



DIRECTOR'S SERIES

Christmas Oratorio, BWV 248

Saturday, December 10, 2022
The Music Center at Strathmore
5301 Tuckerman Lane
North Bethesda, Maryland

WASHINGTON BACH CONSORT
Dr. Dana T. Marsh, Artistic Director



PROGRAM

Christmas Oratorio, BWV 248
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Part I. On the First Day of Christmas

Chorus
Evangelist
Recitative (alto)
Aria (alto)
Chorale
Evangelist
Chorale & Recitative (bass)
Aria (bass)
Chorale

Part II. On the Second Day of Christmas

Sinfonia
Evangelist
Chorale
Evangelist/Angel
Recitative (bass)
Aria (tenor)
Evangelist
Chorale
Recitative (bass)
Aria (alto)
Evangelist & Chorus of Angels
Recitative (bass)
Chorale

Part V. On the First Sunday after New Year's Day

Chorus
Evangelist
Chorus & Recitative (alto)
Chorale
Aria (bass)
Evangelist
Recitative (alto)
Evangelist
Trio Aria (soprano, alto, tenor)
Recitative (alto)
Chorale

Part VI. On Epiphany

Chorus
Evangelist/Herod
Recitative (soprano)
Aria (soprano)
Evangelist
Chorale
Evangelist
Recitative (tenor)
Aria (tenor)
Recitative à 4 (soprano, alto, tenor, bass)
Chorale

— *Intermission* —

Elijah McCormack, *soprano*
Kristen Dubenion-Smith, *alto*
Jacob Perry, Jr., *tenor & Evangelist*
Enrico Lagasca, *bass*

Dr. Dana T. Marsh, conductor

Mary Ann Gardner, Hope P. McGowan,
and National Endowment for the Arts, *underwriters*





MUSICIANS

Soprano

Elijah McCormack, *soloist*
Katelyn Grace Jackson
Amy Nicole Broadbent
Sara MacKimmie
Margot Rood
Kate Vetter Cain

Alto

Kristen Dubenion Smith, *soloist*
Hannah Baslee
Sarah Davis Issaekhouri
Derek Greten-Harrison
Barbara Hollinshead
Sylvia Leith

Tenor

Jacob Perry, Jr.,
soloist & Evangelist
David Evans
Patrick Kilbride
Matthew Loyal Smith
Oliver Mercer
Robert Petillo
Andrew Sauvageau

Bass

Enrico Lagasca, *soloist*
Joshua Brown
Karl Hempel
Ian Pomerantz
Gilbert Spencer
Jason Widney

Violin I

Andrew Fouts
Natalie Rose Kress
Leslie Nero
Freya Creech

Violin II

Tatiana Chulochnikova
Gail Hernández Rosa
Caroline Levy
Annie Loud

Viola

Daniel Elyar
Marika Holmqvist
Scott McCormick

Violoncello

John Moran
Wade Davis

Violone

Jessica Powell Eig
Motomi Igarashi

Flute

Colin St-Martin
Kathryn Roth

Oboe

Geoffrey Burgess
Margaret Owens
Fatma Daglar
Sarah Schilling

Bassoon

Anna Marsh

Trumpet

Josh Cohen
David Puckhoff
Dennis Anthony Ferry

Timpani

Michelle Humphreys

Harpsichord

Adam Pearl

Organ

Leon Schelhase

Rehearsal Pianist

Wei-Han Wu

TEXT & TRANSLATIONS

PART I

ORATORIUM welches die heilige Weyhnacht über in beyden Haupt-Kirchen zu Leipzig musiciret wurde. Anno 1734.

Am 1sten Heil. Weyhnacht-Feyertage, frühe zu St. Nicolai und nachmittage zu St. Thomæ.

Coro – Tutti

Jauchzet, frohlocket, auf, preiset die Tage,
Rühmet, was heute der Höchste getan!
Lasset das Zagen, verbannet die Klage,
Stimmet voll Jauchzen und Fröhlichkeit an!
Dienet dem Höchsten mit herrlichen Chören,
Laßt uns den Namen des Herrschers verehren!

Evangelist

Es begab sich aber zu der Zeit, daß ein Gebot von dem Kaiser Augusto ausging, daß alle Welt geschätzt würde. Und jedermann ging, daß er sich schätzen ließe, ein jeglicher in seine Stadt. Da machte sich auch auf Joseph aus Galiläa, aus der Stadt Nazareth, in das jüdische Land zur Stadt David, die da heißet Bethlehem; darum, daß er von dem Hause und Geschlechte David war, auf daß er sich schätzen ließe mit Maria, seinem vertrauten Weibe, die war schwanger. Und als sie daselbst waren, kam die Zeit, daß sie gebären sollte.

Recitativ

Nun wird mein liebster Bräutigam,
Nun wird der Held aus Davids Stamm
Zum Trost, zum Heil der Erden
Einmal geboren werden.
Nun wird der Stern aus Jakob scheinen,
Sein Strahl bricht schon hervor.
Auf, Zion, und verlasse nun das Weinen,
Dein Wohl steigt hoch empor!

Aria

Bereite dich, Zion, mit zärtlichen Trieben,
Den Schönsten, den Liebsten bald bei dir zu sehn!
Deine Wangen
Müssen heut viel schöner prangen,
Eile, den Bräutigam sehnlichst zu lieben!

Choral

Wie soll ich dich empfangen
Und wie begegn' ich dir,
O aller Welt Verlangen,
O meiner Seelen Zier?
O Jesu, Jesu, setze
Mir selbst die Fackel bei,
Damit, was dich ergötze,
Mir kund und wissend sei.

ORATORIO that was performed musically over the Christmas season in the two principal churches in Leipzig, 1734.

On the first day of Christmas, early at St. Nicholas and in the afternoon at St. Thomas.

Chorus – All

Shout, exult, arise, praise the days [of Christmas],
Glorify what the Most High this day has done!
Leave off faintheartedness, ban lamenting;
Break forth into song, full of shouting and rejoicing!
Serve the Most High with glorious choirs;
Let us revere the ruler's name!

Evangelist

But it happened at that time that a commandment went out from the emperor Augustus that all the [Roman] world be appraised. And everyone [from Judea] went, that he might have himself appraised, each one to his [ancestral] city. Then Joseph too made out to go up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, into the Jewish region to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, this, because he was of the house and lineage of David, so that he might have himself appraised with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was pregnant. And while they were there, the time came that she should give birth.

Recitative (alto)

Now will my most beloved bridegroom,
Now will the champion from the tribe of David—
For the consolation, for the salvation of the earth—
At last be born.
Now will the star out of Jacob shine;
Its stream of light is already breaking forth.
Arise, Zion, and forsake weeping now;
Your well-being lifts on high!

Aria (alto)

Make yourself ready, Zion, with tender desires,
To see the Most Handsome, the Most Beloved,
Soon at your side! This day your cheeks
Must sparkle much lovelier;
Hurry on, to love the Bridegroom most ardently!

Chorale

How shall I receive you,
And how shall I meet you,
O desire of all the world,
O decoration of my soul?
O Jesus; Jesus, set
The torch next to me yourself,
So that whatever brings you enjoyment
May be manifest and known to me.

Standard type: free poetry or chorale text
Italic type: scriptural text

TEXT & TRANSLATIONS *(continued)*

Evangelist

Und sie gebar ihren ersten Sohn und wickelte ihn in Windeln und legte ihn in eine Krippe, denn sie hatten sonst keinen Raum in der Herberge.

Choral und Recitativ

Er ist auf Erden kommen arm,
Wer will die Liebe recht erhöh'n,
Die unser Heiland vor uns hegt?
Daß er unser sich erbarm,
Ja, wer vermag es einzusehen,
Wie ihn der Menschen Leid bewegt?
Und in dem Himmel mache reich,
Des Höchsten Sohn kömmt in die Welt,
Weil ihm ihr Heil so wohl gefällt,
Und seinen lieben Engeln gleich.
So will er selbst als Mensch geboren werden.
Kyrieleis.

Aria

Großer Herr, o starker König,
Liebster Heiland, o wie wenig
Achtest du der Erden Pracht!
Der die ganze Welt erhält,
Ihre Pracht und Zier erschaffen,
Muß in harten Krippen schlafen.

Choral

Ach mein herzliebes Jesulein,
Mach dir ein rein sanft Bettelein,
Zu ruhn in meines Herzens Schrein,
Daß ich nimmer vergesse dein!

Evangelist

And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, for they otherwise had no space in the lodgings.

Chorale & Recitative (bass)

He has come on earth poor,
Who will properly extol the love
That our Savior feels for us?
That he might have mercy on us,
Indeed, who is capable of perceiving it,
How human suffering moves him?
And might make [us] rich, in heaven,
The Son of the Most High comes into the world
Because its salvation pleases him so well
And [might make us] equal to his dear angels.
That he himself wants to be born as man.
Lord have mercy.

Aria (bass)

Great Lord, o mighty King,
Most beloved Savior, o how little
Do you regard the earth's splendor!
He, who upholds the entire world,
[Who] has created its splendor and decoration,
Must sleep in harsh mangers.

Chorale

Oh my beloved little Jesus,
Make for yourself a perfectly soft little bed,
To rest in the shrine of my heart,
That I may never forget you!

PART II

Am 2. Heil. Weyhnachts-Feyertage.

Frühe zu St. Thomæ. Nachmittage zu St. Nicolai.

Sinfonia

Evangelist

Und es waren Hirten in derselben Gegend auf dem Felde bei den Hürden, die hüteten des Nachts ihre Herde. Und siehe, des Herren Engel trat zu ihnen, und die Klarheit des Herren leuchtet' um sie, und sie furchten sich sehr.

Choral

Brich an, o schönes Morgenlicht,
Und laß den Himmel tagen!
Du Hirtenvolk, erschrecke nicht,
Weil dir die Engel sagen,
Daß dieses schwache Knäbelein
Soll unser Trost und Freude sein,
Dazu den Satan zwingen
Und letztlich Friede bringen!

On the second day of Christmas.

Early at St. Thomas. In the afternoon at St. Nicholas.

Sinfonia

Evangelist

And there were in the same vicinity shepherds in the field, by the live-stock pens; they guarded their flocks by night. And look, the Angel of the Lord approached them, and the radiance of the Lord lit up around them, and they were very afraid.

Chorale

Break out, o lovely morning light,
And let heaven dawn!
You shepherd folk, do not be alarmed;
For the angels tell you
That this weak little boy
Shall be our comfort and joy,
[Shall] vanquish Satan, too,
And finally bring peace!

TEXT & TRANSLATIONS (continued)

Evangelist

Und der Engel sprach zu ihnen

Engel: Fürchtet euch nicht! Siehe, ich verkündige euch große Freude, die allem Volke widerfahren wird; denn euch ist heute der Heiland geboren, welcher ist Christus, der Herr, in der Stadt David.

Recitativ

Was Gott dem Abraham verheißen,
Das läßt er nun dem Hirtenchor
Erfüllt erweisen.
Ein Hirt hat alles das zuvor
Von Gott erfahren müssen;
Und nun muß auch ein Hirt die Tat,
Was er damals versprochen hat,
Zuerst erfüllet wissen.

Aria

Frohe Hirten, eilt, ach eilet,
Eh ihr euch zu lang verweilet,
Eilt, das holde Kind zu sehn!
Geht, die Freude heißt zu schön,
Sucht die Anmut zu gewinnen,
Geht und labet Herz und Sinnen!

Evangelist

Und das habt zum Zeichen: Ihr werdet finden das Kind in Windeln gewickelt und in einer Krippe liegen.

Choral

Schaut hin, dort liegt im finstern Stall,
Des Herrschaft gehet überall.
Da Speise vormals sucht ein Rind,
Da ruhet itzt der Jungfrau'n Kind.

Recitativ

So geht denn hin, ihr Hirten, geht,
Daß ihr das Wunder seht!
Und findet ihr des Höchsten Sohn
In einer harten Krippe liegen,
So singet ihm bei seiner Wiegen
Aus einem süßen Ton
Und mit gesamtem Chor
Dies Lied zur Ruhe vor:

Aria

Schlafe, mein Liebster, genieße der Ruh,
Wache nach diesem vor aller Gedeihen!
Labe die Brust,
Empfinde die Lust,
Wo wir unser Herz erfreuen!

Evangelist

Und alsobald war da bei dem Engel die Menge der himmlischen Heerscharen, die lobten Gott und sprachen:

Chor der Engel

Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe und Friede auf Erden und den Menschen ein Wohlgefallen.

Evangelist

And the angel said to them:

Angel: Fear not! Look, I announce to you great joy, which will come to all people; for to you this day is born in the city of David the Savior, who is Christ, the Lord.

Recitative (bass)

What God had pledged to Abraham,
He now lets be shown to the chorus of shepherds
As fulfilled.
About all of this a shepherd [Abraham]
Had to hear from God beforehand; and now also a
Shepherd has to be the first to come to know the deed—
What he [God] at that time had promised—
As fulfilled.

Aria (tenor)

Joyful shepherds, hurry, oh hurry,
Before you tarry too long;
Hurry, to see the pleasing child!
Go, the joy is all too lovely;
Seek to gain the refinement [of this child];
Go and refresh your hearts and minds!

Evangelist

And take this for a sign: you will find the child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.

Chorale

Look there, yonder in the dark stall lies he whose
Lordship ranges all over [to the ends of the earth].
Where once an ox sought food,
There now rests the Virgin's child.

Recitative (bass)

So go forth, then, you shepherds; go,
That you may see the marvel!
And should you find the Son of the Most High
Lying in a harsh manger,
Then sing for him by his cradle
—In a sweet tone
And with united choir—
This lullaby:

Aria (alto)

Sleep, my Most Beloved, enjoy your rest,
Awake after this for the flourishing of all!
Refresh your breast,
Feel the delight
[There, in your rest], where we gladden our hearts!

Evangelist

And immediately there was with the angel the multitude of the heavenly legions, lauding God and saying:

Chorus of Angels

May honor be to God on high, and peace on earth, and to humankind [God's] great pleasure.

TEXT & TRANSLATIONS (*continued*)

Recitativ

So recht, ihr Engel, jauchzt und singet,
Daß es uns heut so schön gelinget!
Auf denn! Wir stimmen mit euch ein;
Uns kann es so wie euch erfreun.

Choral

Wir singen dir in deinem Heer
Aus aller Kraft Lob, Preis und Ehr,
Daß du, o lang gewünschter Gast,
Dich nunmehr eingestellt hast.

Recitative (bass)

Quite right, you angels: shout and sing
That for us this day has prospered so beautifully!
Arise then! We will join with you in song;
It can gladden us just like you.

Chorale

We sing to you, amid your host,
With all our power, "laud, praise, and honor,"
That you, o long desired guest,
Have now presented yourself.

PART V

Am Sonntage nach dem Neuen Jahr. In der Kirche zu St. Nicolai.

Coro – Tutti

Ehre sei dir, Gott, gesungen,
Dir sei Lob und Dank bereit'.
Dich erhebet alle Welt,
Weil dir unser Wohl gefällt,
Weil anheut
Unser aller Wunsch gelungen,
Weil uns dein Segen so herrlich erfreut.

Evangelist

Da Jesus geboren war zu Bethlehem im jüdischen Lande zur Zeit des Königes Herodis, siehe, da kamen die Weisen vom Morgenlande gen Jerusalem und sprachen:

Chorus und Recitativ

Wo ist der neugeborne König der Jüden?
Sucht ihn in meiner Brust,
Hier wohnt er, mir und ihm zur Lust!
Wir haben seinen Stern gesehen im Morgenlande und sind kommen, ihn anzubeten.
Wohl euch, die ihr dies Licht gesehen,
Es ist zu eurem Heil geschehen!
Mein Heiland, du, du bist das Licht,
Das auch den Heiden scheinen sollen,
Und sie, sie kennen dich noch nicht,
Als sie dich schon verehren wollen.
Wie hell, wie klar muß nicht dein Schein,
Geliebter Jesu, sein!

Choral

Dein Glanz all Finsternis verzehrt,
Die trübe Nacht in Licht verkehrt.
Leit uns auf deinen Wegen,
Daß dein Gesicht
Und herrlichs Licht
Wir ewig schauen mögen!

On the Sunday after New Year's. At St. Nicholas Church.

Chorus – All

May honor, God, be sung to you,
May laud and thanks be extended to you.
All the world exalts you,
Because our well-being pleases you,
Because today
The wish of all of us has come true,
Because your blessing gladdens us so splendidly.

Evangelist

When Jesus was born at Bethlehem in the Jewish region at the time of King Herod, look: there came the wisemen of the Orient to Jerusalem, saying:

Chorus & Recitative (alto)

Where is the newborn King of the Jews?
Seek him in my breast;
Here he dwells, to my and his delight!
We have seen his star in the Orient and have come to worship him.
Well for you, you who have seen this light;
It has taken place for your salvation!
You, my Savior, you are the light
That shall shine also to the gentiles, and they
[These gentiles, the wisemen], they do not know you
Yet, [even now] as they already want to revere you.
How bright, how clear must not your luminosity be,
Beloved Jesus!

Chorale

Your luster consumes all darkness,
Turns the murky night into light.
Lead us along your pathways,
That we may see your face
And glorious light
Eternally!

TEXT & TRANSLATIONS (*continued*)

Aria

Erleucht auch meine finstre Sinnen,
Erleuchte mein Herze
Durch der Strahlen klaren Schein!
Dein Wort soll mir die hellste Kerze
In allen meinen Werken sein;
Dies lasset die Seele nichts Böses beginnen.

Evangelist

Da das der König Herodes hörte, erschrak er und mit ihm das ganze Jerusalem.

Recitativ

Warum wollt ihr erschrecken?
Kann meines Jesu Gegenwart
euch solche Furcht erwecken?
O! solltet ihr euch nicht
Vielmehr darüber freuen,
Weil er dadurch verspricht,
Der Menschen Wohlfahrt zu verneuen.

Evangelist

Und ließ versammeln alle Hohepriester und Schriftgelehrten unter dem Volk und erforschte von ihnen, wo Christus sollte geboren werden. Und sie sagten ihm: Zu Bethlehem im jüdischen Lande; denn also stehet geschrieben durch den Propheten: Und du Bethlehem im jüdischen Lande bist mitnichten die kleinst unter den Fürsten Juda; denn aus dir soll mir kommen der Herzog, der über mein Volk Israel ein Herr sei.

Aria Terzetto

Ach, wenn wird die Zeit erscheinen?
Ach, wenn kömmt der Trost
der Seinen?
Schweigt, er ist schon würklich hier!
Jesu, ach so komm zu mir!

Recitativ

Mein Liebster herrschet schon.
Ein Herz, das seine Herrschaft liebet
Und sich ihm ganz zu eigen gibet,
Ist meines Jesu Thron.

Choral

Zwar ist solche Herzensstube
Wohl kein schöner Fürstensaal,
Sondern eine finstre Grube;
Doch, sobald dein Gnadenstrahl
In derselben nur wird blinken,
Wird es voller Sonnen dünken.

Aria (bass)

Light up, too, my dark inclinations,
Light up my heart
With the clear luminosity of your streams of light!
Your word shall be the brightest candle to me
In all my works;
This will let the soul embark on nothing evil.

Evangelist

When Herod the King heard that, he was alarmed, and with him all of Jerusalem.

Recitative (alto) & Evangelist

Why would you all want to be alarmed?
Can the presence of my Jesus
Arouse such fear in you?
O! Shouldn't you
Rather be glad about that,
Because he promises through it
To renew the welfare of humankind.

Evangelist

And [Herod] had all the chief priests and scripture experts among the people gather, and inquired of them, where [the] Christ was expected to be born. And they told him: "at Bethlehem in the Jewish region; for so it stands written by the prophet, 'And you Bethlehem in the Jewish region are by no means the smallest among the princes of Judah; for out of you shall come to me the leader who would be a ruler over my people Israel.'"

Trio Aria (soprano, alto, tenor)

Oh, when will the time appear?
Oh, when shall the consolation of
His own [saved people] come?
Silence!—he really is already here!
Jesus, oh then come to me!

Recitative

My Most Beloved already rules.
A heart that loves his Lordship,
And gives itself to him completely for his own,
Is [to be] my Jesus' throne.

Chorale

True, such a heart-cellar [for Jesus to dwell in] is
Certainly no choice hall of princes,
But rather a dark pit;
Yet, as soon as your grace-filled stream of light
Flashes in this same [pit],
It will seem full of sunlight.

TEXT & TRANSLATIONS (continued)

PART VI

Am Feste der Offenbarung Christi.

Frühe zu St. Thomæ. Nachmittag zu St. Nicolai.

Coro – Tutti

Herr, wenn die stolzen Feinde schnauben,
So gib, daß wir im festen Glauben
Nach deiner Macht und Hülfe sehn!
Wir wollen dir allein vertrauen,
So können wir den scharfen Klauen
Des Feindes unversehrt entgehn.

Evangelist

Da berief Herodes die Weisen heimlich und erlernet mit Fleiß von ihnen, wenn der Stern erschienen wäre. Und weiset sie gen Bethlehem und sprach:

Herodes: *Ziehet hin und forschet fleißig nach dem Kindlein, und wenn ihr's findet, sagt mir's wieder, daß ich auch komme und es anbete.*

Recitativ

Du Falscher, suche nur den Herrn zu fällen,
Nimm alle falsche List,
Dem Heiland nachzustellen;
Der, dessen Kraft kein Mensch ermißt,
Bleibt doch in sichrer Hand.
Dein Herz, dein falsches Herz ist schon,
Nebst aller seiner List, des Höchsten Sohn,
Den du zu stürzen suchst, sehr wohl bekannt.

Aria

Nur ein Wink von seinen Händen
Stürzt ohnmächtger Menschen Macht.
Hier wird alle Kraft verlacht!
Spricht der Höchste nur ein Wort,
Seiner Feinde Stolz zu enden,
O, so müssen sich sofort
Sterblicher Gedanken wenden.

Evangelist

Als sie nun den König gehöret hatten, zogen sie hin. Und siehe, der Stern, den sie im Morgenlande gesehen hatten, ging für ihnen hin, bis daß er kam und stund oben über, da das Kindlein war. Da sie den Stern sahen, wurden sie hoch erfreuet und gingen in das Haus und funden das Kindlein mit Maria, seiner Mutter, und fielen nieder und beteten es an und taten ihre Schätze auf und schenkten ihm Gold, Weihrauch und Myrrhen.

Choral

Ich steh an deiner Krippen hier,
O Jesulein, mein Leben;
Ich komme, bring und schenke dir,
Was du mir hast gegeben.
Nimm hin, es ist mein Geist und Sinn,
Herz, Seel und Mut, nimm alles hin,
Und laß dir's wohlgefallen!

On Epiphany.

Early at St. Thomas. In the afternoon at St. Nicholas.

Chorus – All

Lord, when our insolent enemies snort,
Then grant that we in steadfast faith
Will look to your strength and salvation!
We want to put our trust in you alone,
So that we can escape
The enemy's sharp claws unharmed.

Evangelist

Then Herod convened the wisemen secretly and sought with diligence to learn from them when the star might have appeared. And directed them to Bethlehem, saying:

Herod: *Set out and search diligently for the little child, and when you find it, report this to me, so that I, too, may come and worship it.*

Recitative (soprano)

You deceitful one, just try to bring down the Lord;
Use all your deceitful cunning
To have it in for the Savior;
He, whose power no human comprehends,
Remains nonetheless in safe hands.
Your heart, your deceitful heart,
With all its cunning, is already very well known
To the Son of the Most High, whom you seek to overthrow.

Aria (soprano)

Just one signal from his hands
Overthrows the feeble strength of humankind.
Here all power is mocked!
The Most High has to utter just one word
To put a stop to the insolence of his enemies.
O, then the plans of mortals
Will have to be immediately cut short.

Evangelist

Having heard the king, then, they set out. And look: the star that they had seen in the Orient went forth before them, until, having come [to Bethlehem], it settled over [the place] where the little child was. When they saw the star, they became exceedingly glad and went into the house and found the little child with Mary its mother, and bowed down and worshiped it, and opened their treasures, giving it gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Chorale

Here I stand at your manger,
O little Jesus, my Life;
I come to bring and give to you
What you have granted me.
Take this, it is my spirit and inclination,
Heart, soul and courage; take this all,
And let it please you greatly!

TEXT & TRANSLATIONS (continued)

Evangelist

Und Gott befahl ihnen im Traum, daß sie sich nicht sollten wieder zu Herodes lenken, und zogen durch einen andern Weg wieder in ihr Land.

Recitativ

So geht! Genug, mein Schatz geht nicht von hier,
Er bleibt da bei mir;
Ich will ihn auch nicht von mir lassen.
Sein Arm wird mich aus Lieb
Mit sanftmutsvollem Trieb
Und größter Zärtlichkeit umfassen;
Er soll mein Bräutigam verbleiben,
Ich will ihm Brust und Herz verschreiben.
Ich weiß gewiß, er liebet mich,
Mein Herz liebt ihn auch inniglich
Und wird ihn ewig ehren.
Was könnte mich nun für ein Feind
Bei solchem Glück versehren!
Du, Jesu, bist und bleibst mein Freund;
Und werd ich ängstlich zu dir flehn:
Herr, hilf!, so laß mich Hülfe sehn!

Aria

Nun mögt ihr stolzen Feinde schrecken;
Was könnt ihr mir für Furcht erwecken?
Mein Schatz, mein Hort ist hier bei mir!
Ihr mögt euch noch so grimmig stellen,
Droht nur, mich ganz und gar zu fällen,
Doch seht! mein Heiland wohnt hier.

Recitativ

Was will der Höllen Schrecken nun,
Was will uns Welt und Sünde tun,
Da wir in Jesu Händen ruhn!

Choral

Nun seid ihr wohl gerochen
An eurer Feinde Schar,
Denn Christus hat zerbrochen,
Was euch zuwider war.
Tod, Teufel, Sünd und Hölle
Sind ganz und gar geschwächt;
Bei Gott hat seine Stelle
Das menschliche Geschlecht.

Evangelist

And God commanded them in a dream that they should not direct themselves back to Herod, and [they] set off by another way back to their country.

Recitative (tenor)

So go! [It is] enough that my Treasure will not go
From here; he stays with me;
I will also not let him [free] from me.
His arm will embrace me out of love
With gentle desire
And greatest tenderness;
He shall remain my bridegroom;
I will entrust breast and heart to him.
I know for certain that he loves me;
My heart also loves him deeply
And will honor him eternally.
Now, at such good fortune, how could any enemy
Harm me!
You, Jesus, are and remain my friend;
And if I anxiously beseech you:
"Lord, save [me]!," then let me see salvation!

Aria (tenor)

Now you insolent enemies might horrify;
[Yet] how could you arouse any fear in me?
My Treasure, my Refuge is here with me!
You do still so like to feign being fierce;
Just [go ahead and] threaten to bring me down
Completely; but look! My Savior dwells here.

Recitative à 4 (soprano, alto, tenor bass)

What will the horrors of hell intend now,
What will World and Sin intend to do to us,
Since we rest in Jesus' hands!

Chorale

Now you all are well avenged
Of your band of enemies,
For Christ has broken apart
What was against you.
Death, devil, sin, and hell
Are completely diminished;
The human family
Has its place by God.

Reading Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*

Daniel R. Melamed

If you had been a member of the congregations of the St. Thomas or St. Nicholas Churches in Leipzig during the 1734–35 Christmas season, you might have purchased a small booklet with the title “Oratorio that was performed musically over the Christmas season in the two principal churches in Leipzig.” This 24-page publication contained the text of the *Christmas Oratorio* written and compiled by an anonymous (and to date unidentified) librettist, and set to music by Johann Sebastian Bach.

The booklet fulfilled several functions. One was practical: To the extent that such publications generated a profit, those proceeds typically went to the music director, so Bach may have earned income from the sale of the libretto. Another was liturgical: With the printed text in hand, one could follow the words of the musical presentation of the Christmas story and its poetic elaboration. The large congregations of those churches could not reasonably expect to catch every word of the music performed vocally and instrumentally, especially because its poetry was newly written and heard for the first time in Bach's performances.

But printed texts like this also had a devotional function, meant to encourage reflection on a story of obviously central importance to the Lutheran believer. They did this by presenting both the gospel narrative in its familiar prose from Luke's account, and the poems and hymn stanzas written or chosen by the librettist as commentary. These non-gospel texts framed segments of the narrative (heard on six occasions across the 12 days of the Christmas observance) and interrupted it to comment on particular moments in the story. Both the framing numbers and the interpolations guided the reader of the libretto to particular understandings of the story and its theological significance.

The layout and typography of the original printed pages were designed to support this function. The words of gospel prose were presented in relatively large type, clearly labeled “Evangelist” (or occasionally with the name of an interlocutor such as an angel or Herod). These scriptural verses were “run in”—that is, presented continuously and spanning the whole width of the page. Hymn stanzas (labeled “Chorale”) and new poetry (marked “Recitative” or “Aria”) were in distinct typefaces, presented as poetry with shorter lines and (in the case of arias) indented from the left margin. Their headings were actually “ARIA” in all capital letters, distinguishing them and pointing to their significance.

All this would have made it clear to you as a reader that the libretto consisted of a continuous narrative

interrupted by other texts, encouraging you to read the nativity story in a way that dwelled on particular moments marked by interpolations of specific kinds. The opening poetic movement of each part of the oratorio provided a theological starting point for the day's scriptural passage and its elaboration. Owning a copy of the libretto would have encouraged guided meditation on the Christmas story outside the liturgy, but also fulfilled this function during the services in which the six parts of the Christmas Oratorio were performed.

And this is where Bach's compositional work came in. The words of the Evangelist are sung in a relatively neutral and declamatory manner, presenting the familiar story in a particularly intelligible way. These simple settings, uniform in their presentation across the entire oratorio, helped mark the gospel narrative as its foundation. The quoted hymn stanzas use melodies that would have been familiar to members of the congregation, and indeed the stanzas themselves, chosen from among the many that made up each complete hymn, were familiar as well. The focus here was on the words of the hymn and their relationship to the gospel texts they followed.

That was true of the settings of the new poetry as well, but those movements went a step further. The poetic opening numbers and the interpolated new poems were set musically in ways that enhanced the librettist's theological guidance of the reader/listener. These most elaborate musical numbers did this by presenting the new poetry as declamatory recitatives, and as more lyrical solo, duet, and choral arias. These kinds of movements were meant to move the listener and contribute to the religious experience of the narrated nativity story. They not only conveyed the substance of the poetic words of commentary, but also clothed them in music designed to add an emotional dimension to the listener's experience.

The text and translation in this program reproduce many of the features of the 1734 print. Both the original German text and Michael Marissen's linguistically and theologically meticulous translation are laid out to make clear the distinction between gospel narrative (in italics) and interpolated commentary. The commentary movements are labeled, as in the original print, with their kind (recitative, aria, chorale) and distinguished by standard type style. And the parts of the oratorio, originally heard on distinct days and presenting distinct theological themes, are easily distinguished, all but one beginning with a framing opening Chorus, marked “Tutti” (“All”) in the original.

Reading Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* (continued)



This presentation of the oratorio's text gives you the opportunity of experiencing the Christmas Oratorio like an early eighteenth-century reader and listener, focusing on the librettist's interpretive construction and Bach's musical reinforcement of it. Part I of the oratorio provides a good example of how one might do this.

The work, for the first of the three days over which Christmas itself was celebrated, opens with a movement for all the voices and instruments—one of those new poetic texts marked "Tutti" ("All"). This piece, technically an aria for combined voices, presents themes meant to guide the emotional response of the listener to the beginning of the Christmas story. Its emphasis is on joy, both mentioning rejoicing and rejecting lamentation (note the explicitly emotional words). It further expresses itself in sounding terms—shout, exult, song, choirs—urging audible praise.

Bach's setting reflects both elements. The joyful emotional character ("affect," in eighteenth-century terms) is expressed by conventional musical emblems of joy: the use of trumpets and drums, and a dance-like triple meter. Given the early eighteenth-century view that music like

this acted directly on the listener's body to move the affections—to physically bring on an emotional state—a listener theoretically did not even need to read or hear the word "joy" to be made joyful; the characteristics of the music guaranteed it.

And the text's emphasis on sounding praise is reflected, of course, in the musical presentation itself. Bach provides a striking opening instrumental ritornello that singles out drums, strings, and then trumpets and drums, as if consciously pointing to each of the instruments and their sounds in turn. The effect would have been particularly striking to listeners at the time because Part I would have been the first music heard since the start of Advent, as Leipzig observed a so-called "closed time" that prohibited most musical performance during that period.

After the opening number, Part I continues with a passage of gospel narrative that sets the scene and leads up to the moment of Jesus's birth. Three movements of commentary follow, all oriented towards anticipation and preparation. A recitative elaborates on this anticipation, putting it in personal terms ("my most beloved bridegroom") and affective ones ("forsake weeping"). A gentle and gracious aria follows with a text ("Make yourself ready, Zion") that takes up the themes of preparation and the marriage metaphor, and whose music evokes tenderness, an emotional state. Finally, a carefully selected hymn stanza asks "How shall I receive you?" bringing this first segment of Part I to an end.

Another passage of Evangelist narrative opens the second segment of Part I; it announces the birth and its circumstances. As in the first segment, three movements of commentary follow that elaborate on the themes of the gospel words and their emotional implications. The first is a recitative interwoven with lines of a well-known Christmas hymn stanza. Both the hymn and the new poetic text that expands on it refer to the humble condition of Jesus's birth and to his humanity. The aria that follows paradoxically exalts the tiny child as a great king, and equally paradoxically points to Jesus's rejection of earthly things just at the moment of his earthly appearance. Bach's musical setting of the aria text invokes royalty and earthly splendor by its solo trumpet and fanfares, even as the text speaks of the rejection of such things.

The chorale stanza that closes this part of the oratorio, drawn from another familiar Christmas hymn, once again contrasts the child in the manger with the splendor implied by trumpets and drums used in the musical setting. The overall result is a first part of the Christmas Oratorio that presents two passages of narrative and elaborates on their themes of anticipation, preparation, and the

Reading Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* (continued)

paradoxical lowly status of the newborn Jesus; and that evokes tenderness and splendor as emotional guides to the theological messages of the libretto.

The other parts of the oratorio draw on these same techniques. The gospel verses in Part II relate the role of shepherds in the nativity story, and almost every added text refers to them. Bach and his librettist musically recognize this by forgoing an opening chorus, instead beginning with an instrumental sinfonia that invokes both of the eighteenth-century conventions for pastoral music: a lilting string tune (a stylized shepherds' dance called a *siciliana*), and a woodwind melody with drones (a so-called *musette*, imitating bagpipes). The gospel reference to the manger prompts a series of reflections and an aria explicitly introduced as a lullaby; it invokes the baroque convention of the sleep aria, with a sustained bass pitch and notes grouped in twos. And the introduction of the angels' words of praise ("May honor be to God on high"), along with its splendid setting, lead to a recitative that promises to join the angel chorus. The concluding hymn stanza of praise, performed by the entire ensemble and recalling the opening pastoral music, symbolically does exactly that.

After an opening chorus of praise, Part V begins with a narrative passage, briefly interrupted after it invokes the search for Jesus, that tells of the star of Bethlehem. This prompts a recitative, a chorale stanza, and an aria all on the topics of darkness and light. A gospel passage about Herod and his alarm at the news of the birth is answered by a recitative with the trembling strings that conventionally signified fear and agitation, once again designed to elicit an affective response from the listener. The quotation of a prophecy in the third gospel passage leads to an aria and a recitative declaring that this prophecy is, in fact, already fulfilled. The closing chorale returns to the themes of darkness and light.

Part VI, for Epiphany, opens with a chorus about snarling enemies and about God's power, and these themes govern the entire part. First a gospel passage invokes Herod; then a responding recitative and aria both emphasize Herod's deceit and God's might. The narrated arrival of the wisemen at the manger with their gifts is answered by a chorale stanza that reflects on the concept of a gift. The departure of the wisemen prompts a recitative and aria about Jesus, in contrast, metaphorically remaining. To close, an ensemble recitative and chorale once again invoke the topic of God's power introduced at the start of Part VI. The chorale stanza chosen for this final movement uses the same melody as the very first inserted chorale in Part I, and trumpets and drums musically link this last part to the first as well.

In the course of six parts heard over 12 days, as a reader of the Christmas Oratorio you would have experienced its move from the theme of anticipation to a celebration of the consequence of Jesus's birth for the believer. And as a listener to Bach's setting, you would have heard his music reinforcing those themes, guiding your emotional responses, and pointing you to a particular Lutheran understanding of the Christmas story. Equipped with a copy of the text, like a listener in 1734–35, we can try something similar today.

Daniel R. Melamed is a professor of musicology at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, and serves as president of the American Bach Society and director of the Bloomington Bach Cantata Project. His books *Hearing Bach's Passions* and *Listening to Bach: the Mass in B Minor and Christmas Oratorio*, for general readers, are available from Oxford University Press.

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Dr. Dana T. Marsh's musical training began as a boy chorister at St. Thomas Choir School in New York and at Salisbury Cathedral in England. He earned his undergraduate degree in organ performance from the Eastman School of Music, with later masters and doctoral degrees in historical musicology from the University of Oxford.

Commended as "an energetic and persuasive conductor" (*Los Angeles Times*), and as "a superb choral conductor, energetic and precise" (*The Washington Post*), Marsh has enjoyed fruitful collaborations with the London Mozart Players, Studio de musique ancienne de Montréal, the Lamèque International Baroque Music Festival, Cappella Romana, the choirs of St. Thomas Fifth Avenue and Trinity Wall Street with Trinity Baroque and New York Baroque Incorporated, Magnificat (UK), Musica Angelica Baroque Orchestra, Portland Baroque Orchestra, and the Indianapolis Baroque Orchestra, among others. While living, studying, and working in the UK (1999–2010), he founded the British ensemble

Musica Humana Oxford (2001–2008), which toured the US to enthusiastic praise: "... pleasing to the ear and satisfying to the soul" (*LA Times*).

Working as a vocal soloist and consort singer in the U.S. and the U.K. for 16 years (1992–2008), he received critical acclaim: "Marsh gave object lessons in vocal ornamentation as a graceful countertenor" (*LA Times*), with further plaudits as "a powerful and expressive countertenor" (*New York Times*). He undertook Bach aria study with the Dutch bass-baritone Max Van Egmond in Amsterdam. He performed with the American Bach Soloists, Concert Royal, New York Collegium (under Gustav Leonhardt), Seattle Baroque Orchestra, Musica Angelica Baroque Orchestra, A Cappella Portuguesa, and the Brabant Ensemble. While pursuing doctoral research in the U.K., Marsh sang for seven years as a soloist and regular member of the Choir of New College Oxford, joining in numerous collaborations with the Academy of Ancient Music, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, and the European Union Baroque Orchestra; involved in some 25 concert tours, recording fifteen discs with New College Choir, one of which won the Gramophone Award for Early Music in 2008.

Marsh is Professor of Music and Director of the Historical Performance Institute at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. Previously, he taught early music history at both Oxford and Cambridge universities, additionally publishing original research and review articles through the scholarly presses of both institutions. Marsh is general editor of the Indiana University Press book series, *Historical Performance*, as well as an annual academic journal under the same name. He has written research and review articles for *Early Music* (OUP), *Early Music History* and the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (CUP). He served as Assistant Director of Music and Director of Chapel Music at Girton College Cambridge, and more recently was Canon Organist and Director of Music at Christ Church Cathedral, Indianapolis.

Marsh has also prepared ensembles of young singers for concert and recording engagements with the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Esa-Pekka Salonen and Antonio Pappano. He has recorded in various capacities for Sony, Universal, Avie, Decca, Erato, Koch International Classics, Signum and Public Radio International.



MEET THE ARTISTS



Elijah McCormack, male soprano, performs concert and opera across the United States, garnering praise for his “radiant soprano” and “expressive sophistication” (*Dallas Morning News*). He has performed several times as a soloist with the Washington Bach Consort, singing major works such as Bach’s *Christmas Oratorio* and *St. Matthew Passion*, as well as other programs. As both a soloist and ensemble member, he has performed Bach’s *St. John Passion*, Theile’s *St. Matthew Passion*, Handel’s *Messiah*, and other choral repertoire from medieval to contemporary with organizations such as the Dallas Bach Society, American Bach Soloists, Ensemble Altera, and The Crossing.

On the opera stage, he most recently appeared in Haymarket Opera’s *L’incoronazione di Poppea* (Amore/Valletto). Other opera credits include Bell* Cohen in the world premiere of *NIGHTTOWN* with Lowell House Opera, and Miles in *The Turn of the Screw* with IlluminArts Miami. He was featured as Erato in Handel’s *Terpsichore* in the American Bach Soloists Academy, and appeared as a young artist at the Boston Early Music Festival. The current season sees his debuts with The Crossing, Seraphic Fire, and Ars Lyrica Houston. He was named a finalist in the Grand Rapids Symphony’s Keller Distinguished Bach Musician Award, and a semifinalist in the Poeme Harmonique Corneille Baroque competition, and has twice received an encouragement award in the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition.

McCormack received his Master’s degree in Historical Performance at Indiana University, where he studied with Steven Rickards and sang the roles in *Giulio Cesare* (Tolomeo) and *Hansel and Gretel* (Dewman). He received his Bachelor’s degree in studio art at Skidmore College.



Filipino-American bass-baritone **Enrico Lagasca**’s nascent career already comprises 16 oratorios, 17 new-music works, seven opera roles, 13 song cycles and collections and four Grammy Award-nominated recordings. Concert repertoire is where he spends much of his time, but two hybrid presentations of frame his 2022–2023 season: Tyshawn Sorey’s *Monochromatic Light (afterlight)* directed by Peter Sellers at the Park Avenue Armory and the New York Philharmonic’s premiere of Julia Wolfe’s multi-media *unEarth*. Between the ensemble work in those two world premieres, he sings bass solos in Haydn’s *Lord Nelson Mass* with Voices of Ascension, Handel’s *Messiah* at Ann Arbor’s University Musical Society and Carnegie Hall with Musica Sacra, and Mendelssohn’s *Walpurgisnacht* with the

St. Louis Symphony.

As much as the great sacred works of Bach, Handel, Haydn and Mozart remain in his bones, Enrico is increasingly inclined to seek out music by living composers such as Wolfe, Jonathon Dove, Caroline Shaw, and Reena Esmail. He has sung Sarah Kirkland Snider’s *Mass for the Endangered*, Jake Heggie’s *The Moon is a Mirror* and Nico Muhly’s *The Last Letter*. Joby Talbot’s *Path of Miracles* will figure repeatedly in his 2022–2023 season, along with Craig Johnson’s *Considering Matthew Shepard*—the latter reflecting Enrico’s particular interest in works that address the LGBTQ+ community. He is a member of the Kaleidoscope Vocal Ensemble, which is dedicated to diversity and social justice. Opera roles include Collatinus in Britten’s *Rape of Lucretia* and Lorenzo in Bellini’s *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*. His need to take risks onstage has led him to forward-looking directors such as Thaddeus Strassberger, RB Schlather, and Kevin Newbury.

A graduate of New York’s Mannes School of Music, Enrico lives in New York City with his domestic partner of several years.



Recognized for her “velvety legato and embracing warmth of sound” (*Washington Classical Review*) and “lyric-mezzo of uncommon beauty” (*The Washington Post*) mezzo-soprano **Kristen Dubenion-Smith** enjoys an active performing career in oratorio and sacred vocal chamber music, specializing in music of the medieval, Renaissance and Baroque eras. As a concert soloist, Kristen has earned recognition for her performances of the works of the high Baroque, especially Bach and Handel. Highlights from recent seasons include Handel’s *Israel in Egypt* and Vivaldi’s *Gloria* with the Washington National Cathedral Baroque Orchestra, and Bach’s *St. John Passion* with the Dryden Ensemble. Ms. Dubenion-Smith is a past American Bach Soloists Academy participant and Virginia Best Adams Fellow at the Carmel Bach Festival. 2022–2023 season solo highlights are BWV 170 with Chatham Baroque, *Venus and Adonis* with Bach Collegium San Diego, the Monteverdi *Vespers* with both Apollo’s Fire and Washington National Cathedral Baroque Orchestra, Handel’s *Messiah* with Ensemble Altera, BWV 3 with Bach in Baltimore, and an international tour of Handel’s *Solomon* with Clarion Choir and the English Concert.

Starting in the fall of 2016, Ms. Dubenion-Smith joined the Choir of Men and Boys/Girls at the Washington National Cathedral as the first woman to be offered a position in this choir. She had previously served as cantor since 2010. In her time with the Cathedral Choir, she has sung for liturgies, commemorations, and events of national importance—most recently, the State Funerals of President George H.W. Bush and Senator John McCain, the internment of Matthew Shepard, and presidential inauguration ceremonies and prayer services. Originally from Michigan, Ms. Dubenion-Smith attended Alma College (BMus) before moving to Maryland to complete her studies at the Peabody Conservatory of Music (MMus) in Baltimore.



Tenor, **Jacob Perry**, has been praised for his “gorgeous and stylish” (*ClevelandClassical.com*) interpretations of Renaissance and Baroque repertoire. He has been engaged as a soloist with Apollo’s Fire, Choralis, the City Choir of Washington, Handel Choir of Baltimore, Les Délices, Portland Baroque Orchestra, Tempesta di Mare, Washington Bach Consort, and Washington National Cathedral. Jacob was the tenor participant in the Virginia Best Adam’s Masterclass at the 2022 Carmel Bach Festival.

Deeply immersed in vocal chamber music, Jacob enjoys active membership in Les Canards Chantants, a soloist-ensemble based in Philadelphia, as well as engagements with ensembles such as ARTEK, Cathedra, Seraphic Fire, TENET Vocal Artists, and Yale Choral Artists. Since 2013, Jacob has served as a cantor and member of the choir of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

As Co-Artistic Director of Bridge, a genre-defying vocal ensemble based in Washington, he draws on his instincts for theatricality and story-telling, as the group explores the connections between early masterpieces and ground-breaking new works.

Career highlights include multiple tours performing in Roman Basilicas with the choir of the National Shrine, headlining the inaugural festival of Western Early Music at the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music with Les Canards Chantants, a commercial recording as the tenor soloists in Handel’s *Israel in Egypt* with Apollo’s Fire, and “English Orpheus”—a tour de force exploration of love songs and poems from the Elizabethan, Restoration, and early 18th-century periods he performed with Tempesta di Mare.





Michael Marissen (*Talking Bach*) is Daniel Underhill Professor Emeritus of Music at Swarthmore College and holds a BA from Calvin College and PhD from Brandeis University. He has taught courses on Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, and Classical European music; Bach; a conceptual introduction to the music of various cultures; and Mozart and the string quartet. His research has been supported by fellowships from agencies in Canada (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council), England (Woolf Institute), Germany (DAAD and Humboldt Foundation), and the US (National Endowment for the Humanities and American Council of Learned Societies).

He has written several books on Bach and Handel, including *Bach & God* (Oxford University Press, 2016); *Tainted Glory in Handel's Messiah* (Yale University Press, 2014); *Bach's Oratorios — The Parallel German-English Texts, with Annotations* (Oxford University Press, 2008); *Creative Responses to Bach from Mozart to Hindemith* (University of Nebraska Press, 1998), editor; *Lutheranism, Anti-Judaism, and Bach's St. John Passion* (Oxford University Press, 1998); *An Introduction to Bach Studies* (Oxford University Press, 1998), co-authored with Daniel R. Melamed; and *The Social and Religious Designs of J. S. Bach's Brandenburg Concertos* (Princeton University Press, 1995). Other publications include articles in *Early Music*, *Harvard Theological Review*, *Lutheran Quarterly*, *Music and Letters*, *Musical Quarterly*, *The Huffington Post*, and *The New York Times*.

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