

WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 1 October 2022
7.30pm

Bach and his own plagiarism

The Sixteen

Harry Christophers director	Nicola Barbagli oboe	Alexandra Kidgell soprano
Sarah Sexton violin I, leader	Sarah Humphrys oboe	Rebecca Lea soprano
Sarah Moffatt violin I	Sally Jackson bassoon	Hugh Cutting alto
Ellen O'Dell violin I	Anneke Scott horn	Elisabeth Paul alto
Daniel Edgar violin II	Kate Goldsmith horn	Jeremy Budd tenor
Nia Lewis violin II	Alastair Ross organ	Mark Dobell tenor
Davina Clarke violin II		Ben Davies bass
Max Mandel viola		Eamonn Dougan bass
Stefanie Heichelheim viola		
Sarah McMahon cello		
Tim Smedley cello		
Jan Zahourek violone		

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) Dazu ist erschienen der Sohn Gottes BWV40 (1723)
Mass in G minor BWV235 (?1738-9)
Interval
Alles nur nach Gottes Willen BWV72 (1726)
Mass in F BWV233 (?1738-9)

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Earlier this year, Ed Sheeran won a High Court copyright battle over his song 'Shape of You'. The judge ruled that the singer-songwriter had not plagiarised the song 'Oh Why' by Sami Chokri, stating that Sheeran had 'neither deliberately nor subconsciously copied' Chokri's song.

Could **Bach** have imagined such a court case? It's unlikely: music in 18th-century Europe was a different creature. Of course, music was published and sold. But there was not the same notion of ownership over the dots on the page, the musical 'stuff'. Bach, in particular, had little qualms over what would now be considered musical theft. Indeed, he probably considered it to be high praise. Take the keyboard transcriptions that he made of Vivaldi's *L'estro armonico* during his time in Weimar: this was Bach's way of digesting the music of the Italian, 'reliving' and learning from it through reconfiguration.

Pragmatism guided Bach's other modes of musical repurposing. For particularly busy periods of the liturgical year, such as Christmas, Bach drew on his own pre-existing compositions. After changing the text – a process known as parody – what had been a birthday cantata for a queen could now be used as a more generic celebration for Christmas Day. And that's exactly what Bach did for the Christmas of 1734.

Bach's four short *Missas* have historically been overlooked because of their origins in parody. They have suffered from the logic that because they were conceived secondarily, they must be of secondary worth. This has not always been the case: in the years following Bach's death, the *Missas* were highly regarded. And with some historical distance, we can now appreciate their mastery once more. As Nicholas Kenyon writes, they 'bring together some of Bach's best music from his cantatas. They are short, taut demonstrations of his greatness'.

Tonight's concert puts the Mass in G minor BWV235 and the Mass in F major BWV233 alongside two cantatas from which some of their movements are drawn. Bach's parody technique in the G minor Mass is particularly coherent as its original cantatas – BWV102, a revised version of BWV72, and BWV187 – are all from 1726. The opening 'Kyrie' strikes a penitential tone: the counterpoint between the oboes and the violins immediately creates a sense of the large-scale exploration to come, and a throbbing trill-like figure forms a palpitating background to the voices in contrition. More space in the texture is made in the 'Christe eleison' section, and its dancing feel is particularly elegantly phrased in the voices. Through a 'missing' note on the second beat of the bar, the voices sway against the regularity of the *basso continuo*. The 'Gloria' feels Italianate in its swirling, wonderfully idiomatic string writing – yet there's also

a *turba*-like energy in the voices, reminiscent of Bach's scenes from his Passions.

There then follow four adapted and re-ordered movements from BWV187. The austere, searching bass aria, 'Gratias agimus', is followed by the first moment of tranquillity in the Mass: an alto aria, the 'Domine Fili', is a lilting dance in F major, warmed by an oboe and lovingly stroked figurations in the strings. Then what is possibly the most tender movement in the Mass: the tenor sings the prayer of the 'Qui tollis peccata mundi', wrapped in the improvisatory fragrance of an oboe. For the final chorus, 'Cum Sancto Spiritu', Bach not only changed the text but also reworked the musical material. He transposed it to C minor; a new modulation then takes us to the original key of G minor for the concluding 'Amen'. It's a feat of counterpoint: densely wrought yet emotive and exciting.

The Mass in F possibly dates from 1738. Its 'Kyrie eleison' comes from a cantata which may have been performed as early as Good Friday 1708. Bach conjures the *stile antico* through the measured counterpoint. The first section is closed with a 4–3 suspension, which in some regards is an unBachian gesture even in this contrapuntal setting. But then, in the very next bar, Bach transforms this melodic descent into the thematic material of the 'Christe eleison'. The same suspension closes this central section for the return of the 'Kyrie eleison' – whose material we now hear as an inversion of the 'Christe' theme. These thematic connections make the three opening fugues feel particularly coherent, and bronzed by the horns and oboes, the whole thing is satisfyingly warm.

The 'Qui tollis' parodies the alto aria from *Herr, deine Augen sehen nach dem Glauben* BWV102, which was first performed on 25 August 1726. Bach's changes greatly alter its feel. In the cantata version, the obbligato oboe's first note is a dissonant scream – an action that Alfred Dürr described as seeming to 'call out "Woe!"'. In the Mass, Bach softened this gesture with a melancholy upbeat. The 'Quoniam' is also adapted from BWV102. The original called for solo traverso; in this D minor version, Bach altered the obbligato instrument to a violin. Such changes in key, scoring and figuration create something more angsty and earthy. This is utterly banished by the final 'Cum Sancto Spiritu' which is parodied from BWV40. 'Never content to let matters rest,' Kenyon writes, Bach altered the fugue subject towards the movement's end. This beckons a thrilling *stretto* which combines the fugal entries in unexpected complexity. After a blaze of vocal unison, it is a charge towards the end in unabashed contrapuntal joy.

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Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Dazu ist erschienen der Sohn Gottes BWV40 (1723)

Liturgical text

Coro

Dazu ist erschienen der Sohn
Gottes, dass er die Werke
des Teufels zerstöre.

Recitativo

Das Wort ward Fleisch und
wohnet in der Welt,
Das Licht der Welt bestrahlt
den Kreis der Erden,
Der grosse Gottessohn
Verlässt des Himmels Thron,
Und seiner Majestät gefällt,
Ein kleines Menschenkind zu
werden.
Bedenkt doch diesen
Tausch, wer nur gedenken
kann;
Der König wird ein Untertan,
Der Herr erscheint als ein
Knecht
Und wird dem menschlichen
Geschlecht
- O süßes Wort in aller
Ohren! -
Zu Trost und Heil geboren.

Choral

Die Sünd macht Leid;
Christus bringt Freud,
Weil er zu Trost in diese Welt
ist kommen.
Mit uns ist Gott
Nun in der Not:
Wer ist, der uns als Christen
kann verdammen?

Aria

Höllische Schlange,
Wird dir nicht
bange?
Der dir den Kopf als ein
Sieger zerknickt,
Ist nun geboren,
Und die verloren,
Werden mit ewigem Frieden
beglückt.

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested

Chorus

For this purpose the Son
of God was manifested,
that He might destroy
the works of the devil.

Recitative

The Word was made flesh
and dwells in the world,
the light of the world
irradiates the globe,
the mighty Son of God
leaves the throne of heaven,
and it pleases His majesty
to become a little
creature.
Give thought to this
exchange, all who can
think:
the King becomes a subject,
the Lord appears as a
servant
and is born for this race of
man
- O sweet word in all
men's ears -
to heal and comfort.

Chorale

Sin brings sorrow;
Christ brings joy,
for He has entered this
world to console.
God is with us
now in our need:
who could condemn us
now we are Christians?

Aria

Hellish serpent,
do you not grow
frightened?
The victor who shall
crush your head
is now born,
and all the fallen
shall be favoured with
eternal peace.

Recitativo

Die Schlange, so im Paradies
Auf alle
Adamskinder
Das Gift der Seelen fallen liess,
Bringt uns nicht mehr Gefahr;
Des Weibes Samen stellt
sich dar,
Der Heiland ist ins Fleisch
gekommen
Und hat ihr allen Gift
benommen.
Drum sei getrost! betrübter
Sünder.

Choral

Schüttle deinen Kopf und
sprich:
Fleuch, du alte Schlange!
Was erneurst du deinen Stich,
Machst mir angst und bange?
Ist dir doch der Kopf
zerknickt,
Und ich bin durchs Leiden
Meines Heilands dir
entrückt
In den Saal der Freuden.

Aria

Christenkinder, freuet
euch!
Wütet schon das
Höllereich,
Will euch Satans Grimm
erschrecken:
Jesus, der erretten kann,
Nimmt sich seiner Küchlein an
Und will sie mit Flügeln decken.

Choral

Jesu, nimm dich deiner
Glieder
Ferner in Genaden
an;
Schenke, was man bitten kann,
Zu erquickten deine Brüder:
Gib der ganzen
Christenschar
Frieden und ein selges Jahr!
Freude, Freude über Freude!
Christus wehret allem
Leide.
Wonne, Wonne über Wonne!
Er ist die Genadensonne.

Recitative

The serpent that in paradise
made fall on all of Adam's
children
the venom of souls,
no longer endangers us;
woman's seed is made
manifest,
the Saviour has appeared
in flesh
and has removed all
venom.
Take comfort then, O
troubled sinner.

Chorale

Shake your head and
say:
flee, you ancient serpent!
Why renew your sting
for my fear and anguish?
After all, your head is
dashed,
and I, through the Passion
of my Saviour, have fled
from you
into the hall of gladness.

Aria

Christian children, now
rejoice!
Though hell's domain
now rages,
though Satan's fury would
frighten you:
Jesus, who can save,
will gather His chickens
under His wing.

Chorale

Jesus, continue to look
after
Thy members with loving
grace;
give, whatever we ask,
to revive Thy brethren:
give to all the Christian
throng
peace and a blessed year!
Joy, joy, unending joy!
Christ shall ward off all
sorrow.
Bliss, bliss, unending bliss!
He is the sun of grace.

Mass in G minor BWV235 (?1738-9)

Liturgical text

Kyrie <i>Coro</i> Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison.	Kyrie <i>Chorus</i> Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy.
Gloria <i>Coro</i> Gloria in excelsis Deo, Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis. Laudamus te, Benedicimus te, Adoramus te, Glorificamus te.	Gloria <i>Chorus</i> 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.
<i>Aria</i> Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam. Domine Deus, Rex coelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens.	<i>Aria</i> We give thanks to thee for thy great glory. O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.
<i>Aria</i> Domine Fili unigenite Jesu Christe. Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris, Qui tollis peccata mundi, Miserere nobis.	<i>Aria</i> O Lord the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.
<i>Aria</i> Qui tollis peccata mundi, Suscipe deprecationem nostram. Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, Miserere nobis. Quoniam tu solus sanctus, Tu solus Dominus, Tu solus altissimus Jesu Christe.	<i>Aria</i> Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. Thou that sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy upon us. For thou only art holy; thou only art the Lord; thou only, O Jesus Christ, art most high.
<i>Coro</i> Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris, amen.	<i>Chorus</i> With the Holy Ghost in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Interval

Alles nur nach Gottes Willen BWV72 (1726)

Liturgical text

<i>Coro</i> Alles nur nach Gottes Willen, So bei Lust als Traurigkeit, So bei gut als böser Zeit. Gottes Wille soll mich stillen Bei Gewölk und Sonnenschein. Alles nur nach Gottes Willen! Dies soll meine Losung sein.	<i>Chorus</i> All things according to God's will, in pleasure as in sadness, in good as in evil times. God's will shall comfort me in clouds and sunshine. All things according to God's will! This henceforth shall be my password.
<i>Recitativo</i> O selger Christ, der allzeit seinen Willen In Gottes Willen senkt, es gehe wie es gehe, Bei Wohl und Wehe. Herr, so du willst, so muss sich alles fügen! Herr, so du willst, so kannst du mich vergnügen! Herr, so du willst, verschwindet meine Pein! Herr, so du willst, werd ich gesund und rein! Herr, so du willst, wird Traurigkeit zur Freude! Herr, so du willst, und ich auf Dornen Weide! Herr, so du willst, werd ich einst selig sein! Herr, so du willst, - lass mich dies Wort im Glauben fassen Und meine Seele stillen! - Herr, so du willst, so sterb ich nicht, Ob Leib und Leben mich verlassen, Wenn mir dein Geist dies Wort ins Herze spricht!	<i>Recitative</i> O blest Christian, who always immerses his will in God's will, whatever may befall, in health and sickness. Lord, if Thou wilt, we must all submit to Thee! Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst content me! Lord, if Thou wilt, my torment shall vanish! Lord, if Thou wilt, I shall grow well again and pure! Lord, if Thou wilt, sadness shall turn to joy! Lord, if Thou wilt, I shall find meadows amongst thorns! Lord, if Thou wilt, I shall one day be blest! Lord, if Thou wilt, - let me express this in faith and silence my soul! - Lord, if Thou wilt, I shall not die, though body and life forsake me, when Thy spirit utters this word to my heart!
<i>Aria</i> Mit allem, was ich hab und bin, Will ich mich Jesu lassen, Kann gleich mein schwacher Geist und Sinn Des Höchsten Rat nicht fassen; Er führe mich nur immer hin Auf Dorn- und Rosenstrassen!	<i>Aria</i> With everything I have and am I shall trust myself to Jesus, though my feeble soul and mind cannot fathom the counsel of God, may He still lead me ever forth on paths of thorn and roses!

<i>Recitativo</i>	<i>Recitative</i>
So glaube nun!	So now believe!
Dein Heiland saget: Ich will's tun!	Your Saviour says: I will!
Er pflegt die Gnadenhand	He is still most willing
Noch willigst auszustrecken,	to extend His gracious hand,
Wenn Kreuz und Leiden dich erschrecken,	when affliction and suffering frighten you,
Er kennet deine Not und löst dein Kreuzesband.	He knows your distress and frees you from affliction.
Er stärkt, was schwach,	He strengthens the weak
Und will das niedre Dach	and would not disdain
Der armen Herzen nicht verschmähen,	the humble roof of the poor,
Darunter gnädig einzugehen.	where graciously He deigns to enter.

<i>Aria</i>	<i>Aria</i>
Mein Jesus will es tun, er will dein Kreuz versüßen.	My Jesus will do it, He will sweeten your affliction.
Ogleich dein Herze liegt in viel Bekümmernissen,	Though your heart suffers much distress,
Soll es doch sanft und still in seinen Armen ruhn,	it shall find quiet and gentle rest in His arms,
Wenn ihn der Glaube fasst; mein Jesus will es tun!	if man is filled with faith; my Jesus will do it!

<i>Choral</i>	<i>Chorale</i>
Was mein Gott will, das g'scheh allzeit,	May my God's will always be done,
Sein Will, der ist der beste,	His will is the best will,
Zu helfen den'n er ist bereit,	He is prepared to help those
Die an ihn glauben feste.	who steadfastly believe in Him.
Er hilft aus Not, der fromme Gott,	He helps us in need, this righteous God,
Und züchtigt mit Massen.	and punishes with moderation.
Wer Gott vertraut, fest auf ihn baut,	Who trusts in God, relies on Him,
Den will er nicht verlassen.	Him shall He never abandon.

Mass in F BWV233 (?1738-9)

Liturgical text

<i>Kyrie</i>	<i>Kyrie</i>
<i>Coro</i>	<i>Chorus</i>
Kyrie eleison,	Lord have mercy,
Christe eleison,	Christ have mercy,
Kyrie eleison.	Lord have mercy.

<i>Gloria</i>	<i>Gloria</i>
<i>Coro</i>	<i>Chorus</i>
Gloria in excelsis Deo,	Glory be to God on high,
Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.	and on earth peace to men of good will.
Laudamus te, benedicimus te,	We praise thee, we bless thee,

Adoramus te, glorificamus te.	we worship thee, we glorify thee.
Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.	We give thanks for your great glory.

<i>Aria</i>	<i>Aria</i>
Domine Deus, Rex coelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens, Domine Fili unigenite Jesu Christe,	O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty, O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ,
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris.	O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father.

<i>Aria</i>	<i>Aria</i>
Qui tollis peccata mundi, Miserere nobis, Suscipe deprecationem nostram.	Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us, receive our prayer.
Qui sedes ad dexteram patris, Miserere nobis.	Thou that sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy upon us.

<i>Aria</i>	<i>Aria</i>
Quoniam tu solus sanctus, Tu solus Dominus, Tu solus altissimus Jesu Christe.	For thou only art holy; thou only art the Lord; thou only, O Jesus Christ, art most high.

<i>Coro</i>	<i>Coro</i>
Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris, amen.	With the Holy Ghost in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Translations of 'Dazu ist erschienen der Sohn Gottes' and 'Alles nur nach Gottes willen' from JS Bach: The Complete Cantatas, published by Long Barn Books (Ebrington, Gloucestershire, 1999)