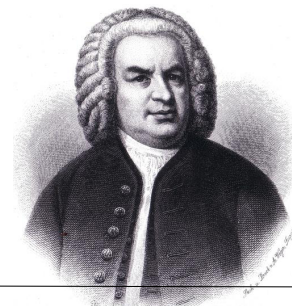


Bach Beat

The Newsletter of the Bach Cantata Choir



February 2016

www.bachcantatachoir.org

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The Bach Cantata Choir's mission is to sing the entire set of cantatas by Johann Sebastian Bach over a period of 30 years.

The BCC is a legally organized non-profit corporation under Oregon law, and a registered 501(c)(3) corporation with the IRS. Donations to the choir are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law and regulation.

The *BachBeat* newsletter is published cyclically by the BCC.

SuperBach Sunday

By John Chilgren — Bass

SuperBach Sunday features some of the greatest Baroque composers of that era including a rarely heard Italian composer, **Alessandro Marcello**.

Marcello was a contemporary of J. S. Bach, Antonio Vivaldi, and Tomaso Albinoni, who was the first Italian to use the oboe as a solo instrument. Originally a *Concerto for Oboe and Strings in D Minor* by Alessandro Marcello, the work was transposed by his older and more famous brother Benedetto Marcello, resulting in the C Minor version which we will hear performed. The three-movement concerto, and the Adagio movement in particular, remains one of his most popular works.

Alessandro was born in Venice in 1673, son of a Venetian senator, and was considered a dilettante in the original sense of an aristocrat who was not required to work and so devoted his time to cultural pursuits. Both he and Benedetto studied law and were members of the city-state's high council. Alessandro played a major role in the judiciary system of Venice but still produced a variety of concertos, cantatas and arias that were performed in Venice. Alessandro died in Padua, near Venice, in 1747 and was buried at his family's estate nearby at Paviola.

In 1713-14, J. S. Bach wrote a keyboard transcription of this oboe concerto, originally described as a *Concerto for solo keyboard in D Minor*, BWV 974. It can be heard on YouTube.



J. S. Bach's Cantata 120, *Gott man lobet dich in der Stille zu Zion* (God, You are praised in the stillness of Zion), was written to celebrate the Inauguration of the Town Council (*Ratswahl*) on August 29, 1729 (or possibly 1730) in Leipzig, the largest city in the federal state of Saxony.



To celebrate a civic function with a religious cantata may seem odd to us now, but before the Enlightenment, there was little or no difference between the religious and the secular. Town council representatives were nearly considered to be representatives of the Almighty Himself.

Parts of this work appear in Cantata 120a, a wedding cantata, and 120b, written to celebrate the bicentennial of the Augsburg Confession. The cantata itself is unusual in that it begins not with a chorus but with a lyrical alto aria, possibly modeled after a lost violin concerto. It is followed by a joyful chorus, *Jauchzet, ihr erfreuten Stimmen* (Exult, you delighted voices), complete with brass and percussion to emphasize the jubilant occasion. Parts of this movement were reworked for the *B-Minor Mass* (BWV 232) as well. The soprano aria is based on the third movement of the Sonata for Violin and Harpsichord, BWV 1019a while the last movement is a straightforward chorale based on the fourth stanza of Martin Luther's *Te Deum*.

Heinrich [Henrich] Schütz was born in 1585, a century before J. S. Bach. He studied law at Marburg before going to Venice in 1609 to study music with Giovanni Gabrieli. After a short stint as organist in the city of Kassel, he moved to Dresden in 1615 to become *Kapellmeister* to the Elector of Saxony at Dresden, a position held until his death in 1672 at the age of 87. He was buried in the old Dresden Frauenkirche but his tomb was destroyed in 1727 when the church was



razed for the construction of the new Dresden Frauenkirche. Once again, the church was destroyed during WWII but was painstakingly rebuilt and completed in 2005.

David Ewen's *Complete Book of Classical Music* states that "...Schütz was Germany's most significant composer before the age of Bach and Handel...and represents the

transition between not only two epochs but also two cultures." The composition performed in February, *Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes* (the Heavens describe the Glory of God) illustrate the influence of Venetian polychoral music (spatially separate choirs singing in alternation) on Schütz's writing. Such a change from polyphonic writing characteristic of the middle Renaissance would become one of the major stylistic changes characteristic of Baroque music.



Schütz was a prolific composer, mostly of sacred works, but also madrigals, motets, sacred symphonies, passions, songs, and several lost works that include the first German opera (*Dafne*) and a ballet. His influence on German music cannot be underestimated.

Marcello
Schütz
J.S. Bach
Zelenka
Oboe Concerto in c minor
Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes
Cantata 120
Te Deum a due cori

Sunday, February 7, 2016 at 2:00 pm
Rose City Park Presbyterian Church
NE 44th & Sandy, Portland OR

SuperBach Sunday

BACH CANTATA CHOIR
3570 NE MATHISON PLACE
PORTLAND OR 97212



The life and times of Czech composer **Jan Dismas Zelenka** have been featured on these pages before (*Bach Beat Vol. 8, No. 1*). Fortunately, the music of this long-forgotten composer has come to life again after 200 years of neglect. The Bach Cantata Choir continues to showcase his brilliance. Zelenka was born in 1679, six years before J. S. Bach, in a small village near Prague but was destined to become part of the great musical setting of Dresden, where he spent most of his life. His star was rising and pay increasing with his sacred compositions becoming part of the repertory of the Dresden Catholic court. A friend of Bach and Telemann, Zelenka was admired but felt underappreciated, once writing to the King of Poland (Augustus the Strong): "I therefore beg you, at your feet, to be graciously pleased to confer on me the position of *Kapellmeister*" (he held this temporary position

only four years, it eventually being given to Johann Adolf Hasse who will be featured in our Lenten Concert). Bach himself wasn't happy with his lot in Leipzig and mused to his own town council: "... one need only go to Dresden and see how the musicians are paid by His Royal Majesty."

Zelenka died in 1745, leaving at least 249 compositions, comprising more than 20 masses, four oratorios and requiems, many instrumental works, two *Magnificats* and two *Te Deum* settings. We will present his *Te Deum a due cori* in D major (ZWV 146), written in 1731. It is believed to have been composed for the birth of the daughter of Frederick Augustus II, the King of Poland and Elector of Saxony. Daughter Princess Maria would marry at age 14 and bear 10 children, including three future kings of France.

John Chilgren sings bass with both the Bach Cantata and Portland Symphonic Choirs. He previously sang 19 years with the Portland Choral Arts Ensemble. For more than 40 years he has been a book and film reviewer for AAAS Science Books and Films.