



Bach's
Christmas Oratorio

BWV 248
Parts 1, 2, 3, and 6

Sunday, December 15, 2024
Music Center at Strathmore
5301 Tuckerman Lane
Bethesda, MD 20852

WASHINGTON BACH CONSORT

Dana Marsh, Artistic Director



PROGRAM

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

Part 1. On the First Day of Christmas

Chorus
Evangelist
Recitative
Aria
Chorale
Evangelist
Chorale and Recitative
Aria
Chorale

Part 2. On the Second Day of Christmas

Sinfonia
Evangelist
Chorale
Evangelist/Angel
Recitative
Aria
Evangelist
Chorale
Recitative
Aria
Evangelist/Chorus of Angels
Recitative
Chorale

— *Intermission* —

Part 3. On the Third Day of Christmas

Chorus
Evangelist/Shepherds
Recitative
Chorale
Aria duetto
Evangelist
Aria
Recitative
Chorale
Recitative
Chorale
[Opening chorus repeated]

[Part 4. On New Year's Day]

[Part 5. On the Sunday after New Year's Day]

Part 6. On Epiphany

Chorus
Evangelist/Herod
Recitative
Aria
Evangelist
Chorale
Evangelist
Recitative
Aria
Recitative
Chorale

Nola Richardson, *soprano*
Meg Bragle, *alto*
Gene Stenger, *tenor & Evangelist*
Paul Max Tipton, *bass*

Dana Marsh, *conductor*

Mary Ann Gardner and Sally Wells, *underwriters*

*Special support from William B. Munier & Laurinda L. Rohn, Helen H. McConnell,
Margarita Brose, Tamera Luzzatto & Alpheus Fair, Richard & Beth Ayres,
Robert L. & Suzanne R. McDowell, and Shannon & Jim Davis.*



MUSICIANS

Soprano

Nola Richardson, *soloist*
Amy Broadbent
Elissa Edwards
Sara MacKimmie
Margot Rood
Carolyn Wise

Alto

Meg Bragle, *soloist*
Julie Bosworth
Janna Critz
Derek Greten-Harrison
Caroline Nielson
Meghen Tuttle

Tenor

Gene Stenger,
Evangelist/soloist
Ryan Connelly
David Evans
Rob Petillo
Andrew Sauvageau
Matthew Loyal Smith
John Logan Wood

Bass

Paul Max Tipton, *soloist*
Josh Brown
Karl Hempel
Ian Pomerantz
Gilbert Spencer
Ross Tamaccio

Violin I

Andrew Fouts,
concertmaster
Natalie Rose Kress
Marika Holmqvist
Marlisa del Cid Woods

Violin II

Freya Creech
Jude Ziliak
Gersh Chervinsky
Jimena Burga Lopera

Viola

Risa Browder
Dan McCarthy
Isaiah Chapman

Violoncello

John Moran
Amy Domingues

Violone

Jessica Powell Eig
Motomi Igarashi

Flute

Colin St-Martin
Kathryn Roth

Oboe

Geoffrey Burgess
Fatma Daglar
Gaia Saetermoe-Howard
Sarah Schilling

Bassoon

Anna Marsh

Trumpet

Josh Cohen
Dillon Parker
Joelle Monroe

Timpani

Michelle Humphreys

Organ

Adam Pearl

Harpsichord

Leon Schelhase

Rehearsal Pianist

Joy Schreier

TEXT & TRANSLATIONS

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

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

PART 1

Am 1sten Heil. Weynachts-Feyertage.
Frühe zu St. Nicolai. Nachmittage zu St. Thomæ.

On the first day of Christmas .
Early at St. Nicholas. In the afternoon at St. Thomas

Coro — Tutti

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

Chorus — All

Shout, exult, arise, praise the days [of Christmas],
Glorify what the Most High [God] has done this day.
Leave off being fainthearted, banish lamentation;
Break forth into song, full of shouting and gladness.
Serve the Most High with glorious choirs;
Let us revere the name of the ruler [of the universe].

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.*

Evangelist

*But it happened at that time that a commandment went out
from the emperor Augustus that all the [Roman] world would
be tallied [in a census]. And everyone [from Judea] went, that
he might have himself tallied, 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 [King] David,
which is called Bethlehem, this, because he was from the house
and lineage of David, so that he might have himself tallied with
Mary, his betrothed wife, who was pregnant. And while they
were in that place, the time came that she should give birth.*

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!

Recitative (alto)

Now will my most beloved bridegroom,
Now will the champion from the lineage 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 and glory] is already breaking forth.
Arise, Zion, and forsake weeping now;
Your well-being climbs on high!

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!

Aria (alto)

Make yourself ready, [God's people,] Zion, with delicate
impulses,
To see the most lovely, the most beloved one, [Jesus,]
soon with you.
This day your cheeks
Must sparkle much more beautifully;
Hurry on, to love the bridegroom most longingly!

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.

Chorale

How shall I receive you,
And how shall I meet you,
Oh [heart's] desire of all the world,
Oh [wisdom, Jesus, that is the] ornament of my soul?
Oh Jesus, Jesus, indeed set
The torch [of your saving word] by me,
So that whatever brings you enjoyment
May be manifest and known to me.

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 erhöhen,
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 [Mary] gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him into a manger, for they otherwise had no room [available] in the inn.

Chorale & Recitative (bass)

He [God's messiah] has come on earth poor,

Who will properly extol the love
That our savior harbors for us?

That he might have mercy on us,

Yes, who is capable of perceiving it,
How human suffering moves him?

And might make [us spiritually] 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 beloved angels.

That he will even be born as a human being.

Lord, have mercy.

Aria (bass)

Great Lord [Jesus], oh [spiritually] strong king,
Most beloved savior, oh how trivial
Do you consider earthly splendor!

He who upholds the whole world,
[He through whom] its splendor and ornament [is] created,
Must sleep in [a] harsh manger.

Chorale

**Ah my dearly beloved little Jesus,
Make yourself a spotless, soft little bed
[For you] to rest [in], in the shrine of my heart,
So that I may never forget you.**

PART 2

Am 2 Heil. Weynachts-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 fürchten 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. Nicolas.

Sinfonia

Evangelist

And there were shepherds in the same area, in the field next to the live-stock pens, who were tending their flock 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 forth, [Lord,] oh lovely morning light,
And let heaven [rise like the] dawn.
You shepherd folk, do not be alarmed;
For the angels tell you
That this helpless little boy
Shall be our comfort and joy,
[Shall] vanquish Satan, too,
And finally bring peace!**

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 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:

Evangelist

And the angel declared to them:

Angel: *"Fear not! Look, I announce to you great joy that will befall all the people [in the world]; for to you this day is born in the city of David the savior, who is Christ, the Lord."*

Recitative (bass)

[A worldwide blessing] that God pledged to Abraham,
He now lets be revealed to the choir of shepherds
As fulfilled.
A [lowly] shepherd [Abraham]
Had to learn all this from God in the first instance;
And now, too, a shepherd must [be the] first to come
to know as fulfilled
The deed that he [God] promised back then.

Aria (tenor)

Joyful shepherds, hurry, ah hurry,
Ere you tarry too long;
Hurry on, to see the gracious 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

Behold, there lies in the dark stable
[God's messiah], whose dominion extends over all
[the world].
Where formerly an ox sought food,
There [Mary] the Virgin's child now rests.

Recitative (bass)

So go forth, then, you shepherds; go,
That you may see the marvel [of Christ's advent].
And when 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 [your] whole choir,
This lullaby:

Aria (alto)

Sleep, my most beloved, enjoy your rest,
Awake after this for the flourishing of all [in faith].
Refresh our breast,
Feel our delight
[There] where we gladden our hearts.

Evangelist

And immediately there was with the angel the mass of the heavenly army formations [of angels] who lauded God, declaring:

TEXT & TRANSLATIONS *(continued)*

Chor del Engel

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

Recitativ

So recht, ihr Engel, jauchzt und singet,
Dass es uns heut so schön gelingt!
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 eingestellet hast.

Chorus of Angels

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

Recitative (bass)

Quite right, you angels; shout and sing
That [with] this day [of Christ's advent] we have come so
beautifully to prosper.
Arise, then! We join in with you [in shouting and singing];
It [Christ's advent] can gladden us and you.

Chorale

[Lord Jesus,] we sing to you, along with your army
[of angels],
With all [our] might, "laud, praise, and honor,"
That you, oh long desired guest [on earth],
Have now presented yourself.

PART 3

Am 3 Heil. Weynachts-Feyertage.
Frühe zu St. Nicolai.

On the third day of Christmas.
Early at St. Nicolas.

Coro — Tutti

Herrscher des Himmels, erhöere das Lallen,
Lass dir die matten Gesänge gefallen,
Wenn dich dein Zion mit Psalmen erhöht!
Höre der Herzen frohlockendes Preisen,
Wenn wir dir itzo die Ehrfurcht erweisen,
Weil unsre Wohlfahrt befestiget steht!

Evangelist

Und da die Engel von ihnen gen Himmel fuhren, sprachen die Hirten untereinander:

Chorus

Lasset uns nun gehen gen Bethlehem und die Geschichte sehen, die da geschehen ist, die uns der Herr kundgetan hat.

Recitativ

Er hat sein Volk getröst,
Er hat sein Israel erlöst,
Die Hülff aus Zion hergesendet
Und unser Leid geendet.
Seht, Hirten, dies hat er getan;
Geht, dieses trifft ihr an!

Choral

Dies hat er alles uns getan,
Sein gross Lieb zu zeigen an;
Des freu sich alle Christenheit
Und dank ihm des in Ewigkeit.
Kyrieleis!

Chorus — All

Ruler of heaven, give heed to our [well-intentioned] babbling;
Let the [church's] feeble songs be pleasing to you
When your [Christian] Zion extols you with psalms.
Hear the hearts' exultant praising
When we now show you reverence
Because our welfare is made certain.

Evangelist

And when the angels departed from them into heaven, the shepherds declared to one another:

Chorus of Shepherds

"Let us now go into Bethlehem and see the story that has happened there, which the Lord has made known to us."

Recitative (bass)

He [the Lord God] has comforted his people,
He has redeemed his [Christian] Israel,
Sent salvation out of Zion,
And ended our suffering.
Look, shepherds, this he has done;
Go, you will come upon this.

Chorale

All this he has done for us
To show his great love;
For this let all of Christendom be glad
And thus thank him in eternity.
Lord, have mercy!

Aria

Herr, dein Mitleid, dein Erbarmen
Tröstet uns und macht uns frei.
Deine holde Gunst und Liebe,
Deine wundersamen Triebe
Machen deine Vätertreu
Wieder neu.

Evangelist

Und sie kamen eilend und funden beide Mariam und Joseph, dazu das Kind in der Krippe liegen. Da sie es aber gesehen hatten, breiteten sie das Wort aus, welches zu ihnen von diesem Kind gesaget war. Und alle, für die es kam, wunderten sich der Rede, die ihnen die Hirten gesaget hatten. Maria aber behielt alle diese Worte und bewegte sie in ihrem Herzen.

Aria

Schliesse, mein Herze, dies selige Wunder
Fest in deinem Glauben ein!
Lasse dies Wunder, die göttlichen Werke,
Immer zur Stärke
Deines schwachen Glaubens sein!

Recitativ

Ja, ja, mein Herz soll es bewahren,
Was es an dieser holden Zeit
Zu seiner Seligkeit
Für sicheren Beweis erfahren.

Choral

Ich will dich mit Fleiss bewahren,
Ich will dir
Leben hier,
Dir will ich abfahren,
Mit dir will ich endlich schweben
Voller Freud
Ohne Zeit
Dort im andern Leben.

Evangelist

Und die Hirten kehrten wieder um, preiseten und lobten Gott um alles, das sie gesehen und gehöret hatten, wie denn zu ihnen gesaget war.

Choral

Seid froh dieweil,
Dass euer Heil
Ist hie ein Gott und auch ein Mensch geboren,
Der, welcher ist
Der Herr und Christ
In Davids Stadt, von vielen auserkoren.

Chorus 1. ab initio repetatur

Duet (soprano, bass)

Lord, your compassion, your mercy
Comforts us and sets us free.
Your gracious favor and love,
Your wondrous impulses,
Make your paternal faithfulness
New again [every morning].

Evangelist

And they [the shepherds] came hurrying and found both Mary and Joseph, [and] in addition the child [who was] lying in the manger. But when they had seen it [the infant, Jesus], they spread the word that had been told to them of this child. And all who met with it [the word] were surprised at the account that the shepherds had told them. But Mary kept all these words and turned them over within her heart.

Aria (alto)

My heart, seal this blessed marvel [of Christ's advent]
Steadfastly within your faith.
Let this marvel, the divine deeds,
Be ever [a means] for [increasing] the strength
Of your weak faith.

Recitative (alto)

Yes, yes, my heart shall safeguard
What it, at this merciful/gracious time [of Christ's advent]
Has experienced as certain proof
For its [eternal] blessedness [of salvation],

Chorale

I will safeguard you [in heart and mind] with diligence;
I will live to you
Here [on earth];
To you will I [go when I] depart [this life];
With you will I [like an angel] hover [in heaven] at last,
Full of joy,
Without [earthly] temporality,
There in the afterlife.

Evangelist

And the shepherds returned [to the field] again, praising and lauding God for all that they had seen and heard, [which was] just as had been told to them.

Chorale

Be joyful therefore,
Because your salvation
Has been born here [on earth as] a god and also a
human being;
He who is
The Lord and Christ,
[Born] in [Bethlehem,] the city of David, [Jesus, the
servant,] chosen [by God] from [among] many.

The first chorus is repeated from the beginning.

PART 6

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 ihrs findet, sagt mirs wieder, dass ich auch komme und es anbetet.

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 gehört 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 täten 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.

On Epiphany.

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

Chorus — All

Lord, when the insolent enemies snort [like war horses],
Then grant that we, in steadfast faith,
Might look to your power and salvation!
We will put our trust in you alone;
Thus can we escape
The enemy's sharp clutches unharmed.

Evangelist

Then Herod convened the wisemen secretly, seeking to learn fully from them, with diligence, when the star might have [first] appeared. And, directing them to Bethlehem, [he] declared:

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, [Herod,] just try to bring down [Jesus,]
the Lord;
[Just go ahead and] use every [bit of] deceitful cunning
To lie in wait for the savior;
He [the Lord Jesus] whose might no human comprehends,
Remains nonetheless in [the Most High's] sure hand.
Your heart, your deceitful heart,
Together with all its cunning, is already very well known
To the Most High's son, [God's messiah] whom you seek to
overthrow.

Aria (soprano)

Just one wave from his [the Most High's] hands
Overthrows the power of impotent humankind.
Here [with God] all [human] might is derided!
If the Most High declares just one word
To put a stop to the insolence of his enemies,
Oh, then [their] mortal thoughts
Must turn immediately [to naught].

Evangelist

Now when they had heard [Herod] the king, 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 up above [the place] where the little child was. When they saw the star, they became exceedingly gladdened and went into the house and found the little child with Mary its mother, and bowed down and worshiped it, and opened their treasures, presenting it gold, frankincense, and myrrh as gifts.

Chorale

Here I stand at your manger,
Oh little Jesus, [you who are] my life;
To you I come, bringing and presenting as gifts
What [endowments] you have given me.

Nimm hin, es ist mein Geist und Sinn,
Herz, Seel und Mut, nimm alles hin,
Und lass dirs wohlgefallen!

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.

Accept [this], it is my spirit and inclination,
Heart, soul, and courage; accept [this] all,
And let it please you greatly.

Evangelist

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

Recitative (tenor)

So go! Enough [that] my treasure [Jesus] is not taking his
leave;
He is remaining here with me;
I also wish not to let him [free] from me.
His [saving] arm will embrace me out of love
With tenderful impulse
And greatest delicacy;
He shall permanently remain my bridegroom;
Breast and heart I wish to commit to him.
I know for certain that he loves me;
My heart also loves him intimately
And will eternally honor him.
Now, with [my experiencing] such a good fortune,
What kind of enemy could [ever] harm me!
You, Jesus, are and remain my friend;
And if I should anxiously plead unto you:
“Lord, save [me]!” then let me see salvation.

Aria (tenor)

[Well] now, you insolent enemies do like to horrify;
[Yet] what kind of fear could you arouse in me?
My treasure, [Jesus,] my refuge is here with me!
You do like to act oh so fierce;
Just [go ahead and] threaten to bring me down well and truly;
But look! My savior dwells here [in my heart].

Recitative à 4 (soprano, alto, tenor, bass)

What, now, will hell’s horror want [to do to us Christians];
What will [the] world and sin want to do to us,
Now that we rest in Jesus’s hands!

Chorale

Now you [God’s chosen Christians] are well avenged
Of your band of enemies,
For Christ has shattered
What was against you.
Death, devil, sin, and hell
Are well and truly diminished;
The human family
Has its place with God [in eternity].

— transl. Michael Marissen and Daniel R. Melamed



Scan QR code or go to <http://www.BachCantataTexts.org/BWV248.2> for an annotated translation.

Listening to the *Christmas Oratorio* with a calendar

The best tool for understanding the original context of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* might not be the autograph score, or the original performing parts, or the printed libretto; it might be a calendar. Much of what is characteristic of the work stems from the dates and places of its first performance under the composer's direction. In modern times we usually experience the *Christmas Oratorio* as a single work—in a recording or (long) performance, or as a musical object to be studied and analyzed as a whole. There is no question that Bach considered it a unified work; his labeling of it as an oratorio makes that clear. But in some ways that designation was more conceptual than real, because the work's music would have been experienced as a series of events spread over a surprisingly long stretch of time.

The liturgical calendar followed in Leipzig and throughout Lutheran Germany governed almost every aspect of religious observance, including the musical adornment of worship, and that calendar turns out to be a useful starting point for thinking about the status of the *Christmas Oratorio* as a single work and for imagining the piece as it was used in Bach's time.

We can begin by recognizing that the *Christmas Oratorio* was not so much for Christmas itself as for the season more broadly. Christmas was one of the three main feasts of the year, together with Easter and Pentecost, observed for three days each. The celebration of Christmas extended even further, from the three-day feast itself beginning on December 25 through the 12 days, including New Year's Day, and ending with Epiphany on January 6. The first day of each of the principal feasts, including Christmas, was marked by the greatest festivity and solemnity. From this point of view, the spectacular trumpets-and-drums opening of the first part of the *Christmas Oratorio* (perhaps better: drums-and-trumpets), for the first day, makes sense. The more modestly scored pastoral part for the second day of Christmas is more restrained than usual for that day; the portion for the third day, with its return of trumpets and drums, is notably more festive than Bach's cantatas for the day and would probably have stood out as unusually elaborate for the occasion. Bach appears to have swapped the musical festivity of the second and third days in connection with the decisions he and his anonymous librettist made about distributing the narrative of Jesus's birth over the six parts of the oratorio.

J.S. Bach served four city churches, and his own musical performances alternated throughout the year by week between the city's two principal houses, St. Thomas and St. Nicholas. Simpler music was provided at the other church each week by a second ensemble under the direction of a senior student. On the very highest feasts, there was an expectation of the top level of concerted music in both principal churches, so Bach's first ensemble performed at the main service in one church in the morning and at the afternoon service in the other. On these days, the second ensemble performed at the opposite church, swapping with the first between services, probably meeting up in the town square as they made the 10-minute walk between them.

This practice is reflected in the performance history of the *Christmas Oratorio* under Bach in the work's first performance in 1734–35. On Christmas Day and the second day of the feast, Bach's music was heard in both churches. Tellingly, the third day saw a performance only at the morning service (and thus at only one of the churches) because this lesser feast did not call for afternoon worship. In the year of the *Christmas Oratorio*'s first performance, the rotation of church music put Bach's composition and his ensemble in St. Nicholas on the morning of the first day and in St. Thomas the morning of the second, with afternoon performances at the other church on those days. On the third day, Bach's ensemble was heard only in the morning, that year at St. Nicholas—and only in that church.

Leipzigers typically attended one church or the other; the well-to-do (meaning most of the congregants) rented family pews, guaranteeing them a seat in keeping with their standing in the community. A regular congregant of St. Nicholas would have heard all three of the first parts of the oratorio, but those who worshiped at St. Thomas would not have heard the third. That is, half of the members of Bach's congregations would have heard just the first and second parts of the *Christmas Oratorio* in 1734–35, the season of its composition and first performance.

These considerations applied as well to the fourth, fifth, and sixth parts of the *Christmas Oratorio*. Part 4 was designed for New Year's Day, celebrated in Leipzig with great festivity as the Feast of the Circumcision and as Jesus's naming day. Part 6 is for Epiphany (January 6), observed almost as elaborately as the first day of Christmas and New Year's Day. As you might expect, Parts 4 and 6 were each heard in both principal churches in 1734–35.

In between is, of course, part 5 for the Sunday after New Year, in some ways the most complicated liturgically. This was not a particularly important event on the church calendar; in fact, it was dispensable, as in some years there is a Sunday between New Year's and Epiphany, but in some years there is not. When it did occur, it was observed with lesser solemnity, and, like the third day of Christmas, it was the occasion for only one of the two congregations to hear a part of the *Christmas Oratorio*. The rotation in 1734–35 put the performance at St. Nicholas, so part V was not heard at St. Thomas.

This means that the two congregations heard different *Christmas Oratorios* in 1734–35: listeners at St. Nicholas heard all six parts but those at St. Thomas only parts 1, 2, 4, and 6. Did this matter? Apparently not to Bach—or at least the situation was tolerable. It might make us think, though, about what it means to listen to the “whole” *Christmas Oratorio* today. Does that necessarily mean all six parts in order? Or does the St. Thomas sequence 1–2–4–6 count, too? What about the four parts heard at this concert? We might be seeing here a difference between an abstract ideal of a work and its practical realization, though it rarely makes sense to imagine that there is such a thing as an ideal version of a church composition by Bach. This was practical music put to practical use, and abstracting it quickly leads to interpretive trouble. But the contrast between a complete work and the way it was sometimes heard is difficult to avoid here, and there may well be both an ideal (complete) *Christmas Oratorio* and a practical one.

The issue arises for a second reason, as well. Scholars have wondered whether the *Christmas Oratorio* was usable only in liturgical years that match the 1734–35 Christmas season precisely—those in which Christmas (and New Year) fall on a Friday or Saturday, producing a Sunday after New Year's Day but not one after Christmas. Starting in 1734–35 and through the 1749–50 Christmas season, Bach's last, there were three more years whose sequence matched the design of the *Christmas Oratorio* and twelve that did not, either lacking a Sunday after Christmas or adding a Sunday after New Year. Only the Christmas seasons 1739–40, 1744–45, and 1745–56 match exactly. Was the *Christmas Oratorio* reperformed after its first hearing, and was it limited to years whose calendar (and sequence of feasts) corresponded to its original design? If it was not restricted in that way, does that imply various possible presentations of the work's parts?

All this matters for the way we listen to and think about the work. If we attend a performance of just the first three parts, are we hearing half the piece, or a form in which Bach might have used its music on the first three days of Christmas in some years? Is it acceptable to leave out part 5, emulating a year in which there was neither a Sunday after Christmas nor one after New Year's (1735–36, 1740–41, and 1746–47 in Bach's time)? And when we consider the work's musical, narrative, and theological dimensions, do we have to think about all six parts, or should we consider other permutations?

There is no doubt that Bach thought of the *Christmas Oratorio* as a single work; the singular “oratorio” he used several times in its sources demonstrates this, as does his careful numbering of the “parts of the oratorio.” But we need to consider whether the only way to think about a piece is in its abstract and perhaps ideal complete form, or whether the work as heard in performance might be just as ripe for analysis and interpretation—and for performance today.

The modern experience of listening to all of Bach's music is very different from that in his time, but the *Christmas Oratorio* is probably uniquely different in one important respect. It is not just that we often hear the piece (or its first half, or some combination of its parts) in one sitting, giving us effectively Bach's vision of the oratorio as an integral work that was not available to eighteenth-century listeners. Rather, its very relationship to time itself has changed. Perhaps we should follow this performance of the work not with a libretto or score in our lap, but with a calendar.

The material here is excerpted from the author's book Listening to Bach: The Mass in B Minor and the Christmas Oratorio for general readers, available from Oxford University Press.

Daniel R. Melamed is professor emeritus of musicology at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. His book, *Hearing Bach's Passions* (Oxford University Press), now in an updated paperback edition, is designed for general readers and discusses Bach's passions today against the background of their presentations in the eighteenth century. His most recent book, *Listening to Bach: The Mass in B Minor and the Christmas Oratorio* (Oxford), also for general readers, takes up issues of listening and is illustrated with many recorded examples.

MEET THE DIRECTOR



Dr. Dana T. Marsh is the Artistic Director of the Washington Bach Consort. His 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 master's 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 US and the UK 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 UK, 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 15 discs with New College Choir, one of which won the *Gramophone* Award for Early Music in 2008.

Dana 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 Acis, Sony, Universal, Avie, Decca, Erato, Koch International Classics, Signum, and Public Radio International.

MEET THE ARTISTS



Hailed as an "impressive tenor" (*The New York Times*) who sings with "sweet vibrancy" (*The Cleveland Plain Dealer*), **Gene Stenger** is one of the country's most called upon Bach specialists who is also heralded for his performances of oratorios by Handel, Haydn, Mendelssohn, and Mozart. This season, Mr. Stenger joins Resonance Works to sing the role of Rodrigo in Rossini's *La Donna del Lago*. In the winter, he performs Handel's *Messiah* with the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, and Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* not only with the Washington Bach Consort, but also with the Colorado Bach Ensemble. He joins the Charlottesville Symphony as the tenor soloist in Mozart's *Requiem* in the Spring. Mr. Stenger's 2023–2024 season included solo debuts with the Washington Bach Consort (Bach's *St. John Passion*), Winston-Salem Symphony (Handel's *Messiah*), North Carolina Baroque Orchestra (Handel's *Messiah*), Baltimore Choral Arts Society (Bach's *Magnificat*), and Resonance Works Pittsburgh (Bach's *Magnificat* & Esmail's *This Love*

Between Us). He makes returning solo appearances with the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra (Handel's *Messiah*), Bach Society of St. Louis (Bach's *St. John Passion*), Colorado Bach Ensemble (Bach's *Mass in B Minor*), Upper Valley Baroque (Bach's *St. John Passion*), Bach Collegium at St. Peter's NYC (Bach's *St. John Passion*), Bach Vespers at Holy Trinity New York (BWV 75 & 165), and a return solo quartet performance of David Lang's *the little match girl passion* at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Originally from Pittsburgh, PA, Gene holds degrees from Yale University's School of Music and Institute of Sacred Music, Colorado State University, and Baldwin Wallace University Conservatory of Music. He currently resides in New Haven, CT, where he is instructor of voice at Yale University. www.genestenger.com

MEET THE ARTISTS

American soprano **Nola Richardson** has been recognized for her performances of Bach, Handel, and Mozart and has won First Prize in all three major American competitions focused on the music of J.S. Bach. Recent highlights include Handel's *Samson* with the Oratorio Society of New York at Carnegie Hall, Bach's *B Minor Mass* with American Classical Orchestra at Lincoln Center, a performance for Leipzig BachFest with the Bach Choir of Bethlehem, and her Kennedy Center debut in Handel's *Radamisto* with Opera Lafayette. She has performed Handel's *Messiah* with the Colorado, Kansas City, Pittsburgh, and Seattle Symphonies and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra; and works of Bach with the Atlanta and Baltimore Symphonies, and at the Cincinnati May festival. Nola frequently appears with major baroque orchestras and opera companies, such as the Boston Early Music Festival, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, American Bach Soloists, Voices of Music, Ars Lyrica, and Musica Angelica. She is the first and only soprano to receive the prestigious DMA degree in Early Music Voice from Yale. This season, Nola sings title roles in *Hansel and Gretel* with Helena Symphony, Hesse's *Marc' Antonio e Cleopatra* with Baroque Chamber Orchestra of Colorado, and *Theodora* with Ars Lyrica Houston. In addition to Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with the Washington Bach Consort, she will join the Twelfth Night Ensemble in two national tours of Handel cantatas, Oratorio Society of NY for *Messiah*, and Seattle Symphony for BWV 51, among other performances. www.nolarichardson.com



Widely praised for her musical intelligence and “expressive virtuosity” (*San Francisco Chronicle*), **Meg Bragle** has earned an international reputation as one of today's most gifted mezzo-sopranos. An accomplished early music specialist, she has sung in North America and Europe with the English Baroque Soloists, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony, Netherlands Bach Society, Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Les Violons du Roy, Orchestra of St. Luke's, Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, American Bach Soloists, Apollo's Fire, Arion Baroque, and the Dunedin Consort. A leading interpreter of Baroque and Classical repertoire, Meg has appeared with many symphony orchestras in the US and Canada, including the Philadelphia, Houston, Toronto, and Atlanta, as well as the National Arts Center Orchestra, Victoria Symphony, and Calgary Philharmonic. Her discography includes four recordings with Sir John Eliot Gardiner and the English Baroque Soloists, including Bach's *Easter and Ascension Oratorios*—the vehicle for her BBC Proms debut—and Bach's *Mass in B Minor*. With Apollo's Fire, she recorded Mozart's *Requiem*, Handel's *Dixit Dominus*, *Ode for the Birthday of Queen Anne*, Monteverdi's *Vespro della Beata Vergine*, and *L'Orfeo*. Other recordings include Bach's *St. John Passion*, the complete works of Chiara Margarita Cozzolani, Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*, Toby Twining's *Chrysalid Requiem*, Anthony Newman's *Requiem*, Copland's *In the Beginning*, and the *Five Borough Songbook*, as well as the world premiere recording of Daron Hagen's *Art of Song*. Meg lives in Philadelphia, where she is Artist in Residence at the University of Pennsylvania and also directs the Collegium Musicum and Opera and Musical Theater Workshop. www.megbragle.com



PHOTOGRAPHER TATIANA DALBEK

Described by the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* as a dignified and beautiful singer, bass-baritone **Paul Max Tipton** enjoys an active career in opera, oratorio, and chamber music, performing and recording throughout North America, Europe, and Asia. A versatile singer, Paul's repertoire ranges from Schütz and Monteverdi to Britten and Bolcom, with his interpretations of the works of Bach and Haydn being acclaimed for their strength and sensitivity. Recent collaborations include Haydn's *Creation* with Pacific Symphony, Christus in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* at the Spoleto Festival USA, Plutone in Monteverdi's *Orfeo* with Göteborg Baroque, the title role in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at the University of Michigan, Archibald Grosvenor in *Patience* with Odyssey Opera, performances across the Bay Area of Schubert's *Winterreise* & *Die Schöne Müllerin*, arranged for strings with New Esterhazy Quartet, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Grand Rapids Symphony, recitals with Ricky Ian Gordon in Ann Arbor & Firenze, and Handel's *Dettingen Te Deum* at Carnegie Hall under Ton Koopman. Recent recordings include Nicolaus Bruhns's solo cantatas for bass with Masaaki Suzuki (BIS), a Grammy nomination for Brahms's *Ein Deutsches Requiem* with Seraphic Fire, Bach's *St. John Passion* as Christus with Cantata Collective & Nicholas McGegan, and several records with Cut Circle (*Musique en Wallonie*). He trained on full fellowship at the University of Michigan School of Music in Ann Arbor. He is a 2010 graduate of the Yale University Institute of Sacred Music in Oratorio & Early Music. In 2012, he was made a Lorraine Hunt Lieberson Fellow at Emmanuel Music. He resides in New York City. www.paulmaxtipton.com



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TALKING BACH

with Michael Marissen

Talking Bach is a free pre-concert lecture by noted Bach scholar **Michael Marissen** and is open to all concert ticket holders. The lecture focuses not only on the musical elements of the works that will be performed, but also on the historical context in which the music was created. These talks are designed to enhance the concertgoers' appreciation and enjoyment of the music they are about to hear.



PHOTO © SIGRID ESTRADA

Michael Marissen, the Daniel Underhill Professor Emeritus of Music, retired from Swarthmore College after a distinguished career that began in 1989. He has also served as a visiting professor on the graduate faculties at Princeton University and the University of Pennsylvania and has been a lecturer for the Washington Bach Consort for nearly three decades. His notable publications include *The Social and Religious Designs of J.S. Bach's Brandenburg Concertos* (Princeton, 1995), *Lutheranism, Anti-Judaism, and Bach's St. John Passion: With an Annotated Literal Translation of the Libretto* (Oxford, 1998), *An Introduction to Bach Studies* (Oxford, 1998; with Daniel R. Melamed), *Bach's Oratorios: The Parallel German-English Texts with Annotations* (Oxford, 2008), *Bach & God* (Oxford, 2016), and *Bach against Modernity* (Oxford University Press, 2023). With Daniel Melamed, he is also translating and annotating all the librettos that Bach set to music, freely available at BachCantataTexts.org.

2024–2025 SEASON AT A GLANCE

The Director's Series

Concerti Virtuosi II *Fire & Verve!*

Sunday, March 23, 2025, at 4:00 p.m.
National Presbyterian Church

Mozart *Requiem* & Joseph Bologne Violin Concerto *Classics of Paris & Vienna*

Sunday, April 27, 2025, at 4:00 p.m.
National Presbyterian Church

The Chamber Series

Vocal Polyphony: Heinrich Schütz & the German Motet

Friday, March 7, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. | Live! at 10th & G (DC)
Saturday, March 8, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. | St. Paul's Episcopal Church (Alexandria, VA)

Bach's Cello Suites: Meet Wade Davis

Friday, April 4, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. | Live! at 10th & G (DC)
Saturday, April 5, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. | St. Paul's Episcopal Church (Alexandria, VA)

A Song of Dedication: Baroque Splendor in Portuguese Jewish Amsterdam—350th Anniversary

Friday, May 2, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. | Live! at 10th & G (DC)
Saturday, May 3, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. | St. Paul's Episcopal Church (Alexandria, VA)

The Noontime Cantata Series

Capitol Cantata Series: Mondays at St. Mark's Capitol Hill (DC) at 12:10 p.m.

Downtown Cantata Series: Tuesdays at Church of the Epiphany (DC) at 12:10 p.m.

Du wahrer Gott und Davids Sohn, BWV 23

Organ Preludes TBA
Tuesday, March 4, 2025

Am Abend aber desselbigen Sabbats, BWV 42

O Mensch, beweine deine Sünde gross, BWV 622
Fugue in G Minor, BWV 578
Monday, March 31 & Tuesday, April 1, 2025

Washington Bach Consort Mission

Founded in 1977 by Dr. J. Reilly Lewis and now led by Artistic Director Dr. Dana T. Marsh, the Washington Bach Consort shares the transformative power of music, with the works of Johann Sebastian Bach and other baroque composers at the core. Our professional artists inspire audiences with the highest levels of artistic excellence, enrich the cultural life through historically-informed performances, and provide educational programs in the Washington, DC community and beyond.

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A special thank you to our 2024–2025 season volunteers and our volunteer coordinator, Oriana Casadei; and to Beverly Simmons, *ffortissimo* DESIGN, for program design.



Washington Bach Consort

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