

Johann Sebastian BACH

MAGNIFICAT, BWV 243

with the Christmas Interpolations

Kimberly Christie, soprano
Laura Choi Stuart, soprano
Diana Cantrelle, contralto
Jason Rylander, tenor
Jason Buckwalter, baritone
William Heim, bass-baritone

THE ADVENT PROJECT

Richard Allen Roe, conductor

In 1723 Leipzig, Germany was a thriving city of roughly 30,000 inhabitants. Home to one of the finest universities in Europe, where Goethe would later study, and an annual book fair, Leipzig was a center of scholastic and intellectual life in the German speaking world. In 1539 Martin Luther preached at St. Thomas church, and it was there, with its famous school for boys and excellent choir, the Thomaner, that Johann Sebastian Bach arrived in May, to assume his new duties as Thomas-Cantor and Director of Music for the City of Leipzig.

About six weeks later, on 2 July of that year, Bach was presented with a special task: to compose music for the service of Vespers for the Feast of the Visitation. On most Saturdays and Sundays, the congregation sang the Magnificat as part of their regular Vespers services, in the vernacular, using the 9th Psalm tone. On major feast days, Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, as well as the Marian feasts, however, the expectation was for an elaborate setting with chorus, soloists and orchestra, and the text was to be sung in Latin. Even though Bach had hardly settled in, it is highly improbable that he would have turned to previously performed repertoire from the church's archives. More likely, Bach used the occasion to notify his new community that he had, indeed, arrived, and that things under his musical watch would be different. The result, the Magnificat in E-flat, BWV 243a, was the most significant setting of the text that Leipzig worshippers had ever encountered. With its large orchestra, including three trumpets and timpani, and larger than normal chorus of five parts, rather than the usual four (though this has been shown to be a tradition on these special Feast days), Bach was able to include a full range of musical styles within the single work. Some time between 1728 and 1732 Bach revised the work, transposing it to the key of D, and making some minor changes in the harmony and instrumentation. This later version has become more well-known, and is our presentation today.

Following Visitation, the next occasion Bach had to use his Magnificat was for Vespers on 25 December 1723 (for many years scholars thought the work was written specifically for Christmas, and only recently have they begun to connect its provenance to Visitation). For that liturgy four Christmas carols, the first two in German, and the other two in Latin, were required, stemming from a Leipzig tradition, wherein the Christmas story was recounted by the singing of carols during Vespers. Bach appended his original E-flat score at the end with these short carols, notifying the musicians with written notices in the score's margins, that one of the carols was to be performed next, before proceeding to the subsequent Magnificat verse (hence the term, "Christmas Interpolations"). However, Bach did not include these interpolated pieces, nor did he make any notice of them, in his revised score. The four carols have been transposed by modern editors to the key of D major, allowing for holiday performances to include their cheerful tidings...in the same key as the well-known, later revised Magnificat.

The music itself was (and remains) challenging, to both musicians and listeners. High technical demands, rhythmic acuity, extended range, advanced harmony, stylistic nuances, and difficult articulation issues abound in the work. For a boy choir, even one as famous as the Thomaner, it would have been a wake-up call. For listeners, the insistent and constant association of musical motive wedded to the text would serve to gain Bach his reputation as the "Fifth Evangelist."

Bach's mission, it seems, was to interpret the Biblical text in a traditional and orthodox manner (but not narrowly so), and then use music to express the important aspects of meaning. In Luther's words, Mary, "...the Holy Virgin, experienced this herself, that God worked such great things, even though she was despised, homely, poor and scorned, the Holy Spirit taught her this rich art and wisdom, that the Lord God is a God, who has nothing to do with us, other than to raise up that which is lowly, to bring down that which is haughty, to break-up what is powerful, and make whole that which is broken." There is no doubt that Bach knew this Marian theology; his Magnificat boldly expresses precisely this broadly accessible notion in so many ways.

*Müllhaupt, Erwin. Martin Luther's Gospel Commentary, pt 1.3. p 105 ff. Göttingen, Vandenhoeck + Ruprecht, 1957.

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Text and Translation

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| 1. <i>Magnificat anima mea Dominum,</i> | 1. My soul doth magnify the Lord, |
| 2. <i>Et exsultavit spiritus meus
in Deo salutari meo.</i> | 2. And my spirit hath rejoiced
in God my saviour. |
| 3. <i>Vom Himmel hoch da komm ich her
ich bring euch gute neue Mär,
den guten Mär bring ich so viel,
davon ich sing'n und sagen will.</i> | 3. <i>From heaven above to earth I come
To bear good news to every home;
Glad tidings of great joy I bring,
Whereof I now will say and sing.</i> |
| 4. <i>Quia respexit humilitatem
ancillae suae.
Ecce enim ex hoc beatam</i> | 4. For He hath regarded the low estate of His
handmaiden: for behold, from
henceforth shall call me blessed |
| 5. <i>Omnes generationes.</i> | 5. All generations. |
| 6. <i>Quia fecit mihi magna, qui potens est.
Et sanctum nomen eius.</i> | 6. For He that is mighty hath done great
things: and holy is His name. |
| 7. <i>Freut euch und jubiliert,
zu Bethlehem gefunden wird,
das herzeliebe Jesulein,
das soll euer Freud und Wonne sein.</i> | 7. <i>Rejoice and be glad,
at Bethlehem is found
the loving Jesus child,
who will become your joy and delight.</i> |
| 8. <i>Et misericordia a progenie
in progenies timentibus eum.</i> | 8. And His mercy is on them that fear Him,
from generation to generation. |
| 9. <i>Fecit potentiam in brachio suo dispersit
mente cordis sui.</i> | 9. He hath shewed strength with His arm; He
hath scattered the proud in the
imagination of their hearts. |
| 10. <i>Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax,
hominibus bona voluntas.</i> | 10. <i>Glory to God in the highest, and peace on
Earth, goodwill to all.</i> |
| 11. <i>Deposuit potentes de sede,
et exsultavit humiles.</i> | 11. He hath put down the mighty from their
seats, and exalted them of low degree. |
| 12. <i>Esurientes implevit bonis,
et divites dimisit inanes.</i> | 12. He hath filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he hath sent empty away. |
| 13. <i>Virga Jesse floruit,
induit carnem hominis,
fit puer delectabilis. Alleluja.</i> | 13. <i>The branch of Jesse flowers, Our Emmanuel
appears; He takes on the flesh of
humanity, becoming a delightful boy,
Alleluia.</i> |
| 14. <i>Suscepit Israel puerum suum,
recordatus misericordiae suae.</i> | 14. He hath holpen His servant Israel
in remembrance of his mercy. |
| 15. <i>Sicut locutus est ad Patres nostros,
Abraham, et semini ejus, in saecula.</i> | 15. As He spake to our fathers,
Abraham, and his seed forever. |
| 16. <i>Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto,
sicut erat in principio,
et nunc, et semper,
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.</i> | 16. Glory to the Father, to the son, and to the
Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be, world
without end. Amen. |

Luke 1: 46 - 55 (KJV)

The Advent Project
Richard Allen Roe, Conductor
Ronald Duquette, Chorus Manager

<i>Soprano</i>	<i>Alto</i>	<i>Tenor</i>	<i>Bass</i>
Regina Bandy	Diana Cantrelle	Ronald Duquette	Jason Buckwalter
Katie Baughman	Emily Jaworski	Alan Naylor	Casey Cook
Sophia Chen	Sonya Knussen	David Page	Latham Gunn
Kimberly Christie	Carolee Pastorius	Jason Rylander	William Heim
Carolyn Forte	Shelley Waite	Adam Smith	Don Juran
Kelly Jones	Patrice Weiglein Roe	Ari Stern	Arthur LaRue
Sarah Lundquist			Daryl Yoder
Sara MacKimmie			
Emily Kate Naydeck			
Nancy MacArthur Smith			
Robin Smith			
Laura Choi Stuart			
Amy K. Sullivan			

<i>Flute</i>	<i>Violin I</i>	<i>Contrabass</i>
Shaughn Dowd	Regino Madrid,	Glenn Dewey
Angela Uperti-Hite	concertmaster	
	Kim Miller	<i>Organ</i>
<i>Oboe/Oboe d'amore</i>	Bill Tortolano	Timothy Newton
Wes Nichols	Joanna Owen	
Mark Christianson		<i>Continuo Organ: Bennett & Giuttari, Op. 40, Supplied by David M. Storey, Baltimore, MD</i>
<i>Bassoon</i>	<i>Violin II</i>	
Eric Dirksen	Steve Romer	
	Alexis Benard	
	Laura Knutson	
<i>Trumpet</i>	<i>Viola</i>	<i>The Advent Project is seeking volunteers! We have many administrative tasks to perform, and would gratefully appreciate your help. Please contact Patrice Weiglein Roe at 301.309.8904 to give your support for our next concerts.</i>
Woody English	Chris Shieh	
Bill Hargreaves	Derek Smith	
Francis Allegra	Marta Howard	
<i>Timpani</i>	<i>Violoncello</i>	<i>"Like" us on Facebook: www.Facebook.com/TheAdvent Project</i>
Glenn Paulson	Chris Moehlenkamp	
	Charlie Powers	

*A reception is offered in De Sales Hall (adjacent to the church)
following the performance. All are invited.*