

PROGRAM NOTES by George Shangrow

The St. Matthew Passion consists of two large parts each framed by a pair of grand choruses. The opening and final choruses of part one each contain a chorale melody sung by the Boychoir. In the first chorus, Bach is calling upon humankind to gather to share in the Passion story. Over this text (and incredible counterpoint) he places the chorale tune "O Lamb of God Unspotted" as an emotional counterpoint to the tragedy which follows. The use of double chorus and orchestra gives Bach the possibility of dialogue in chorus, two possible different characters for the chorus, as well as more effective crowd scenes in the choral parts.

The opening dramatic recitative begins the Last Supper portion of the work. Note from the beginning the words of Jesus are always accompanied by a "halo" of strings — this is in contrast to the St. John Passion, but direct heritage to earlier works such as the Seven Last Words by Schutz.

As this first section continues Bach contrasts the opening chorale asking what crime Jesus has done with the scene of elders, scribes, and priests suggesting that He not be killed during the feast. Then follows the disciples chastisement of Christ and the woman who annoints Him with oil and His rebuke of the disciples comments. The ensuing alto recitative and aria complete the section with deeply personal comments on the preceeding actions. This "form" of story section followed by aria and recitative dominates the entire work. Following the musical and dramatic elements of narrative with this in mind will help clarify the progressions in the work as well as explain the length of some of the pieces.

With a gentle chorus the disciples ask Jesus where the feast will be held and with his answer — again in direct contrast to the mood od the chorus — He says that one of them will betray Him, which Judas has already done. The disciples now ask, "Lord, is it I?" and in the chorus Bach sets this text exactly eleven times, leaving the question from the 12th disciple, Judas, for the next recitative. Judas asks, "Is it I, Rabbi?" with this different text Bach sets up the actual betrayal later in piece

where Judas will once again greet Christ as "Rabbi."

The Passover supper itself is the only real aria sung by Jesus in the entire work. Accompanied by the halo of strings, it is one of the most beautiful moments in the work. After the commenting soprano recit. and aria comes one of the more descriptive of Jesus' recits. Notice the upward moving scale which starts in the cello and ends in the Evangelist when they go up the Mount of Olives. Also Bach scatters the sheep with a very sprightly string accompaniment which turns very sober for the end of the section.

Next comes an illustration of Bach's use of keys to make a philosophical point: the joyful chorale extolling the virtues of the Saviour/Shepherd is set in E Major. Immediately following is Peter's declaration that he will be absolutely faithful to Jesus whatever happens, and lesus telling him that he will three times deny Him. The following chorale, "I will stand beside Thee", is set one-half step lower signifying the personal loss humankind must endure through the example of the denial.

The next accompanied recit, and aria have a solo tenor paired with chorus II singing a chorale melody. The cello-bass repeated note pattern symbolizes the trembling tormented heart. The combination of recorder and english horn in canon is the first of the truly unique orchestrations Bach uses in the work. The wonder of these two movements is found in the great contrast between the uneasiness of the aria and the consoling comfort of the chorale.

The bass recit. "The Saviour falls down before His Father" has the strings in a constantly downward arpeggio figure except when the text speaks of God's uplifting mercy. In the aria, the setting of the words so agrees with the voice that the opening ascending sixth on "gladly" just rolls off the tongue. The wonderful chromaticism describing "Kreuz und Becher" in contrast with the second section of the aria's "His lips with milk and honey flowing" show Bach's unending desire to heighten the emotional meaning of the text with all the devices at hand — he even change the tonality from minor to

Leading to the end of Part One are the Evangelists sections describing Jesus praying in the garden and none of the disciples staying and watching with Him. Then the soldiers and priest come for Him and, in one of the most dramatic moments in the Evangelist part, Judas says "the one I kiss is He" — and in an almost tender exchange between Jesus and Judas, Jesus is recognized and taken.

The grief-filled duet which follows contains many canons and is reminiscent of chorale melody. Like the opening chorus with its interrupting questions from chorus II, the crowd (of disciples) interrupts the duet saying "Loose Him, halt ye, b nd Him not!" This leads into the double chorus depicting the oath "May lightning and thunder in ruin engulf them". Here Bach's use of antiphonal choruses — with rapidly changing harmonies — is amazing for its time.

After a highly charged dramatic recit. comes the final chorus to the first part: "O Man, Bewail thy Grievous Sin" in the most beautiful setting Bach did of this chorale tune. This chorus was originally written to be the opening chorus to the St. John Passion (in a key one-half step lower), but Bach abandoned that idea and used it as a hopeful closing chorus

Part Two opens with an unusual dialogue between the alto (continued on page 4)



GEORGE SHANGROW is the conductor and musical director of the Broadway Symphony and the Seattle Chamber Singers. He founded both ensembles, the Singers in 1968 and the orchestra in 1978; and has brought both groups to enjoy respected reputations, both nationally and in Europe. Shangrow has been the creative force behind these organizations' BACH YEAR celebration, planning each of the 31 concerts, gathering together the performers, and performing in most of them, either as conductor or as harpsichordist. It is Maestro Shangrow's hope that the BACH YEAR will create many, many new lovers of J. S. Bach's music, as well as satisfy those who already revere this timeless composer. In addition to his work with the BS/SCS and Bach, George Shangrow is director of music at the University Unitarian Church in Seattle. Under his leadership, their music program flourishes, and the church has become a recognized place for fine musical presentations. He is also involved in music education and community involvement; he lectures frequently for the Women's University Club and Seattle Opera's Preview Program, and he has participated in the regional conventions of the American Choral Directors Association and American Guild of Organists. Several of Seattle's professional performing ensembles have had George Shangrow appear as guest conductor, and he frequently is asked to adjudicate student and professional musician competitions.

The Broadway Symphony/Seattle Chamber Singers The Choir of the Sound The Columbia Boys Choir

George Shangrow, conductor

MATTHÄUS-PASSION

The Passion According to St. Matthew

BRIAN TREVOR sings the role of the Evangelist or narrator of the Passion story. He is a native of Vancouver, B.C., and is presently the Director of Choral and Vocal Music at Mt. Royal Conservatory of Music in Calgary, Alberta. Dr. Trevor is in high demand as a tenor soloist across Canada and makes regular appearances in the States. He has performed as the Evangelist in both the St. Matthew Passion and St. John Passion by Bach numerous times, including three times before for the Seattle Chamber Singers. Trevor has recorded for both the Canadian and Australian Broadcasting Companies.





PETER KECHLEY interprets the role of Jesus in this St. Matthew Passion. For over ten years, he has been a featured soloist with the Seattle Chamber Singers, and has done solo work for several Seattle area churches and synagogues. Peter Kechley has been actively involved in this BACH YEAR; he did the programming of each of the twelve Bach Cantata Sundays held at the University Unitarian Church, and is a regular soloist in those Cantata concerts. His understanding of the perfect ways Bach matches music to text has lent a fine quality to all the choral/orchestal Bach concerts programmed this year.

LAURIE HANEY, soprano, has been a regular performer with the University of Washington Opera Theater, and is often invited to sing the soprano solo work for the several community ensembles that produce oratorio and concert literature. She was a winner in the 1985 San Francisco Opera Merola Program Auditions, and was a recent performer in the Battelle Northwest Young Artist Series.

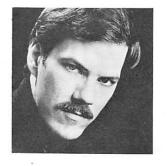




MARCIA BELLAMY, mezzo-soprano, is currently a granduate student at the UW, studying voice and opera theater. She has been a soloist for the several campus performing ensembles, and was the alto soloist for the January Bach Cantata Sunday in the BS/SCS series. Marcia was a lead character in the UW's 1985 production of Bernstein's Candide, and she has performed with Opus 1 and with Pacific Northwest Ballet.

CHARLES WALKER, tenor, has appeared in opera, opperetta and concerts throughout the United States, including New York City, Boston, Houston, Santa Fe, and in Seattle, he sang the role of President Chester A. Arthur in Seattle Opera's production of the Ballad of Baby Doe in the Fall of 1984. He is especially sought after as a performer of the music of J.S. Bach, and we are pleased to present him in the St. Matthew Passion and a program of solo cantatas next Sunday evening (Mar. 24) at the Wallingford United Methodist Church.





MICHAEL DELOS, bass, is a busy performer in the Pacific Northwest. He sang the role of Jesus in the BS/SCS production of Bach's St. John Passion just three weeks ago — this followed four performances of the St. Matthew Passion with the Portland Symphonic Choir and Symphony the week before. He is often a presentor of Seattle Opera Previews, and is a bass soloist for various churches and performing groups throughout the United States. Twice, at the request of the composer, Delos has performed in Menoti's The Consul.

PROGRAM NOTES (continued from page 2)

soloist and chorus II. Note that with each entrance of the chorus the harmonies grow stranger and, in a way, move further away — the chorus/solo ends on a singularly unresolved note with the alto asking "Ah, where has my Jesus gone?"

The drama is continued including the introduction of the two false witnesses — who sing a very bizarre duet. Jesus, however, remains silent. The tenor recit accompanied in another unusual orchestration by oboes and arpeggiando gamba has exactly 39 strokes — symbolizing the scourging of Jesus. In the aria we have once again the great contrasts in text setting the give emotional meaning to the words patience, shame, scorn, and false tongues.

Jesus' trials in the Judgement Hall follow with some of the early crowd outbursts. Here, as in the later crowd scenes, it is the job of the Evangelist to keep the drama taut. Bach keeps the story moving by keeping the Evangelist's interjections brief and exciting. The chorale which ends this section has a particularly bittersweet feeling to it.

Next comes the actual denial by Peter. After being questioned by two people and by a third group of people — all of whom Peter tells he does not know who this man (Christ) is, the cock crows. In the original clefs inwhich the piece was written, the last line of Peter, "Ich kenne des Menschen nicht," and the immediately following line "And immediately the cock crew," were identically written notes.

The Evangelist words "And Peter went out and wept bitterly" and the ensuing alto aria with violin obbligato are two of the most intimate moments in the work.

A very worldy return to the story comes with Judas trying to return the 30 silver pieces to the priests. The attempt is in vain as the priests tell him that in no way can he absolve himself of the deed that he has done — and in the weird duet for the two priests they say they cannot even put the "blood-money" in the treasury. Judas hangs himself and another solo with violin obbligato follows in great contrast to the previous one.

The trial proceeds. After an outburst response of "Barabam!" by the crowd when Pilate asks which prisoner he should set free comes the "Crucify Him!" chorus. This is a fugetta with a very angular, strange subject tonally describing the ugliness of the crowd and the act of crucifixion.

The heart of the entire work follows in the soprano recit. and aria "For love of me is my Saviour dying". This aria is accompanied only by obbligato flute and two english horns. As the piece ends and a calm mood is established, the Evangelist interrupts and the crowd repeats the crucify chorus, but this time a whole step higher in pitch increasing the crowd's fervor

and tension!

Pilate's attempts at ridding himself of guilt are thwarted by the polyphonic crowd chorus "His blood is on all of us and on our children" and the alto recit and aria depict the weeping of our hearts. The soldiers dress Christ in a purple robe and crown of thorns and mock him (listen for the flutes) saying "We hail thee, O King of the Jews" and then they spat upon Him and smote Him upon the head with a reed — then follows the Passion Chorale.

When Christ is being led to be crucified, a man named Simon comes to carry his cross. This is depicted in an incredible bass aria accompanied by viola da gamba. The difficult chords and ornaments, string crossings and dotted rhythms show the feeling of the cross being dragged down the street. The text speaks of sharing the burden with Christ as Christ shares peoples burdens. The length of the aria gives a feeling of the length of the ordeal.

Mocking crowd choruses ask Jesus why, if He is God's son, he can't take Himself down from the cross. Another unusual orchestration in the alto recit and aria follows with interruptions from the second chorus asking where "they" should come — to Jesus' arms.

The next section is the death of Christ. Here, for the only time, Christ's words are not accompanied by the strings, but only by the continuo organ and cello. With constant harassment by the crowd, Jesus cries out His last words and dies followed by the final, and most moving setting of the passion chorale-tune.

With a burst of virtuoso continuo writing comes the earthquake and the opening of the graves. This struck terror in the hearts of those present and the captain of the guard says "Truly this was the Son of God". Bach sets this text in two bars of choral music — perhaps the two most wonderful in the entire work.

The story is completed with a beautiful bass recit and aria, but not quite. The crowd comes in once more and with a very rude chorus intimates to Pilate that if there are no guards around Jesus' tomb, His disciples will come in the night and steal His body saying that He has been resurrected. Pilate gives his permission for watchmen, and they are put in place as the stone is rolled across the opening of the tomb thus sealing it.

A four-part recit and chorus bids Jesus good-night in a very sad, yet praiseful manner. The closing chorus "Here at the grave we all sit weeping" ends the work — on Good Friday. There has yet been no resurrection. The work concludes with a deeply moving yet unfinished tragic feeling.

HISTORICAL NOTES

The tradition of presenting the Passion story on good Friday began in the Middle Ages. Priests would recite or chant the words from the Gospels, different men each taking a character part. It was usual practice for a low-voiced man to read the words of Christ, and a higher voiced man to do the narrative. The congregants (usually brothers of the order, but sometimes the people of the parrish) were given the parts of the disciples and the high priests and the crowds of the Jerusalem streets. This practice continues to the present day in most liturgical churches, but the high point of the Passion format was reached in 1728, with Bach's St. Matthew Passion. Bach wrote five different versions of the Passion story, only two of which survive (the St. John being the other). The St. Matthew

by Kay Verelius

Passion contains a great variety of musical forms, but the spiritual feeling is consistant throughout the work. Bach took the text from the Gospel of St. Matthew, chapters 26 and 27, in the German translation by Martin Luther. Additional texts, for the arias and some choruses, were written especially for the work by Picander, one of Bach's literary friends. The music alone is perfectly beautiful; the text is strong and meaningful; but the way that Bach combined the music with text is the aspect which makes the St. Matthew Passion stand out as the greatest sacred work ever composed in the history of western music. Please follow your translations, not just to follow the story, but to gain more insight into the genius of Johann Sebastian Bach.

The text translation booklets were printed through the courtesy of SAFECO Ins. Co. In order that they may be used for future performances of the St. Matthew Passion, please deposit the booklets in the provided boxes near the exits as you leave the theater. If you would like to keep one, we ask a \$1 donation.



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CHARLES WALKER Tenor

George Shangrow, Harpsichord

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Charles Walker is a virtuoso performer of literature from the High Baroque. He last performed in Seattle in "The Ballad of Baby Doe" and is pleased to return for this recital, and for the tenor arias in the St. Matthew Passion.

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EASTER SUNDAY CANTATAS

April 7, 8:00 p.m. University Unitarian Church 6556 35th NE, Seattle

BWV 4: Crist lag in Todesbanden

BWV 6: Bleib bei uns, denn es will Abend werden BWV 31: Der Himmel lacht, der Erde jubiliert

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George Shangrow, conductor

Prokofiev: Piano Concerto No. 3

Arthur Barnes, Piano Soloist

Rossini: La Gazza Ladra Overture

(The Thieving Magpie)

Brahms: Symphony No. IV

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Meany Hall

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Call 524-0603 for ticket reservations