



THE CHURCH OF
SAINT LUKE
IN THE FIELDS
487 Hudson Street
New York, NY 10014

The Choir of St. Luke in the Fields
David Shuler, *Director of Music*

Thursday, December 8, 2022 at 7:30 p.m.
Pre-Concert Lecture by Dr. David Schulenberg at 6:30 p.m.

A Bach Christmas

Please silence cell phones and other electronic devices.

Cantata 62

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

1. Chorale: Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland
2. Aria (Tenor): Bewundert, o Menschen, dies große Geheimnis
3. Recitative (Bass): So geht aus Gottes Herrlichkeit und Thron
4. Aria (Bass): Streite, siege, starker Held!
5. Recitative (Soprano, Alto): Wir ehren diese Herrlichkeit
6. Chorale: Lob sei Gott, dem Vater, ton

Cantata 40

1. Chorale: Dazu ist erschienen der Sohn Gottes
2. Recitative (Tenor): Das Wort ward Fleisch
3. Chorale: Die Sünd macht Leid
4. Aria (Bass): Höllische Schlange
5. Recitative (Alto): Die Schlange, so im Paradies
6. Chorale: Schüttele deinen Kopf und sprich
7. Aria (Tenor): Christenkinder, freuet euch!
8. Chorale: Jesu, nimm dich deiner Glieder

~ Intermission ~

Cantata 191

Part One

1. Chorus: Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Part Two

2. Aria (Soprano, Tenor): Gloria Patri et Filio
3. Chorus: Sicut erat in principio

THE CHOIR OF ST. LUKE IN THE FIELDS

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Danielle Buonaiuto
Amber Evans
Melissa Fogarty
Ava Pine

Alto

Catherine Hedberg
Elizabeth Merrill

Tenor

David Root
Christopher Preston Thompson

Bass

Phillip Cheah
Zachary Fletcher

“One of the city’s finest classical choirs.” (*Time Out NY*), the Choir of St. Luke in the Fields is the professional vocal ensemble in residence at the Episcopal Church of St. Luke in the Fields in New York City. As part of the liturgy at St. Luke’s Church, the Choir regularly performs masses and motets that date from the fifteenth century to the present. The Choir has presented numerous NYC premieres, both of new works (Arvo Pärt’s *Berliner Messe* and *Missa Sillabica* and Dan Locklair’s *Brief Mass*) and older works (the North American premiere of Georg Philipp Telemann’s *St. Matthew Passion* of 1746 and the New York premiere of C.P.E. Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* of 1769). The Choir is known for its historically informed performances of early music. *The New York Times* said in 2011, “Both as an ensemble and as individual soloists, the members of the Choir of St. Luke in the Fields were consistently admirable.” *Early Music America* wrote that the Choir “maintains a full schedule of early music services ... as well as concert performances known for their adventuresome programming and intimate scale.”

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Peter Kupfer
Mark Rike
Theresa Salomon
Nelva Lagerwey TeBrake
Mark Zaki

Viola

Dan McCarthy*
Margrét Hjaltested

Cello

David Bakamjian*
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Bass

Patricia Ann Neely

Flute

Sandra Miller*
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Horn

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Alexandra Cook

Trumpet

John Thiessen*
Brandon Bergeron
Mario Correa

Timpani

Rex Benincasa

Organ

Dongsok Shin

* *principal*

LECTURER

David Schulenberg's most recent book is the new biography of Bach in the Master Musicians series from Oxford University Press. He has also written books on Bach's sons Friedemann and Emanuel as well as on Bach's keyboard music; among his other publications are editions of keyboard and organ music by members of the Bach family. His textbook and anthology *Music of the Baroque* is now in its third edition. A performer on harpsichord, clavichord, and fortepiano, he has recorded chamber music by Quantz, Graun, C.P.E. Bach, and King Frederick the Great. He teaches at Wagner College (Staten Island) and at Boston University; selections from his writings, editions, and recordings are online at schulenbergmusic.org.

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PROGRAM NOTES

The first Sunday in Advent is the beginning of the church year. The gospel reading is the description of Jesus's entry on the donkey into Jerusalem. Its place here is not part of the Easter story but rather the fulfillment of the prediction of the coming of the king. The chorale most closely associated with Advent is the Lutheran arrangement of the Latin hymn "Veni redemptor gentium" called by Luther "Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland." As with most Latin arrangements, the form of the chorale is irregular: four brief phrases with the first identical to the fourth. The most notable feature of the melody is the rather exotic-sounding diminished 4th in the first and fourth phrases. It appears in all three of the great Leipzig chorale settings for organ. All the earlier versions, including the one in our cantata here, soften the interval to a perfect fourth.

The opening chorus of Cantata BWV 62 is in an extremely lively 6/4 time. Running scales and arpeggios in the first violin are punctuated by two different figures: a fleeting motive passed around to both the oboes and strings and a more sturdy, almost militaristic, repeated note figure usually found in the strings. All three of these ideas are played on top of the first phrase of the chorale appearing in long notes, first in the bass and then at the cadence in the oboes. We will remember how abstract Bach's setting of the chorale was in his Weimar cantata of the same name. Here, as with all of the second Jahrgang (cycle of cantatas), the emphasis is on clear statement of the tune over extremely lively orchestral figuration.

The tenor aria, #2 of the cantata, is an extremely long, though very lively affair. Its effect is of abundance. It has the uncanny effect of indicating both the grandeur of Christ's coming and the humility of his human roots. After a brief secco recitative, the bass aria has a very different character. It is militaristic. It could even be accused of being jingoistic if the vocal phrases were not constantly overlapping and occasionally even contradicting the orchestra. The whole orchestra is in unison with no harmony whatsoever. Bach never wrote another aria quite like this one, but it is a character often found in Handel. The main effect is that of a virtuosic showpiece for the bass. After such brazen and aggressive music, the little duet recitative for the soprano and alto with strings is shocking. In its brief time it brings us the only inward view of this moment in the liturgical year. The final chorale setting is sturdy and powerful.

Cantata BWV 40, "Dazu ist erschienen der Sohn Gottes," was composed for the second day of Christmas. The text is concerned with Jesus's description of the rejection and persecution of the prophets, attendant to the story of the Stoning of St. Stephen as recounted in Acts. This accounts for the strange tone of the Cantata BWV 40 that is full of battle cries against the devil, even though it quotes the great passage at the beginning of the Gospel of John and makes other references to the birth of Jesus. The sole purpose and meaning of Christ's birth, as seen here, is to do battle with the devil.

The opening chorus is a superb example of Bachian military music. Two horns, two oboes and the strings trade off a fanfare figure that grows into a full-fledged battle cry. The chorus enters with blocky statements of the text. They eventually shout out the idea of the battle with the devil in regimented and disciplined rhythmic precision. Occasionally Bach will present texts in two contrasting ways. After the initial outward brilliance of the opening of Cantata BWV 40, the chorus sings the same text as a rather lyrical and inward fugue at half the tempo of the previous

material. The ultimate integration of this fugue with the previous material is a great tour de force of the first Jahrgang (cycle of Leipzig cantatas). The way that the counter-subject of the fugue subtly works itself back into the opening character is a marvel. There is something devilishly subversive about that theme. The fugue is very extended with a full return to the original battle music. The chorus is in a modified da capo form with a fugue as the B section, a distinctive and unique idea in the cantatas.

The secco tenor recitative begins with a pedal point as the singer intones the words, “the word was made flesh.” As surely as Mozart changes the scene in Figaro by little scale passages in the recitatives, Bach here sets off the quote from John by accompanying the commentary with an ascending scale passage in the continuo.

Four-voice chorale harmony usually stands in the cantatas as a pillar of congregational wisdom. Chorales almost always stand back from the action and often have a rather cool, almost dignified, response to the more passionate recitatives and arias. There are three chorales in Cantata BWV 40. They have a folksy, almost rough, quality to them. The sophistication of the previous material is reduced in the first chorale to “Sin makes sadness, Christ brings joy.” The words are superbly colored both by the marvelous ambiguity of the major/minor harmony and by the block-like chord presentation. The pithy little opening statements are followed by a marching tune accompanied by a descending eighth-note bass line.

The cantata then plunges into more devilish music. Here the serpent’s tail is portrayed by the twisting whiplashes of the first violins. The terse oboes and strings punctuate it almost brutally. The aria is marvelously grotesque. Notice how the misshapen voice line lurches almost drunkenly on top of the subversive bass. The snake turns from lashing dragon to sinuous serpent in the alto recitative. The alto line meanders languorously between the rolling strings figuration and the sparse bass. It is as secretive and inward as the aria was blustery and aggressive. The recitative is one of the few moments of quiet in the whole cantata, reminding us that this is the same serpent that brought down Adam and Eve.

The next chorale is even more folk-like than the first. Its blocky wisdom is in extreme contrast to the silky sophistication of the previous recitative. The ending passage into the realm of joy is one of the great moments in all of the chorales. Daring and complex wind writing, as seen here, separates Bach from his contemporaries. In the tenor aria that follows we have a major wind-band tour de force. Bravura oboes and horns accompany the virtuoso and high-flying tenor part. The melismas on the word “freuet” (‘rejoices’) accompanied by dazzling horn and oboe fanfares give the aria an inimitable heroic flavor. There is an interesting sense that this passage is cut from the same cloth as both the serpent’s tail in the bass aria and the “work of the devil” in the opening chorus. The cantata could sound like a brilliant string of unrelated pieces if it didn’t have the underlying unity of similar musical material.

The final chorale “Freuet euch ihr Christen alle” begins similarly to “Jesu meine Freude.” Its deep seriousness gives the cantata a surprising close after the bravura of the tenor aria. This chorale has the same shape as the second chorale, with folk wisdom leading to a sublime and surprisingly profound conclusion. While not exactly unknown, this cantata is greater than it is usually given credit for. The progression of ideas and the unusual, even unique, way in which the chorales function make it sui generis in the literature.

Most listeners will recognize the Bach “Gloria in excelsis Deo”, Cantata BWV 191 from the very first bar: it is based entirely on the “Gloria” from the B minor Mass, BWV 232. This composition has posed all sorts of questions for scholars and biographers of Bach, as it is not a cantata in the usual sense of the word, and it is unlikely, with its Latin text, that it was performed for a church service in the Thomaskirche. The most likely occasion for its first performance was a special service of thanksgiving held in the University church in Leipzig on Christmas Day 1745 to celebrate the Peace of Dresden. The second Silesian war had just come to an end, the only time in his life that Bach had first-hand experience of the horrors and suffering of war as Prussian troops occupied Leipzig and devastated its surroundings in the autumn of 1745. Thus the passage "et in terra pax" would have acquired a particular concrete meaning.

Bach scholar Klaus Hoffman posits: “It would thus seem possible that this composition might have been the ceremonial music for this peace celebration. Everything fits: the choice of text with its heavenly message of peace, the Latin language (which was in common use in the University Church), as well as a note by Bach in the score that the second and third movements should be performed ‘post Orationem’ (‘after the oration’). The forthcoming peace treaty seems not to have become public knowledge in Leipzig until 22nd December at the earliest. Bach’s music for the festivities must therefore have been produced in great haste, and this time pressure would also explain his recourse to a work that already existed, and his pragmatic choice to make as few alterations as possible.”

The opening “Gloria” remains virtually unchanged. Bach retains the five-part choir (only once used elsewhere in the cantatas), the instrumentation and the text. The following two movements were adapted and set with new texts. The soprano/tenor duet with flute, originally the “Domine Deus,” is now a simple tribute of glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This constraint, plus the requirement to change the ending so as to finish in the tonic key, led Bach to significantly shorten the model from the Mass by leaving out the B section.

The concluding doxology, “Sicut erat in principio” (originally “Cum sancto”), takes off with a tremendous burst of action. The words are combined with a new, signal-like motif that effectively opens the work and is subsequently heard several times in two or three parts, an octave apart. Our cantata concludes as the triumphant first trumpet rings out a message of peace for humankind.

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TEXTS

Cantata 62

1. Chor

Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland,
Der Jungfrauen Kind erkannt,
Des sich wundert alle Welt,
Gott solch Geburt ihm bestellt.
("Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland," verse 1)

2. Arie (Tenor)

Bewundert, o Menschen, dies große
Geheimnis:
Der höchste Beherrscher erscheint der
Welt.
Hier werden die Schätze des Himmels
entdeckt,
Hier wird uns ein göttliches Manna bestellt,
O Wunder! die Keuschheit wird gar nicht
befleckt.

3. Rezitativ (Bass)

So geht aus Gottes Herrlichkeit und Thron
Sein eingeborner Sohn.
Der Held aus Juda bricht herein,
Den Weg mit Freudigkeit zu laufen
Und uns Gefallne zu erkaufen.
O heller Glanz, o wunderbarer
Segensschein!

4. Arie (Bass)

Streite, siege, starker Held!
Sei vor uns im Fleische kräftig!
Sei geschäftig,
Das Vermögen in uns Schwachen Stark zu
machen!

5. Rezitativ (Duett) (Soprano) (Alto)

Wir ehren diese Herrlichkeit
Und nahen nun zu deiner Krippen
Und preisen mit erfreuten Lippen,
Was du uns zubereit';
Die Dunkelheit verstört' uns nicht
Und sahen dein unendlich Licht.

1. Chorus

*Now come, Savior of the heathens,
known as the Virgin's child,
over whom the whole world marvels,
that God had ordained such a birth for him.*

2. Aria (Tenor)

*Marvel, O humanity, at this great
mystery:
the Supreme Ruler appears to the
world.
Here the treasures of heaven are
uncovered,
here a divine manna is presented to us,
O miracle! The purity will be entirely
unblemished.*

3. Recitative (Bass)

*Thus from God's glory and throne
goes forth his only-begotten Son.
The hero out of Judah breaks forth
to run his course with joy
and to purchase us fallen ones.
O brilliant radiance, O wonderful light of
blessing!*

4. Aria (Bass)

*Struggle, conquer, powerful hero!
Be mighty for us in the flesh!
Be effective,
to strengthen the potential in us, the weak!*

5. Recitative (Duet) (Soprano) (Alto)

*We honor this glory
and approach your manger now
and praise with joyful lips
what you have prepared for us;
the darkness does not confuse us
and we see your eternal light.*

(Please turn the page very quietly)

6. Choral

Lob sei Gott, dem Vater, ton,
Lob sei Gott, sein'm eingen Sohn,
Lob sei Gott, dem Heiligen Geist,
Immer und in Ewigkeit!
("Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland," last
verse)

6. Chorale

*Praise be to God the Father,
praise be to God, His only Son,
Praise be to God, the Holy Spirit,
for ever and in eternity!*

Cantata 40

1. Chor

Dazu ist erschienen der Sohn Gottes, daß er
die Werke des Teufels zerstöre.
(John 3:8)

1. Chorus

*For this the Son of God appeared, that he
might destroy the works of the Devil.*

2. Rezitativ (Tenor)

Das Wort ward Fleisch und wohnt in der
Welt,
Das Licht der Welt bestrahlt den Kreis der
Erden,
Der große Gottessohn
Verläßt des Himmels Thron,
Und seiner Majestät gefällt,
Ein kleines Menschenkind zu werden.
Bedenkt doch diesen Tausch, wer nur
gedenken kann;
Der König wird ein Untertan,
Der Herr erscheint als ein Knecht
Und wird dem menschlichen Geschlecht
– O süßes Wort in aller Ohren! –
Zu Trost und Heil geboren.

2. Recitative (Tenor)

*The word became flesh and lived in the
world,
the light of the world illumines the orb of the
earth;
the great Son of God
left the throne of heaven,
and it pleased His majesty
to become a little human child.
Only consider this exchange, who is capable
of thought;
the King becomes a subject,
the Lord appears as a servant
and for the race of humanity
– O sweet word in all ears! –
is born as Comforter and Savior.*

3. Choral

Die Sünd macht Leid;
Christus bringt Freud,
Weil er zu Trost in diese Welt ist kommen.
Mit uns ist Gott
Nun in der Not:
Wer ist, der uns als Christen kann
verdammen?
("Wir Christenleut," verse 3)

3. Chorale

*Sin creates suffering;
Christ brings joy,
because he has come into this world to
comfort.
God is with us
now in our need:
who could condemn us as Christians?*

4. Arie (Bass)

Höllische Schlange,
Wird dir nicht bange?
Der dir den Kopf als ein Sieger zerknickt,
Ist nun geboren,
Und die verloren,
Werden mit ewigem Frieden beglückt.

5. Rezitativ (Alto)

Die Schlange, so im Paradies
Auf alle Adamskinder
Das Gift der Seelen fallen ließ,
Bringt uns nicht mehr Gefahr;
Des Weibes Samen stellt sich dar,
Der Heiland ist ins Fleisch gekommen
Und hat ihr allen Gift benommen.
Drum sei getrost! betrübter Sünder.

6. Choral

Schüttele deinen Kopf und sprich:
Fleuch, du alte Schlange!
Was erneurst du deinen Stich,
Machst mir angst und bange?
Ist dir doch der Kopf zerknickt,
Und ich bin durchs Leiden
Meines Heilands dir entrückt
In den Saal der Freuden.
("Schwing dich auf zu deinem Gott," verse
2)

7. Arie (Tenor)

Christenkinder, freuet euch!
Wütet schon das Höllenreich,
Will euch Satans Grimm erschrecken:
Jesus, der erretten kann,
Nimmt sich seiner Küchlein an
Und will sie mit Flügeln decken.

4. Aria (Bass)

*Hellish serpent,
are you not afraid?
He who will crush your head as victor
is now born,
and the lost ones
will be delighted with eternal peace.*

5. Recitative (Alto)

*The serpent that in Paradise
upon all Adam's children
dripped venom, poisonous to souls,
brings no more danger to us;
the seed of woman presents Himself,
the Savior has come in the flesh
and has taken away all the venom.
Therefore be comforted! troubled sinner.*

6. Chorale

*Shake your head and say:
flee, ancient serpent!
Why renew your sting,
making me anxious and fearful?
Nevertheless your head is crushed,
and I, through the passion
of my Savior, am borne away from you
into the hall of rejoicing.*

7. Aria (Tenor)

*Christian children, rejoice!
Though the kingdom of Hell rages,
and Satan's fury would terrify you:
Jesus, who can save,
takes to himself his little chicks
and will cover them with his wings.*

(Please turn the page very quietly)

8. Choral

Jesu, nimm dich deiner Glieder
Ferner in Genaden an;
Schenke, was man bitten kann,
Zu erquicken deine Brüder:
Gib der ganzen Christenschar
Frieden und ein sel'ges Jahr!
Freude, Freude über Freude!
Christus wehret allem Leide.
Wonne, Wonne über Wonne!
Er ist die Genadensonne.
("Freuet euch, ihr Christen alle," verse 4)

8. Chorale

*Jesu, take to yourself your members
henceforth in grace;
grant that which can be requested,
to refresh your brethren:
give to the whole throng of Christians
peace and a blessed year!
Joy, joy beyond joy!
Christ wards off all sorrow.
Rapture, rapture beyond rapture!
He is the sun of grace.*

Cantata 191

Erster Teil

1. Chor

Gloria in excelsis Deo. Et in terra pax
hominibus bonae voluntatis.

Zweiter Teil

2. Arie (Duett) (Soprano) (Tenor)

Gloria Patri et Filio et
Spiritus sancto.

3. Chor

Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper et in
saecula saeculorum, amen.

Part One

1. Chorus

*Glory to God in the highest, and peace on
earth to men of good will.*

Part Two

2. Aria (Duet) (Soprano) (Tenor)

*Glory to the Father and the Son and the
Holy Spirit.*

3. Chorus

*As it was in the beginning and now and
always and in the age of ages, amen.*

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