March 9, 2024
Christ United Methodist Church, Rochester

March 10, 2024
Cathedral of St. Paul, St. Paul

This concert was made possible in part by a grant to the Bach Society from the Cathedral Heritage Foundation, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization whose mission is to preserve the Cathedral as a historic monument and support it as a venue for the arts and education.
Singet dem Herrn  
*Dedicated to the memory of Art and Martha Kaemmer*  

Johann Sebastian Bach

Symphony in C Major  

C.P.E. Bach

Warum ist das Licht gegeben  

Johannes Brahms

-Intermission-

Suite in A Minor for Recorder, Strings, and Continuo  

Georg Philipp Telemann

Das ist meine Freude  

Johann Ludwig Bach

Sei, lieber Tag, willkommen  

Johann Michael Bach
Singet dem Herrn

Johann Sebastian Bach

In addition to writing over 300 church cantatas for his Thomaskirche in Leipzig, Johann Sebastian Bach created a rich variety of other sacred music, including six motets for funerals and other special occasions. The most celebrated of these, Singet dem Herrn, was probably written in 1727, but the circumstances of its composition—written perhaps for a New Year celebration; or for a funeral; or even, as suggested by Christoph Wolff, as a demanding "choral etude" for training his choristers—are unknown.

What is not in doubt is the brilliant and ingenious music throughout. Far surpassing the simple chorale-based motets of the time, Bach creates a choral concerto with three (fast-slow-fast) movements.

The first movement sets the first three verses of Psalm 149. It opens with a grand double-choir fanfare, including over 50 calls of Singet! (sing!), and culminates in a dazzling fugue including word-painting: a long, swirling run of 16th notes on the word Reihen (dance), and a drum-like arpeggio of steady 8ths on the word Pauken (timbrel).

The second, slower movement offers a contemplative contrast. Choir II sings a dignified chorale based on Psalm 103, reminding us that humanity is but dust and quickly passes away, as if blown by the wind. After each line, Choir I interrupts these somber thoughts, offering up a graceful prayer for God's continued guidance and protection — “be our shield and light.”

The joyous final movement is a setting of two verses from Psalm 150. First comes a hymn of praise, tossed back and forth between the choirs, then an exuberant closing fugue with both choirs finally joined to proclaim, “let all that has breath praise the Lord!”

This piece made such an impression on Mozart during his 1789 visit to Leipzig that he asked to see the score and spent much time analyzing the parts—as recounted by Friedrich Rochlitz:

  Hardly had the choir sung a few measures when Mozart sat up, startled; a few measures more and he called out: ‘What is this?’ And now his whole soul seemed to be in his ears. When the singing was finished he cried out, full of joy: ‘Now there is something one can learn from!’

1. Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied; Sing to the Lord a new song!
   die Gemeine der Heiligen sollen ihn loben. The assembly of saints shall praise him.
   Israel freue sich des, der ihn gemacht hat. Let Israel rejoice in him who has made him.
   Die Kinder Zion sei’n fröhlich über ihrem Könige, May the children of Zion be joyful in their king.
   Sie sollen loben seinen Namen im Reihen; They shall praise his name in the dance;
   mit Pauken und mit Harfen sollen sie ihm spielen. with timbrels and harps they shall play to him.

2. Chorale (Choir 2)
   Wie sich ein Vater erbarmet
   Über seine junge Kinderlein
   So tut der Herr uns allen,
   So wir ihn kindlich fürchten rein.
   Er kennt das arm Gemächte,
   Gott weiß, wir sind nur Staub,
   As a father has mercy
   on his young child,
   so the Lord has mercy on us all,
   if, like children, we sincerely fear him.
   He knows our feeble powers;
   God knows we are but dust,
Gleichwie das Gras vom Rechen, like the grass before the rake,
Ein Blum und fallend Laub. a fading flower, a falling leaf.
Der Wind nur drüber wehet, The wind only blows over it,
So ist es nicht mehr da, and it is there no more!
Also der Mensch vergehet, Thus we all pass away;
Sein End, das ist ihm nah. our end is near.

Aria (Choir 1)
Gott nimm dich ferner unser an, God, continue to care for us.
Denn ohne dich ist nichts getan For without you, nothing is achieved
Mit allen unsern Sachen. in any of our affairs.
Drum sei du unser Schirm und Licht, Therefore be our shield and light,
Und trügt uns unsre Hoffnung nicht, and do not disappoint our hope.
So wirst du’s ferner machen. Thus you will continue to do.

Wohl dem, der sich nur steif und fest Happy is the one who steadfastly
Auf dich und deine Huld verläßt. relies on you and your grace.

3. Lobet den Herrn in seinen Taten, Praise the Lord for his acts,
lobet ihn in seiner großen Herrlichkeit! praise him for his great glory!
Alles, was Odem hat, lobe den Herrn. Let all that has breath praise the Lord.
Hallelujah!

Symphony in C Major

Warum ist das Licht gegeben

Johannes Brahms

Johannes Brahms, having finally and triumphantly completed his First Symphony in the previous year, spent the summer of 1877 in the pleasant village of Pörtschach. There he wrote his sunny Second Symphony and immediately followed it with the *a cappella* motet *Warum ist das Licht gegeben?*

When asked about the ominous appearance of trombones and timpani (often associated with war and suffering) in the otherwise bright and sunny Second Symphony, Brahms wrote:

I would have to confess that I am...a severely melancholic person. That black wings are constantly flapping above us, and that in my output—perhaps not entirely by chance—that symphony is followed by a little essay about the great “Why?” It casts the necessary shadow on the serene symphony and perhaps accounts for those timpani and trombones.

Brahms dedicated *Warum* to the great Bach scholar Philipp Spitta, with whom he was collaborating to publish the first complete edition of Bach’s works. Although the self-deprecating Brahms would discourage the comparison, he was surely influenced by the model of J. S. Bach, both in structure and use of counterpoint.

For his opening section, Brahms picks an exceedingly dark, disturbing text from the Book of Job, beginning with an anguished choral question—*Warum?*—followed by a stunning display of Brahms’ skill in counterpoint, a canon for four voices, each one entering a fourth lower than the last. In spite of this intellectual technique, it is employed to powerfully expressive and emotional effect. The stark choral question *Warum?* repeatedly interrupts the meditation on mortality and suffering, but no answer is given.

Brahms follows this opening depiction of “black wings..flapping” with three responses.

First he chooses an uplifting verse from Lamentations and creates a glorious, comforting cascade of F major, again displaying his mastery of counterpoint with a six-part canon.
Next Brahms sets a text from James as a centerpiece of blessing. Many have noted a parallel structure in his earlier German Requiem, with its beautiful central movement, *Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen*. The second portion of the James text, including an encouraging reference to the patience of Job, returns to the tempo and key of the Lamentations setting and reprises that canon.

Finally—and surely in homage to Bach—Brahms harmonizes a chorale written by Martin Luther in 1524 (and used multiple times by Bach). Luther paraphrased the Canticle of Simeon, *Nunc Dimittis*, offering a *sanft und stille* (calm and quiet) consolation to those departing in peace.

Thus Brahms replies to his “great Why,” but without clear explanation. As he himself wrote a few years later, “in the Book of Job you will find that ‘Warum’—but no answer to it.”

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**Warum ist das Licht gegeben dem Mühseligen,**
*Why is light given to those in misery,*

und das Leben den betrübten Herzen
*and life to afflicted souls*

(die des Todes warten und kommt nicht,
*to those who wait for death, and it comes not;*

und grüben ihn wohl aus dem Verborgenen,
*who dig for it secretly,*

die sich fast freuen und sind fröhlich,
*who nearly rejoice and are glad*

daß sie das Grab bekommen),
*that they have found the grave),*

Und dem Manne, des Weg verborgen ist,
*and to the one whose way is hidden*

und Gott vor ihm denselben bedecket?
*and from whom God has hidden himself?*

Lasset uns unser Herz samt den Händen
*Let us lift up our hearts and our hands*
aufheben zu Gott im Himmel.
*to God in heaven.*

Siehe, wir preisen selig,
*Behold, we call them blessed,*
die erduldet haben.
*those who have endured.*

Die Geduld Hiob habt ihr gehört,
*You have heard of the patience of Job*

und das Ende des Herrn habt ihr gesehen;
*and you have seen the purpose of the Lord;*

denn das Herr ist barmherzig,
*for the Lord is compassionate,*

und ein Erbarmer.
*and a merciful God.*

Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin
*In peace and joy I now depart*

In Gottes Willen;
*according to God’s will;*

Getrost ist mir mein Herz und Sinn
*my heart and mind are comforted,*

Sanft und stille.
*calm, and still;*

Wie Gott mir verheißen hat:
*as God has promised me,*

Der Tod ist mir Schlaf worden.
*death has become my sleep.*

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**Suite in A Minor for Recorder, Strings, and Continuo**

*Georg Philipp Telemann*

**Das ist meine Freude**

*Johann Ludwig Bach*

Das ist meine Freude,
*This is my joy*

däß ich mich zu Gott halte,
*That I draw near to God;*

daß ich meine Zuversicht
*That I place my trust*

setze auf den Herrn.
*in the Lord.*

**Sei, lieber Tag, willkommen**

*Johann Michael Bach*

Sei, lieber Tag, willkommen,
*Be welcome, dear day,*

willkommen sei du heut!
*You are welcome today!*

Heut freuen sich die Frommen,
*Today the righteous rejoice,*

die Frommen, die allzeit,
allzeit den großen Gott,
Gott, ihren Schöpfer, loben,
ihn loben hoch dort oben,
erlöst aus aller Not.

Denn an dem Tage brachte
der liebste Gottessohn,
was Freude bei uns machte,
aus seinem Himmelsthron:
Ein schönes neues Jahr,
Glück, Heil und allen Segen
zu Wegen und zu Stegen
der ganzen Christenschar!

Drum kommt, ihr Christenbrüder,
kommt her an diesem Tag,
kommt, fallt für Jesu nieder,
damit es euch behag!
Kommt, dankt und bittet ihn,
daß er in diesem Jahre
euch väterlich bewahre
und tue wie vorhin!

Laßt eure Stimmen hören,
laßt klingen Saiten (Pfeifen) drein,
lobt ihn mit vollen Chören,
laßt alles fröhlich sein!
Singt, singet eurem Gott,
singt, lobet, danket, betet,
vor euren Jesu tretet,
er schützt vor Not und Tod!

At all times, the great God,
God, their Creator, praise,
Praise him there in the heights above,
Rescued from all misery.

For this day has brought
The most beloved Son of God,
Who has created joy for us,
From His throne in heaven:
A beautiful new year,
Happiness, salvation and blessing
For the comings and goings
Of the entire Christian assembly!

Therefore, gather, you Christian brothers,
Gather together on this day,
Come, kneel down for Jesus,
That you might find delight!
Come, thank and entreat him,
That He, in this year,
Watch over you like a father
As He has always done!

Let your voices be heard,
Let the strings (fifes) ring out,
Praising Him with mighty choirs,
Let everyone be joyful!
Sing, sing to our God,
Sing, praise, give thanks, pray,
Draw near to our Jesus,
Who shields us from adversity and death!

Don’t miss our next concert!

What’s Past is Prologue

Sat. May 4 — 7:30 p.m.
Sun. May 5 — 3:00 p.m.
Christ United Methodist Church
Rochester

Special Reception for Rick & Jan Kvam
after Sunday’s Concert!

For Rick Kvam’s final concert with Choral Arts Ensemble, he has picked personal choral favorites: some old, some new, some serious, some lighthearted — all wonderful. We’ll sing music from the Renaissance to the world premiere of a new work commissioned by Dale Trumbore. Join us to celebrate Choral Arts Ensemble’s four decades of distinguished singing and its bright musical future! Tickets available at choralartsensemble.org
Two-time JUNO Award winning conductor, composer, recorder, and flute soloist Matthias Maute has achieved an international reputation. In 2016 he was named artistic director of the Bach Society of Minnesota and in 2019 of the professional choir Ensemble vocal Arts-Québec. Impressed by his artistic approach, The New York Times described the orchestra he conducts in Montreal, Ensemble Caprice, as being “an ensemble that encourages the listener to hear the world.” Maute’s recording of Bach’s Brandenburg Concertos juxtaposed with Maute’s own arrangements of Preludes from Shostakovich’s Op. 87 was hailed by The New Yorker’s Alex Ross as standing out “for its fleet, characterful approach” and “its fresh, vibrant colors”. Matthias Maute’s compositions are published by Breitkopf & Härtel, Amadeus, Moeck and Carus. Maute’s 1st violin concerto was performed by soloist Mark Fewer with the St. John’s Symphony and with I Musici de Montréal. Matthias Maute has made some twenty recordings on the Analekta, Vanguard Classics, Bella Musica, Dorian, Bridge and ATMA Classique labels.
Artistic Director Rick Kvam holds music degrees from Harvard and Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. Rick founded the Rochester Men’s Capella in 1982, the Choral Arts Ensemble in 1985, and the Honors Choirs of SE Minnesota in 1992. He has won the Sally Ordway Award for arts initiative and the Mayor’s Award for artistic excellence. Married to accompanist Jan Kvam for 34 years, he also worked for 26 years as an emergency medicine physician at Olmsted Medical Center hospital.

Daughter of a choir director and organist, Choral Arts Ensemble accompanist Jan Kvam has been active as an accompanist for soloists and ensembles her entire adult life and has taught piano privately for many years. Jan holds a degree in piano performance from Bethel College in St Paul.