



J.S. Bach

St. John Passion, BWV 245

John Mark Ainsley

Catherine Bott

Stephen Richardson

Michael Chance

Paul Agnew

Stephen Varcoe

Brandenburg Consort

Roy Goodman

King's College Choir,

Cambridge

Stephen Cleobury

Johann Sebastian Bach: *St John Passion, BWV 245*

Part I			23	Recitative. "Die Juden aber schrieen und sprachen"	4:14
1	Chorus. "Herr, unser Herrscher"	8:35	24	Aria. "Eilt, ihr angefochtenen Seelen"	4:05
2	Recitative. "Jesus ging mit seinen Jüngern"	2:28	25	Recitative. "Allda kreuzigten sie ihn"	2:12
3	Chorale. "O gross Lieb"	0:47	26	Chorale. "In meines Herzens Grunde"	1:06
4	Recitative. "Auf dass das Wort erfüllet wurde"	1:07	27	Recitative. "Die Kriegsknechte aber"	3:57
5	Chorale. "Dein Will gescheh, Herr Gott, zugleich"	0:54	28	Chorale. "Er nahm alles wohl in acht"	1:00
6	Recitative. "Die Schar aber und der Oberhauptmann"	0:53	29	Recitative. "Und von Stund an nahm sie der Jünger"	1:31
7	Aria. "Von der Stricken meiner Sünden"	4:45	30	Aria. "Es ist vollbracht!"	5:32
8	Recitative. "Simon Petrus aber folgete Jesu nach"	0:16	31	Recitative. "Und neiget das Haupt und verschied"	0:28
9	Aria. "Ich folge dir gleichfalls mit freidigen Schritten"	3:52	32	Aria. "Mein teurer Heiland, lass dich fragen"	4:43
10	Recitative. "Derselbige Jünger war dem Hohenpriester bekannt"	3:16	33	Recitative. "Und siehe da, der Vorhang im Tempel zerriss"	0:32
11	Chorale. "Wer hat dich so geschlagen"	1:38	34	Arioso. "Mein Herz, in dem ganze Welt"	0:59
12	Recitative. "Und Hannas sandte ihn gebunden"	2:31	35	Aria. "Zerfliesse, mein Herze"	7:10
13	Aria. "Ach, mein Sinn"	2:29	36	Recitative. "Die Juden aber, dieweil es der Rüsttag war"	2:17
14	Chorale. "Petrus, der nicht denkt zurück"	1:08	37	Chorale. "O hilf, Christe, Gottes Sohn"	0:58
15	Chorale. "Christus, der uns selig macht"	1:02	38	Recitative. "Darnach bat Pilatum Joseph von Arimathia"	2:19
			39	Chorus. "Ruht wohl, ihr heiligen Gebeine"	6:25
			40	Chorale. "Ach, Herr lass dein lieb Engelein"	1:51
Part II			Appendix		
16	Recitative. "Da führeten sie Jesum"	4:16	41	Chorale. "O Mensch, beweine deine Sünde gross"	5:47
17	Chorale. "Ach grosser König"	1:29	42	Aria. "Himmel reisse, Welt erbebe"	3:58
18	Recitative. "Da sprach Pilatus zu ihm"	2:02	43	Aria. "Zerschmettert mich"	5:31
19	Arioso. "Betrachte, meine Seele"	2:32	44	Aria. "Ach windet euch nicht so"	6:14
20	Aria. "Erwäge, wie sein blutgefärbter Rücken"	8:42	45	Chorale. "Christe, du Lamm Gottes"	4:02
21	Recitative. "Und die Kriegsknechte flochten eine Krone"	5:46			
22	Chorus. "Durch dein Gefängnis, Gottes Sohn"	0:54			

John Mark Ainsley, *Evangelist* (tenor)

Stephen Varcoe, *Pilatus* (bass)

Stephen Richardson, *Christus* (bass)

Catherine Bott, *soprano* • Michael Chance, *alto* • Paul Agnew, *tenor*

Brandenburg Consort • Roy Goodman, *director*

King's College Choir, Cambridge • Stephen Cleobury, *conductor*



John Mark Ainsley



Paul Agnew



Stephen Varcoe



Stephen Richardson



Catherine Bott



Michael Chance

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

The Bach family had lived near Leipzig since the fourteenth century, a region of Germany that was very sympathetic to the Lutheran doctrine. Unfortunately for its inhabitants it was fought over during the vicious Thirty Years War (1618-48) and many followers of Luther were slaughtered and their property destroyed. The composer Heinrich Schutz (1585-1672) was profoundly affected by what he had witnessed during this war: hitherto his music had shown the benign influence of his teacher Monteverdi; following the war his music became austere with his Passions being scored for smaller forces and almost starved of emotion. A movement known as Pietism spread quickly throughout the Protestant areas of Germany, being especially prevalent around Leipzig. The Pietists were strictly against all forms of elaborate worship and believed that salvation could only be achieved through strict adherence to the sacrament, the sermon and the Bible in every aspect of their daily life. They often clashed with the Lutherans who believed that music played an important part in man's spiritual well-being. for as Luther said: *'God has created man for the express purpose of praising and extolling Him. However when man's natural musical ability is whetted and polished to the extent that it becomes art, then do we note with great surprise the great and perfect wisdom of God in music, which is after all his product and gift...The whole purpose of harmony is the glory of God; all other use is but the idle juggling of Satan.'*

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 -1750), a Lutheran, was specifically asked by St Thomas' Church, Leipzig, to supply a non-theatrical Passion, which sounds like a

contradiction in terms. In this context Passion stands for the act of passive suffering, of watching and occasionally empathising in the suffering of Christ, a development which began in the Middle Ages when the church took steps to popularise the Bible. When sung, the role of the narrator (Evangelist) would be taken by a tenor and that of Jesus by a bass. As instruments were added they began to be grouped with certain roles and as with opera any dramatic action in the text occurred during recitative. The chorus would have two functions: to participate in the action and then to reflect upon it, such reflections being provided by the chorales which were Lutheran hymns familiar to the congregation. Bach was 'provincial' in the sense that he rarely travelled far from Leipzig and was therefore not readily exposed to recent musical developments elsewhere. and he saw little reason to make great changes in the established performance practice of this type of music. In any case Leipzig, with its small roster of town musicians and amateurs would have been unable to provide more than the basics in musical resources.

St John Passion was first performed in 1724 as part of a church service during Holy Week at St Thomas' Church in Leipzig with other items being added the following year, included in this recording ('1725 setting'), although later Bach reverted to the original 1724 version. With its trial scenes *St John Passion* is noticeably more dramatic than the *St Matthew Passion* which followed a couple of years later. It is scored for the following players: 2 flutes, 2 oboes (includes oboes d'amore and di caccia), bassoon, strings (including viola da gamba and viola d'amore), and a continuo section that includes lute. The tenor and bass

soloists sing the parts of the Evangelist and Jesus respectively whilst other singers share the remaining roles. The two parts are of uneven length with the break taken following Peter's denial at which time the sermon would be delivered.

The opening chorus is a massive and densely scored da capo movement in which the chorus sing against undulating semiquavers over a pedal accompaniment. The action begins with Jesus and his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane where they are interrupted by Judas and the crowd who have been sent to arrest him. Jesus' calm response seems to check the crowd whereupon the first chorale "O grosse Lieb" contrasts His love and suffering with our living for pleasure. Peter's sudden act of violence in cutting off the High Priest's servant's ear brings another chorale asking for patience in times of trouble. Two arias follow: the first is sorrowful in contemplation of Jesus who is by now bound; the second for soprano is joyful accompanying Peter's declaration that he will follow Jesus come what may. Next comes Peter's threefold denial, each denial being repeated a tone higher, which in turn is followed by a chorale in which the congregation protests at the injustice of Jesus' treatment and a tenor aria depicting Peter's despair. The first part ends with an expressive chorale that moves from horror at Peter's denial to a prayer for forgiveness containing a sharp discord on the word 'bases' (evil).

The bulk of *Part 2* is taken up with the trial. Pilate puts forth several arguments to the Jews which are answered in short, declamatory phrases. (in recent years these passages have given rise to debate that this work might actually be anti-Judaic, although surely Bach is only giving

an interpretation of the Gospel.) This part contains some of the most emotive music written by Bach with key words such as 'geisselte' (scourged) scored melodramatically for effect. In the midst of the action comes a long and beautiful tenor aria 'Erwage, wie sein blutgefärbter Rücken' followed almost immediately by a mocking chorus during which time the Jews become more insistent. Finally Jesus is delivered over to be crucified whereupon the bass soloist presses for haste in carrying out the sentence 'Eilt, ihr angefocht'nen Seelen'. A chorale tune familiar as the hymn 'All glory, laud and honour' follows the act of placing Jesus on the Cross. As the soldiers cast lots for Jesus' coat the sound of the dice being rattled can be clearly heard in the cello continuo. One passage, the rending of the temple veil, comes from St Matthew's Gospel and the following earthquake shows some imagination but Bach was to achieve far more in the *St Matthew Passion*. The work closes with a chorus, bidding Jesus to rest well, and a chorale beginning in tranquility but closing in majesty.

For this performance under the direction of Stephen Cleobury, the King's College Choir is joined by an impressive array of Baroque specialists headed by the tenor John Mark Ainsley (Evangelist) and the bass Stephen Richardson as Christ. They are joined by the soprano Catherine Bott, the alto Michael Chance and baritone Stephen Varcoe (who also takes the part of Pilate). The orchestra in this performance, the Brandenburg Consort, was founded by Roy Goodman (previously a star soloist at King's) and is one of the most vital sounding period music groups to be found.

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