

WIGMORE HALL

Monday 6 June 2022 7.30pm

Bach motets

Solomon's Knot

Zoë Brookshaw soprano

Clare Lloyd-Griffiths soprano

Nathan Mercieca alto

Kate Symonds-Joy alto

Ruairi Bowen tenor

Thomas Herford tenor

Frederick Long bass

Jonathan Sells bass

Jan Zahourek violone

Pawel Siwczak organ

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Johann Christoph Bach (1642-1703)

Fürchte dich nicht

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Fürchte dich nicht BWV228

Komm, Jesu, komm BWV229 (before 1732)

Johann Christoph Bach

Lieber Herr Gott, wecke uns auf (1672)

Johann Sebastian Bach

Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden BWV230

Interval

Johann Christoph Bach

Herr, nun lässest du deinen Diener

Johann Sebastian Bach

Jesu, meine Freude BWV227 (c.1723)

Johann Christoph Bach

Der Gerechte, ob er gleich zu zeitlich stirbt (1676)

Johann Sebastian Bach

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied BWV225 (1726-7)

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Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen's picaresque novel *Simplicius Simplicissimus*, written in 1668, recalled the bloody horrors of the recent Thirty Years War and the patterns of life it left behind. The latter included new rituals for mourning the dead, especially in Lutheran territories, where the hold of the Church over public funeral ceremonies was loosened by private approaches to burial and grief, among them the nocturnal *Beisetzung* (literally 'the setting by' or interment). **Johann Sebastian Bach** and members of his family would surely have attended funerals held at night. These ceremonies became de rigueur among the aristocracy and rising merchant classes, whose elaborate open-air funeral services were often preceded by torch-lit processions and accompanied by choirs and even instrumentalists at the graveside.

Several of the motets in this evening's programme may have been written with nocturnal funerals in mind; they certainly belong to a repertory of compositions related to the private, personal expression of grief, shaped not by the Church but by the wishes of the deceased and their family. The score of JS Bach's cantata *Ich lasse dich nicht, du segnest mich denn* BWV157, associated with the Leipzig funeral of a court counsellor, contains evidence to suggest that the work was probably performed at a burial that began at dusk. His so-called funeral motets, among them *Jesu, meine Freude* BWV227, *Fürchte dich nicht* BWV228 and *Komm, Jesu, komm* BWV229, may also have accompanied interment ceremonies at nightfall.

Jesu, meine Freude was almost certainly written in July 1723 for the funeral of Johanna Maria Kees, wife of Leipzig's postmaster, and could have been repeated at her graveside. Beyond such speculation, Johann Sebastian and his first cousin once removed, Johann Christoph, clearly valued music's consoling power. Their funerary motets belonged to an ancient tradition of a cappella or lightly accompanied sacred choral compositions, one that was in robust health when Johann Sebastian arrived in Leipzig in 1723 to become Thomaskantor.

Johann Sebastian's majestic setting of *Fürchte dich nicht* possibly stems from an earlier version written during his time at the Weimar court (1708-17). Bach reduces the initial double-choir texture to four parts in its central section to articulate God's consoling words to Jacob: 'I have called you by your name, you are mine'. **Johann Christoph** sets the motet's text, a marriage of words from Isaiah and St Luke's Gospel, for five voices, playing with contrasts between chordal declamation and brief passages of polyphony and introducing an exquisite shift of texture for the dialogue between soprano, to the melody of Johann Rist's choral '*O Traurigkeit*', and the lower voices at '*O Jesu du bist mein*'. Words and music proclaim God's reassurance and Jesus's promise to the repentant thief crucified alongside him: 'you will be with me in paradise'.

The expressive vitality of Johann Christoph's double-choir motet *Lieber Herr Gott, wecke uns auf*, a product of the early 1670s, flows

from its contrasts of minor and major modes and choral textures. Shortly before his death, Johann Sebastian Bach prepared a set of instrumental parts for the piece, a copy of which he held in his family archive; it is possible, though unproven, that it was performed at Johann Sebastian's own funeral in Leipzig in July 1750. *Herr, nun lässest du deinen Diener*, a noble setting for double choir of the Song of Simeon or *Nunc dimittis*, and *Der Gerechte, ob er gleich zu zeitlich stirbt* for five voices, convey consoling words with great economy, the former supported by solid chordal harmonies, the latter delivered in the form of a sacred madrigal.

Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden, based on words from Psalm 117, stands apart from Johann Sebastian's other motets. Its earliest surviving sources, copied in the early 1800s, raise doubts about its authorship, while its independent continuo part suggests that it might have originated as a cantata movement. The rhetorical force of its fugal counterpoint and reflective chordal passages, however, support the case that it was written by the most famous Bach of all.

Johann Sebastian's *Komm, Jesu, komm* BWV229 and *Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied* BWV225 are based respectively on verses from the sacred song *Komm, heiliger Geist* and words from two psalms, a chorale and free verse. Paul Thymich wrote the text of *Komm, Jesu, komm* in 1684 for the funeral of Jacob Thomasius, Rector of Leipzig's Thomasschule. Each of Bach's verses ends with a paraphrase of words from St John's Gospel: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life'. While the date and purpose of its composition have not been established, it is possible that the motet was conceived to accompany the funeral service or perhaps the burial of a leading Leipzig citizen. The tri-partite *Komm, Jesu, komm*, complete with a hymn-like central 'arie' in which the soul bids goodnight to the world, would certainly intensify the interment ritual.

Singet dem Herrn probably dates from 1726-7 and may have been intended to mark the October anniversary of Luther's Reformation. Bach's majestic motet, for eight-part double chorus, begins with a contrapuntal treatment of the first three verses of Psalm 149, crowned by an extended section in which the first choir sings an extended fugue to the words '*Die Kinder Zion*' while the second choir interjects with material based on words and music from the work's opening. The central movement, like that of *Komm, Jesu, komm*, includes a contemplative 'arie' in free verse. This is prefaced by a chorale, which also surfaces throughout the so-called aria. The motet's lively bi-partite final movement sets the second and sixth verses of Psalm 150. Following a brief outburst of imitative counterpoint for two choirs, Bach unites both in a four-part fugue in praise of God.

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Johann Christoph Bach (1642-1703)

Fürchte dich nicht

Fear not

Liturgical text, Johann Rist

Fürchte dich nicht,
Denn ich hab dich erlöst,
Ich habe dich bei deinem Namen
gerufen:
Du bist mein.

Fear not,
for I have redeemed thee,
I have called thee by thy
name;
thou art mine.

Wahrlich, ich sage dir:
Heute wirst du mit mir im
Paradies sein.

Verily I say unto thee:
today shalt thou be with me in
paradise.

O Jesu, du mein Hilf und Ruh,
Ich bitte dich mit Tränen:
Hilf, dass ich mich bis ins Grab
Nach dir möge sehnen.

O Jesus, my help and my rest,
I entreat thee with tears:
help me to follow thee
until my life ends.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Fürchte dich nicht

Fear not

BWV228

Liturgical text, Paul Gerhardt

Fürchte dich nicht, ich bin bei dir;
Weiche nicht, denn ich bin dein
Gott!
Ich stärke dich, ich helfe dir
auch, ich erhalte dich durch
Die rechte Hand meiner
Gerechtigkeit.

Fear not, for I am with thee;
be not dismayed, for I am thy
God!
I will strengthen thee, yea I will help
thee; yea I will uphold thee
with the right hand of my
righteousness.

Fürchte dich nicht, denn ich
habe dich erlöst,
Ich habe dich bei deinem Namen
gerufen, du bist mein.

Fear not, for I have redeemed
thee;
I have called thee by thy name;
thou art mine.

Herr, mein Hirt, Brunn aller
Freuden,
Du bist mein, ich bin dein,
Niemand kann uns scheiden.
Ich bin dein, weil du dein
Leben
Und dein Blut mir zugut in den
Tod gegeben.

Lord my shepherd, source of all
joys,
thou art mine, I am thine,
none can part us.
I am thine, because thou gavest
thy life
and thy blood for my sake, and
embraced death.

Du bist mein, weil ich dich fasse
Und dich nicht, o mein Licht,
Aus dem Herzen lasse.
Lass mich hingelangen,
Da du mich und ich dich
Lieblich werd umfängen.

Thou art mine, because I hold thee
and will never let thee, O my light,
leave my heart.
Let me reach the place
where I shall embrace thee
and thou me in all eternity.

Komm, Jesu, komm

BWV229 (before 1732)

Paul Thymich

Komm, Jesu, komm, mein Leib
ist müde,
Die Kraft verschwind't je mehr
und mehr,
Ich sehne mich nach deinem Friede;
Der saure Weg wird mir zu
schwer!
Komm, komm, ich will mich dir
ergeben;
Du bist der rechte Weg, die
Wahrheit und das Leben.

Come, Jesus, come

Come, Jesus, come, my body is
weary,
my strength deserts me more
and more,
I yearn for thy peace;
life's bitter path is too much for
me!
Come, come, I will surrender
myself to thee,
thou art the right way, the truth
and the life.

Drum schliess ich mich in deine
Hände
Und sage, Welt, zu guter Nacht!
Eilt gleich mein Lebenslauf zu
Ende,
Ist doch der Geist wohl angebracht.
Er soll bei seinem Schöpfer
schweben,
Weil Jesus ist und bleibt der
wahre Weg zum Leben.

And so I place myself in thy
hands
and bid thee, world, farewell!
Though the sands of my life are
running out,
the spirit is ready.
It shall hover before its
maker,
for Jesus is and remains the
true way to life.

Johann Christoph Bach

Lieber Herr Gott, wecke uns auf (1672)

Martin Luther

Lieber Herr Gott, wecke uns auf
Dass wir bereit sein,
Wenn dein Sohn kömmt,
Ihn mit Freuden zu empfangen
Und dir mit reinem Herzen zu
dienen,
Durch denselbigen deinen lieben
Sohn,
Jesum Christum unsern Herren.
Amen.

Dear Lord God, wake us up

Dear Lord God, wake us up
so that we are ready,
when your son comes,
to greet him with joy,
and to serve you with pure
heart,
through the same dear son of
yours,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Johann Sebastian Bach

Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden BWV230

Liturgical text

Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden,
Und preiset ihn, alle Völker.
Denn seine Gnade und
Wahrheit
Waltet über uns in
Ewigkeit.
Halleluja.

Praise the Lord, all ye nations

Praise the Lord, all ye nations,
praise him all ye people.
For his merciful kindness is
great towards us
and the truth of the Lord
endureth for ever.
Alleluia.

Interval

Johann Christoph Bach

**Herr, nun lässest du
deinen Diener**

Liturgical text

Herr, nun lässest du deinen
Diener in Frieden fahren, wie
du gesagt hast.

Denn meine Augen haben
deinen Heiland gesehen,
Welchen du bereitet hast vor
allen Völkern,

Ein Licht zu erleuchten die
Heiden, und zum Preis deines
Volk Israel.

Ehre sei dem Vater und dem
Sohn und dem Heiligen Geist,
Wie im Anfang, so auch jetzt
und alle Zeit, und in Ewigkeit.
Amen.

**Lord, now lettest thou
thy servant**

Lord, now lettest thou thy
servant depart in peace:
according to thy word.
for mine eyes have seen: thy
salvation,
which thou hast prepared:
before the face of all people;
to be a light to lighten the
Gentiles: and to be the glory
of thy people Israel.

Glory be to the Father, and to the
Son: and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is
now, and ever shall be: world
without end. Amen.

Johann Sebastian Bach

Jesu, meine Freude

BWV227 (c.1723)

Liturgical text, Johann Franck

Jesu, meine Freude,
Meines Herzens Weide,
Jesu, meine Zier,
Ach wie lang, ach lange
Ist dem Herzen bange
Und verlangt nach dir!
Gottes Lamm, mein Bräutigam,
Ausser dir soll mir auf Erden
Nichts sonst Liebbers werden.

Es ist nun nichts
Verdammliches an denen,
Die in Christo Jesu sind,
Die nicht nach dem Fleische
wandeln,
Sondern nach dem Geist.

Unter deinem Schirmen
Bin ich vor den Stürmen
Aller Feinde frei.

Lass den Satan wittern,
Lass den Feind erbittern,
Mir steht Jesus bei.

Jesus, my joy

Jesus, my joy,
pasture of my heart,
Jesus, my jewel,
ah, how long, how long
has my heart suffered
and longed for you!
God's lamb, my bridegroom,
beside you nothing on earth
shall be dearer to me.

Now there is nothing damnable
in those
who are in Christ Jesus,
who do not walk in the way of
the flesh,
but in the way of the Spirit.

Under your protection
I am safe from the storms
of all enemies.

Let Satan rage,
let the enemy become embittered,
Jesus stands with me.

Ob es itzt gleich kracht und
blitzt,
Ob gleich Sünd und Hölle
schrecken:
Jesus will mich decken.

Denn das Gesetz des Geistes,
Der da lebendig machet in
Christo Jesu,
Hat mich frei gemacht von dem
Gesetz
Der Sünde und des Todes.

Trozt dem alten Drachen,
Trozt des Todes Rachen,
Trozt der Furcht darzu!
Tobe, Welt, und springe,
Ich steh hire und singe
In gar sichrer Ruh.
Gottes Macht hält mich in
acht;

Erd und Abgrund muss
verstummen,
Ob sie noch so brummen.

Ihr aber seid nicht fleischlich,
sondern geistlich,
So anders Gottes Geist in euch
wohnet.
Wer aber Christi Geist nicht
hat,
Der ist nicht sein.

Weg mit allen Schätzen!
Du bist mein Ergötzen,
Jesu, meine Lust!
Weg ihr eitlen Ehren,
Ich mag euch nicht hören,
Bleibt mir unbewusst!
Elend, Not, Kreuz, Schmach und
Tod
Soll mich, ob ich viel muss leiden,
Nicht von Jesu scheiden.

So aber Christus in euch ist,
So ist der Leib zwar tot um der
Sünde willen;
Der Geist aber ist das Leben
Um der Gerechtigkeit willen.

Gute Nacht, o Wesen,
Das die Welt erlesen,
Mir gefällst du nicht.
Gute Nacht, ihr Sünden,
Bleibet weit dahinten,
Kommt nicht mehr ans Licht!
Gute Nacht, du Stolz und Pracht!
Dir sei ganz, du Lasterleben,
Gute Nacht gegeben.

Whether it thunders and the
lightning flashes,
even if sin and hell try to terrify
me,
Jesus will protect me.

For the law of the spirit,
which gives life in Christ
Jesus,
has freed me from the
law
of sin and death.

Defiance to the old dragon,
defiance to the abyss of death,
defiance to fear as well!
Rage, world, and attack;
I stand here and sing
entirely secure, in peace.
God's strength keeps watch
over me;
earth and abyss must fall
silent,
however much they would roar.

But you are not of the flesh, but
of the Spirit,
since the Spirit of God lives in
you.
Yet he who does not have
Christ's Spirit,
is not his.

Away with all treasures!
You are my delight,
Jesus, my joy!
Away, you vain honours,
I refuse to listen to you,
remain unknown to me!
Misery, want, torture, shame
and death,
although I must suffer much,
shall never part me from Jesus.

However if Christ is in you,
then the body is dead indeed for
the sake of sin;
but the spirit is life
for the sake of righteousness.

Good night, O creature
that cherishes the world,
you do not please me.
Good night, sins,
keep well away,
never again come to light!
Good night, pride and glory!
Entire life of corruption,
good night.

So nun der Geist des,
Der Jesum von den Toten
 auferwecket hat,
In euch wohnt,
So wird auch derselbige,
Der Christum von den Toten
 auferwecket hat,
Eure sterbliche Leiber lebendig
 machen
Um des willen,
Dass sein Geist in euch wohnet.

Now since the Spirit
of him who raised Jesus from
 the dead
dwells in you,
so that same one
who resurrected Christ from the
 dead
will bring your mortal bodies
 back to life,
for the sake of
his Spirit that dwells in you.

Weicht, ihr Trauergeister,
Denn mein Freudenmeister,
Jesus, tritt herein.
Denen, die Gott lieben,
Muss auch ihr Betrüben
Lauter Zucker sein.
Duld ich schon hier Spott und
 Hohn,
Dennoch bleibst du auch im
 Leide,
Jesu, meine Freude.

Hence, spirits of sadness,
for the master of my joy,
Jesus, comes.
For those who love God,
even their troubles
will be pure sugar.
Though I endure mockery and
 shame here below,
nevertheless you stay with me
 even in sorrow,
Jesus, my joy.

Johann Christoph Bach

Der Gerechte, ob er gleich zu zeitlich stirbt

(1676)

Liturgical text

Der Gerechte,
Ob er gleich zu zeitlich stirbt,
Ist er doch in der Ruhe.
Er gefällt Gott wohl
Und ist ihm lieb,
Und wird weggenommen
Aus dem Leben unter den Sündern
Und wird hingerücket,
Dass die Bosheit
Seinen Verstand nicht verkehre,
Noch falsche Lehre
Seine Seele betrübe,
Ist er bald vollkommen worden,
Und hat viel Jahr erfüllet.
Denn seine Seele gefällt Gott wohl,
Darum eilet er mit ihm
Aus dem bösen Leben.

The righteous, even when they may die too soon

The righteous,
even when they may die too soon,
nevertheless find rest.
They do please God
and receive his love,
and are taken away
from life among sinners
and removed,
so that wickedness
does not twist their minds,
nor false teaching
distress their souls -
they are soon enough perfected
and achieve many years,
for their souls do please God:
that's why he hurries them
out of this wicked life.

Johann Sebastian Bach

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied BWV225

(1726-7)

Liturgical text, Johann Gramann

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied,
Die Gemeinde der Heiligen sollen
 ihn loben.
Israel freue sich des, der ihn
 gemacht hat.
Die Kinder Zion sei'n fröhlich
 über ihrem Könige,
Sie sollen loben seinen Namen
 im Reihen;
Mit Pauken und mit Harfen
 sollen sie ihm spielen.

Wie sich ein Vater erbarmet
 über seine junge Kinderlein,
So tut der Herr uns allen, so wir
 ihn kindlich fürchten rein.
Er kennt das arm Gemächte, Gott
 weiss, wir sind nur Staub,
Gleichwie das Gras vom Rechen,
 ein Blum und fallend Laub.
Der Wind nur drüber wehet, so
 ist es nicht mehr da,
Also der Mensch vergehet, sein
 End das ist ihm nah.

Gott, nimm dich ferner unser an,
Denn ohne dich ist nichts getan
Mit allen unsern Sachen.
Drum sei du unser Schirm und
 Licht,
Und trügt uns unsre Hoffnung
 nicht,
So wirst du's ferner machen.
Wohl dem, der sich nur steif und
 fest
Auf dich und deine Huld
 verlässt.

Die Gottesgnad alleine
Steht fest und bleibt in Ewigkeit
Bei seiner lieben G'meine,
Die steht in seiner Furcht bereit,
Die seinen Bund behalten.
Er herrscht im Himmelreich.
Ihr starken Engel, waltet
Sein's Lobs und dient zugleich
Dem grossen Herrn zu Ehren
Und treibt sein heiligs Wort!
Mein Seel soll auch vermehren
Sein Lob an allem Ort.

Sing to the Lord a new song,

Sing to the Lord a new song,
and his praise in the
 congregation of saints.
Let Israel rejoice in him that
 made him.
Let the children of Zion be joyful
 in their King.
Let them praise his name in the
 dance; let them sing
praises unto him with the
 timbrel and harp.

As a father is merciful to his
 little children,
so is the Lord to us all, as long
 as we are obedient and pure.
He knows our frailty, God
 knows we are but dust,
as the grass and flower and
 foliage, falling under the rake.
Let but the wind breathe over it
 and it is gone.
Thus man passes away, his end
 is at hand.

O Lord, continue to care for us,
for without thee all our striving
comes to nothing.
Be then our shield and
 light,
and if our hope does not deceive
 us,
thou shall continue to be so.
Happy is he who, without
 wavering,
puts his trust in thee and thy
 bounty.

God's grace alone
is steadfast and lasts forever,
with his dear congregation,
that stands in fear of him
and keeps his Testament.
He reigns in the kingdom of heaven.
You mighty angels hold sway,
praise him and serve him,
honour the great God,
and obey his holy word.
My soul shall also continue
to praise him everywhere.

Lobet den Herrn in seinen
Taten,
Lobet ihn in seiner grossen
Herrlichkeit!
Alles, was Odem hat, lobe den
Herrn.
Halleluja!

Praise the Lord for his mighty
deeds,
praise him according to his
excellent greatness.
Let everything that hath breath
praise the Lord.
Alleluia!