

2011-2012
CONCERT SEASON



The Bach Concert Series

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T. Herbert Dimmock, *Founder and Music Director*

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The Bach Concert Series is funded by an operating grant from the Maryland State Arts Council, an agency dedicated to cultivating a vibrant cultural community where the arts thrive.

The Bach Concert Series is made possible in part through sponsorship of the Baltimore County Executive, County Council, and the Commission on Arts and Sciences.

The Bach Concert Series' participation in Free Fall Baltimore is made possible by presenting sponsor Susquehanna Bank and the Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts, Joseph and Harvey Meyerhoff Family Charitable Funds, The Abell Foundation, William G. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund, American Trading and Production Corporation (Atapco) and Baltimore Community Foundation.



The Bach Concert Series

BachInBaltimore.org

At Christ Lutheran Church
701 South Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21230-3835
1-410-941-9262

T. Herbert Dimmock, *Founder and Music Director*

Dear Friends of the Bach Concert Series:

Welcome to our 24th Season!

We are very pleased that you have chosen to join us to hear the remarkable and glorious music of Johann Sebastian Bach in the beautiful setting of Christ Lutheran Church. The Bach Concert Series continues to bring you the finest quality performances possible. Most concerts are free to the public, but two special performances, the magnificent St. Matthew Passion and our June concert that will feature two of Bach's largest and most festive cantatas, will be ticketed premium concerts. Also, we hope you will plan to join us at the 2011 BachFest, our annual fundraising event, following the December 4 concert.

Our gracious host, Christ Lutheran Church, continues to provide us one of the most beautiful and acoustically superior venues for concert performances. Their continuing support of the Bach Concert Series has been instrumental in helping us evolve as a successful, independent organization.

Your interest and support has generated a fantastic growth in concert attendance of some 30% over the past two years.

The appearance of professional soloists and musicians is supported by your generous donations. We encourage you to support the Bach Concert Series as a contributing member. Donors from the 2010-2011 season are listed in this program. A warm and heart-felt thank you is extended to each of them.

We know that you will welcome the exciting new season and hope that you will help us reach out to lovers of Bach's music throughout the Baltimore-Washington region by inviting friends and neighbors to attend our concerts. Enjoy the music and spread the word!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John G. Geist".

John G. Geist, President

T. HERBERT DIMMOCK

Tim Smith of The Baltimore Sun wrote: "Since 1977, no one has had his finger more clearly on the pulse of choral music in Baltimore than T. Herbert Dimmock."



Mr. Dimmock is considered one of the foremost Baroque experts in the country. His conducting credits include nearly all the oratorios and anthems of Handel, all the major Bach works and approximately 140 Bach Cantatas. He has conducted the music of Bach in the US, Germany, Canada and England, working with many of the world's most accomplished singers and instrumentalists. His unique performances of Bach's music are the result of a life-long study of Bach, Bach's music, and Bach's theology. Maestro Dimmock has also thoroughly explored the music of Handel. As music director of the Handel Choir of Baltimore for 25 years, he conducted 14 of his oratorios and all of his major anthems (including the Chandos Anthems, the Te Deums, the Coronation Anthems, the Funeral Anthem and the Foundling Hospital Anthem).

Maestro Dimmock is an accomplished organist having played organ recitals at many of the world's most prestigious sites, including Westminster Abbey, Winchester Cathedral, the National Cathedral, and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. A graduate of Davidson College and Peabody Conservatory, Mr. Dimmock pursued further study with Greg Smith, Roger Wagner, Robert Shaw and Helmuth Rilling.

Maestro Dimmock has received numerous awards and recognitions over the years, including Who's Who, International Biographical Society, Baltimore's Best, Mayor & City Council Citation of Appreciation, State of Maryland, Senate of Maryland, Baltimore County Schools and Baltimore City Schools.

Maestro Dimmock is also the choir director of what is arguably the premiere Jewish choir at a conservative synagogue in the USA, the Chizuk Amuno Congregation. Working with the cantor of the synagogue, Mr. Dimmock has recorded an acclaimed CD of Jewish music entitled "Face to Face."

Mr. Dimmock has served as the music director of several prominent churches in Baltimore, including St. Anthony of Padua, The Cathedral of the Incarnation and First English Lutheran Church. He is also currently music director of The Harford Choral Society and The Herb Dimmock Singers as well as the organist/choirmaster at Lititz United Methodist Church.

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J. S. BACH

St Matthew Passion

by T. Herbert Dimmock, *MUSIC DIRECTOR*



Bach composed The St. Matthew Passion for Good Friday and first performed it in Leipzig April 11, 1727.

Today we generally associate the word “passion” with an intensity of feeling or enthusiastic commitment, typically in the context of a romantic attachment or one’s work. The dictionary reminds us that a primary definition is quite different: “An enduring of inflicted pain, tortures, or the like; (a) [*usually cap.*] the suffering of Christ on the cross, or his sufferings between the night of the Last Supper and his death. (b) [*cap.*] One of the gospel narratives of the passion of Christ.”

Richard Freed notes that: “Recitations of the Passion appeared in Christian religious observance as early as the fourth century. Musical settings came into the picture before the end of the twelfth century, and polyphonic treatments in the fifteenth. Significant contributions to the genre came from English and Italian composers in the latter century, and from Bach’s great compatriot Heinrich Schütz in the seventeenth. By the time Bach composed this work, the Passion as a musical form had become a prominent feature of Protestant observance, particularly in the German states. ... In general the German Passion took the form of a large-scale oratorio, its text based primarily on one of the Gospels (as translated by Martin Luther) but including also contemporaneous material either created specifically for the oratorio or adapted for it, and in many instances embellished with numerous chorales.”

The librettist for the *St. Matthew Passion* was Bach’s friend Christian Friedrich Henrici (1700-1764), who used the pseudonym “Picander” for the numerous poems and texts for cantatas and oratorios he wrote.

Though the *St. Matthew Passion* itself was never lost, it fell from view completely. Bach himself apparently performed it only two or three times and, as with many of his other

large works, it was overlooked for three quarters of a century following his death. The twenty-year-old Felix Mendelssohn undertook to correct this situation by unearthing the *Matthew Passion* and directing the historic performance of the work in Berlin on March 11, 1829. This successful rescue effort of Mendelssohn’s not only achieved widespread recognition for the *Matthew Passion* as the towering masterwork it is, but also opened the way to a revival and new appreciation of Bach’s other works.

My teacher, Helmuth Rilling, one of the greatest Bach conductors ever, writes of the *St. Matthew Passion*: “The *St. Matthew Passion* is assuredly one of the greatest masterpieces ever composed in the history of music. In specifically measurable respects, it is Bach’s longest work, and it also calls for the largest array of performing forces he ever used in a single composition: two complete choruses and two complete orchestras in addition to the numerous soloists. I would say the *Matthew Passion* is the most important of Bach’s works, sharing that distinction only with the *Mass in B minor*.”

“Bach composed this work, as he did also his *St. John Passion*, using the complete text of the Gospel—in this case, Chapters 25 and 26 of St. Matthew—unabridged, since every word of this text was important to him, and he followed the story of the Passion very closely. In addition to that, there is a second layer of text: these are contemplative passages from the pen of Picander, commenting on the story as it unfolds. And the third layer of the text, of course, comprises the wonderful chorales which appear throughout the entire work.

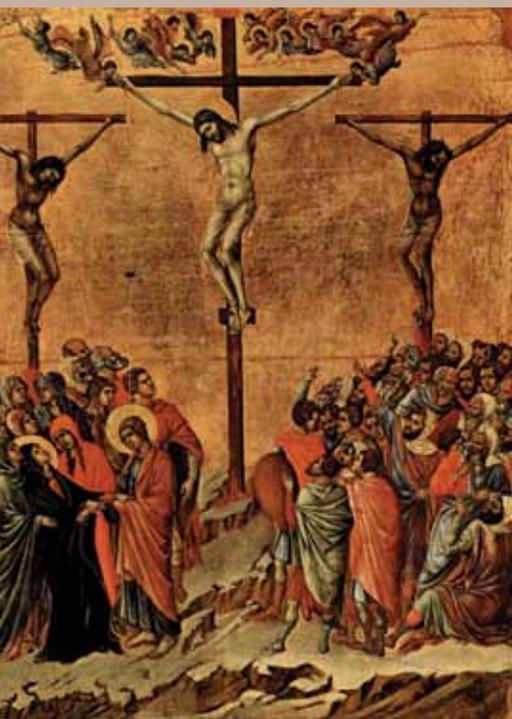
“As in many other oratorios, especially in stories of the Passion, the story itself is given to the Evangelist. While we can observe that the Evangelist, on one side, testifies—he tells us the story—there are also moments, and these are most beautiful ones, in which he seems to become overwhelmed by the story itself, becoming very expressive, touched and moved by the story which he himself tells.

“All of the persons represented in this story have solo parts, and in the *St. Matthew Passion* these are many: there are the servants, there

ST. MATTHEW PASSION (CONTINUED)

are the maidens, there is the high priest, and so on. One of the solo roles is that of Jesus himself. Bach surrounds the part of Jesus with the strings of the first orchestra, giving this figure his halo, a radiant light around this Son of God that sets him apart from all the other persons represented in the work. There is one very special moment, however, in which he is not accompanied by the strings: he loses his musical halo, when he says, "Eli, Eli, lema sabsachthani?"—"My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" At this very touching moment, when he loses his faith, he also loses his halo.

"We come to the question, why is the *St. Matthew Passion* so important and so moving for so many people? I think it is because Bach very obviously tries to touch upon so many basic human problems. He speaks about love, he speaks about hate, he speaks about betrayal, and of many other things that were problems for his time and are still problems in human situations in our own time. And I think in this touching music Bach can address these problems and say something that still has profound meaning for us today.



Buoninsegna Crucifixion

"Besides that, we have a very personal aspect to the work, and this is shown in Bach's position toward his text. In one of the final choruses, by which point Christ has already died, the soldiers gather and speak the words, "Wahrlich, dieser ist Gottes Sohn gewesen"—"Truly, this was the Son of God"—and there we find a number of notes in the bass line of the chorus: just 14 notes, and these 14 notes, I think, must represent Bach's own name. His "name number" is 14 [the letters of the name BACH being Nos. 2, 1, 3 and 8, respectively, of the alphabet], and so he underscores his personal identity with the story of the Passion in his own name—certainly a very special way to demonstrate his own position in respect to those words of the soldiers, and the story of the Passion."

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 8)



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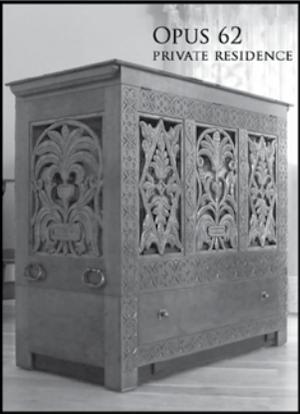
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ST. MATTHEW PASSION (CONTINUED)

In the *St. Matthew Passion* Bach calls on the members of the oboe family of instruments often to explore specific emotional meanings suggested by the text. The oboe da caccia helps to express tragedy and anguish. Bach's use of the oboe d'amore expresses to perfection the close ties between Mankind and the Savior, moving from heartfelt tears to a true commingling of grace and devotion.

The work is laid out in two large parts. Part I begins with the anointing of Jesus in Bethany and ends with his arrest; Part II covers his trial and crucifixion. For his 1736 performance of the work, Bach replaced the relatively simple chorale which had been his original ending for Part I with the remarkable fantasia for double chorus which now concludes it: "O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde gross." As the revered scholar Karl Geiringer observed, "the great choruses that introduce and conclude each of the work's two parts form the pillars supporting the mighty work without participating in the development of the drama."

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J. S. Bach St. Matthew Passion

Part I - Saturday, March 31, 2012 at 7:30 PM

Part II - Sunday, April 1, 2012 at 5:00 PM

Jennifer Young, *SOPRANO*
Monica Reinagel, *ALTO*
Joseph Regan, *TENOR*

Jeffery Fahnstock, *EVANGELIST*
David Dimmock, *BASS*
Benjamin Park, *JESUS*

Children's Chorus of Maryland, *GUEST CHOIR*

Alyson Shirk, *DIRECTOR*

T. Herbert Dimmock, *MUSIC DIRECTOR*

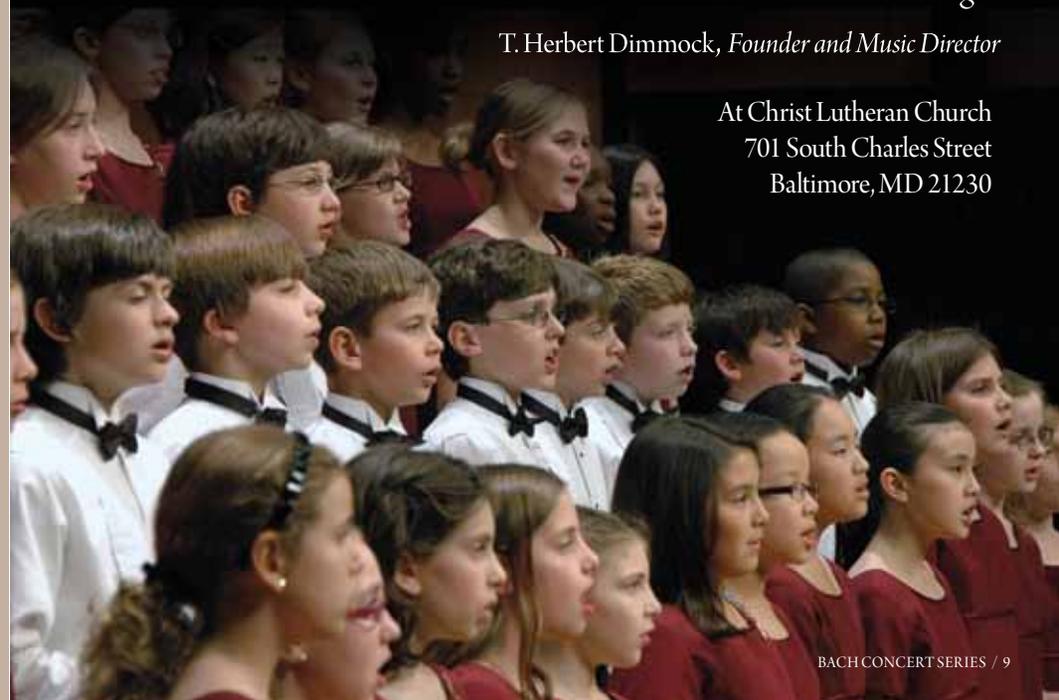
Adults: \$40 per individual concert or \$60 for both
Students up to age 22: \$20 per individual concert or \$30 for both
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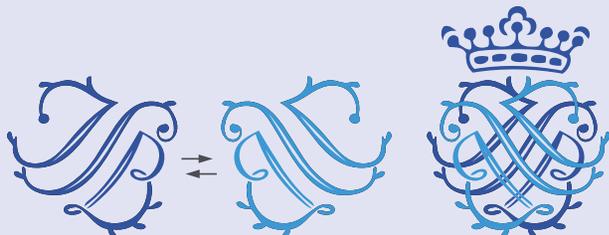


Bach's Seal

by T. Herbert Dimmock, *MUSIC DIRECTOR*

Bach's seal, used throughout his Leipzig years, contains the letters J S B superimposed over their mirror image topped with a crown.

The seal itself has become synonymous with the music of Bach. Like the seal, the beauty of Bach's music can be appreciated on many levels. A listener's first impression of Bach's music typically is that it is very pleasing. As one listens to it again and again, more and more dimensions of the music reveal themselves. Bach has a nearly infinite sense of inventiveness in his melodies, which flow endlessly and effortlessly. Bach's counterpoint is astonishingly developed – melodies can be played forwards, backwards and simultaneously and fit together flawlessly. Bach's use of musical forms is boundless in scope and inventiveness. Fugues, canons, fantasies, preludes, song, freely composed or highly imitative – all work at the highest level.



The seal reflects Bach's art. The first visual impression is pleasing. On closer examination one sees the script letters of Bach's initials [J S B] both forwards and backwards. In short, like his music, Bach's seal works on multiple levels. It is not surprising then that The Bach Concert Series has joined with a multitude of other organizations that focus on the work of Bach to honor the master by incorporating his seal into our logo.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2011, 6 PM 5TH ANNUAL BACHFEST



Join us for an evening of gourmet food, fabulous live entertainment, and a silent auction.

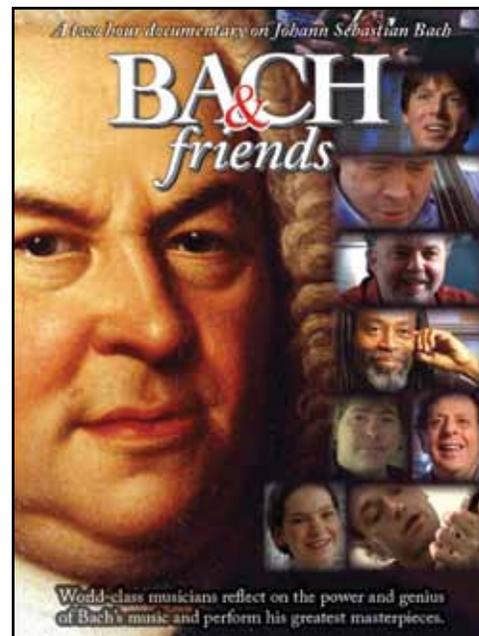
Tickets: Couples - \$140 Adult - \$75 Child 12 and under - \$25
Tickets may be purchased online at www.BachInBaltimore.org
or by phone with a major credit card by calling 1-866-811-4111

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Baltimore, MD 21230



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T. Herbert Dimmock, *Founder and Music Director*



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2011-2012 CHAMBER MUSIC SERIES

YING QUARTET

Saturday, October 1, 2011, 8:00 PM, Smith Theatre

JASON VIEAUX, GUITARIST, AND THE ESCHER STRING QUARTET

Saturday, November 19, 2011, 8:00 PM, Smith Theatre

PACIFICA QUARTET

Saturday, December 3, 2011, 8:00 PM, Smith Theatre

HAHN-BIN, VIOLINIST – YOUNG CONCERT ARTISTS WINNER

Saturday, January 14, 2012, 8:00 PM, Smith Theatre

AMERICAN STRING QUARTET & ARIEL STRING QUARTET

Saturday, January 28, 2012, 8:00 PM, Smith Theatre

GRYPHON TRIO – VIOLIN, CELLO & PIANO ENSEMBLE

Saturday, February 18, 2012, 8:00 PM, Smith Theatre

SOYEON LEE, NAUMBURG INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION WINNER

Saturday, March 17, 2012, 8:00 PM, Smith Theatre

BORCIANI 2011 STRING QUARTET COMPETITION WINNER

Saturday, April 14, 2012, 8:00 PM, Smith Theatre

~ Artists, programs, and dates subject to change ~

Endow the Future for Bach

There is a sign over the entrance to a major US zoo that reads: "In the end, we will only preserve that which we love. And, we will only love that which we understand." We teach our audience about the music of Johann Sebastian Bach while at the same time offering a superb concert experience. This approach is one that we feel certain will preserve what we all love and appreciate - Bach's music.

The arts are a labor-intensive endeavor. To perform the music of Bach on a high artistic level requires many hours of skilled labor. The Bach Concert Series has made the idealistic choice to make most of its music available at no charge to everyone in the community. This gift to Baltimore has been good for the community – and for the Bach Concert Series because it has helped grow our audience. However, every arts ensemble requires a prudent strategy to address growing operating costs.

The Bach Concert Series formed its permanent Endowment Fund with the Baltimore Community Foundation in 2009. The Foundation uses the expertise of leading financial minds who donate their expertise to manage endowment funds for many area nonprofits. The endowment ensures that the Bach Concert Series can continue to fund concerts for years to come. At the close of June 2011, the Bach Endowment Fund had reached a total of about \$70,000.

Within the permanent Endowment Fund, there are many opportunities to name or honor a person, a musician or an organization. These begin at \$3,000 to endow an orchestra member for one performance per season in perpetuity, or \$5,000 to endow a soloist or the concertmaster for a single concert per season in perpetuity. Endowing the full orchestra for a single concert every season is possible with \$30,000. A gift of \$100,000 will cover the total cost of a free Bach cantata concert each year.

To discuss a gift, please contact T. Herbert Dimmock, Music Director, thdimmock@gmail.com or Martha Connolly, Development Vice President, brunnerc@verizon.net.

The Bach Concert Series Board of Directors

The Bach Concert Series is a 501(c) (3) organization – donations to which are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. A copy of our current financial statement is available upon request to the Bach Concert Series, 701 S. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21230-3835, 410-941-9262. Documents and information submitted to the State of Maryland under the Maryland Charitable Solicitations Act are available from the Office of the Secretary of State for the cost of copying and postage.



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7:30PM

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Sweet Honey in the Rock joins Tom Hall and the Chorus in an unforgettable evening featuring their soulful harmonies, from spirituals to blues and jazz improvisations.

Christmas with Choral Arts
Tuesday, November 29, 2011 at 7:30 pm • The Baltimore Basilica
Tom Hall leads the Chorus and Orchestra in this festive holiday program in the beautiful Baltimore Basilica.

Sing-Along Messiah
Friday, December 16, 2011 at 7:30 pm • Kraushaar Auditorium at Goucher College
Tom Hall leads the Chorus, Orchestra, and the audience in the magnificent choruses of Handel's *Messiah*.

Christmas For Kids
Saturday, December 17, 2011 at 11 am • Kraushaar Auditorium at Goucher College
Featuring Pepito the Clown, Ronnie the Reindeer and a visit from Santa!

Mendelssohn's Elijah
Sunday, May 6, 2012 at 3 pm • Kraushaar Auditorium at Goucher College
Tom Hall leads the Chorus, Orchestra, and vocal soloists in this choral masterwork.

Call (410) 523-7070 or visit www.BaltimoreChoralArts.org
Tom Hall, Music Director

Bach Concert Series 2011-2012 Season Finale

June 3, 2012 at 4:00 PM

Bourrée and Gigue from Overture in D major (BWV 1068) by J. S. Bach
J. S. Bach Cantata 149: Man singet mit Freuden vom Sieg
J. S. Bach Cantata 130: Herr Gott, dich loben alle wir

Jennifer Lynn Waters, *SOPRANO* Leneida Crawford, *ALTO*
Jason Rylander, *TENOR* Jason Thoms, *BASS*

Sonata in E-flat major for flute and continuo (BWV 1031) by J. S. Bach

Kimberly Valerio, *FLUTE* Bozena Jedrzejczak, *CONTINUO*

Singing Sensations Youth Choir, *GUEST CHOIR*

Dr. Hollie Hood-Mincey, *DIRECTOR*

Tickets: Adults: \$30, Students up to age 22: \$15

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A photograph of a choir performing. The members are of various ages and are holding blue songbooks, looking intently at the music and singing.



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Benjamin Hochman, piano
- MAR 11 • 2012**
Escher String Quartet
- APR 22 • 2012**
Wonderlic Piano Finals
- MAY 20 • 2012**
Dolce Suono Trio

SUNDAYS AT 7:30

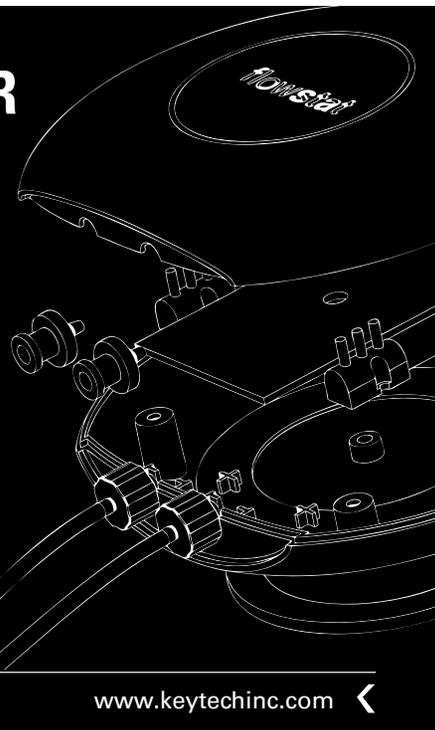
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SUNDAY SCHEDULE

- 8:30 a.m. Holy Communion with Quartet and Organ
- 8:45 a.m. Contemporary Worship with Praise Band
- 9:45 a.m. Christian Education for ALL Ages
- 11:00 a.m. Holy Communion with Full Choir and Organ

WEDNESDAY SCHEDULE

- 11:00 a.m. Morning Prayer Service
- 7:15 p.m. Candlelight Holy Communion

To learn more about Christ Church visit www.christinnerharbor.org



SUNDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2011 AT 4 PM - FREE CONCERT

J. S. Bach Cantata 140: Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme
 Bonnie McNaughton, *SOPRANO* Nick Fichter, *TENOR* Steven Rainbolt, *BASS*
 Ciaccona from Partita #2 in D minor (BWV 1004) by J.S. Bach
 Ronald Mutchnik, *VIOLIN*
 Maryland State Boychoir, *GUEST CHOIR*
 Stephen Holmes, *DIRECTOR*

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2011 AT 4 PM - FREE CONCERT

J. S. Bach Cantata 47: Wer sich selbst erhöht, der soll erniedriget werden
 Stefanie Moore, *SOPRANO*
 Fantasy and Fugue in G minor (BWV 542) by J.S. Bach
 Daniel Aune, *ORGANIST*
 Baltimore School for the Arts Chamber Choir, *GUEST CHOIR*
 Mark A. Hardy, *DIRECTOR*

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2011 AT 4 PM - FREE CONCERT

J. S. Bach Cantata 36: Schwingt freudig euch empor
 Karen Myers, *SOPRANO* Jessica Renfro, *ALTO* Kristopher Jean, *TENOR*
 Prelude and Fugue in E minor (BWV 548) by J.S. Bach
 Both Eightnotes and Vocal Chords from Park School, *GUEST CHOIR*
 Paul Hulleberg and Adele Dinerstein, *DIRECTORS*
 BachFest – immediately after the concert.
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SUNDAY, JANUARY 1, 2012 AT 4 PM - FREE CONCERT

Badinerie from Suite #2 for strings (BWV 1067) by J. S. Bach
 J. S. Bach Cantata 16: Herr Gott, dich loben wir
 Richard Kennedy, *TENOR* Mark Wilson, *BASS*
 Cello Suite #1 in G major (BWV 1007) by J. S. Bach
 Gretchen Gettes, *CELLO*

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2012 AT 4 PM - FREE CONCERT

J. S. Bach Cantata 182: Himmelskönig, sei willkommen
 Bonnie Cutsforth-Huber, *ALTO* Alex Guerrero, *TENOR* John Eisenhardt, *BASS*
 Prelude and Fugue in B minor (BWV 544) by J. S. Bach
 Daniel J. Sansone, *ORGANIST*
 Dayseye from Bryn Mawr School, *GUEST CHOIR*
 Alyson Shirk, *DIRECTOR*

SUNDAY, MARCH 4, 2012 AT 4 PM - FREE CONCERT

First Movement from Brandenburg Concerto #1 (BWV 1046) by J. S. Bach
 J. S. Bach Cantata 83: Erfreute Zeit im neuen Bunde
 Bailey Whiteman, *ALTO* J.J. Hebert, *TENOR* William Schaller, *BASS*
 Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor (BWV 582) by J. S. Bach
 Jonathan Dimmock, *ORGANIST*
 Ha Zamir Baltimore, *GUEST CHOIR* Erika Pardes Schon, *DIRECTOR*

SATURDAY, MARCH 31, 2012 AT 7:30 PM - TICKETED CONCERT

J. S. Bach St. Matthew Passion - Part I
 Jennifer Young, *SOPRANO* David Dimmock, *BASS* Monica Reinagel, *ALTO*
 Benjamin Park, *JESUS* Joseph Regan, *TENOR* Jeffery Fahnstock, *EVANGELIST*
 Children's Chorus of Maryland, *GUEST CHOIR* Alyson Shirk, *DIRECTOR*

SUNDAY, APRIL 1, 2012 AT 5 PM - TICKETED CONCERT

J. S. Bach St. Matthew Passion - Part II
 Jennifer Young, *SOPRANO* Jeffery Fahnstock, *EVANGELIST* Monica Reinagel, *ALTO*
 David Dimmock, *BASS* Joseph Regan, *TENOR* Benjamin Park, *JESUS*

SUNDAY, MAY 6, 2012 AT 4 PM - FREE CONCERT

Bourrée I, Bourrée II, Minuet, and Badinerie from Overture for flute and strings (BWV 1067) by J. S. Bach
 J. S. Bach Cantata 157: Ich lasse dich nicht, du segnest mich denn
 Taylor Armstrong, *TENOR* Phillip Collister, *BASS*
 Prelude and Fugue in A minor (BWV 543) by J. S. Bach
 Christopher Schroeder, *ORGANIST*
 Calvert Hall College High School Chamber Singers, *GUEST CHOIR*
 George Wilkerson, Jr., *DIRECTOR*

SUNDAY, JUNE 3, 2012 AT 4 PM - TICKETED CONCERT

Bourrée and Gigue from Overture in D major (BWV 1068) by J. S. Bach
 J. S. Bach Cantata 149: Man singet mit Freuden vom Sieg
 J. S. Bach Cantata 130: Herr Gott, dich loben alle wir
 Jennifer Lynn Waters, *SOPRANO* Leneida Crawford, *ALTO*
 Jason Rylander, *TENOR* Jason Thoms, *BASS*
 Sonata in E-flat major for flute and continuo (BWV 1031) by J. S. Bach
 Kimberly Valerio, *FLUTE* Bozena Jedrzejczak, *CONTINUO*
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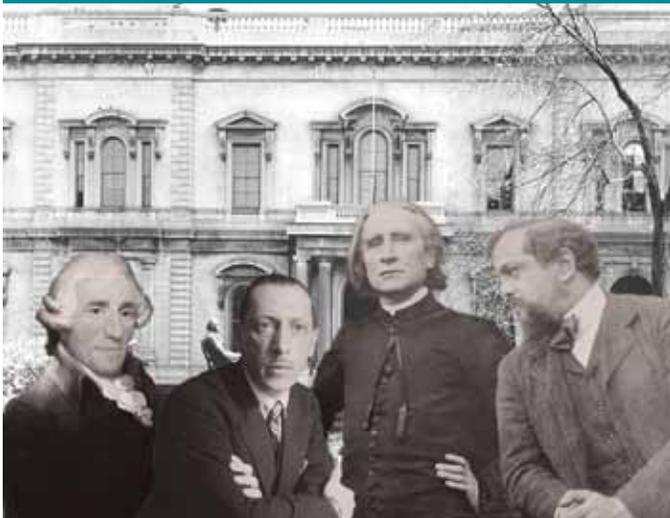
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Church Music in the Time of J. S. Bach

by T. Herbert Dimmock, *MUSIC DIRECTOR*

Since the time of the ancient Greeks, composers and philosophers believed that music had the power to both teach and change people. When Johann Sebastian Bach was born in 1685, a commonly shared goal of composers of sacred music who lived in the Lutheran area of southern Germany was to “instruct their listeners” and “touch their emotions.” Bach was just 15 years old when the composer Johann Matteson wrote that the goal of composers was to write music that would generate: “especially intense, serious, long-lasting and extremely profound emotions.” This idea – that music was a powerful, transformative medium – was to become a cornerstone of Bach’s life-long approach to composition.

For Lutheran church musicians, the “Hauptmusik” (principal music for the church service) was the church cantata. With the exception of the season of Lent, 18th century Lutheran church musicians were responsible for a musical composition of approximately 20 minutes duration to be performed at all the principal worship services. These cantatas used as texts the Bible lessons appointed for the day as well as poems, meditative writings and hymns based on the lessons. In Bach’s churches, the cantatas were performed by a choir of boys and adult male voices (we know that women also sang secretly for Bach, especially in solo passages). A small orchestra of strings and, as needed winds and brass, along with a harpsichord and/or organ accompanied the singers. Bach himself played the keyboard instrument(s). The effectiveness of these cantatas is best explained by exploring Baroque theories of composition, including the “Doctrine of Affections” and “Word Painting.” Ulrich Leisinger points out: “the starting point for every doctrine of the affections is the relation between body and mind. It was believed that affections, being passions of the mind, had physical origins. ... Contrary to appearances, emotions are not brought on by a conscious act of the soul. It is much more a case of the soul being touched, thereby creating an affection over which the soul has no conscious control.” Though this may sound a bit complicated to us today, composers like Bach found the challenge straightforward and, in fact, easy to accomplish. He could “touch” the soul with his music.

In the 18th century when Bach began writing cantatas, Baroque composers had already created a highly developed musical language founded equally on “affects” and “word painting.” The combination of traditional compositional tools of rhythm, melody and harmony and the compositional devices of word painting and the doctrine of affections resulted in a unique body of sacred music composed over a period of nearly 150 years. Bach’s consummate mastery of all of these elements and his unrivaled ability to convincingly communicate the gospel through both words and the non-verbal language

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 36)

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(Continued from page 24)

of music earned him the moniker of the “fifth evangelist.” Thus it was that the composer J. S. Bach actually became a preacher who used the entire language of music to drive home the theological points that were suggested to him in the scriptures.

In addition to the “affects” that permeate the cantatas of J. S. Bach, we also find many examples of “word painting” in the cantatas. Word painting is music that is written to sound like the meaning of the text. Action verbs such as run, fall, turn and twist afford obvious examples of word painting possibilities. Bach also liked to paint pictures in sound to depict angels (with hovering melodic ideas) the Holy Spirit (with fast-moving passages meant to depict the wind) and Satan (with twisted melodic lines meant to suggest the image of a snake) – to name just a few.

Of the roughly 300 cantatas that Bach wrote in his lifetime, we have only 200 remaining to us today. They are true treasures. Bach’s music has a timeless, universal quality to it that is deeply humanizing and can effectively communicate across a myriad of cultural boundaries. My brother, Jonathan, once said to me, “Bach was a vessel through which the world has been given a unique glimpse of eternity and paradise.” I couldn’t agree more.

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The Bach Concert Series Board of Directors



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