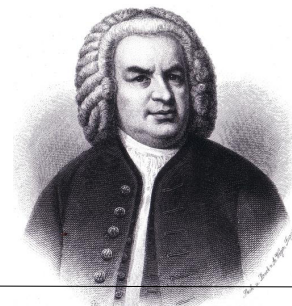


Bach Beat

The Newsletter of the Bach Cantata Choir



May 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.

Editor: Emily Rampton

Season Finale

By John Chilgren — Bass



The Bach family tree includes more than 50 sons with the name of Johann within the Bach clan. At birth or baptism, two names were often given to a child in Germany. The first name or given name was that to honor a saint, the most common male name in the Bach family being the German form of John, or Johann. The middle name was a secular or call name by which the person was known, such as Friedrich (Fred), Heinrich (Henry), or Wilhelm (William). The equivalent first name for females was Johanna or Anna, with the middle call name being Louise, Catherine, Maria, etc.

This concert will include works by Johann Sebastian Bach and by his third-cousin Johann Ludwig Bach. They shared the same great great grandfather, Veit Bach, acknowledged by J. S. Bach as the founder of the incredibly talented Bach clan that spanned 300 years.

Johann Ludwig Bach was born in the small village of Thal near Eisenach in 1677. He attended school in Gotha, Germany, and later studied theology before receiving an appointment as court musician in the town of Meiningen in 1699 under Prince Bernhard I, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen. The prince promoted Ludwig to the position of cantor of the Schloßskirche in 1703. After the death of the prince in 1711, Ludwig tried to attain a similar appointment at Eisenach (birthplace of J. S. Bach). The successor to Prince Bernhard, Duke Ernst Ludwig I, persuaded Ludwig Bach to stay on and promoted him to Capellmeister where he stayed until his death in 1731. Ludwig was known as the "Meiningen Bach" to distinguish him from his famous cousin in Leipzig.

The complete extant works of Ludwig Bach include 20 cantatas, 11 motets, two masses, one

Magnificat, and funeral music for his lifelong patron Duke Ernst Ludwig. That this music survives is due to J. S. Bach, who performed 18 of Ludwig Bach's cantatas as well as his two masses during his third year in Leipzig.

Although orchestral music was probably his principal activity from 1711 onwards, hardly any of that material is extant.



Most of his motets are scored for double chorus and basso continuo, and frequently include a Lutheran chorale. The motet *Das ist Meine Freude* (This is my joy) from Psalm 73:28 features madrigal-like rhythms and echo effects providing a dance-like and joyful work.

Ludwig Bach's younger son Gottlieb Friedrich Bach was a well-known portrait artist. His works include the "Meiningen pastel" (right) which, though not signed or dated, is widely believed to be an authentic portrait of the famous J. S. Bach.



Johann Sebastian Bach's Cantata 37, *Wer da gläubet und getauft wird* (He who believeth and is baptized) was written in 1724 and performed at least twice, in 1724 and 1731. He wrote it for Ascension Day, which is the 40th day of Easter (39th day following Easter Sunday). It focuses not on the actual Ascension but on Luther's idea, "Justification by Faith Alone." The delightful first choral movement sets the theme by quoting from Mark 16:10: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." The second through fifth movements are solos, with the sixth ending in a straightforward SATB chorale (*Den Glauben mir verleihe*: Faith grant me). The third movement, a chorale duet between soprano and alto, is based on Philipp Nicolai's wonderful hymn *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern* (O Morning Star, how bright and beautiful) sometimes referred to as the 'morning star' chorale. The alto and soprano trade off as leader and follower with the spirited cello accompanying them throughout.

Cantata 176, *Es ist ein trotzig und verzagt Ding um aller Menschen Herze* is one of his shortest cantatas (less than 13 minutes). Written for Trinity Sunday, it was performed on May 17, 1725 during Bach's second year in Leipzig. It is one of nine cantatas written in 1725 based on texts by Christiane Mariane von Ziegler, a Leipzig poet and writer. This cantata abruptly begins without an orchestral prelude of any sort before launching into the stark choral fugue, based on the Old Testament book of Jeremiah 17:9 that reads "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

The title "*Es ist ein trotzig und verzagt Ding um aller Menschen Herze*" can be translated "there is a defiant and miserable (or despairing) thing in the hearts of all men," suggesting a dark contrast between man's stubbornness and his hopelessness. The opening choral fugue in C minor states this with angry repetitions of the word 'trotzig' (defiant). The remaining solo recitatives and arias are brimming with biblical references to the New Testament book of John 3:1-17 in which the Pharisee Nicodemus comes to Jesus and asks him to resolve his troubling questions. Nicodemus, fearing reprisals, comes in the night and represents the darkness while Jesus represents the light.

At the completion of Cantata 176, Bach stopped composing at his rapid pace, composing only two additional cantatas before the season of Advent. At this point he temporarily resumed composing at the rate of a cantata per week and then relied on the 18 cantatas written by his cousin Ludwig.



Just as J.S. Bach kept alive the music of Ludwig Bach, **Felix Mendelssohn** is responsible for reviving the music of Johann Sebastian Bach beginning in the early 19th century. Mendelssohn's "Heilig" was composed for double-choir in Berlin in 1846. We include it here to honor his role in rediscovering and keeping alive the glorious music of J. S. Bach.





We last encountered **Giovanni Pierluigi de Palestrina**, or simply Palestrina, in the May 2015 BachBeat. Born in 1525 in the small village of Palestrina, near Rome, he was a choirboy at Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome and in 1537 was appointed organist and maestro di cappella at Palestrina Cathedral in 1544 under the Bishop who would become Pope Julius III. This pope later appointed him to the Cappella Giulia at St. Peter's Basilica from 1551-1554 and again from 1571 to his death in 1594. Soon after his appointment he published a book of masses, the first ever dedicated to a Pope by an Italian composer.

A prolific composer, Palestrina left over 700 works of all genres (motets, madrigals, masses, hymns, etc). The motet "*Tu es Petrus*" (Thou art Peter) is based on Palestrina's parody mass of the same name for the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul and published in his second book of motets in 1572. The work is one of Palestrina's finest works, in which the music flows in an even polyphonic sound that is balanced and poised. The work is often used during various papal ceremonies.



Heinrich Schütz, the greatest German composer of the 17th century before the arrival of J. S. Bach, was featured in the February 2016 issue of the BachBeat. Born into a family of innkeepers in Saxony in 1585 and mentored by the Landgrave Moritz of Hesse-Kassel, he abandoned a promising career in law and instead studied music in Italy with Giovanni Gabrieli, returning to Kassel as organist.

In 1614 Elector Johann Georg I of Saxony requested and received permission from Landgrave Moritz of Hesse-Kassel to employ Schütz at Dresden for a few months. The following year the elector obtained the composer's services for two years and Schütz became in effect the elector's Capellmeister. In 1616 Moritz requested that Schütz return to Kassel, but the elector refused to release him so Schütz remained at the Saxon court and was formally given the title of Capellmeister by January 1619.

Owing to economic pressures wrought by the Thirty Years' War, Schütz traveled to Italy in the late 1620s and found a musical life in Venice vastly different from what

he had encountered there during his youth. Composer-singer-priest Claudio Monteverdi guided his study of the new musical developments.

Schütz was a prolific composer, with nearly 500 extant known works. The short motet and dialogue *Es gingen zweene Menschen hinaug in den Tempel*, SWV 444 (Two men went forth to the Temple to pray) is the parable from Luke 18:10-14 in which the Pharisee and Publican or tax collector pray in the temple. Composed some time during the 1630s, the work has two parts: the dialogue itself and a final choral movement.



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.

Bach to the 21st Century

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Any corrections needed? Email to: info@bachcantatachoir.org
Or drop this off at the next concert. Thank you!

Cake Walk!

Following the May 22 concert, join us in the church parlor for an old-fashioned Cake Walk. Artistic director Ralph Nelson will play some lively tunes while participants circle the room to win a cake.



Plus Cake Walk!

Palstrina: Tu es Petrus
 Johann Ludwig Bach: Das ist meine Freude
 J.S. Bach: Cantata #176
 J.S. Bach: Cantata #37
 Schutz: Es gingen zweene Menschen
 Mendelssohn: Heilig

Sunday May 22 at 2:00 pm
Rose City Park Presbyterian Church
 NE 44th & Sandy, Portland OR

Season finale

BACH CANTATA CHOIR
 3570 NE MATHISON PLACE
 PORTLAND OR 97212

