Coming events

SOLO CANTATAS BY BACH, HÄNDEL AND SCHUTZ

CHARLES WALKER
Tenor
George Shangrow, Harpsichord

March 24, 1985 — 8:00 p.m.
Wallingford United Methodist Church
2115 42nd N. Seattle
Charles Walker is a virtuoso performer of literature from the High Baroque.
He last performed in Seattle in "The Ballad of Baby Doe" and is pleased to return for this recital,
and for the tenor arias in the St. Matthew Passion.
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THE BACH YEAR PRESENTS

EASTER SUNDAY CANTATAS
April 7, 8:00 p.m.
University Unitarian Church
6556 35th NE, Seattle

BWV 4: Crist lag in Todesbanden
BWV 6: Bleib bei uns, denn es will Abend werden
BWV 31: Der Himmel lacht, der Erde jubilert
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THE BROADWAY SYMPHONY IN CONCERT
George Shangrow, conductor

Prokofiev: Piano Concerto No. 3
Arthur Barnes, Piano Soloist
Rossini: La Gazza Ladra Overture
(The Thieving Magpie)
Brahms: Symphony No. IV

April 14, 1985
Meany Hall 3:00 p.m.
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MATTHÄUS-PASSION
The Passion According to St. Matthew
March 17, 1985 — 3:00 p.m.
Meany Hall, U.W.

The Broadway Symphony/Seattle Chamber Singers
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The Columbia Boys Choir
George Shangrow, conductor
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This Choir was founded by Steven Stevans in January, 1985 to provide vocal and choral training and experience of the highest caliber to boys aged 7 to voice-change. Auditions are held three times a year; September, December and March. For more information call 724-6610.

**PROGRAM NOTES** by George Shangrow

The St. Matthew Passion consists of two large parts each framed by a pair of grand choruses. The opening and final choruses of part one each contain a chorale melody sung by the Crow Capsule. In the first chorus, Bach is calling upon the audience to gather to share in the Passion story. Over this text (and incredible counterpoint) he places the chorale tune “O Lamb of God Unveiled” as an emotional counterpart to the tragedy which follows. The use of double chorus and orchestra gives Bach the opportunity of dialogue in two possible different characters for the chorus, as well as more effective contrasted scenes to the choral parts.

The opening dramatic recitative begins the Last Supper portion of the work. Note from the beginning the words of Jesus are always accompanied by a “buh” of strings — this is in contrast to the St. John Passion, but direct heritage to earlier works such as the Seven Last Words by Schutz.

As this first section continues Bach contrasts the opening chorale asking what crime Jesus has done with the scene of elders, priests suggesting that He not be killed during the feast. Then follows the disciples chastisement of Christ and the woman who annoints Him with all oil and His rebuke of the disciples comments. The ensuing also recitative and aria complete the section with deep personal comments on the proceeding actions. The “return” of story section followed by aria and recitative dominates the entire work, following the musical and dramatic elements of narrative with this in mind will help clarify the progressions in the work as well as explain the length of some of the pieces.

With a gentle chord the disciples ask Jesus where the feast will be held and with his answer — again in direct contrast to the mood of the chorus — His way that one or two men may sit at his table with Judas. The words which Jesus has already done. The words ask, “Lord, is it I?” and in the chorus Bach sets this text exactly eleven times, leaving the question from the 12th disciple, Judas, for the next recitative. Judas asks, “Is it I, Rabbi?” with this different text Bach sets up the actual betrayal later in piece where Judas will once again greet Christ as “Rabbi.”

The Passover supper itself is the real aria sung by Jesus in the entire work. Accompanied by the halls of string, it is one of the most beautiful moments in the work. After the commenting soprano recit, and aria comes one of the more descriptive of Jesus’ recits. Notice the upward moving scale which stars in the cello and ends in the Evangelist when they go up the entire range of the tenor. Also Bach sculpts the phrase with a very sprightly string accompaniment which turns very sober for the next recitative.

Next comes an illustration of Bach’s use of keys to make a philosophical point: the joyful extolming the virtuosity of the Savior! Shepherd is set in E Major. Immediately following is Peter’s declaration that he will be absolutely faithful to Jesus whatever happens, and Jesus telling him that he will three times deny him. The following chorale, “I will stand before Thee,” is set one-half step lower signifying the personal loss brewing inside each disciple of the denial. The next accompanied recit, and aria have a solo tenor paired with chorale II singing a chorale melody. The solo-bass repeated note pattern simulates the trembling tomentos heart. The combination of recorder and english horn in canon is the first of the many unique orchestration devices Bach uses in the work. The wonder of these two movements is found in the great contrast between the unison of the aria and the contrasting complex chorale.

The bass recit: “The Savior falls down before his Father” has the strings in a continuous downward arpeggio figure — except when the text speaks of God’s uplifting mercy. In the aria, the setting of the words so agrees with the vocal that the ascending sixth on “gladly” just rolls off the tongue. The wonderful chromaticism describing “Kneel and becher in” contrast with the second section of the aria’s “His lips with milk and honey flow” show Bach’s unending desire to heighten the emotional meaning of the text with all the devices at hand, even change of mode from minor to major.

Lending to the end of Part One are the Evangelist sections describing Jesus praying in the garden and none of the disciples staying with him. Then the soldiers and priest come for him and, in one of the most dramatic moments in the Evangelist part, Judas says “the one I kiss is he” — and in an almost terrified change between Jesus and Judas, Jesus is recognized and taken.

The grief-filled duet which follows contains many canons and is reminiscent of chorale melody. In the opening chorus with its interrupting questions from chorale II, the crown (of disciples) interrupts the duet saying “Leave Him, hate ye, for this Man?” None of it leads into the double duet expressing the oath “Stay lightning and thunder in ruin engal all them.” Here Bach’s use of ostinato chorale melody — with rapidly changing harmonies — is amazing for its time.

After a highly changed dramatic recit, comes the final chorus to the first part; “O Man, Beware this Christian Sin” in the most beautiful setting Bach did of this chorale tune. This chorus was originally written to be the opening chorus to the St. John Passion (in a key one-half step lower), but Bach abandoned that idea and used it as a hopeful closing chorus here.

Part Two opens with an unusual dialogue between the alto (continued on page 4)
THE CHOIR OF THE SOUND
Delores Fox, Conductor

BRIAN TREvor sings the role of the Evangelist or narrator of the Passion story. He is a native of Vancouver, B.C., and is currently the Director of Choral and Vocal Music at St. Mary’s University in Calgary, Alberta. Dr. Trevor is high in demand as a tenor soloist across Canada and makes regular appearances in the States. He has performed as Evangelist in both the St. Matthew Passion and St. John Passion by Bach numerous times, including three times before for the Seattle Chamber Singers. Trevor has recorded for both the Canadian and Australian Broadening Companies.

Laurie Haney, soprano, has been a regular performer with the University of Washington Opera Theater, and is often invited to sing solo roles for the University’s annual ensembles that produce operas and concert literature. She was a winner in the 1994 San Francisco Opera Merola Program Auditions, and was a recent participant in the Nationalove Northwest Young Artist Series.

Charles Walker, tenor, has appeared in opera, concerts and festivals throughout the United States, including New York City, Boston, Houston, Santa Fe, and in Seattle, he sang the role of Frendes Chorus A. in Arthur in Seattle Opera’s production of the Ballad of Baby Doe in Fall of 1994. He is especially sought after as a performer of the music of R.S. Bach, and we are pleased to present him to the St. Matthew Passion and a program of solo cantatas near Sunday eveing (Mar. 24) at the Whidbey United Methodist Church.

The Broadway Symphony/Seattle Chamber Singers:
The Choir of the Sound:
The Columbia Boys Choir:

The Passion According to St. Matthew

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We gratefully acknowledge the following individuals and organizations for helping to make this performance possible:

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PETER KIRKLEY interprets the role of Jesus in this St. Matthew Passion. For over ten years, he has been a featured soloist with the Seattle Chamber Singers, and has done solo work for several Seattle church choirs and synagogues. Peter Kirkley has also been actively involved in this BACH YEAR; he did the programming of each of the twelve Bach Cantatas sung by the University Concentration Union Church and is a regular soloist in those Cantata concerts. His understanding of the perfect way Bach matches music to text has lent a fine quality to all the chorals/chorus Bach concerts programmed this year.

MARIA BELLAMY, mezzo-soprano, is currently a graduate student at the UK’s ending voice and opera program. She has been a soloist for the several campus performances and was also a soloist for the January Bach Cantatas Sunday in the BACH series. Martin was a music director in the 1999 1990 production of Bernstein’s Candide, and has also performed with Opera and with Pacific Northwest Ballet.

MICHAEL DELOS, tenor, is a baritone performer in the Pacific Northwest. He sang the role of Jesus in the BSSC’s production of Bach’s St. John Passion just three weeks ago — this followed four performances of the St. Matthew Passion with the Portland Symphonic Choir and Symphony the week before. He is often invited to perform with the Opera Pacifica, and is a baritone soloist for various choirs and performing groups throughout the United States. Twice, at the request of the composer, DeLos has performed in Mengelstool’s Cantatas.
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PROGRAM NOTES (continued from page 2)

Soloist and chorus II. Note that with each entrance of the chorus the harmonies grow stronger and, in a way, move further away — the chorus/solo ends on a singularly unresolved note with the soloist singing "Ah, where has our Jesus gone?"

The drama is continued including the introduction of the two female soloists who sing a beautiful duet. Jesus, however, remains silent. The tenor recit accompanied in another unusual orchestration by oboe and arpeggiando gamba has exactly 39 strokes — symbolizing the scouring of Jesus. In the arias we have once again the great contrasts in text setting the given music. This is depicted in the words patience, shame, scorn, and false tongues.

Jesus' trial in the Judgement Hall follow with some of the early crowd outbreaks. Here, as in the later crowd scenes, it is the job of the Evangelist to keep the drama taut. Bach keeps the story moving by keeping the Evangelist's interjections brief and exciting. The choral which ends this section has a particularly bitterness feeling to it.

Next comes the actual denial by Peter. After being questioned by two people and by a third group of people — all of whom Peter tells he does not know who this man (Christ) is, the cockcrow in the original cleft timber the piece was written, the last line of Peter, "Ich kenne den Menschen nächst," and the following line "And immediately the cock crew," were identically written notes.

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

A very worldly return to the story comes with Judas trying to return the 30 silver pieces to the priests. The attempt is in vain as the priests tell him that in no way he can absolve himself of the deed that he has done — and in the wind dust for the priests they say they cannot even put the "blood money" in the treasury. Judas hangs himself and another solo with violin obligato follows in great contrast to the previous one.

The trial proceeds. After an outburst response of "Barabas!" by the crowd when Pilate asks which prisoner he should set free comes the "Crucify Him!" chorus. This is a fugetta with a very angular, strange subject mostly describing the ugliness of the crowd and the act of crucifixion.

The heart of the entire work follows in the soprano recit. and chorus "For let him that is unclean depart into the uttermost parts of the earth." This aria is accompanied only by obligato flute and two English horns. As the piece ends and a calm mood is established, the Evangelist interjects and the crowd repeats the crucify chorus, but this time a whole step higher in pitch increasing the crowd's fervor and tension!

Pilate's attempts at hiding himself of guilt are thwarted by the polyphonic chorus "His blood is on all of us and on our children" and the alto recit. "Ah, where has our Jesus gone?"

The soldiers dress Christ in a purple robe and crown of thorns (the latter for the first time) saying "We hail thee, O King of the Jews" and then they spit upon Him and smite Him upon the head with a reed — then follows the Passion Choral.

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

Mocking crowd choruses ask Jesus why, if He is God's son, he can't take Himself down from the cross. Another unusual orchestration in the alto recit and aria follows with interruptions from the second chorus asking where "they" should come — to Jesus' arms.

The next section is the death of Christ. Here, for the only time, Christ's words are not accompanied by the singing, but only by the continuo organ and cellos. With constantharassment by the crowd, Jesus cries out His last words and dies followed by the final, and most moving setting of the passion choral-tune.

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

The story is completed with a beautiful bass recit and aria, but not quite. The crowd comes in once more and with a very rude chorus imitates to Pilate that if there are no guards around Jesus' tomb, His disciples will come in the night and steal His body saying that Pilate gives his permission for watchmen, and they are put in place as the stone is rolled across the opening of the tomb thus sealing it.

A fourth aria comes with Pilate's vow "I am wash in blood." This is a very sad, yet peaceful moment. The closing chorus "Here at the grave we all sit weeping" ends the work — on Good Friday. There has been yet no resurrection. The work concludes with a deeply moving yet unfinished tragic feeling.

HISTORICAL NOTES

by Kay Verduras

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

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Clare Bluhm
Margaret Christie
Deborah Cole
Sharon Diel
Pat Evens
Mary Hatch
Alto
Dorothy Boelman
Pat Byrd
Betty Chamberlain
Sue Conrad
Barbara Cotton
Mardi Dehn
Sandy Fairchild
Helen Felton
Olivia Gendler
Tenor
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