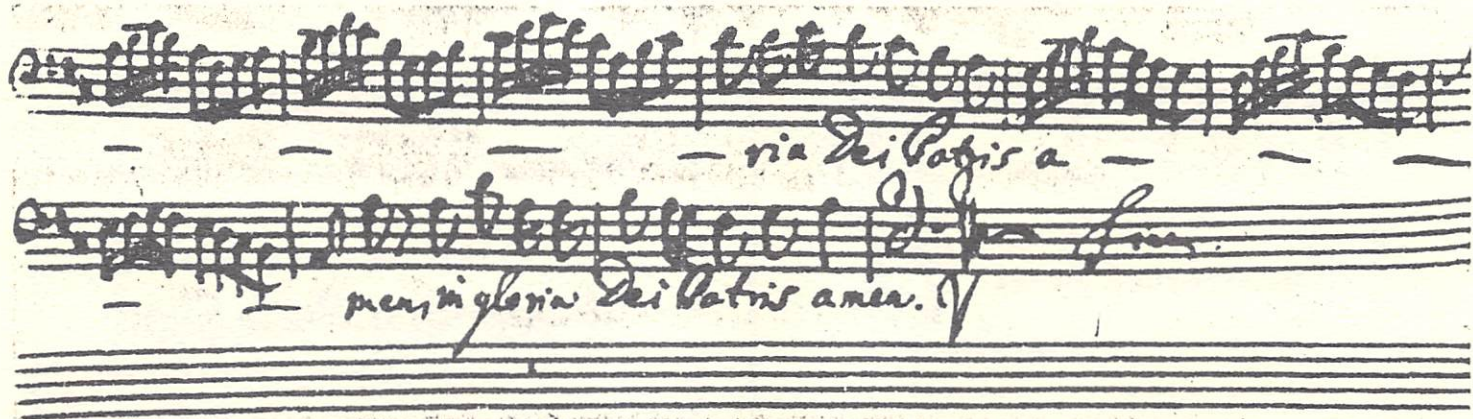
- 12 Credo in unum Deum.
13 Patrem omnipotentem, factorem coeli et terrae, visibilium omnium et invisibilium.
14 Et in unum Dominum, Jesum Christum, filium Dei unigenitum, et ex patre natum ante omnia saecula, Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero, genitum, non factum, consubstantialem patri, per quem omnia facta sunt, qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit de coelis.
15 Et incarnatus est de spiritu sancto ex Maria virgine, et homo factus est.
16 Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato, passus et sepultus est.
17 Et resurrexit tertia die secundum scripturas, et ascendit in coelum, sedet ad dextram Dei patris, et iterum venturus est cum gloria judicare vivos et mortuos, cujus regni non erit finis.
18 Et in spiritum sanctum, dominum et vivificantem, qui ex patre filioque procedit, qui cum patre et filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur, qui locutus est per prophetas. Et unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam.
19 Confiteor unum baptisma in remissionem peccatorum, et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.
- I believe in one God.
The Almighty Father, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.
And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, born of the Father before time began, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in substance with the Father, and through Him all things were made; for us men and for our salvation He came down from heaven.
And was incarnate of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, and was made man.
And was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried.
And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven, where He is seated on the right hand of God the Father, and will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.
And I believe in the Holy spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son; together with the Father and the Son He is adored and glorified; He it was who spoke through the prophets.
And I believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic church.
I profess one baptism for the remission of sins, and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

IV. SANCTUS

- 20 Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, dominus Deus Sabaoth! Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria ejus.
21 Osanna in excelsis.
22 Benedictus qui venit in nomine domini.
Reprise of Osanna.
- Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth! Heaven and earth are full of His glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord.*

V. AGNUS DEI

- 23 Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
24 Dona nobis pacem.
- Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Grant us peace.*



Gloria of the B minor Mass, end of the bass part in Bach's handwriting.



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All events are paid admission.

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The Broadway Symphony/Seattle Chamber Singers wishes to acknowledge Sherman and Clay for providing the use of the Rogers Alexandria Organ, Mr. Glen Kersten, consultant.

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