

The Broadway Symphony and Seattle Chamber Singers
George Shangrow, conductor

present

Johann Sebastian Bach
**The Passion According to
St. Matthew**

with the
Columbia Boys Choir Concert Choir
Steve Stevens, founder and conductor

Sunday, March 25, 1990

Meany Theater, University of Washington

Mukund Marathe	The Evangelist
Brian Box	Jesus
Catherine Haight	Soprano
Kathryn Weld	Mezzo Soprano
Stephen P. Wall	Tenor
Steven Tachell	Bass

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The *St. Matthew Passion* consists of two large parts each framed by a pair of grand choruses. The opening and final choruses of part one each contain a chorale melody sung by the boy choir. In the first chorus, Bach is calling upon humankind to gather to share in the Passion story. Over this text (and incredible counterpoint) he places the chorale tune "O Lamb of God Unspotted" as an emotional counterpoint to the tragedy which follows. The use of double chorus and orchestra gives Bach the possibility of dialogue in chorus, as well as more effective crowd scenes in the choral parts.

The opening dramatic recitative begins the Last Supper portion of the work. Note that from the beginning the words of Jesus are always accompanied by a "halo" of strings - this is in contrast to the *St. John Passion*, but a direct heritage from earlier works such as the *Seven Last Words* by Scheutz.

As this first section continues, Bach contrasts the opening chorale asking what crime Jesus has done with the scene of elders, scribes, and priests suggesting that He not be killed during the feast. Then follows the disciples' chastisement of Christ, the woman anointing Him with oil, and his rebuke of the disciples' comments. The ensuing alto recitative and aria complete the section with deeply personal comments on the preceding actions. The "form" of story section followed by recitative and aria dominates the entire work. Following the musical and dramatic elements of narrative with this in mind will help clarify the progressions in the work as well as explain the length of some of the pieces.

With a gentle chorus the disciples ask Jesus where the feasts will be held. His answer is again in direct contrast to the mood of the chorus - He says that one of them will betray Him, which Judas has already done. The disciples now ask, "Lord, is it I?", and in the chorus, Bach sets this text exactly eleven times leaving the question from the twelfth disciple, Judas, for the next recitative. Judas asks, "Is it I, Rabbi?" Judas asks the question in a different manner from the other disciples. With this difference Bach sets up the actual betrayal scene which occurs later in the piece where Judas will once again greet Christ as "Rabbi."

The passover supper itself is the only real aria sung by Jesus in the entire work. Accompanied by the halo of strings, it is one of the most beautiful moments in the work. After the soprano recitative and aria which comments on Jesus' words comes one of the more descriptive of Jesus' recitatives. Notice the upward moving scale which starts in the cello part and ends in the Evangelist's lines as they ascend the Mount of Olives. Bach scatters the sheep with a very sprightly string accompaniment which turns very sober for the end of the section.

Next comes an illustration of Bach's use of tonality to make a philosophical point: the joyful chorale extolling the virtues of the Saviour/Shepherd is set in E Major. Immediately following is Peter's declaration that he will be absolutely faithful to Jesus whatever happens, and Jesus telling Peter that he will three times deny Him. The following chorale, "I will stand beside Thee" is set one-half step lower signifying the personal loss humankind must endure through the example of the denial.

The next accompanied recitative and aria have a solo tenor paired with Chorus II singing a chorale melody. The cello-bass repeated note pattern symbolizes the trembling tormented heart. The combination of recorder and English horn (oboe da caccia) in canon is the first of the unique orchestrations Bach uses in the work. The wonder of these two movements is found in the great contrast between the uneasiness of the aria and the consoling comfort of the

chorale.

The bass recitative "The Saviour falls down before His Father" has the strings in a constantly downward arpeggio figure - except when the text speaks of God's uplifting mercy. In the aria, the setting of the words so agrees with the voice that the opening ascending sixth on "gladly" just rolls off the tongue. The wonderful chromaticism describing "Kreuz und Becher" in contrast with the second section of the aria's "His lips with milk and honey flowing" show Bach's unending desire to heighten the emotional meaning of the text with all the devices at hand - he even changes the tonality from minor to major.

Leading to the end of Part One are the Evangelist's sections describing Jesus praying in the garden and how none of the disciples maintained the vigil with Him. Then the soldiers and priests come for Jesus and, in one of the most dramatic moments in the Evangelist's part, Judas says "the one I kiss is he" - and in an almost tender exchange between Jesus and Judas, Jesus is recognized and taken.

The grief-filled duet which follows contains many canons and is reminiscent of the chorale melody. Like the opening chorus with its interrupting questions from Chorus II, the crowd of disciples interrupts the duet saying "Loose him, halt ye, bind Him not!" This leads into the double chorus depicting the oath "May lightning and thunder in ruin engulf them." Here Bach's use of antiphonal choruses - with rapidly changing harmonies - is amazing for its time.

After a highly charged dramatic recitative comes the final chorus of the first part: "O Man, bewail thy grievous sin" in Bach's most beautiful setting of this chorale tune. This movement was originally composed to be the opening chorus of the *St. John Passion* (in a key one-half step lower), but Bach abandoned that idea and used it as a hopeful closing chorus here.

Part Two opens with an unusual dialogue between the alto soloist and Chorus II. Note that with each entrance of the chorus the harmonies grow stranger and, in a way, move further away - the chorus/solo ends on a singularly unresolved note with the alto asking "Ah, where has my Jesus gone?"

The drama is continued with the introduction of the two false witnesses - who sing a very bizarre duet. Jesus, however, remains silent. The tenor recitative is accompanied by oboes and an arpeggiated figure in the cello and has exactly 39 strokes, symbolizing the scourging of Jesus. In the aria Bach has used great contrasts in setting the text, portraying the emotional meanings of the words patience, shame, scorn, and false tongues.

Jesus' trial in the Judgement Hall is followed by outbursts from the crowd. Here, as in the later crowd scenes, it is the job of the Evangelist to keep the drama taut. Bach keeps the story moving by keeping the Evangelist's interjections brief and exciting. The chorale which ends this section is particularly bittersweet.

Next comes Peter's denial. Peter is asked by two individuals and by a third group of people if he knows who is this man (Christ). All three times Peter's reply is 'no' and after each denial the cock crows. In the original clefs in which the piece was written the last line of Peter, "I know this man not," and the following line "And immediately the cock crew," were identically written notes.

The Evangelist's words "And Peter went out and wept bitterly" and the ensuing alto aria with violin obbligato are two of the most intimate moments in the work.

A very worldly return to the story comes with Judas trying to return the 30 silver pieces to the priests. The attempt is in vain as the priests tell him that in no way can he absolve himself of the deed that he has done - and in the weird duet for two priests they say they cannot even put the "blood-money" in the treasury. Judas hangs

himself and another solo with violin obbligato follows in great contrast to the previous one.

The trial proceeds. Pilate asks the crowd which prisoner should be set free, and their unanimous outburst is "Barabbam!" This exclamation is immediately followed by the "Crucify Him!" chorus, which is a fughetta with an angular subject that tonally describes the ugliness of the crowd and the act of crucifixion.

The heart of the entire work follows in the soprano recitative and aria "For love of me my Saviour is dying." This aria is accompanied only by obbligato flute and two English horns. As the movement ends and a calm mood is established, the Evangelist interrupts and the crowd repeats the "Crucify" chorus, this time a whole step higher in pitch, increasing the crowd's fervor and tension.

Pilate's attempts at ridding himself of guilt are thwarted by the polyphonic crowd chorus "His blood is on all of us and on our children" and the alto recitative and aria which depict the weeping of our hearts. The soldiers dress Christ in a purple robe and crown of thorns and mock Him (listen for the flutes) saying "We hail thee, o King of the Jews" and then they spat upon Him and smote Him upon the head with a reed - then follows the Passion Chorale.

When Christ is being led to be crucified, a man named Simon comes to carry his cross. This is depicted in an incredible bass aria accompanied by cello. The difficult chords and ornaments, string crossings and dotted rhythms show the feeling of the cross being dragged down the street. The text speaks of sharing the burden with Christ as Christ shares the burdens of the people. The length of the aria gives a feeling of the length of the ordeal.

Mocking crowd choruses ask Jesus why, if he is God's son, he can't take himself down from the cross. Another occurrence unusual orchestration is in the following alto recitative and aria where the second chorus interrupts the soloist, asking where "they" should come - to Jesus' arms.

The next section is the death of Christ. Here, for the only time, Christ's words are not accompanied by the strings, but only the continuo organ and cello. With constant harassment by the crowd, Jesus cries out His last words and dies, followed by the final, most moving setting of the Passion Chorale.

With a burst of virtuosic continuo writing comes the earthquake and the opening of the graves. This struck terror in the hearts of those present and the captain of the guard says "Truly this was the Son of God." Bach sets this text in two bars of choral music - perhaps the most wonderful two bars in the entire work.

The story is completed with a beautiful bass recitative and aria, but not quite. The crowd comes in once more and in a very rude chorus intimates to Pilate that if there are no guards around Jesus'

tomb, His disciples will come in the night and steal his body saying that He has been resurrected. Pilate gives his permission for watchmen, and they are put in place as the stone is rolled across the opening of the tomb, thus sealing it.

A four-part recitative and chorus bids Jesus good-night in a very sad, yet praising manner. The closing chorus "Here at the grave we all sit weeping ends the work - on Good Friday. There has been no resurrection. The work concludes with a deeply moving yet unfinished tragic feeling.

Historical Notes by Kay Verelius

The tradition of presenting the Passion story on Good Friday began in the Middle Ages. Priests would recite or chant the works from the Gospels, different men each taking a different character. It was usual practice for a low-voiced man to read the words of Christ, and a higher voiced man to do the narrative. The congregants (usually brothers of the order, but sometimes people of the parish) were given the parts of the disciples and the high priests and the crowds of the Jerusalem streets. This practice continues to the present day in most liturgical churches, but the high point of the Passion format was reached in 1728, with Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. Bach wrote five different versions of the passion story, only two of which survive (the *St. John* being the other). The *St. Matthew Passion* contains a great variety of musical forms, but the spiritual feeling is constant throughout the work. Bach took the text from the Gospel of St. Matthew, chapters 26 and 27, in the German translation by Martin Luther. Additional texts for the arias and some choruses were written especially for the work by Picander, one of Bach's literary friends. The music alone is perfectly beautiful; the text is strong and meaningful; but the way that Bach combined the music with text is the aspect which makes the *St. Matthew Passion* stand out as the greatest sacred work ever composed in the history of western music. Please follow your translations, not just to follow the story, but to gain more insight into the genius of Johann Sebastian Bach.

The text translation booklets were printed through the courtesy of SAFECO Insurance Companies and the Consulate of the Federal Republic of Germany. In order that they may be used for future performances of the *St. Matthew Passion*, please deposit the booklets in the boxes which have been provided for this use and are placed near the exits. If you would like to keep a booklet, we ask a \$3.00 donation.



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Tenor **Mukund Marathe** is making his third appearance as Evangelist with the Broadway Symphony/Seattle Chamber Singers. Marathe was born and raised in New York City and received his degree at Columbia University. He has won praise for his virtuosity and versatility in concert repertoire ranging from early music to modern jazz, with special acclaim for his interpretations of Bach and Handel. He made his Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center debuts with the National Chorale in Handel's *Messiah* and recently toured Spain with the Liria Chamber Orchestra singing *Messiah* and the Brahms *Zigeunerlieder*. With Amor Artis, he has sung Handel's *Alexander's Feast*, Honegger's *King David* and the American premiere of Donizetti's *Miserere*. He has performed in the Bach *St. John Passion*, the Schuetz *Musicalische Exequien* and a Bach Cantata Series with Musica Sacra. Other recent activities include *Judas Maccabaeus* with the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, the Haydn *Theresienmesse*, Kurt Weill's *Kiddush* Bach's *Ascension Oratorio* with the National Chorale, Monteverdi Arias with the Long Island Baroque Ensemble and Stravinsky's *Reynard* with Robert Kraft.

Baritone **Brian Box** is a native of Washington and received his Master of Music degree in vocal performance from Western Washington University. Mr. Box has appeared frequently with the BS/SCS as a soloist in cantatas and oratorios and with the Broadway Symphony in Mahler's *Songs of a Wayfarer*. Among his credits are performances of Brahms' *Four Last Songs* with the Western Washington University Orchestra and the leading role in Dominic Argento's opera *Postcard from Morocco* at the University of British Columbia. Mr. Box has also performed with Northwest Opera in Schools, Etc. and the Seattle Opera's education program, singing children's opera throughout the state.

Soprano **Catherine Haight** is a graduate of Seattle Pacific University and has a busy vocal studio on the east side. Most recently, she appeared as soloist in the BS/SCS presentation of *Messiah*, and has also been featured in their performances of Haydn's oratorio *The Seasons*, and Bach's cantata for soprano solo, *Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen*. In addition to her many appearances with the Broadway Symphony and Seattle Chamber Singers, Ms. Haight has also sung solos with the Bellevue Chamber Chorus, Pacific Northwest Ballet, and the Skagit Valley Bach Choir.

Tenor **Stephen P. Wall** has appeared many times with the BS/SCS. He was the tenor soloist in last season's opening concert, Beethoven's *Symphony #9* as well as appearing in the title role in *The Return of Ulysses*. His credits with Seattle Opera include *Tannhauser* and *Die Meistersinger*. Mr. Wall has been a featured soloist with the Seattle, Spokane, Vancouver (B.C.) and Sapporo (Japan) Symphonies, and this year will make his first appearance with the Everett Symphony. He is currently a member of the voice faculty at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma.

Mezzo Soprano **Kathryn Weld** has performed a wide range of opera, oratorio, concert repertoire, and contemporary works throughout the United States, Canada, and Japan. National semi-finalist in the Metropolitan Opera Auditions, she has performed the roles of Rosina in *The Barber of Seville*, Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*, the title role in Gluck's *Orfeo*, and Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus*. Ms. Weld has sung with Seattle Opera, North Carolina Opera, the Bronx Opera, and Hidden Valley Opera. This May marks her first Cherubino with the New Jersey State Repertory Opera. In concert Ms. Weld has been heard with the Seattle Symphony, the Oregon Symphony, Nashville Symphony, and numerous other orchestras. She has won recital appearances in New York City, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Japan. She recently premiered a new oratorio and song cycle by Seattle's Bern Herbolzheimer at the Chelan Bach Festival.

Bass-baritone **Steven Tachell's** musical training took him from the United States to the Vienna Academy of Music, where he studied for two years. He then sang as the feste baritone for one year with the St. Gallen (Switzerland) Opera. Since his return to the United States, Mr. Tachell has performed with many regional opera houses. His roles with Seattle Opera include Sharpless in *Madame Butterfly* and Ping in *Turandot*. Other roles include Bartolo in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Dulcamara in the *Elixir of Love*, and Leporello in *Don Giovanni*. He has been heard with the Arizona Opera, Chataanooga Opera, Opera New England, Opera Orchestra of New York, and the Santa Fe Opera. In May he appears as Mozart's Figaro with the New Jersey State Repertory Opera. As an oratorio soloist, Mr. Tachell's oratorio credits include Handel's *Messiah* with the Sapporo Symphony, performances of the *St. John* and *St. Matthew Passion*, Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, and Haydn's *Creation*.



Elisabeth Reed, *viola da gamba*, has performed in Germany, Italy, England, Canada, and Jordan as well as throughout the United States. Her experience includes faculty concerts at Eastman, Oberlin, Indiana University, Middle Tennessee State University, and the Banff Centre for the Arts. She has appeared at the Boston and Bloomington Early Music Festivals, and has recorded for Focus records. Principal cellist for the *Los Angeles Baroque Orchestra*, she also plays principal for the *Portland Baroque Orchestra*, the *Dayton Bach Society*, *Ensemble Seicento*, the *Benevolent Order for Music of the Baroque*, and the *Manly Street Chamber Players*. She graduated from the North Carolina School of the Arts, the Oberlin Conservatory, and the Eastman School of Music, and has done doctoral work at Indiana University's School of Music. She was a winner of the *Durham Symphony Young Artists' Concerto Competition*.

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