

Bach Beat

The Newsletter of the Bach Cantata Choir



March 2017

www.bachcantatachoir.org

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The Bach Cantata Choir presents a Lenten Concert

Sunday, March 19, 2017 at 2:00 p.m.

Cimador: *Concerto for String Bass* (Garrett Jellesma, bass)

Lotti: *Miserere*

Brahms: *Psalm 51*

J. S. Bach: *Cantata #198 Laß, Fürstin, laß noch einen Strahl*

P.J. Christiansen: *What Wondrous Love*

All Bach Cantata Choir concerts are held at the Rose City Park Presbyterian Church at the corner of NE 44th & Sandy (office address 1907 NE 45th Ave) in Portland, Oregon ([map](#)). Free-will offerings gratefully accepted.

Musical Notes for a Lenten Concert

By John Chilgren—Bass

Giovanni Battista Cimador (1761-1805)

The Bach Cantata Choir continues its tradition of giving up brass for Lent and is showcasing the stringed instruments at its March concert. Garrett Jellesma is our featured instrumentalist in *Concerto in G Major for String Bass* by Giovanni Battista Cimador, an Italian composer who worked in Venice and later in London.

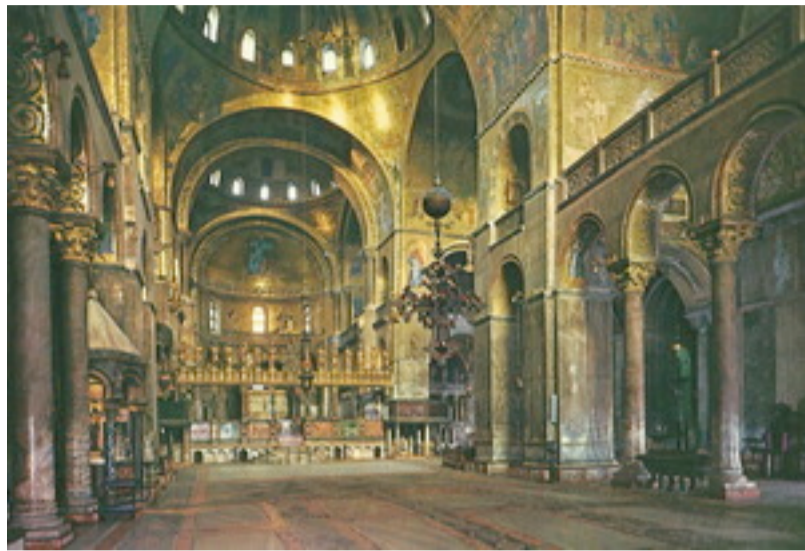
Cimador is largely unknown to western audiences, as we have only anecdotal information about his life and training. Born into a Venetian family of nobility in 1761, he became not only a composer, vocalist and coach, string and pianoforte artist but also a publisher in London later in his life. His first known work was *Ati and Cybele*, a fairy tale for music and dance in 1789. A year later he produced *Pimmalione* (Pygmalion), a dramatic monologue in two acts based on Rousseau's earlier monodrama. Befriending a virtuoso double bass player, Venetian Dominico Dragonetti (1746-1863), he composed a *Concerto in G major* for him, the work for which he is known and which will be performed at this concert. After moving to London in 1791, Cimador made a name for himself by rearranging complex Mozart symphonies as sextets for strings and flute and in so doing greatly facilitated Mozart's reception in London. He would later release Mozart operas in collaboration with the flautist and publisher, Tebaldo Monzani (c.1762-1839), a partnership that dissolved a few years after its formation.

Eventually settling in Bath, famous for its mineral spas and cultural life, Cimador established himself as a violinist and editor of the journal *The Open Music Warehouse*. It was in 1794 that Cimador, who marveled at Hayden's

quartets, met the composer himself, the two becoming friends. Cimador died under unknown circumstances while in Bath on February 27, 1805.

Antonio Lotti (1667-1740)

An account of the life of Venetian-born Antonio Lotti can be found in the January 2015 issue of the *BachBeat*. His role in the musical life of Venice extended over 50 years and while much scholarship has focused on his operas, of which he was an influential proponent, he composed a large body of sacred choral music.



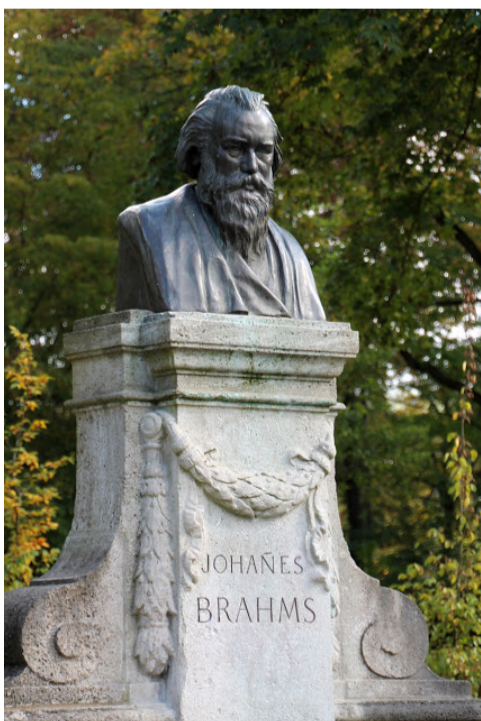
His association with San Marco Basilica began in 1687 when he was appointed as an alto in the choir; after a few years he had risen through the ranks from second organist to first organist (a title he held for 32 years) and eventually to choirmaster (primo maestro di capella). His influence during the Italian Baroque may have been overshadowed by his contemporaries in Venice (Vivaldi), Naples (Alessandro Scarlatti), Germany (Bach, Hasse and Zelenka), England (Handel) but he was known to all of these Baroque giants as well as to Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I and Saxony Elector Augustus II who invited him to Dresden for two years to write operas for the monarch, which he did successfully.

Some Lotti scholars have suggested that Lotti influenced these same Baroque composers (Bach, Handel, Vivaldi, and Zelenka). The music of Lotti's many students still survives. Despite his influence, Lotti's music has been sadly neglected, and only now is his position as a significant composer of sacred music being appreciated.

Miserere Mei in D minor was composed around 1733. Some scholars have suggested that this work was written in a competition for the position of maestro di capella at San Marco, which he successfully obtained but not until 1736 (the wheels of bureaucracies apparently turned slowly back then too). The choir will perform only the opening part of this beautiful work.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Johannes Brahms was born in Hamburg on May 7, 1833. The second of three children of Johann Jakob, a professional musician in Hamburg, and Johanna Christiane Brahms, young Brahms received a piano, a cello and a valveless French horn from his father who early on realized the prodigious talent possessed by his son. Jakob soon enlisted pianist Otto Cossell and later Cossell's teacher, pianist Eduard Marxsen as tutors. Marxsen had been an acquaintance of both Beethoven and Schubert and was a devotee of the music of Mozart, Haydn, and J. S. Bach, the tradition of which was conveyed to Brahms whose first piano recital in 1848 included a Bach fugue (Brahms was well-schooled in Bach's compositions).



Brahms left for Vienna in 1862 where he would spend much of his life but had yet to reconcile the many conflicts of his personal expectations with those of others as well as with the opposing musical currents of his day. His first concert tour with Hungarian violinist Eduard Reményi in 1853 brought him into contact with violinist Joseph Joachim (later, a close collaborator with Brahms), Franz Liszt and the Schumanns, with whom he formed a close friendship, especially with Clara Schumann after the death of Robert in 1856. In 1859 he formed the Frauenchor in Hamburg, his inspiration for his early choral works. These relationships would help Brahms find his "musical voice" that would enable him to produce works of all genres, including his *Requiem* to honor his mother who died in 1859. While never attaining the conducting position in the Hamburg Philharmonic, he did receive an appointment to the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde (Society of Friends of Music), a.k.a. Musikverein, in Vienna in 1872. Although he had formed a few close relationships with other women, he never married.

His life was complicated by professional clashes with Joseph Joachim, Richard Wagner, Hans von Bülow, a prominent conductor and descendent of the 600-year-old von Bülow dynasty, but these relationships healed later in his life. Brahms died in Vienna in 1897 from liver cancer. His friend Joachim was the principal speaker at a ceremony in Meiningen where a monument was erected (pictured here). A statue of Brahms was unveiled at the Musikhalle in Hamburg in 1909. Extant works of Brahms number about 2,000

scattered in 20 countries and include a vast amount of chamber works.

The popular work to be heard at the Lenten concert is from Brahms's *Zwei Motetten*, Op. 29. Written in 1860, the work demonstrates that Brahms had mastered contrapuntal techniques. The first motet *Schaffe in mir, Gott, ein rein Herz*, Op. 29, No. 2, is a setting of the penitential *Psalms 51* (Create in me, God, a pure heart) and written in three movements, the first of these perhaps being the most widely known.

J. S. Bach (1685-1750)

When Friedrich Augustus I became Elector of Saxony in 1698, he began to transform his capital of Dresden into a major cultural center, one of the most opulent in Europe. But Augustus was also an opportunistic ruler and sought to expand his reign by becoming a candidate for the Polish crown. Lutheran Augustus in strongly Protestant Saxony could not be king of Poland unless he was of the Catholic faith. Despite protests from his Saxon subjects, Augustus adopted Catholicism and also the name Augustus II, King of Poland.

His wife, the Princess Christiane Eberhardine of Brandenburg-Bayreuth, whom he married in 1693, refused to renounce her Protestant faith and went into self-exile in Pretzsch Castle on the Elbe River where she resided until her death in 1727 at the age of 55. She never set foot in Poland. Neither her husband nor her son were present at the funeral when she was buried in the parish church of Pretzsch. King Augustus continued his notorious womanizing and left 267 illegitimate children by one estimate, hence acquiring one of his many names, Augustus the Strong (der Starke). The queen's death was deeply mourned in Leipzig as well and a fitting tribute to her was planned. A student at Leipzig, Hans von Kirchbach, arranged to have a memorial service for her. He enlisted the Leipzig philosopher and writer Johann Christoph Gottsched, also an occasional librettist of J. S. Bach, to write verses for a *Mourning Ode* (Trauer Ode) which Bach set to music. The result was the secular Cantata 198 (BWV 198) *Laß, Fürstin, laß noch einen Strahl* (Let, Princess, let still one more glance) performed October 15, 1727 in the Paulinerkirche (St. Paul), the church of the University of Leipzig.



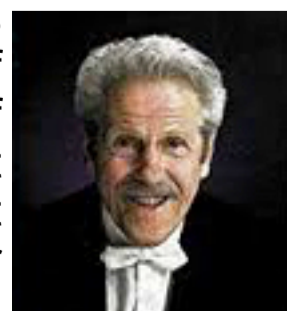
The extraordinary scoring indicated that every capable musician in Leipzig could participate, there being a large and diverse number of instruments that must have gratified and amazed the audience. According to the program, the Ode was "set by Herr Bach in the Italian style." The opening choral movement is majestic and dramatic.

Bach's Cantata 198 apparently served another purpose, as it is linked to one of the Bach Passions. While only two of the Bach Passions are extant (*St. Matthew* and *St. John*), a third work, *St. Mark Passion* (BWV 247), is known to have been written but only the libretto exists; the original score has been lost. Bach's librettist Picander (Christian Friedrich Henrici) began to work on Bach's final *Passion* in 1731 while Bach was in Leipzig. Fragments of music recovered after the bombing of Dresden have shown that Cantata 198 as well as other cantatas formed much of the music of the *St. Mark Passion* that was reconstructed and published in 1964. Interested readers may pursue this further by reading online published studies by William Hoffman, self-described as "The World's Oldest Living Graduate Student."

Paul J. Christiansen, Arr. (1914-1997)

What Wondrous Love is an American tune discovered by Southern Baptist composer William Walker (1809-1875) on his journeys through the Appalachian countryside. It was never inscribed in print until Walker added it to his collection of shape-note hymns and tune book called *The Southern Harmony* published in 1835. Hymnals being scarce in the early 19th century, music was rarely written down and lyrics were repeated with the text kept simple, fostering learning and teaching to subsequent generations.

The arrangement sung at the Lenten concert is by **Paul J. Christiansen**, an American choral conductor and composer, formerly of the Concordia College in Moorhead MN. His father, Norway-born F. Melius Christiansen (1871-1955) was choral director at St. Olaf College for 32 years, producing one of the premier *a capella* choirs in the US. His son Paul was born in 1914 in Northfield MN, home of St. Olaf College. After graduating from St. Olaf, he studied piano, conducting and composition at Oberlin Conservatory and Eastman School of Music. Most of his 50-year career was spent developing and perfecting the Concordia Choir, another premier *a capella* choir. He further developed the Paul Christiansen Choral Schools begun by his father and composed and arranged a large number of choral works still popular today. He received the St. Olav Medal from the government



of Norway in 1978 awarded in recognition of "outstanding services rendered in connection with the spreading of information about Norway abroad and for strengthening the bonds between expatriate Norwegians and their home country." He died of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) on December 5, 1997 in Moorhead, MN.

John Chilgren sings bass with the Bach Cantata Choir. He performed with the Portland Symphonic Choir for a decade and the Choral Arts Ensemble of Portland for 20 years. He has been a book and film reviewer for AAAS Science Books and Films for nearly 50 years.

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*Upcoming Book Discussion

Evening in the Palace of Reason – Bach meets Frederick the Great in the Age of Enlightenment
by James R. Gaines

Available in hardback, paperback, Kindle or Nook versions.

For a New York Times review: <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/17/books/review/evening-in-the-palace-of-reason-being-geniuses-together.html>

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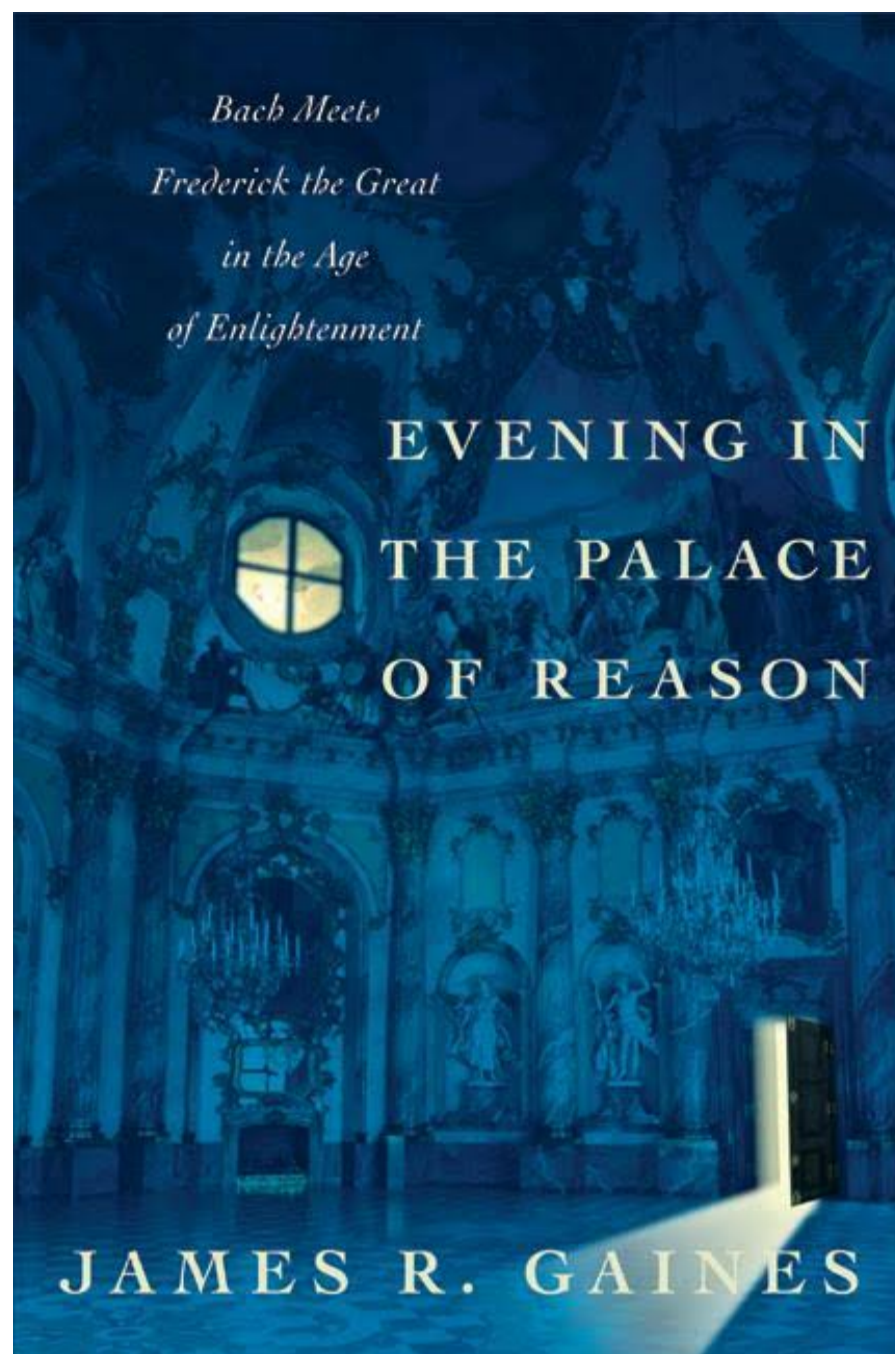
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The Bach Cantata Choir's mission is to sing the entire set of cantatas by Johann Sebastian Bach over a period of 30 years.

The Bach Cantata Choir is a legally organized non-profit corporation under Oregon law, and is 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 Bach Cantata Choir.

Emily Rampton, Editor

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