

'Give Peace in our Time'

Programme

Motet <i>Komm Jesu Komm</i>	Johann Schelle (1648-1701)
Chorale <i>Verleih uns Frieden</i>	Martin Luther (1483-1546)
Motet <i>O Herr, ich bin dein Knecht</i>	Johann Hermann Schein (1586-1630)
Air <i>Gib dich zufrieden</i> <i>Anne van der Sloot</i>	Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
Chorale <i>Christ der du bist der helle Tag</i>	arr. J.S. Bach
Air <i>Jesus unser Trost und Leben</i> <i>Nathan McDonald</i>	J.S. Bach
Motet <i>Ich laße dich nicht</i>	J.S. Bach
Air <i>Komm süßer Tod</i> <i>Alana Hayes</i>	J.S. Bach
Motet <i>Unser Wandel ist in Himmel</i>	Johann Ernst Bach (1722-1777):
Air <i>Warum betrübst du dich</i> <i>Timothy Carter</i>	J.S. Bach
Motet <i>Verleih uns Frieden</i>	Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672)
Chorale <i>Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin</i>	M. Luther, arr. J.S. Bach
Motet <i>Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin</i> <i>Gina Johnson & Char Hodgkins</i>	J.H. Schein
Motet <i>Lobet den Herrn</i>	J.S. Bach

St John's Consort

Director, organ, harpsichord: David Stratkauskas

Soprano: Anne van der Sloot, Kyla Fradette, Gina Johnson

Alto: Alana Hayes, Char Hodgkins

Tenor: Timothy Carter, Alex Chen

Bass: Nathan McDonald, Rowan McWilliams

with Natalie Mackie, violone

Programme Notes

Today's concert explores themes of life and death, trust and hope. We have selected gems from the rich tradition of German Baroque sacred choral music interspersed with sacred songs and chorales.

Chorales were an intrinsic part of the spiritual life of 17th and 18th-century Lutherans. At a time when death was very present in daily lives – Bach alone lost nine of his twenty children at infancy – these familiar texts were an important source of hope and strength in an unpredictable life. **Verleih uns Frieden** is a chorale by Martin Luther, and is a translation of the Latin Antiphon "Da Pacem, Domine" (Give Peace, Lord). The chorale **Christ, der du bist der helle Tag** was a popular evening hymn, based on the Latin Evening Hymn "Te lucis ante terminum" (to Thee before the end of day) with its roots in the sixth century. **Mit Fried und Freud**, also by Martin Luther, paraphrases the *Nunc Dimitis*, regularly used in the evening services of Evensong and Compline in churches even in the current time. Choral tunes and texts were also often used as a basis for more complex compositions, as is the case with several works on today's program.

All the composers in today's concert were connected to each other and were important influences within the canon of sacred music in Germany. **Johann Schelle** worked as the Kantor at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig in 1677-1701, the same position **Johann Sebastian Bach** won in 1723. Schelle got his early musical education from Heinrich Schütz, when still a choir boy in Dresden. Given this Thomaskirche connection, Schelle's motet "**Komm Jesu Komm**" might very well have been an inspiration for Johann Sebastian Bach, who used the same text for one of his motets.

Johann Hermann Schein was also one of Bach's predecessors at the *Thomaskirche*. He worked as the Kantor there 1616—1630 and was a contemporary and a good friend of Schütz's. Schein had great misfortunes in his personal life: four out of five of his children died at infancy, his wife died of child birth, and he himself suffered from poor health, including kidney stones, scurvy, gout, and tuberculosis, and died at the age of just 44.

Bach's motets are the only works that have remained in the repertoire since Bach's death, unlike his cantatas which grew out of fashion and were forgotten for decades. Until fairly recently musicologists did not consider **Ich laße dich nicht** to be written by J.S. Bach, but by his son Johann Christoph. However, it is now generally agreed that the gorgeous motet is at least partially by Johann Sebastian himself, and probably his earliest surviving example of the genre.

Johann Ernst Bach was the son of Johann Bernhard Bach, a second cousin to Johann Sebastian. As a gifted youth, Johann Ernst studied with Johann Sebastian, also his godfather, at the *Thomasschule* in Leipzig. He spent much of his career as the *Kapellmeister* in Eisenach and Weimar and his teacher's influence is evident in his contrapuntal writing and close attention to text.

Heinrich Schütz studied with the Italian master Gabrieli in Venice in 1609-1613, and possibly later with Monteverdi, and spent most of his career as a court composer to the Elector of Saxony in Dresden. Like Schein, Schütz was a big influence on the incorporation of Italian compositional techniques into German liturgical music.

The four solo songs heard today are from amongst the numerous sacred songs Bach wrote for private, rather than liturgical, use. **Gib dich zufrieden, Jesus unser Trost** and **Komm süßer Tod** were published in Georg Christian Schemelli's *Musicalisches Gesang-Buch* (Musical song book) in 1736 along with over 900 sacred songs by Bach and other contributors. Two of the songs – **Gib dich zufrieden** and **Warum betrübst** – appear also in the Anna Magdalena Notebook used for domestic music making and learning in Bach's own household.

Bach's motet "Lobet den Herrn" derives its text from Psalm 117 verses 1-2. Most of Bach's motets are considered to be written for funerals, and despite its exuberant nature, "Lobet den Herrn" may well have been written for this purpose also, as death could be considered a joyous release from earthly struggles.

Soile Stratkauskas

Translations

KOMM, JESU, KOMM

1. Come, Jesus, come, my body is weary,
my strength fails me more and more,
I long for your peace;
the sour path is becoming too difficult for
me!
Come, come, I shall yield myself to you;
you are the right way, truth and life.

2. Who believes on you, will not be shamed
Who embraces you has done well—
Yes even in the midst of the bonds of death
Finds the best path of life.
So let me eagerly strive for you;
You are the right way, truth, and life.

3. Therefore I enclose myself in your hands
and say goodnight to you, world!
Even though my lifetime rushes to its end,
my spirit is nevertheless prepared.
It shall soar with its Savior,
since Jesus is and remains the right way to
life.

VERLEIH UNS FRIEDEN (CHORALE & SCHÜTZ)

Give peace in our time, O Lord,
because there is none other

that fighteth for us,
but only thou, O God.

O HERR, ICH BIN DEIN KNECHT

O Lord, truly I am your servant
and the son of your handmaid:
you have loosed my bonds.
I will offer to you the sacrifice of
thanksgiving,
and call on the name of the Lord.

GIB DICH ZUFRIEDEN

1. Make yourself contented and find
stillness,
in the God who is your life,
In him rests all the fullness of joy,
without him you toil in vain.
He is your spring and your sun,
shining every day, brightly, to your delight.
Make yourself contented and be still.

2. He is full of light, consolation, and grace,
unstained and faithful of heart.
Where he stands nothing will harm you,
even the pain of the greatest torment.
Cross, fear, and need can he soon put aside,
even death is in his hands.
Make yourself content and be still.

CHRIST, DER DU BIST DER HELLE TAG

1. Lord Christ, Thou art the heavenly Light
Who dost disperse the shades of night.
All radiant, Thou, the Father's Son,
Dost spread the brightness of His throne.

2. Safe in Thy care so shall we sleep,
While wakeful angels watch do keep.
O God Eternal, Three in One,
Forever may Thy praises run.

JESUS, UNSER TROST UND LEBEN

1. Jesus, our consolation and life,
who was given over to death;
has with glory and might
won victory and life regained.
From death's bonds,
he has risen a prince of victory.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

2. He wrestled valiantly,
Hell and devil overpowering,
No enemy can harm us anymore,
No matter how he rages.
So let Zion joyously
Resound with full voice:
Alleluia! Alleluia!

3. Now death itself is bound,
overcome by life;
we are its tyranny,
free of its sting.
Now the sky is opened,
true peace is made.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

ICH LAßE DICH NICHT

I will not let you go, until you bless me,
My Jesus, I will not let you go,
until you bless me!
*Since you are my God and father,
You will not abandon your child,
You who have a father's heart!
For I am a poor clod of earth.
in this world I know no consolation*

KOMM, SÜSSER TOD

1. Come, sweet death, come, blessed rest!
Come lead me to peace
for I am weary of the world,
oh come! I wait for you,
come soon and lead me,
close my eyes.
Come, blessed rest!

2. Come, sweet death, come blessed rest!
Oh, that I were but already
there among the hosts of angels,
out of this black world
into the blue, starry firmament,
up to heaven.
Oh, blessed rest!

3. Come, sweet death, come blessed rest!
I will now see Jesus
and stand among the angels.
It is henceforth accomplished,
so, world, good night,
my eyes are already closed.
Come, blessed rest.

UNSER WANDEL IST IM HIMMEL

For our pilgrimage is to heaven;
from whence we also look for
the Saviour, Jesus Christ the Lord;

Who shall transfigure our worthless body,
So that it will be like His glorious body,

As you have bid me Lord
I have with true faith
embraced my dear Savior
beholden in my own arms.
God, to subsist, I willingly depart
this vale of tears for the halls of joy.
Be gone, whatever upon earth
one might prefer to salvation.

We however are comforted
and have even more passion

than what is emitted by love
and are at home with the Lord.

WARUM BETRÜBST DU DICH

Wherefore art thou so sad
and bowed down to earth,
O my most tortured soul,
O my most weary heart?
In fear of what indeed
thy destiny may bring thee,
Thou coursest o'er the world
and o'er the very skies.
If thou dost not rely
upon God's will most firmly,
Thou shalt in all of time
no true repose discover.

MIT FRIED UND FREUD (CHORALE & SCHEIN)

With peace and joy I go my way
in God's will.
My heart and mind are comforted,
peaceful and calm.
As God promised me
death has become my sleep.

LOBET DEN HERRN

Praise the Lord, all nations,
and praise Him, all peoples!
For His grace and truth
rules over us for eternity.
Alleluia.