

WIGMORE HALL

Monday 10 January 2022 7.30pm

Gabrieli Consort & Players

Paul McCreesh director

Charlotte Shaw soprano

Helen Charlston mezzo-soprano

Jeremy Budd tenor

Ashley Riches bass-baritone

Catherine Martin violin

Persephone Gibbs violin

Oliver Webber violin

Ellen O'Dell violin

Rachel Byrt viola

Andrew Skidmore cello

Judith Evans bass

Katy Bircher flute

Rebecca Miles recorder

Ian Wilson recorder

Katharina Spreckelsen oboe

Hannah McLaughlin oboe

Zoe Shevlin bassoon

Anneke Scott horn

Martin Lawrence horn

Masumi Yamamoto harpsichord

William Whitehead organ

Anon

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Puer natus in Bethlehem

Sie werden aus Saba alle kommen BWV65 (1724)

Prelude on 'Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele' (1724) *arranged by William Whitehead*

Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele BWV180 (1724)

Interval

Sinfonia from *Ich steh' mit einem Fuss im Grabe* BWV156 (1729)

Mass in F BWV233

Kyrie • Gloria

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Bach at Epiphany

In Leipzig during **Johann Sebastian Bach's** time, the feast of Epiphany was celebrated in grand style. Not only did it commemorate the coming of the Wise Men to Christ; it was also the liturgical finale to the 12 days of the Christmas season. As one of the major feasts in the church year, Epiphany was heralded by special bell-ringing, and the services made greater use of Latin and elaborate music.

The musical focus of the Lutheran service in Bach's day was the cantata performed before the sermon. In his first year in Leipzig, Bach wrote *Sie werden aus Saba alle kommen* BWV65 as the cantata for Epiphany. The colourful scoring includes recorders, oboes da caccia (a lower-sounding version of the oboe), and horns (which were unusual in church music at the time). The resultant rich sonority denotes the splendour of the festival, and also the magnificence and exoticism of the Magi.

The opening chorus sets Isaiah's prophecy that crowds will come from Sheba; here the sweeping vocal lines and echoing passages for horns and wind may evoke the vast spaces of faraway Sheba, or the multitude flocking to Bethlehem. The next movement, by contrast, is a simple strophe from the 1543 chorale *Puer natus in Bethlehem*, heard at the beginning of this concert, confirming that Isaiah's prophecy has been fulfilled. This juxtaposition is typical of Bach's church music: long, complex movements are interspersed with succinct chorales that the whole congregation would recognise. The subsequent arias declare that gold, incense and myrrh are inadequate gifts for Jesus; only the believer's heart will suffice. Here the oboes da caccia are prominent, instruments that Bach associated with unconditional love. The cantata ends with another chorale, this time vowing faith in God.

The cantata *Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele* BWV180, although written for the 20th Sunday after Trinity, is described in one manuscript source as a 'communion cantata'. It therefore may have been performed on religious festivals as an additional cantata during the distribution of Communion, and is based on the eponymous Eucharist hymn of 1649, which invites the believer's Soul to enter the radiant experience of union with Christ. Tonight's performance is introduced with a version of Bach's organ setting of the tune; then, the text and tune of this chorale are sung in the first, third and last movements of the cantata, while the intervening movements gloss its message.

The cantata exudes joyful confidence at God's invitation to Communion. In the opening chorus, the chorale is sung in long notes by the soprano, while the remaining parts have the dance rhythms of a gigue, its exuberance tempered by elements of a pastorale. The first aria 'Ermuntre dich' urges believers to open their hearts when Christ knocks: in the virtuosic flute part, an anapaest figure (short-short-long) represents the knocking sound. In the next movement, a recitative and arioso for soprano, the

chorale returns, now in an adorned version sung over an effervescent obbligato for violoncello piccolo (a smaller, experimental version of the cello). The second aria 'Lebens Sonne, Licht der Sinnen' evokes the joy of communion between Christ and the soul: a rich combination of recorders, oboes and strings plays a gentle triple-time dance with beguiling syncopated figures. A final strophe from the chorale *Schmücke dich* closes the cantata by contemplating the divine love expressed in the holy meal of Communion.

The Leipzig churches marked major feasts such as Epiphany with elaborate musical settings of sections of the Latin Mass. In about 1738 Bach made four settings of the Kyrie and Gloria, including the Mass in F BWV233 heard in tonight's concert (prefaced with a sinfonia from Cantata 156). Like his other Masses, this work is largely based on movements from Bach's cantatas of the 1720s, a process known as parody. Some scholars have suggested that Bach recycled his old pieces because he was short of time - yet Bach took great pains to select and revise movements from the cantatas. Perhaps he wanted to refashion his favourite cantatas into liturgical music that could be used more regularly.

The Kyrie opening the F major Mass is in stern counterpoint, with little independent role for the instruments apart from the chorale *Christe, du Lamm Gottes* quoted by the woodwind. Appositely, this chorale is the German translation of the *Agnus Dei*, which is used at a later stage in the celebration of the Eucharist and which refers to Christ redeeming the sins of the world. Bach thereby infuses the penitential Kyrie with the promise of forgiveness. The text of the Kyrie falls into three parts, each marked thematically in Bach's setting. His initial theme ('Kyrie eleison') is inverted for the second section ('Christe eleison'), and he then combines the two versions of the theme in the third part ('Kyrie eleison'). This musical structure may have doctrinal significance. Some commentators suggest the original theme and its inversion may represent the duality of the God the Father and God the Son, with the final section representing their union in the Holy Spirit.

By contrast with the counterpoint of the Kyrie, the Gloria starts with a lively dance that shares the exuberance of the arias of Cantata 180. The horn parts whoop as if they are embarking on a hunt, while the harmonies swirl against repeated notes in the bass-line. The subsequent arias shift the focus to Jesus, the son of God made incarnate at Christmas. In the 'Qui tollis', the plaintive oboe line accompanies a contemplation of the sins of the world; then in the 'Quoniam tu solus sanctus', a syncopated, leaping violin line gives a swagger to the mention of Christ enthroned on high. This Mass juxtaposes the joy of the dance with the learnedness of counterpoint; it is a compendium of Lutheran musical diversity, ideal for the richness of liturgical celebrations of Epiphany.

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Anon

Puer natus in Bethlehem

Puer natus in Bethlehem, Alleluia.
Unde gaudet Jerusalem. Alleluia.

Hic jacet in præsepio,
Qui regnat sine termino.

Cognovit bos et asinus,
Quod puer erat Dominus.

Reges de Sabâ veniunt,
Aurum, thus, myrrham
offerunt.

Intrantes domum invicem,
Novum salutant principem.

De matre natus virgine.
Sine virili semine;

Sine serpentis vulnere,
De nostro venit sanguine.

In carne nobis similis.
Peccato sed dissimilis,

Ut redderet nos homines,
Deo et sibi similes.

In hoc natali gaudio,
Benedicamus Domino:

Laudetur sancta Trinitas,
Deo dicamus gratias.

A child is born in Bethlehem

A Child is born in Bethlehem;
exult for joy, Jerusalem!

There, in a manger lowly, lies.
He who reigns above the skies.

The ox and ass in neighbouring stall
see in that Child the Lord of all.

And kingly pilgrims, long foretold
from East bring incense, myrrh,
and gold,

and enter with their offerings
to hail the new-born King of Kings.

He comes, a maiden mother's Son.
Yet earthly father hath He none;

and, from the serpent's poison free
he owned our blood and pedigree.

Our feeble flesh and His the same.
Our sinless kinsman He became,

that we, from deadly thrall set free
like Him, and so like God, should be.

Come then, and on this natal day
rejoice before the Lord and pray

and to the Holy One in Three
give praise and thanks eternally.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Sie werden aus Saba alle kommen BWV65 (1724)

Liturgical text

Coro

Sie werden aus Saba alle
kommen, Gold und Weihrauch
Bringen und des Herren Lob
verkündigen.

Choral

Die Kön'ge aus Saba kamen dar,
Gold, Weihrauch, Myrrhen
brachten sie dar,

They will all come from Sheba

Chorus

They will all come from Sheba,
bring gold and incense and
proclaim the praise of the
Lord.

Chorale

The kings came from Sheba
they brought from there gold,
incense and myrrh.

Alleluja!

Recitativo

Was dort Jesaias vorhergesehen,
Das ist zu Bethlehem geschehn.
Hier stellen sich die Weisen
Bei Jesu Krippe ein
Und wollen ihn als ihren König
preisen.
Gold, Weihrauch, Myrrhen sind
Die köstlichen Geschenke,
Womit sie dieses Jesuskind
Zu Bethlehem im Stall
beehren.
Mein Jesu, wenn ich itzt an
meine Pflicht gedenke,
Muss ich mich auch zu deiner
Krippe kehren
Und gleichfalls dankbar sein:
Denn dieser Tag ist mir ein Tag
der Freuden,
Da du, o Lebensfürst,
Das Licht der Heiden
Und ihr Erlöser wirst.
Was aber bring ich wohl, du
Himmelskönig?
Ist dir mein Herze nicht zuwenig,
So nimm es gnädig an,
Weil ich nichts Edlers bringen
kann.

Aria

Gold aus Ophir ist zu schlecht,
Weg, nur weg mit eitlen Gaben,
Die ihr aus der Erde brecht!
Jesus will das Herze haben.
Schenke dies, o Christenschar,
Jesu zu dem neuen Jahr!

Recitativo

Verschmähe nicht,
Du, meiner Seele Licht,
Mein Herz, das ich in Demut zu
dir bringe;
Es schliesst ja solche Dinge
In sich zugleich mit ein,
Die deines Geistes Früchte sein.
Des Glaubens Gold, der
Weihrauch des Gebets,
Die Myrrhen der Geduld sind
meine Gaben,
Die sollst du, Jesu, für und für
Zum Eigentum und zum
Geschenke haben.
Gib aber dich auch selber mir,
So machst du mich zum
Reichsten auf der Erden;

Alleluia!

Recitative

What Isaiah foretold
has happened at Bethlehem.
Here the wise men
appear at Jesus' crib
and want to praise him as their
king.
Gold, incense and myrrh are
the precious gifts
with which by them this baby Jesus
is honoured in the stable at
Bethlehem.
My Jesus, when I think now of
my duty,
I must also turn to your
crib
and be likewise thankful:
for this day is for me a day of
joy
where you, o prince of life,
become the light of the gentiles
and their redeemer.
But what should I bring, you
king of heaven?
If my heart is not too little,
then accept it through your mercy,
since I can bring nothing more
noble.

Aria

Gold from Ophir is too slight,
away, away with vain gifts
that you break from the earth!
Jesus wants to have your heart.
Give this, o Christian flock,
to Jesus for the new year!

Recitative

Do not scorn,
you who are the light of my soul,
my heart that I humbly bring to
you;
it includes such things
within at the same time
that are the fruit of your spirit.
The gold of faith, the incense of
prayer,
the myrrh of patience are my
gifts,
which you will have, Jesus, for ever
as your property and
gift,
But give yourself also to me,
then you make me the richest
person on earth;

Denn, hab ich dich, so muss
Des grössten Reichtums
Überfluss
Mir demaleinst im Himmel
werden.

Aria

Nimm mich dir zu eigen hin,
Nimm mein Herze zum Geschenke.
Alles, alles, was ich bin,
Was ich rede, tu und denke,
Soll, mein Heiland, nur allein
Dir zum Dienst gewidmet sein.

Choral

Ei nun, mein Gott, so fall ich dir
Getrost in deine Hände.
Nimm mich und mach es so mit mir
Bis an mein letztes Ende,
Wie du wohl weisst, dass
meinem Geist
Dadurch sein Nutz entstehe,
Und deine Ehr je mehr und
mehr
Sich in ihr selbst erhöhe.

**Prelude on 'Schmücke
dich, o liebe Seele' (1724)**
arranged by William Whitehead

**Schmücke dich, o liebe
Seele BWV180 (1724)**

Coro

Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele,
Lass die dunkle Sündenhöhle,
Komm ans helle Licht gegangen,
Fange herrlich an zu prangen;
Denn der Herr voll Heil und
Gnaden
Lässt dich itzt zu Gaste laden.
Der den Himmel kann verwalten,
Will selbst Herberg in dir
halten.

Aria

Ermuntre dich: dein Heiland
klopft,
Ach, öffne bald die
Herzenspforte!
Ob du gleich in entzückter Lust
Nur halb gebrochne Freudenworte
Zu deinem Jesu sagen musst.

for if I have you, then
the abundance of the greatest
wealth
will one day be mine for ever in
heaven.

Aria

Accept that I should belong to you
accept my heart as a present.
All, all that I am,
what I speak, do and think
should, my saviour, all
be dedicated to your service.

Chorale

Ah now, my God, may I fall
consoled in your hands.
Accept me and so deal with me
until my final end
as you well know how , so that
my spirit
may benefit in this way
and your honour ever more and
more
may be exalted in me.

**Adorn yourself, O dear
soul**

**Adorn yourself, O dear
soul**

Chorus

Adorn yourself, O dear soul,
leave the dark den of sins,
come into the clear light,
begin to shine with glory,
for the Lord, full of salvation
and mercy
has now invited you as a guest.
He who can reign in heaven
wants himself to make his
dwelling in you.

Aria

Stir yourself: your saviour is
knocking,
Ah, open quickly the doors of
your heart!
Even if in enchanted delight
only words of joy half broken
you have to say to your Jesus.

Recitativo e Choral

Wie teuer sind des heiligen
Mahles Gaben!
Sie finden ihresgleichen
nicht.
Was sonst die Welt
Vor kostbar hält,
Sind Tand und Eitelkeiten;
Ein Gotteskind wünscht diesen
Schatz zu haben
Und spricht:

Ach, wie hungert mein Gemüte,
Menschenfreund, nach deiner
Güte!
Ach, wie pfleg ich oft mit
Tränen
Mich nach dieser Kost zu sehnen!
Ach, wie pfleget mich zu
dürsten
Nach dem Trank des
Lebensfürsten!
Wünsche stets, dass mein Gebeine
Sich durch Gott mit Gott
vereine.

Recitativo

Mein Herz fühlt in sich Furcht
und Freude;
Es wird die Furcht erregt
Wenn es die Hoheit überlegt
Wenn es sich nicht in das
Geheimnis findet,
Noch durch Vernunft dies hohe
Werk ergründet.
Nur Gottes Geist kann durch
sein Wort uns lehren,
Wie sich allhier die Seelen
nähren,
Die sich im Glauben
zugeschickt.
Die Freude aber wird gestärket,
Wenn sie des Heilands Herz
erblickt
Und seiner Liebe Grösse
merket.

Aria

Lebens Sonne, Licht der Sinnen,
Herr, der du mein alles
bist!
Du wirst meine Treue sehen
Und den Glauben nicht
verschmähen,
Der noch schwach und
furchtsam ist.

Recitative & Chorale

How valuable are the gifts of the
holy meal!
Nothing like them can be found
anywhere.
What the world otherwise
considers as precious
are only toys and vanity;
A child of God wants to have
this treasure
And says:

Ah, how my spirit hungers,
Friend of man, for your
goodness!
Ah, how often I am accustomed
with tears
to long for this nourishment.
Ah, how accustomed I am to
thirst
for the drink of the Prince of
life!
Constantly I wish that my bones
could be united through God
with God.

Recitative

My heart feels in itself fear and
joy;
Fear is aroused
when it contemplates his grandeur,
when it does not find its way in
the mystery,
Nor through reason reaches the
bottom of this high work.
Only God's spirit can teach us
through his Word,
how the souls here are
nourished,
Who surrender themselves in
belief.
Our joy however is strengthened
when we regard the saviour's
heart
and take note of the greatness
of his love.

Aria

Sun of life, light of the senses
Lord, you who are everything to
me!
You will see my loyalty
and will not scorn my
faith
which is still weak and
fearful.

Recitativo

Herr, lass an mir dein treues
Lieben,
So dich vom Himmel abgetrieben,
Ja nicht vergeblich sein!
Entzünde du in Liebe meinen Geist,
Dass er sich nur nach dem, was
himmlisch heisst,
Im Glauben lenke
Und deiner Liebe stets gedenke.

Choral

Jesu, wahres Brot des Lebens,
Hilf, dass ich doch nicht vergebens
Oder mir vielleicht zum Schaden
Sei zu deinem Tisch geladen.
Lass mich durch dies
Seelenessen
Deine Liebe recht ermessen,
Dass ich auch, wie itzt auf Erden,
Mög ein Gast im Himmel werden.

Recitative

Lord, grant that your faithful
love for me
which drove you from heaven
may not be in vain!
Set my spirit on fire in love
so that only towards what is
known as heavenly
in faith it may be directed
and think of your love continuously.

Chorale

Jesus, true bread of life,
help me so that not in vain
or perhaps to my loss
I may be invited to your table.
Grant that I may, through this
food for my soul,
measure out rightly your love,
so that I also, as here on earth,
become a guest in heaven.

Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius
Patris.

Aria

Qui tollis peccata
mundi,
Miserere nobis,
Suscipe deprecationem nostram.
Qui sedes ad dexteram
patris,
Miserere nobis.

Aria

Quoniam tu solus sanctus,
Tu solus Dominus,
Tu solus altissimus Jesu
Christe.

Coro

Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei
Patris, amen.

O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son
of the Father.

Aria

Thou that takest away the sins
of the world,
have mercy upon us,
receive our prayer.
Thou that sittest at the right
hand of the Father,
have mercy upon us.

Aria

For thou only art holy;
thou only art the Lord;
thou only, O Jesus Christ, art
most high.

Coro

With the Holy Ghost in the glory
of God the Father. Amen.

Interval

Johann Sebastian Bach

Sinfonia from *Ich steh' mit einem Fuss im Grabe*

BWV156 (1729)

Mass in F BWV233

Kyrie

Coro

Kyrie eleison,
Christe eleison,
Kyrie eleison.

Kyrie

Chorus

Lord have mercy,
Christ have mercy,
Lord have mercy.

Gloria

Coro

Gloria in excelsis Deo,
Et in terra pax hominibus bonae
voluntatis.
Laudamus te, benedicimus te,
Adoramus te, glorificamus te.
Gratias agimus tibi propter
magnam gloriam tuam.

Gloria

Chorus

Glory be to God on high,
and on earth peace to men of
good will.
We praise thee, we bless thee,
we worship thee, we glorify thee.
We give thanks for your great
glory.

Aria

Domine Deus, Rex coelestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens,
Domine Fili unigenite Jesu
Christe,

Aria

O Lord God, heavenly King,
God the Father Almighty,
O Lord, the only-begotten Son,
Jesus Christ,

'Puer natus in Bethlehem' translated by Hamilton Montgomerie MacGill, 1876. 'Sie werden aus Saba alle kommen' and 'Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele' by Francis Browne at <http://www.bach-cantatas.com>