

WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 31 December 2022
7.00pm

Dunedin Consort

Rachel Redmond soprano
James Hall alto
Hugo Hymas tenor
Robert Davies bass
Rachel Ambrose Evans soprano
Judy Louie Brown alto
Ed Woodhouse tenor
Jon Stainsby bass

John Butt director

Matthew Truscott violin I
Sarah Bevan-Baker violin I
Huw Daniel violin II
Alice Evans violin II
Oliver Wilson viola
Jonathan Manson cello
Christine Sticher violone
Katy Bircher flute
Graham O'Sullivan flute
Alexandra Bellamy oboe, oboe
d'amore

Frances Norbury oboe
Bethan White oboe, oboe
da caccia
Inga Maria Klaucke bassoon
Simon Munday trumpet
Peter Mankarious trumpet
Matthew Wells trumpet
Brendan Musk trumpet
Stephen Burke timpani
Stephen Farr organ

Antonio Caldara (1671-1736)

Sinfonia in C

I. Allegro • II. Andante, piano e staccato • III. Allegro

With grateful thanks to Adrian Chandler for permission to use his edition

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Christen, ätzet diesen Tag BWV63 (c.1714-5)

Interval

Johann Sebastian Bach

Unser Mund sei voll Lachens BWV110 (1725)

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Despite being one of the most celebrated composers of his time, **Antonio Caldara** is seldom known by audiences today. The English composer Charles Avison listed Caldara's works among those of Corelli and Handel to have 'stood the never failing test of time'; Charles Burney described Caldara as 'one of the greatest professors, both for the Church and the stage, that Italy can boast'. Perhaps, though, the best testimony comes not in words but in musical notes. Housed in the Berlin State Library is a copy that Johann Sebastian Bach made of the 'Suscepit Israel' from Caldara's *Magnificat*. Bach added to Caldara's four-part counterpoint two additional lines for violins.

Caldara was court composer to the Duke of Mantua, to Prince Ruspoli in Rome, and finally to Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI in Vienna where he remained until his death. It was his savvy way with royalty, as well as a politically astute sense for the changing times, with which Caldara surfed a particularly prestigious career. And yet he has been neglected in the history books. The organisers of the 2022 international symposium on Caldara in Sydney speculate that this was for two main reasons. Caldara's service as a court musician meant that the dissemination of his works was limited. Secondly, his role as court musician has been interpreted as a marker of conventionality – distinct from iconoclastic or innovative narratives which have characterised his better-known contemporaries.

The Sinfonia in C survives in a source in Dresden. Its opening movement is a boisterous *Allegro*. As violinist Adrian Chandler remarks, it is reminiscent of Vivaldi's concertos for multiple instruments: solos are given to pairs of trumpets, bassoons and oboes – with glorious specificity, too (one passage for 'fagotti con il violoncello' highlights a particularly interesting sonority for two bassoons in a later episode). In contrast, the central *Andante* is a three-part texture marked '*staccato*'. The final *Allegro* blows away any dust – quite literally, with the trumpets and oboes in fun antiphonal exchange.

Bach's *Christen, ätzet diesen Tag* BWV63 was performed on Christmas Day in Leipzig 1723. It was possibly composed in Weimar as early as 1713, and Bach scholar Yoshitake Kobayashi argued that it was performed on Christmas Day 1714 in Weimar (though its lavish scoring means that the cantata could not have been accommodated in the intimate space of the Himmelsburg, Weimar's court chapel). More convincing perhaps are the ties to Halle: the text of the cantata echoes that by theologians in Halle, especially Johann Michael Heineccius, and is possibly connected to Bach's bid for the organist job at Halle's Liebfrauenkirche.

Certainly, the cantata is festive: it is bright, celebratory, and grand. But it lacks features one would expect from a Christmas cantata. There is no

pastoral music, such as the lilting *Sinfonia* that opens Part II of the *Christmas Oratorio* BWV248. Neither is there an angel shrouded in a halo of strings for the annunciation. There isn't even a closing chorale. Instead, Bach provided a symmetrical structure with a tenor recitative as its central axis. This doesn't seem particularly remarkable until we focus on the recitative's middle line: 'In lauter Heil und Gnaden' ('to pure salvation and mercy'), a cadence in purest C major – the key in which the cantata opens and closes. The recitative turns unexpectedly to warfare, and the cellist is keen to fight: abandoning their usual role of harmonic underpinning, they tighten their bow – a pun that proves to be quite literal – and engage in scalic runs of demisemiquavers that represent arrows flying through the air.

The cantata opens with an explosion that you would expect from such a festive work. Its serene heart comes in the form of a duet for soprano and bass with obbligato oboe in luxurious wriggling (and the most exquisitely blue note in bar 25). We move from the second duet, that in its graceful dance rhythms perhaps represent the earthly joys, to the splendour of heaven that promises so much more than any earthly court – four trumpets instead of the usual three! – and oboe and violins in triumphant and joyful busyness. But it's not all celebration: a section that begins with just voices provides a foretaste of heavenly peace, too.

Unser Mund sei voll Lachens BWV110 was composed for Christmas Day in Leipzig 1725. It was performed in the morning at the Nikolaikirche, and then again once more in the afternoon in the Thomaskirche. Bach revived the cantata at least once between 1728 and 1731. The libretto is taken from *Gottgefälliges Kirchen-Opfer* by Georg Christian Lehms. Bach found much inspiration in this publication from 1711, as it provided texts for his cantatas *Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust* BWV170 and *Mein Herze schwimmt im Blut* BWV199. Instead of recitatives, Lehms's text alternates arias with Bible verses.

Listeners may recognise the opening movement as a version of the *French Overture* from the Orchestral Suite No. 4. Bach left the opening section untexted, delaying the choir until the lively middle section. Gorgeous sonorities are explored in the arias: the tenor is joined by two flutes, the alto singer with an oboe d'amore, and the bass with trumpet, oboes and strings. Sensual aspects of the libretto are heightened through these timbres – the thoughts rise swiftly to heaven in perfumed phrases of the flutes, the dense reediness captures pain and cursing, and the golden heavenly mouthpiece awakens any snoozing congregants with a blast of joyful fanfare.

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Antonio Caldara (1671-1736)

Sinfonia in C

I. Allegro

II. Andante, piano e staccato

III. Allegro

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Christen, ätzt diesen Tag BWV63 (c.1714-5) **Christians, engrave this day**

Coro

Christen, ätzt diesen Tag
In Metall und Marmorsteine!
Kommt und eilt mit mir zur
Krippen
Und erweist mit frohen
Lippen
Euren Dank und eure Pflicht;
Denn der Strahl, so da
einbricht,
Zeigt sich euch zum
Gnadenscheine.

Chorus

Christians, engrave this day
in metal and marble!
Come and hasten with
me to the manger
and show with joyous
song
your gratitude and duty;
for the dawning radiance
reveals itself
to you as the light of
grace.

Recitativo

O selger Tag! o ungemeines
Heute,
An dem das Heil der
Welt,
Der Schilo, den Gott schon
im Paradies
Dem menschlichen
Geschlecht verhieß,
Nunmehr sich vollkommen
dargestellt
Und suchet Israel von der
Gefangenschaft und
Sklavenketten
Des Satans zu
erretten.
Du liebster Gott, was sind wir
Armen doch?
Ein abgefallnes Volk, so dich
verlassen;
Und dennoch willst du uns
nicht hassen;
Denn eh wir sollen noch nach
dem Verdienst zu Boden
liegen,
Eh muss die Gottheit sich
bequemen,
Die menschliche Natur an
sich zu nehmen
Und auf der Erden
Im Hirtenstall zu einem
Kinde werden.

Recitative

O blessed day! O
wondrous day
on which the Saviour of
the world,
the Shiloh promised by
God in paradise
to the human
race,
reveals himself
completely
and seeks to save
Israel from being
imprisoned
and fettered by Satan's
slavish chains.
O most loving God! What
are we, poor creatures?
A fallen race that has
forsaken Thee.
And even then Thou dost
not hate us;
for rather than let us, as
we deserve, writhe on
the ground,
the Godhead itself
deigns
to take on human
shape,
and on earth
be born in a
stable.

O unbegreifliches, doch
seliges Verfügen!

O incomprehensible, yet
blessèd dispensation!

Aria

Gott, du hast es wohl
gefüget,
Was uns jetzo
widerfährt.
Drum lasst uns auf ihn stets
trauen
Und auf seine Gnade bauen,
Denn er hat uns dies
beschert,
Was uns ewig nun
vergnüget.

Aria

God, Thou hast well
ordained
what for us now comes to
pass.
Let us then ever trust in
Him
and build upon His grace;
for He has bestowed on
us this gift,
which causes us eternal
joy.

Recitativo

So kehret sich nun heut
Das bange Leid,
Mit welchem Israel
geängstet und beladen,
In lauter Heil und
Gnaden.
Der Löw aus Davids Stamme
ist erschienen,
Sein Bogen ist gespannt, das
Schwert ist schon gewetzt,
Womit er uns in vor'ge
Freiheit setzt.

Recitative

And so today,
the anguish and the pain
which beset and troubled
Israel,
gives way to pure
salvation and mercy.
The lion from David's line
has appeared,
His bow is drawn tight,
His sword sharpened,
with these He shall bring
us our former freedom.

Aria

Ruft und fleht den Himmel an,
Kommt, ihr Christen, kommt
zum Reihn,
Ihr sollt euch ob dem erfreuen,
Was Gott hat anheut getan!
Da uns seine Huld
verpfelet
Und mit so viel Heil
beleget,
Dass man nicht g'nug
danken kann.

Aria

Call and implore heaven,
come, ye Christians,
come to the dance,
you should rejoice
at God's deeds today!
For He has accorded us
such grace,
bestowed on us such
salvation,
more than we can thank
him for.

Recitativo

Verdoppelt euch demnach,
ihr heissen
Andachtsflammen,
Und schlägt in Demut
brünstiglich zusammen!
Steigt fröhlich himmelan
Und danket Gott für dies,
was er getan!

Recitative

May then your ardent
flames of devotion be
redoubled,
fall to your knees
fervently in homage!
Rise joyously up to Heaven
and thank God for what
He has done!

Coro

Höchster, schau in Gnaden
an
Diese Glut gebückter
Seelen!
Lass den Dank, den wir dir
bringen,
Angenehme vor dir klingen,

Chorus

Almighty God, gaze
graciously on
the fervour of these
humble souls!
May the thanks that we
offer
be pleasing unto Thee;

Lass uns stets in Segen
gehn,
Aber niemals nicht geschehn,
Dass uns der Satan möge
quälen.

may we ever walk in
grace,
let it never come to pass
that Satan should
torment us.

Interval

Johann Sebastian Bach

Unser Mund sei voll Lachens BWV110 (1725) Let our mouth be full of laughter

Coro
Unser Mund sei voll Lachens
und unsre Zunge voll
Rühmens.
Denn der Herr hat Grosses
an uns getan.

Chorus
Let our mouth be full of
laughter and our
tongue of singing.
For the Lord hath done
great things for us.

Aria
Ihr Gedanken und ihr
Sinnen,
Schwinget euch anitzt von
hinnen,
Steiget schleunig himmeln
Und bedenkt, was Gott
getan!
Er wird Mensch, und dies allein,
Dass wir Himmels Kinder
sein.

Aria
All you thoughts and
meditations,
soar aloft at
once,
climb swiftly heavenwards
and think what God has
done!
He becomes man, merely
that we be heaven's
children.

Recitativo
Dir, Herr, ist niemand gleich. Du
bist gross, und dein Name ist
gross und kannst's mit der
Tat beweisen.

Recitative
There is none like unto
Thee, O Lord. Thou art
great, and Thy name is
great in might.

Aria
Ach Herr, was ist ein
Menschenkind,
Dass du sein Heil so
schmerzlich suchest?
Ein Wurm, den du
verfluchest,
Wenn Höll und Satan um ihn
sind;
Doch auch dein Sohn, den
Seel und Geist
Aus Liebe seinen Erben
heisst.

Aria
Ah, Lord, what is
man,
that Thou, through such
pain, would redeem him?
A worm, whom Thou dost
curse,
when hell and Satan
surround him;
but yet Thy son, whom
soul and spirit
out of love call their
inheritance.

Duetto
Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe
und Friede auf Erden und
den Menschen ein
Wohlgefallen!

Duet
Glory to God in the
highest, and on earth
peace, good will toward
men!

Aria
Wacht auf, ihr Adern und ihr
Glieder,
Und singt dergleichen
Freudenlieder,
Die unserm Gott gefällig
sein.
Und ihr, ihr andachtvollen
Saiten,
Sollt ihm ein solches Lob
bereiten,
Dabei sich Herz und Geist
erfreun.

Aria
Awake, you veins and
limbs,
and sing those songs of
joy,
which are pleasing to our
God.
And you, you strings of
deep devotion,
should offer Him such
praise,
that heart and soul
rejoice.

Choral
Alleluja! Alleluja! Gelobt sei
Gott,
Singen wir all aus unsers
Herzens Grunde.
Denn Gott hat heut gemacht
solch Freud,
Die wir vergessen solln zu
keiner Stunde.

Chorale
Alleluia! Alleluia! All praise
to God,
let us all sing from the
depths of our hearts.
For God today has
wrought such joy,
that we shall always
remember.

Bach translations by Richard Stokes from JS Bach: The Complete Cantatas, published by Long Barn Books (Ebrington, Gloucestershire, 1999)