

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHORAL SOCIETY

81ST SEASON

ASSEMBLY HALL, TUNBRIDGE WELLS

SUNDAY 24TH MARCH 1985

3.00 P.M.

# St. John Passion (Bach)

EVANGELIST – MICHAEL GOLDTHORPE (Tenor)

JESUS – JONATHAN ROBARTS (Bass)

JILL WASHINGTON (Soprano)

SUSAN MASON (Contralto)

ALAN DUFFIELD (Tenor)

HARPSICHORD – WILMARC ELLMAN

ORCHESTRA LEADER – JANE PAMMENT

CONDUCTOR – DEREK WATMOUGH

ENTRY BY PROGRAMME – £3.50

(SENIOR CITIZENS £3.00, CHILDREN £1.50)

## The St John Passion – J.S. Bach

J.S. Bach, whose tricentenary we are celebrating, was born at Eisenach on 21st March 1685, but it was not until 1722-3 that he composed his St John Passion. In this work he followed a long tradition of setting the Good Friday gospel for choral presentation, which had evolved from the medieval Mystery Plays into simple plainsong arrangements of the biblical text. This ancient mode was transformed in the 16th century by Schütz, born exactly 100 years before Bach, who imported a lyrical Italian style from Monteverdi. In Germany it was brought to its culmination by Bach in the Lutheran church.

Bach actually composed the St John for performance on Good Friday at St Thomas's church in Leipzig, his first major offering as their new cantor. The restricted time available (a mere ten weeks for composition and rehearsal) together with the mystical nature of St John's version of the events, seem to have forced Bach to yield to the natural flood of his religious fervour, so much the core of his everyday life. Thus, although invariably artistically controlled, his composition swept forward, vital, elemental, and utterly spiritual, with results which make its intensely dramatic impact just as forceful today as 250 years ago. His choruses of angry mobs, cynical soldiery, and biting sarcastic Pharisees still express character as forcefully as any composer since.

But Bach was dissatisfied with his work after its initial presentation, and before repeating it the next year replaced five of the original numbers, most notably the great chorale "O Man bewail" – it turns up, however, in amplified contrapuntal form in the St Matthew! – replacing it with "Lord our Redeemer", which to modern tastes seems less attractive.

Similarly, modern listeners are apt to query the interpolation of lengthy "reflective" arias which appear to hold up the drama overmuch, however beautiful their vocal lines or beguiling their accompaniments. This was nevertheless the practice of the age; the Passion was an ever-living event which could never be sufficiently pondered or commented upon. Bach's use of chorales (settings of hymns familiar to his audience, who joined in their singing) impelled rather than impeded the story-flow, indicating his intention to build a forceful recital of the drama, even when necessary including snatches of St Matthew's gospel for greater effect.

Incidentally, the Leipzig city fathers considered the St John Passion "too theatrical" and Bach's contract was adjusted to include a stipulation that he curb the dramatic expressiveness of his church music. Did he ponder this admonition when later composing his St Matthew, one wonders?

Not only did Bach personally select and place the St John chorales, but he probably also wrote the text for many arias. The fact that he repeated some of the music – "Jesus of Nazareth" for instance is used in varied guises for five of the short crowd choruses – was not due to lack of time or inventiveness, otherwise he would surely have remedied such deficiencies when revising next year. It was, rather, an integral part of Bach's architectural symmetry of form, which is so apparent in this monumental work, such balanced perfection invariably being matched by his inexhaustible harmonic invention.

PART I

No.		No.	
1	Lord and Master in all lands Chorus	12	And Simon Peter followed Jesus
2	Jesus went forth with his disciples Recit. (Tenor and Bass)		Recit. (Tenor)
3	Jesus of Nazareth Chorus	13	I follow in gladness to meet Thee
4	Jesus saith unto them, I am he Recit. (Tenor and Bass)		Air (Soprano)
5	Jesus of Nazareth Chorus	14	Now that disciple was known
6	Jesus answered, I have told you Recit. (Tenor and Bass)		Recit. (Soprano, Tenor and Bass)
7	O mighty love, O love beyond all measure Chorus	15	Ah! whence this hatred shown Thee?
8	That the saying might be fulfilled Recit. (Tenor and Bass)		Chorale
9	Thy will, O God, be always done Chorale	16	Now Annas had sent him bound
10	Then the band and the chief captain Recit. (Tenor)		Recit. (Tenor)
11	Chains of bondage that I wrought me Air (Alto)	17	Art thou not one of his disciples?
			Chorus
		18	He denied it, and said, I am not
			Recit. (Tenor and Bass)
		19	Ah! my soul, what end awaiteth thee
			Air (Tenor)
		20	Peter in forgetfulness
			Chorale

INTERVAL OF 15 MINUTES

PART II

21	He, Whose life was as the light Chorale	46	We have no king but Caesar Chorus
22	Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas Recit. (Tenor and Bass)	47	Then delivered he him unto them Recit. (Tenor)
23	If this man were not a malefactor Chorus	48	Haste, poor souls ensnared in treason Air (Bass) with Chorus
24	Then said Pilate unto them Recit. (Tenor and Bass)	49	And there they crucified him Recit. (Tenor)
25	It is not lawful Chorus	50	Write thou not, The king of the Jews Chorus
26	That the saying of Jesus Recit. (Tenor and Bass)	51	Pilate answered, What I have written Recit. (Tenor and Bass)
27	O King of glory Chorale	52	Thy Name is shining on me Chorale
28	Pilate therefore said unto him Recit. (Tenor and Bass)	53	The soldiers therefore, when they had crucified Recit. (Tenor)
29	Not this man, but Barabbas Chorus	54	Let us not divide it Chorus
30	Now Barabbas was a robber Recit. (Tenor)	55	That the Scripture might be fulfilled Recit. (Tenor and Bass)
31	Come, ponder, O my soul Arioso (Bass)	56	See Him now, the Righteous One Chorus
32	Behold Him: See! Air (Tenor)	57	And from that hour that disciple took her Recit. (Tenor and Bass)
33	And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns Recit. (Tenor)	58	All is fulfilled Air (Alto)
34	Hail, thou King of the Jews Chorus	59	And he bowed his head Recit. (Tenor)
35	And they smote him with their hands Recit. (Tenor and Bass)	60	My Lord and Saviour let me ask Thee Air (Bass) with Chorale
36	Crucify him Chorus	61	And behold, the veil of the Temple Recit. (Tenor)
37	Pilate saith unto them Recit. (Tenor and Bass)	62	My heart, behold the world intent Arioso (Tenor)
38	We have a law Chorus	63	O heart, melt in weeping Air (Soprano)
39	When Pilate therefore heard that saying Recit. (Tenor and Bass)	64	The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation Recit. (Tenor)
40	O Christ, Thy fetters mean release Chorus	65	Help us, O Thou Son of God Chorale
41	But the Jews cried out Recit. (Tenor)	66	And after this, Joseph of Arimathaea Recit. (Tenor)
42	If thou let this man go Chorus	67	Rest here in peace Chorus
43	When Pilate therefore heard that saying Recit. (Tenor and Bass)	68	Ah! Lord, when my last end is come Chorus
44	Away with him Chorus		Chorale
45	Pilate saith unto them Recit. (Tenor and Bass)		

**JILL WASHINGTON** (Soprano) comes from Stoke-on-Trent. She studied at the Royal Academy of Music with Marjorie Thomas until 1980 and went on to the National Opera Studio. While at the Academy she sang the roles of Nanetta (Falstaff) and Tytania (Midsummer Night's Dream) and appeared with the D'oyly Carte Company. Miss Washington joined Glyndebourne Touring Opera in 1981 and returned there this season. Concert appearances have included "Messiah from Scratch" at the Royal Albert Hall with Sir David Wilcocks, Beethoven's Choral Symphony with the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra, and appearances at the Purcell Room and Queen Elizabeth Hall in programmes of Telemann and Bach.



**SUSAN MASON** (Contralto) was born in York and studied in London with Audrey Langford. She made her South Bank debut in 1981 performing works by Schubert and Mozart at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. Her debut at the Royal Festival Hall was in 1982 and this was followed by a Henry Wood Promenade Concert in 1984.

She has received numerous prizes and awards, particularly for her singing of Handel and Mozart; and for her recent work on the concert and oratorio platforms. She has been acclaimed as one of the country's most promising young contraltos.

This is Susan's fourth appearance with us, the previous ones being Vivaldi's "Gloria", Bach's "Christmas Oratorio" and Elgar's "Dream of Gerontius". We welcome her back.



**MICHAEL GOLDTHORPE** (Tenor) Michael also makes his fourth appearance with us, the previous ones being Mozart's "Mass in C Minor", Bach's "Christmas Oratorio" and in 1974, he sang the same role of Evangelist. He was born and educated in York, and studied as a choral exhibitioner at Trinity College, Cambridge. Following various awards to young musician schemes, he has followed an active freelance career, frequently appearing in all major London concert halls, as well as the rest of Britain and Europe. Michael has given recitals, broadcasts for Radio 3 and sung at various European festivals. He has specialised in difficult high tenor parts (haute-contre) of the French Baroque period and has of late included demonstrations of his comic skill in leading roles in several Offenbach operettas.

**ALAN DUFFIELD** (Tenor) was born in Ripon, Yorkshire and studied singing at the Birmingham School of Music and later at the National Opera Studio. He has made several television and radio broadcasts, notably Mozart's "Requiem" and Haydn's "Nelson Mass". He has performed a very wide range of oratorio, specialising in particular in Baroque and twentieth century repertoire. Alan's recent operatic work includes roles with the Glyndebourne Touring Opera and the New Sussex Opera. Engagements in 1983 include his debut with the English National Opera in Monteverdi's "Orfeo".



**JONATHAN ROBARTS** (Bass). Jonathan sang previously with us in Beethoven's "Missa Solemnis", Schubert "Mass in A Flat" and Puccini "Messa di Gloria". He was born in Edinburgh and began his professional singing career at King's College, Cambridge and later at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Jonathan has worked with various vocal ensembles and choirs all over Britain and has broadcasted frequently on Channel 3 with the BBC Singers. His love of German Lieder is enhanced by his study of languages whilst at university. As a result, he is able to compile varied and interesting programmes based on French, German and English song repertoires. Last year, he sang in performances of Bach's "B Minor Mass" and Mozart's "Requiem" at the Queen Elizabeth Hall.



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## 81st SEASON

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We are most grateful for the support of Patrons and Vice-Presidents and new ones are always welcome. Please ring or write to the General Secretary, Mr L.A. Lee, 233 Greggs Wood Road, Tunbridge Wells (TW 21937).

The Choir rehearses on Monday evenings from September to April. New members are always welcome. There is a simple and private audition. Please ring the General Secretary (as above) if you are interested in becoming a singing member.



The National Federation of Music Societies, to which the Society is affiliated, give support towards the cost of concerts with the funds provided by the Arts Council of Great Britain. The Tunbridge Wells Borough Council also provides guarantees.

The Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society is a registered charity.