

WIGMORE HALL

Monday 3 February 2025
7.30pm

London Handel Players

Adrian Butterfield director

Oliver Webber violin I

Maxim del Mar violin II

Rachel Byrt viola

Gavin Kibble cello

Cecelia Bruggemeyer double bass

Silas Wollston organ

Rachel Brown flute I

Katy Bircher flute II

Joel Raymond oboe I

Oonagh Lee oboe II

Nathaniel Harrison bassoon I, oboe III

Rebecca Hammond bassoon II

Gavin Edwards horn

Neil Brough trumpet I

Peter Mankarious trumpet II

Katie Lodge trumpet III

Ben Hoffnung timpani

Jessica Cale soprano

Zoë Brookshaw soprano

Daniel Taylor alto

Helen Charlston alto

Charles Daniels tenor

Samuel Boden tenor

Ashley Riches bass

Florian Störtz bass

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Mass in B minor BWV232 (c.1747-9)



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The first publisher of **Bach's** B minor Mass in 1818, Hans Nägeli, regarded this work as the 'greatest musical artwork of all times and peoples', an extremely bold judgement but one with which it is hard to disagree. Bach was unusual for his time in that he seemed to intend to compose a notable proportion of his music with an eye to posterity rather than simply for performance on any particular occasion. This is especially true of the B minor Mass as we have no record of a complete performance in his lifetime. Sections of it, such as the 'Sanctus' and the 'Kyrie' and 'Gloria', were certainly performed at various stages in his life, but it seems that completion of the entire Mass was something that preoccupied his final years without any specific performance in mind. Its sheer scale precluded it from inclusion in a service and yet concert performances of Mass settings were unheard of.

It seems that Bach wanted to produce a work that included as many styles and forms as possible and to this end he decided to spend time studying the *stile antico*, the polyphonic style of the 16th Century which in the 17th Century had become reserved for sacred music with the rise of the *stile moderno* for secular repertoire. It tells us a great deal about Bach's character and enquiring mind that, even after establishing himself as a musician of such high stature, he should want to continue to educate himself further.

The 'Gratias' and 'Dona nobis pacem' (which employ the same music), the second 'Kyrie', the opening section of the 'Credo' and the 'Confiteor' are all examples of his use of the *stile antico* and in the Confiteor a plainchant *cantus firmus* emerges from the surrounding counterpoint.

Bach scholars such as Joshua Rifkin and John Butt have come to the conclusion that almost all of the sections of the Mass are 'parodies', that is, they are adaptations of pre-existing compositions even though some of these compositions have been lost in their original form. It's likely that the 'Confiteor' section of the 'Credo' is the only movement to be freshly composed in the 1740s. The number of corrections in Bach's autograph manuscript reveals that he was composing this movement as he was writing it, unlike many of the other movements in which he is clearly either copying out or re-arranging a pre-existing version.

A more 'modern', *galant* style can be found in the 'Domine Deus'. The music is light and dancing in character and this is helped by the fact that the bass line is marked *pizzicato*. This dance element was a

fashion that had spread from France. Louis XIV had been a passionate devotee of the art of dancing and, having spent much of his reign at war with the rest of Europe, perhaps his real victory lay in the gradual spread of *La Belle Danse*, which he had espoused, across the Continent. At the courts of the German states the French language was spoken and dancing masters from France were imported to teach the upper classes how to deport themselves on the dance floor. Bach learned these dances as a student in Lüneburg near Hamburg during his mid-teenage years. It was a 'modern' conception to include this style of writing in a sacred work since dance music had previously been considered inappropriate for use in church.

Bach did not give any movements specific dance titles, but the joyful opening of the 'Gloria' and the *Pleni sunt coeli* section of the 'Sanctus' are clearly based on the light-hearted *passepied* and the 'Crucifixus' is a sombre *passacaglia*. His choice of the proud polonaise for the 'Quoniam' and the employment of a virtuoso horn part continued a relatively new tradition in Saxony where Bach lived and worked. The Elector of Saxony, Augustus II 'the Strong', and his son, Friedrich Augustus II, who succeeded him on his death in 1733, were both also elected as the King of Poland and both of them were keen huntsmen. Bach had sent a fair copy of the 'Kyrie' and 'Gloria' (the 'Missa') to Friedrich Augustus in 1733 on his accession in the hope of receiving Court recognition. The text of the 'Quoniam', 'For you alone are the holy one, you alone are the Lord', magnified the Almighty, and, by association with the divine, also flattered the elector-king himself and the composer finally received the title he desired three years later.

The question of which vocal forces Bach had at his disposal has been hotly debated ever since Joshua Rifkin first suggested in 1981 that the majority of his works would have been performed with one singer per part. The aforementioned 'Missa' is very clearly designated for five vocal parts with two sopranos and one each of alto, tenor and bass. It is possible that a performance took place in 1733 though this is still uncertain. The 'Sanctus' has six vocal parts with divided altos, as well as sopranos, whilst the 'Osanna' requires two quartets of parts, that is eight singers. Since there is no evidence of a complete performance under Bach's direction I have chosen to divide up the sections in the most practical way.

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Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Mass in B minor BWV232 (c.1747-9)

Liturgical text

| | |
|--|---|
| Kyrie | Kyrie |
| <i>Coro</i> Kyrie eleison. | <i>Chorus</i> Lord, have mercy. |
| <i>Aria (Duetto)</i> Christe eleison. | <i>Aria (Duet)</i> Christ, have mercy. |
| <i>Coro</i> Kyrie eleison. | <i>Chorus</i> Lord, have mercy. |
| Gloria | Gloria |
| <i>Coro</i> Gloria in excelsis Deo. | <i>Chorus</i> Glory be to God in the highest. |
| <i>Coro</i> Et in terra pax Hominibus bonae voluntatis. | <i>Chorus</i> And in earth peace to men of good will. |
| <i>Aria</i> Laudamus te, benedicimus te, Adoramus te, glorificamus te. | <i>Aria</i> We praise thee; we bless thee; we worship thee; we glorify thee. |
| <i>Coro</i> Gratias agimus tibi Propter magnam gloriam tuam. | <i>Chorus</i> We give thanks to thee for thy great glory. |
| <i>Aria (Duetto)</i> Domine Deus, Rex coelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens, Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe altissime, Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris. | <i>Aria (Duet)</i> O Lord God, Heavenly King, God the Father Almighty. O Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son. Jesus Christ most high. Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father. |
| <i>Coro</i> Qui tollis peccata mundi, Miserere nobis, Qui tollis peccata mundi, Suscipe deprecationem nostram. | <i>Chorus</i> Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. |

Aria
Qui sedes ad
dextram
Patris,
Miserere nobis.

Aria
Thou that sittest at the
right hand of the
Father,
have mercy upon us.

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

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

Coro
Cum Sancto
Spiritu
In gloria Dei Patris.
Amen.

Chorus
Together with the Holy
Ghost
in the glory of God the
Father. Amen.

Interval

Symbolum Nicenum Symbolum Nicenum

Coro
Credo in unum Deum.

Chorus
I believe in one God.

Coro
Credo in unum Deum,
Patrem omnipotentem,
Factorem coeli et
terrae,
Visibilium omnium et
invisibilium.

Chorus
I believe in one God;
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and
earth,
and of all things visible
and invisible.

Aria (Duetto)
Et in unum Dominum Jesum
Christum,
Filius Dei
unigenitum
Et ex Patre natum ante
omnia saecula.
Deum de Deo, lumen de
lumine,
Deum verum de Deo vero,
Genitum, non factum,
Consubstantialem
Patri,
Per quem omnia
facta sunt.
Qui propter nos homines
Et propter nostram salutem
Descendit de
coelis.

Aria (Duet)
And in one Lord Jesus
Christ,
the only begotten Son of
God,
begotten of the Father
before all worlds;
God of God, light of
light,
true God of true God,
begotten not made;
being of one substance
with the Father,
by whom all things were
made.
Who for us men
and for our salvation
descended from
heaven.

Song continues overleaf. Please turn the page as quietly as possible.

Coro
Et incarnatus est
De Spiritu Sancto ex
Maria virgine,
Et homo factus est.

Chorus
And was incarnate
by the Holy Ghost of the
Virgin Mary,
and was made man.

Coro
Crucifixus etiam pro
nobis
Sub Pontio
Pilato,
Passus et sepultus est.

Chorus
He was crucified also for
us,
suffered under Pontius
Pilate,
and was buried.

Coro
Et resurrexit tertia
die
Secundum
scripturas,
Et ascendit in
coelum,
Sedet ad dextram Dei
Patris,
Et iterum
venturus est
Cum gloria iudicare vivos et
mortuos,
Cuius regni non
erit finis.

Chorus
And on the third day he
rose again
according to the
Scriptures:
and ascended into
heaven.
He sitteth at the right
hand of the Father;
and he shall come again
with glory
to judge the living and
the dead;
and his kingdom shall
have no end.

Aria
Et in Spiritum Sanctum
Dominum et
vivificantem,
Qui ex Patre
Filioque
procedit;
Qui cum Patre et
Filio simul
Adoratur et
conglorificatur;
Qui locutus est per
Prophetas.
Et unam sanctam
catholicam
Et apostolicam
ecclesiam.

Aria
And in the Holy Ghost,
the Lord and giver of
life,
who proceedeth from
the Father and the
Son,
who with the Father and
the Son together
is worshipped and
glorified;
as it was told by the
Prophets.
And I believe in
one holy
catholic and apostolic
Church.

Coro
Confiteor unum
baptisma
In remissionem
peccatorum.

Chorus
I acknowledge one
baptism
for the remission of
sins.

Coro
Et expecto
resurrectionem
mortuorum
Et vitam venturi saeculi.
Amen.

Chorus
And I await the
resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world
to come. Amen.

Sanctus

Sanctus

Coro
Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt coeli et terra
gloria eius.

Chorus
Holy, Holy, Holy,
Lord God of Hosts.
Heaven and earth are
full of thy glory.

Coro
Osanna in excelsis.

Chorus
Hosanna in the highest.

Aria
Benedictus qui
venit
In nomine Domini.

Aria
Blessed is he that
cometh
in the name of the Lord.

Coro
Osanna in excelsis.

Chorus
Hosanna in the highest.

Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei

Aria
Agnus Dei
Qui tollis peccata
mundi,
Miserere nobis.

Aria
Lamb of God,
who takest away the sins
of the world,
have mercy upon us.

Coro
Dona nobis pacem.

Chorus
Grant us peace.