

# WIGMORE HALL

Wednesday 5 April 2023  
7.30pm

## London Handel Players

Adrian Butterfield director	Rowan Pierce soprano
Rachel Brown flute	Daniel Taylor alto
Persephone Gibbs violin	Charles Daniels tenor
Rachel Byrt viola	Jerome Knox bass
Clifton Harrison viola	
Sarah McMahan cello	
Carina Cosgrave double bass	
Silas Wollston harpsichord, organ	
James Eastaway oboe	
Gail Hennessy oboe	
Nathaniel Harrison bassoon	

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) Christ lag in Todesbanden BWV4 (?by 1708)  
Aus der Tiefen rufe ich, Herr BWV131 (1707)

*Interval*

Johann Joachim Quantz (1697-1773) Flute Concerto No. 256 in A  
*I. Allegro di molto • II. Arioso ma con tenerezza • III. Presto*

Johann Sebastian Bach Jesu, der du meine Seele BWV78 (1724)

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Since Lent was considered to be a period of austerity in the Lutheran Church calendar, **Bach** was not usually required to write church music during that part of the year. But meditation on Jesus's death is found in the biblical texts set for numerous other Sundays of the year, and the two cantatas *Aus der Tiefen rufe ich, Herr* and *Jesu, der du meine Seele* are particularly beautiful examples of this, whilst *Christ lag in Todesbanden* was written specifically for Easter Day.

Although no pre-Leipzig sources of *Christ lag in Todesbanden* BWV4 survive it seems likely that Bach performed this work on Easter Sunday in 1707 at St Blasius's Church in Mühlhausen as part of his audition for the job there. The work's five-part string scoring also suggests an early work, a texture commonly found in the 17th-century repertoire.

It is a setting of all seven stanzas of Martin Luther's Easter hymn (1524) preceded by an opening instrumental *Sinfonia* which seems to encapsulate Christ's suffering, death and resurrection all by itself. There's a brooding quality to the E minor opening sequence and bars 3 and 4 pre-echo the text, 'Den Tod' ('Death'), heard in Verse 2. Then the bass line takes us inexorably down to Hell followed by the first violin line stretching up towards Heaven and culminating in a final, major chord representing the joy of The Resurrection.

The movements that follow reflect this journey from darkness to light. One would perhaps have expected a cantata for Easter Day to focus mainly on the positive message of this Festival and yet much of the text and music deals with the battle between Life and Death that has taken place in the lead up to this day, rather than rejoicing in the victory that has been won.

*Aus der Tiefen rufe ich, Herr* is another of Bach's earliest surviving cantatas and dates, like *Christ lag*, from his time in Mühlhausen in 1707-8. It isn't known for certain for which occasion this work was written but it is thought that it may have been intended for a service commemorating the devastating fire that took place in the town in May 1707. The scoring is similar to that of BWV4 but with an oboe taking the place of one of the violins.

Much of the text comes from Psalm 130: 'Out of the depths I cry unto thee, O Lord', but also included are two stanzas from a hymn based on Psalm 51, a psalm traditionally used in the period of Lent. The mood of the opening *sinfonia* and chorus is penitential and features a dialogue between the oboe and violin before the singers enter, but then the mood becomes brighter for the text: 'Lord, hear my voice'. The two hymn stanzas are sung as a *cantus firmus* within arias by bass and tenor and then Bach concludes this work on a more positive note with a fugal setting of the words: 'Let Israel hope in the Lord'.

**Johann Joachim Quantz** is most commonly remembered as the flute teacher of Frederick the Great and author of the extensive treatise *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* (1752). By the time of his entry into service at the Prussian court in 1741 Quantz was well known and respected as an extremely versatile, widely travelled and experienced musician. He had met and impressed Alessandro Scarlatti, Hasse and Handel, the latter of whom apparently would have liked him to remain in England; if he had, Handel would surely have written much more for the flute. But if Quantz had stayed here, we would not have the hundreds of sonatas and concertos he composed expressly for his illustrious pupil, the Crown Prince, later King of Prussia.

Frederick first heard Quantz play in Dresden and his mother arranged flute lessons, though these had to be kept secret from his autocratic father who continually attempted to quash his son's cultural interests. Frederick repaid him handsomely when he succeeded to the throne, eventually engaging him on an enormous salary of 2000 Thalers per year for life as well as bonuses on top for each new flute and every new composition. The concerto in A major is one of three hundred! Needless to say, Quantz became one of the richest musicians of his day.

This particular concerto is bursting with vitality in the outer movements, whilst the middle movement is a lilting, almost classical serenade, which does much to dispel the myth that Quantz merely churned out the same old formulae and also testifies to Frederick's obvious ability. In this special anniversary year, 250 years since his death, we celebrate his immense output, much of which was never published and remained in the private library of Frederick the Great.

*Jesu, der du meine Seele* dates from 1724, Bach's second year in Leipzig. It opens with a magnificent, lamenting G minor chorus in the form of a *passacaglia* over a descending chromatic ground bass. It's hard to imagine a more contrasting movement than the soprano-alto duet that follows which is so comical and frivolous by comparison with what precedes it; it makes us wish that Bach had tried his hand at opera. The tenor recitative returns us to the world of 'leprous sin' whilst the succeeding aria celebrates the cleansing nature of the blood Jesus shed on the cross, the flute figuration representing the words '[it] makes my heart feel light again'. The bass *accompagnato* reminds us of Christ's Passion and the last aria with oboe solo and concluding chorale leave us with a message of hope.

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## Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

### Christ lag in Todesbanden BWV4

(?by 1708)

*Martin Luther*

*Sinfonia*

*Coro*

Christ lag in  
Todesbanden

Für unsre Sünd gegeben,  
Er ist wieder erstanden  
Und hat uns bracht das Leben;  
Des wir sollen fröhlich sein,  
Gott loben und ihm dankbar  
sein  
Und singen halleluja,  
Halleluja!

*Duetto*

Den Tod niemand zwingen  
kunnt  
Bei allen Menschenkindern,  
Das macht' alles unsre  
Sünd,  
Kein Unschuld war zu  
finden.  
Davon kam der Tod so  
bald  
Und nahm über uns Gewalt,  
Hielt uns in seinem Reich  
gefangen.  
Halleluja!

*Aria*

Jesus Christus, Gottes Sohn,  
An unser Statt ist kommen  
Und hat die Sünde weggetan,  
Damit dem Tod genommen  
All sein Recht und sein  
Gewalt,  
Da bleibt nichts denn Tods  
Gestalt,  
Den Stach'l hat er verloren.  
Halleluja!

*Coro*

Es war ein wunderlicher Krieg,  
Da Tod und Leben  
rungen,  
Das Leben behielt den Sieg,  
Es hat den Tod verschlungen.  
Die Schrift hat verkündigt  
das,  
Wie ein Tod den andern  
frass,  
Ein Spott aus dem Tod ist  
worden.  
Halleluja!

### Christ lay in the bonds of death

*Sinfonia*

*Chorus*

Christ lay in the bonds of  
death,  
sacrificed for our sins,  
he has risen again  
and brought us life;  
for this we should rejoice,  
praise the Lord and give  
thanks  
and sing alleluia  
alleluia!

*Duet*

No one could overcome  
Death  
amongst all mankind,  
this was all caused by our  
sins,  
no innocence could be  
found.  
Thus it was that Death  
came so soon  
and seized power over us,  
held us captive in his  
kingdom.  
Alleluia!

*Aria*

Jesus Christ, the Son of God,  
has come to our abode  
and cast all sin aside,  
thereby depriving death  
of all his rights and  
strength,  
naught but Death's mere  
form remained,  
he had lost his sting.  
Alleluia!

*Chorus*

It was a strange war;  
when Death and Life did  
fight,  
Life won the victory  
and devoured Death.  
The scriptures foretold it  
so,  
how one death consumed  
the other  
and made a mockery of  
Death.  
Alleluia!

*Aria*

Hier ist das rechte  
Osterlamm,  
Davon Gott hat geboten,  
Das ist hoch an des Kreuzes  
Stamm  
In heisser Lieb gebraten,  
Das Blut zeichnet unsre Tür,  
Das hält der Glaub dem Tode  
für,  
Der Würger kann uns nicht  
mehr schaden.  
Halleluja!

*Aria (Duetto)*

So feiern wir das hohe  
Fest  
Mit Herzensfreud und  
Wonne,  
Das uns der Herre scheinen  
lässt,  
Er ist selber die Sonne,  
Der durch seiner Gnade  
Glanz  
Erleuchtet unsre Herzen ganz,  
Der Sünden Nacht ist  
verschwunden.  
Halleluja!

*Choral*

Wir essen und leben wohl  
In rechten  
Osterfladen,  
Der alte Sauerteig nicht soll  
Sein bei dem Wort  
Gnaden,  
Christus will die Koste sein  
Und speisen die Seel allein,  
Der Glaub will keins andern  
leben.  
Halleluja!

*Aria*

Here is the true Easter  
Lamb,  
that God has offered,  
high on the tree of the  
cross  
it was burned in ardent love,  
his blood marks our door,  
faith holds it up in the  
face of death,  
the strangler can no  
longer harm us.  
Alleluia!

*Aria (Duet)*

So we celebrate with  
heartfelt joy  
and pleasure the High  
Feast  
that the Lord for us  
makes manifest;  
he is himself the sun,  
who through the  
splendour of his grace  
fills our hearts with light,  
the night of sin has  
disappeared.  
Alleluia!

*Chorale*

We eat and fare well  
on the true unleavened  
Easter bread,  
the ancient leaven shall not  
be with us at this time of  
Mercy,  
Christ shall our food now be,  
he alone shall feed the soul,  
faith would live on  
nothing else.  
Alleluia!

**Aus der Tiefen rufe ich, Herr BWV131 (1707)**      **Out of the depths I cry unto thee**

*Liturgical text and Bartholomäus Ringwaldt*

*Coro*  
Aus der Tiefen rufe ich, Herr,  
zu dir. Herr, höre meine  
Stimme, lass deine Ohren  
merken auf die Stimme  
meines Flehens!

*Chorus*  
Our of the depths I cry unto  
thee, O Lord. Lord, hear  
my voice; let thine ears be  
attentive to the voice of  
my supplications!

*Arioso con Choral*  
Erbarm dich mein in solcher  
Last,  
Nimm sie aus meinem Herzen,  
Dieweil du sie gebüsst hast  
Am Holz mit  
Todesschmerzen,  
Denn bei dir ist die  
Vergebung, dass man dich  
fürchte.  
Auf dass ich nicht mit  
grossem Weh  
In meinen Sünden untergeh,  
Noch ewiglich verzage.

*Arioso with Chorale*  
Have mercy on me in  
such torment,  
remove it from my heart,  
for thou hast atoned for it  
with pains of death upon  
the cross,  
for there is forgiveness  
with thee, that thou  
mayest be feared.  
So that I might not with  
grievous woe  
perish in my sins,  
or despair for evermore.

*Coro*  
Ich harre des Herrn, meine  
Seele harret, und ich hoffe  
auf sein Wort.

*Chorus*  
I wait for the Lord, my  
soul doth wait, and in  
his word do I hope.

*Aria con Choral*  
Meine Seele wartet auf den  
Herrn von einer  
Morgenwache bis zu der  
andern.

*Aria with Chorale*  
My soul waiteth for the  
Lord more than they  
that watch for the  
morning.

Und weil ich denn in meinem  
Sinn,  
Wie ich zuvor geklaget,  
Auch ein betrübter Sünder bin,  
Den sein Gewissen  
naget,  
Und wollte gern im Blute  
dein  
Von Sünden abgewaschen sein  
Wie David und Manasse.

Because I in my  
heart,  
as I have hitherto lamented,  
am also a troubled sinner,  
gnawed at by his  
conscience,  
and would gladly in thy  
blood  
be washed clean of sin,  
like David and Manasseh.

*Coro*  
Israel hoffe auf den Herrn;  
denn bei dem Herrn ist  
die Gnade und viel  
Erlösung bei ihm.  
Und er wird Israel  
erlösen aus allen seinen  
Sünden.

*Chorus*  
Let Israel hope in the  
Lord: for with the Lord  
there is mercy, and with  
him is plenteous  
redemption. And he  
shall redeem Israel  
from all her iniquities.

**Johann Joachim Quantz (1697-1773)**

**Flute Concerto No. 256 in A**

*I. Allegro di molto*

*II. Arioso ma con tenerezza*

*III. Presto*

**Johann Sebastian Bach**

**Jesu, der du meine Seele BWV78 (1724)**

*Johann Rist and Anonymous*

*Coro (Choral)*  
Jesu, de du meine  
Seele  
Hast durch deinen bittern Tod  
Aus des Teufels finstern  
Höhle  
Und der schweren  
Seelennot  
Kräftiglich herausgerissen  
Und mich solches lassen  
wissen  
Durch dein angenehmes  
Wort,  
Sei doch itzt, o Gott, mein  
Hort!

**Jesus, who hast wrested my soul**

*Chorus (Chorale)*  
Jesus, who hast wrested  
my soul  
through thy bitter death  
from the devil's dark  
cavern  
and from oppressive  
anguish  
most forcefully  
and hast informed me of  
this  
through thy pleasant  
Word,  
be even now, O God, my  
refuge!

*Aria (Duetto)*  
Wir eilen mit schwachen,  
doch emsigen Schritten,  
O Jesu, o Meister, zu helfen  
zu dir.  
Du suchest die Kranken und  
Irrenden treulich.  
Ach höre, wie wir  
Die Stimmen erheben, um  
Hülfe zu bitten!  
Es sei uns dein gnädiges  
Antlitz erfreulich!

*Aria (Duet)*  
We hasten with weak but  
diligent steps,  
O Jesus, O master, to  
thee.  
Thou seekest to help the  
ailing and erring.  
Ah, hearken, as we  
raise our voices, to beg  
thee for help!  
May thy gracious  
countenance smile on us!

*Recitativo*  
Ach! ich bin ein Kind der  
Sünden,  
Ach! ich irre weit und breit.  
Der Sünden Aussatz, so an  
mir zu finden,  
Verlässt mich nicht in dieser  
Sterblichkeit.  
Mein Wille trachtet nur nach  
Bösen.  
Der Geist zwar spricht: ach!  
wer wird mich erlösen?

*Recitative*  
Ah! I am a child of  
sin,  
ah! I err far and wide.  
Leprous sin is found on  
me,  
clings to my  
mortality.  
My will only aspires to  
evil.  
Though my soul says: ah,  
who will redeem me?

Aber Fleisch und Blut zu zwingen	But to force flesh and blood
Und das Gute zu vollbringen, Ist über all meine Kraft.	to accomplish good, is beyond all my strength.
Will ich den Schaden nicht verhehlen,	Though I would not conceal my error,
So kann ich nicht, wie oft ich fehle, zählen.	I cannot count how often I have sinned.
Drum nehm ich nun der Sünden Schmerz und Pein	And so I now take my sinful grief and pain
Und meiner Sorgen Bürde,	and the burden of my sorrow,
So mir sonst unerträglich würde,	which I could otherwise not endure,
Ich liefre sie dir, Jesu, seufzend ein.	and deliver them to thee, Jesus, with a sigh.
Rechne nicht die Missetat,	Do not count all the sinful deeds
Die dich, Herr, erzürnet hat!	which, O Lord, have angered thee!

<i>Aria</i>	<i>Aria</i>
Das Blut, so meine Schuld durchstreicht,	The blood, which erases my guilt,
Macht mir das Herze wieder leicht	makes my heart feel light again
Und spricht mich frei.	and sets me free.
Ruft mich der Höllen Heer zum Streite,	Though all hell should call me to the fight,
So stehet Jesus mir zur Seite,	Jesus will stand beside me,
Dass ich beherzt und sieghaft sei.	that I may take heart and win the day.

<i>Recitativo</i>	<i>Recitative</i>
Die Wunden, Nägel, Kron und Grab,	The wounds, the nails, the crown and the grave,
Die Schläge, so man dort dem Heiland gab,	the blows that were dealt the Saviour there,
Sind ihm nunmehr Siegeszeichen	are from henceforth signs of triumph
Und können mir verneute Kräfte reichen.	and can endow me with new strength.
Wenn ein erschreckliches Gericht	When a terrible judge
Den Fluck vor die Verdammten spricht,	lays a curse upon the damned,
So kehrt du ihn in Segen.	thou dost change it into blessing.
Mich kann kein Schmerz und keine Pein bewegen,	No grief nor pain can affect me,
Weil sie mein Heiland kennt;	since my Saviour knows of them;
Und da dein Herz vor mich in Liebe brennt,	and as thy heart burns for me in love,
So lege ich hinwieder Das meine vor dich nieder.	I in turn lay down my own before thee.
Dies mein Herz, mit Leid vermengen,	This my heart, marked with the grief
So dein teures Blut besprenget,	which thy precious blood did scatter,
So am Kreuz vergossen ist,	which was shed upon the cross,

Geb ich dir, Herr Jesu Christ.	I give to thee, Lord Jesus Christ.
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<i>Aria</i>	<i>Aria</i>
Nun du wirst mein Gewissen stillen,	Now shalt thou quieten my conscience,
So wider mich um Rache schreit,	which cries for vengeance against me,
Ja, deine Treue wird's erfüllen,	yea, thy faithfulness will fulfil it,
Weil mir dein Wort die Hoffnung beut.	because thy Word offers me hope.
Wenn Christen an dich glauben,	If Christians believe in thee,
Wird sie kein Feind in Ewigkeit Aus deinen Händen rauben.	no foe shall ever steal them out of thy hands.

<i>Choral</i>	<i>Chorale</i>
Herr, ich glaube, hilf mir Schwachen,	Lord, I believe, help my weakness,
Lass mich ja verzagen nicht;	let me not despair;
Du, du kannst mich stärker machen,	thou, thou canst make me stronger,
Wenn mich Sünd und Tod anfigt.	when sin and death assail me.
Deiner Güte will ich trauen,	I shall trust thy goodness
Bis ich fröhlich werde schauen	till I shall see with gladness
Dich, Herr Jesu, nach dem Streit	thee, Lord Jesus, after the fight,
In der süßen Ewigkeit.	in that sweet eternity.

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