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SOPRANO

Alex Potter
COUNTertenOR

Thomas Hobbs
TENOR

Stephan MacLeod
BASS-BARITONE

Pacific Baroque Orchestra

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Pre-concert chat with
host Matthew White at 6:45:

Alexander Weimann
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BACH - TRAUERODE BWV 198

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

“Lass, Fürstin, lass noch einen Strahl” (Trauerode) – CANTATA BWV 198
Soprano, Alto, Tenore, Basso, 4-part Chorus,
Flauto traverso I/II, Oboe d’amore I/II, Violino I/II, Viola, Viola da gamba I/II, Liuto I/II, Continuo

ERSTER TEIL:
Coro: Lass, Fürstin, lass noch einen Strahl
Recitativo: Dein Sachsen, dein bestürztes Meißen
Aria: Verstummt, verstummt, ihr holden Saiten!
Recitativo: Der Glocken bebendes Getön
Aria: Wie starb die Heldin so vergnügt!
Recitativo: Ihr Leben ließ die Kunst zu sterben
Coro: An dir, du Fürbild großer Frauen,

ZWEITER TEIL:
Aria: Der Ewigkeit saphirnes Haus
Recitativo: Was Wunder ists? Du bist es wert
Coro: Doch, Königin! du stirbest nicht

INTERVAL

“Wir müssen durch viel Trübsal” – CANTATA BWV 146
Soprano, Alto, Tenore, Basso, 4-part Chorus,
Flauto traverso I/II, Oboe I/II, Taille, Oboe d’amore I/II, Violino I/II, Viola, Organo, Continuo

Sinfonia
Coro: Wir müssen durch viel Trübsal in das Reich Gottes eingehen.
Aria: Ich will nach dem Himmel zu
Recitativo: Ach! wer doch schon im Himmel wär!
Aria: Ich sää meine Zähren
Recitativo: Ich bin bereit
Aria (Duetto): Wie will ich mich freuen, wie will ich mich laben
Choral: Freu dich sehr, o meine Seele

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This concert is generously supported
by the Drance Family in honour of
José Verstappen and Betty Drance.
This was Bach at work, according to his colleague, Thomas School Rector Johann Matthias Gesner. Often imagined today to be a difficult and demanding character constantly in conflict with bosses and colleagues, Gesner’s description and the music on this programme show a different side of Johann Sebastian Bach, a consummate musician balancing and harmonizing diverse considerations and opposing forces: the abilities and needs of his ensemble members, the demands and desires of his employers, musical ideals with constrains of time and personnel, tensions between Protestants and Catholics, sacred and secular spheres, and paradoxes of faith.

As Thomas Cantor, Bach was responsible for preparing the music for Leipzig’s four main churches and organizing music for various civic functions. At the beginning of his tenure in Leipzig, he ambitiously endeavoured to provide his own cantatas for all fifty-nine of the Sunday services and special feast days in the liturgical year, weekly composing, copying, and rehearsing half an hour of new music with a vocal ensemble of eight to twelve school students and an instrumental ensemble consisting of four professional town musicians and whichever older Thomas School pupils, university students, or Bach sons could play well enough to fill in the gaps... all the while teaching basic musicianship skills to the young musicians. Not surprisingly, then, he sometimes turned for help and inspiration to music that he had written earlier in his career. The first two movements of Cantata 146 were probably based on a violin concerto, now lost, from his time in Weimar. Here, Bach substitutes organ for violin, reinventing the first movement as an exuberant sinfonia with a shimmering organ solo, and the second movement as a lamenting chorus, ingeniously weaving vocal parts into the original instrumental texture. The tortuous violin line, once the focus of this movement, becomes an organ solo commenting on the music and message of the chorus. Although the only parts surviving from this cantata date from after Bach’s lifetime, it was likely composed sometime between 1726 and 1728 along with several other cantatas with organ solos. Probably, Bach had a gifted young keyboard player among his pupils, whom he chose to challenge and exhibit, perhaps his eldest son Wilhelm Friedemann, then in his mid-teens. A few years later, this music surfaces again as a harpsichord concerto with parts copied by teenaged Carl Philipp Emanuel. Evidently, J.S. Bach considered it successful teaching material.

Cantata 146 meditates on Jesus’ farewell message, the gospel text for Jubilate Sunday, the third Sunday after Easter. “Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.” The juxtaposition of the sorrows of mortal life and the comfort offered by faith and the hope of heaven characterize this entire cantata. Following the sorrow of the opening chorus, the pendulum swings to emphasize joy, shadowed by worldliness painted with dark harmonies, in the alto aria “I would go to heaven”, then back again in the agitated soprano recitative and aria “I sow my tears with an anxious heart”. Strikingly pairing the sweet mellowness of the flute with the dark, mournful timbre of two oboes d’amore, this aria expresses such intense suffering that hope for future union with God becomes a longing for death. The dance-inspired tenor and bass duet transports us back to the realm of rejoicing, and the cantata is summed up with a simple chorale verse.

By contrast, Cantata 198, the mourning ode for Saxon Electress and Polish Queen Christiane Eberhardine, is a secular cantata celebrating the princess’ life, written to accompany the funeral oration held in her honour at the University Church in Leipzig in 1727. The poem, by rising star of the literary world, Johann Christoph Gottsched, follows learned conventions rooted in classical rhetoric, lamenting and emphasizing the extent of the loss, praising and memorializing the electress, and consoling her loyal subjects. Faced with a strophic poem and seriously pressed for time, Bach carves the text somewhat arbitrarily into the alternating recitatives and arias with framing choruses characteristic of the cantata. However, he honours the many striking images in the poem by giving the recitatives graphic orchestral accompaniment, rather than the usual sparse support of continuo alone, and by setting the music for an unusually diverse and colourful instrumental ensemble,
including flutes, oboes, oboes d'amore, violins, violas, violas da gamba, two lutes and continuo. Perhaps mindful of the scholarly audience, his music deliberately demonstrates compositional skill. Each of the choruses applies a different musical principal. The first is a concerto, featuring each instrumental group in turn, the second is a fugue, and the last a dance song. The whole cantata centres around the moment of the electoress’ “cheerful” death, which Bach sets as an alto aria accompanied by the particularly subdued tones of two violas da gamba and two lutes.

The commission of this cantata was a political minefield for Bach. In 1727, he did not hold any official university position, and attempts were made to have the music composed by the music director of the university church, Johann Gottlieb Görner, with whom Bach had already had professional conflicts. After the student organizing the memorial threatened to cancel the event, the university registrar sought Bach’s signature on a declaration that this commission would not set a precedent for abuse of Görner’s rights in the future. Bach avoided signing the document, and two years later, became director of the collegium musicum at the university. Remarkably, his personal friendship with Görner remained intact until the end of his life, when Maria Magdalena asked Görner to act as guardian for four of the young Bach children. The memorial also highlighted religious conflict in Saxony. The electoress was revered by her Lutheran subjects for not concurring with her husband’s conversion to Catholicism, hence she is referred to as “protector of the faith” in this cantata. Under the law, the elector had the right to force his subjects to convert to his faith of choice. Just a few years later, Bach proved he had carefully navigated these tensions, seeking and receiving an official position as court composer at the Catholic Saxon court.

The cantatas on this programme and the stories surrounding them show Bach attending to the needs and desires of the people around him, teaching, comforting, memorializing. This programme and the whole of the Vancouver Bach Festival celebrates the continued power of Bach’s music to build bridges, cross boundaries, explore paradox, and speak to the human condition.
Orchestra listing (I asked Jonathan for these)

Also, the following need to be included:

Bio Gli Angeli

Bios Soloists

Bio PBO

Bio Alex
“Lass, Fürstin, lass noch einen Strahl“  
(TRAUERODE)  
CANTATA BWV 198

ERSTER TEIL

Coro  
Flauto traverso I/II, Oboe d’amore I/II, Viola da gamba I/II, Liuto I/II, Violino I/II, Viola, Continuo

Lass, Fürstin, lass noch einen Strahl  
Aus Salems Sterngewölben schießen.  
Und sieh, mit wieviel Tränengüssen  
Umringen wir dein Ehrenmal.

Recitativo  
Soprano,  
Violino I/II, Viola, Continuo

Dein Sachsen, dein bestürztes Meißen  
Erstarrt bei deiner Königsgruft;  
Das Auge tränt, die Zunge ruft:  
Mein Schmerz kann unbeschreiblich heißen!  
Hier klagt August und Prinz und Land,  
Der Adel ächzt, der Bürger trauert,  
Wie hat dich nicht das Volk bedauert,  
Sobald es deinen Fall empfand!

Aria  
Soprano,  
Violino I/II, Viola, Continuo

Verstummt, verstummt, ihr holden Saiten!  
Kein Ton vermag der Länder Not  
Bei ihrer teuren Mutter Tod,  
O Schmerzenswort! recht anzudeuten.

Recitativo  
Alto,  
Flauto traverso I/II, Oboe d’amore I/II, Viola da gamba I/II, Liuto I/II, Violino I/II, Viola, Continuo

Der Glocken bebendes Getön  
Soll unsrer trüben Seelen Schrecken  
Durch ihr geschwungnes Erze wecken  
Und uns durch Mark und Adern gehn.  
O, könnte nur dies bange Klingen,  
Davon das Ohr uns täglich gellt,  
Der ganzen Europäerwelt  
Ein Zeugnis unsres Jammers bringen!

Le, Princess, let still one more glance  
Shoot forth from Salem’s starry heavens.  
And see how many tearful off’rings  
We pour around thy monument.

Thy Saxons, like thy saddened Meissen*,  
Stand numb beside thy royal tomb;  
The eye doth weep, the tongue cries out:  
My pain must be without description!  
Here mourn August and Prince and land,  
The nobles moan, the commons sorrow,  
How much for thee thy folk lamented  
As soon as it thy fall perceived!

Be mute, be mute, ye lovely lyres!  
No sound could to the nations’ woe  
At their dear cherished mother’s death,  
O painful word!, give meet expression.

The tolling of the trembling bells  
Shall our lamenting souls’ great terror  
Through their rebounding bronze awaken  
And pierce us to the very core.  
Oh, would that now this anxious peeling,  
Which on our ears each day doth shrill,  
To all the European world  
A witness of our grief might render!

* Meissen, Torgau and Pretzsch are three towns on the river Elbe mentioned in the text of this Cantata.
Aria
Alto
Viola da gamba I/II, Liuto I/II, Continuo

Wie starb die Heldin so vergnügt!
Wie mutig hat ihr Geist gerungen,
Da sie des Todes Arm bezwungen,
Noch eh er ihre Brust besiegt.

How died our Lady so content!
How valiantly her spirit struggled,
For her the arm of death did vanquish
Before it did her breast subdue.

Recitativo
Tenore,
Oboe d’amore I/II, Continuo

Ihr Leben ließ die Kunst zu sterben
In unverrückter Übung sehn;
Unmöglich konnt es denn geschehn,
Sich vor dem Tode zu entfärben.
Ach selig! wessen großer Geist
Sich über die Natur erhebet,
Vor Gruft und Särgen nicht erbebet,
Wenn ihn sein Schöpfer scheiden heißt.

Her living let the art of dying
With ever steadfast skill be seen;
It would have been impossible
Before her death that she grow pallid.
Ah, blessed he whose noble soul
Doth raise itself above our nature,
At crypt and coffin doth not tremble,
When him his maker calls to part.

Coro
Flauto traverso I/II, Oboe d’amore I/II, Viola da gamba I/II, Liuto I/II, Violino I/II, Viola, Continuo

An dir, du Fürbild großer Frauen,
An dir, erhabne Königin,
An dir, du Glaubenspflegerin,
War dieser Großmut Bild zu schauen.

In thee, thou model of great women,
In thee, illustrious royal queen,
In thee, thou keeper of the faith,
The form of kindness was to witness.
ZWEITER TEIL

Aria
Tenore, Flauto traverso, Oboe d’amore, Viola da gamba I/II, Violino I/II, Liuto I/II, Continuo

Der Ewigkeit saphirnes Haus
Zieht, Fürstin, deine heitern Blicke
Von unserer Niedrigkeit zurücke
Und tilt der Erden Dreckbild aus.
Ein starker Glanz von hundert Sonnen,
Der unsern Tag zur Mitternacht
Und unsre Sonne finster macht,
Hat dein verklärtes Haupt umsponnen.

Eternity’s sapphiric house,
O Princess, these thy cheerful glances
From our own low estate now draweth
And blots out earth’s corrupted form.
A brilliant light a hundred suns make,
Which doth our day to mid of night
And doth our sun to darkness turn,
Hath thy transfigured head surrounded.

Recitativo - Arioso
Basso
Flauto traverso I/II, Oboe I/II, Continuo

Was Wunder ists? Du bist es wert,
Du Fürbild aller Königinnen!
Du musstest allen Schmuck gewinnen,
Der deine Scheitel itzt verklärt.
Nun trägst du vor des Lammes Throne
Anstatt des Purpurs Eitelkeit
Ein perlenreines Unschuldskleid
Und spottest der verlassnen Krone.

What wonder this? This thou hast earned,
Thou model of all queens forever!
For thou wast meant to win the glory
Which hath transfigured now thy head.
Before the lamb’s own throne thou wearest
Instead of purple’s vanity
A pearl-white robe of purity
And scornest now the crown forsaken.

Soweit der volle Weichselstrand,
Der Niester und die Warthe fließet,
Soweit sich Elb’ und Muld’ ergießet,
Erhebt dich Stadt und Land.

As far the brimming Vistula,
The Dniester and the Warth are flowing,
As far the Elb’ and Muld’ are streaming,
Extol thee / both the / town and land.

Dein Torgau geht im Trauerkleide,
Dein Pretzsch wird kraftlos, starr und matt;
Denn da es dich verloren hat,
Verliert es seiner Augen Weide.

Thy Torgau* walketh now in mourning,
Thy Pretzsch* is weary, pale and weak;
For with the loss it hath in thee,
It loseth all it vision’s rapture.

Coro
Flauto traverso I/II, Oboe d’amore I/II, Viola da gamba I/II, Liuto I/II, Violino I/II, Continuo

Doch, Königin! du stirbest nicht,
Man weiß, was man an dir besessen;
Die Nachwelt wird dich nicht vergessen,
Bis dieser Weltbau einst zerbricht.
Ihr Dichter, schreibt! wir wollens lesen:
Sie ist der Tugend Eigentum,
Der Untertanen Lust und Ruhm,
Der Königinnen Preis gewesen

No, royal queen! Thou shalt not die;
We see in thee our great possession;
Posterity shall not forget thee,
Till all this universe shall fall.
Ye poets, write! For we would read it:
She hath been virtue’s property
Her loyal subjects’ joy and fame,
Of royal queens the crown and glory.

INTERVAL

* Meissen, Torgau and Pretzsch are three towns on the river Elbe mentioned in the text of this Cantata.
“Wir müssen durch viel Trübsal”  
CANTATA BWV 146

Sinfonia  
Organo, Oboe I/II, Taille, Violino I/II, Viola, Continuo

Coro  
Violino I/II, Viola, Continuo

“Wir müssen durch viel Trübsal in das Reich Gottes eingehen.” “We must enter the Kingdom of God through much sorrow.”

Aria  
Alto,  
Violino, Continuo

Ich will nach dem Himmel zu,  
Schnödes Sodom, ich und du  
Sind nunmehr geschieden.  
Meines Bleibens ist nicht hier,  
Denn ich lebe doch bei dir  
Nimmermehr in Frieden.

I want to go to heaven;  
Contemptible Sodom, you and I  
Are parted from now on.  
My resting-place is not here,  
Since I can live with you  
Nevermore in peace

Recitativo  
Soprano,  
Violino I/II, Viola, Continuo

Ach! wer doch schon im Himmel wär!  
Wie dränget mich nicht die böse Welt!  
Mit Weinen steh ich auf,  
Mit Weinen leg ich mich zu Bette,  
Wie trüglich wird mir nachgestellt!  
Herr! merke, schaue drauf,  
Sie hassent mich, und ohne Schuld,  
Als wenn die Welt die Macht,  
Mich gar zu töten hätte;  
Und leb ich denn mit Seufzen und Geduld  
Verlassen und veracht’,  
So hat sie noch an meinem Leide  
Die größte Freude.  
Mein Gott, das fällt mir schwer.  
Ach! wenn ich doch,  
Mein Jesu, heute noch  
Bei dir im Himmel wär!

Ah! if I were only in heaven!  
In what way am I not oppressed by the evil world!  
I awake in tears,  
In tears I lay down in my bed,  
How deceitfully am I assailed!  
Lord! Take note, look here,  
They hate me, though guiltless,  
As if the world had the power  
Even to put me to death;  
While I live with sighs and patience  
Abandoned and scorned,  
Even at my suffering they have  
the greatest joy.  
My God, this lays heavily upon me.  
Alas! if only,  
My Jesus, even today  
I were with You in heaven!

Aria  
Soprano,  
Flauto traverso, Oboe d’amore I/II, Continuo

Ich säe meine Zähren  
Mit bangem Herzen aus.  
Jedoch mein Herzeleid  
Wird mir die Herrlichkeit  
Am Tage der seligen Ernte gebären.

I sow my tears  
With an anxious heart.  
However my heart’s sorrow  
Will become glory for me  
On the day the blessed sheaves are harvested.
Recitativo  
Tenore,  
Continuo

Ich bin bereit,  
Mein Kreuz geduldig zu ertragen;  
Ich weiß, dass alle meine Plagen  
Nicht wert der Herrlichkeit,  
Die Gott an den erwählten Scharen  
Und auch an mir wird offenbaren.  
Itzt wein ich, da das Weltgetümmel  
Bei meinem Jammer fröhlich scheint.  
Bald kommt die Zeit,  
Da sich mein Herz erfreut,  
Und da die Welt einst ohne Tröster weint.  
Wer mit dem Feinde ringt und schlägt,  
Dem wird die Krone beigelegt;  
Denn Gott trägt keinen nicht mit Händen in den Himmel.

I am ready  
To bear my Cross patiently;  
I know that all my troubles  
Are not equal to the glory  
That God will reveal to the chosen flock  
And even to me.  
Now I weep, since the turmoil of the world  
Seems joyful next to my suffering.  
Soon the time will come  
When my heart will rejoice,  
And when the world one day will weep without comfort.  
Whoever strives and battles with the enemy,  
Will have the crown placed upon him;  
For God carries no one to heaven in His hands.

Aria (Duetto)  
Tenore, Basso,  
Oboe I/II, Violino I/II, Viola, Continuo

Wie will ich mich freuen, wie will ich mich laben,  
Wenn alle vergängliche Trübsal vorbei!  
Da glänz ich wie Sterne und leuchte wie Sonne,  
Da störet die himmlische selige Wonne  
Kein Trauern, Heulen und Geschrei.

How I will rejoice, how I will delight,  
When all mortal sorrows are over!  
There I will shine like a star and glow like the sun,  
Then the divine, blessed joy will be destroyed  
By no sorrow, moan or shriek.

Choral  
Flauto traverso e Oboe I e Violino I col Soprano, Oboe II e Violino II coll’Alto, Taille e Viola col Tenore, Continuo

Freu dich sehr, o meine Seele,  
Und vergiss all Not und Qual,  
Weil dich nun Christus, dein Herre,  
Ruft aus diesem Jammertal.  
Aus Trübsal und großem Leid  
Sollst du fahren in die Freud,  
Die kein Ohre hat gehöret  
Und kein Ewigkeit auch währt.

Rejoice greatly, o my soul,  
And forget all stress and anguish,  
Since now Christ, your Lord,  
Calls you out of this valley of sorrow!  
Out of trouble and great distress  
You shall journey into such joy  
That no ear has ever heard,  
And that lasts throughout eternity.