## St. Matthew Passion

by Johann Sebastian Bach

Seattle Chamber Singers Orchestra Seattle



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# Seattle Chamber Singers Orchestra Seattle

George Shangrow Music Director

present

Johann Sebastian Bach

## St. Matthew Passion

with the Columbia Boys Choir Steve Stevens, conductor & founder

Meany Theater, University of Washington Sunday, April 9, 1993

The Evangelist — Alan Bennett
Jesus — Michael Delos
Soprano — Catherine Haight
Mezzo Soprano — Emily Lunde
Tenor — Stephen P. Wall
Bass — Brian Box

#### **Character Roles**

Peter Judas Pontius Pilate Pilate's Wife High Priest I Robert Schilperoot Douglas Durasoff Andrew Danilchik Barbara Stephens Paul Benningfield High Priest II
False Witness I
False Witness II
1st Servant
2nd Servant

Gustave Blazek Emily Lunde Paul Benningfield Nancy Shasteen Laurie Medill

This concert made possible by the generous support of Seattle Arts Commission, King County Arts Commission and Washington State Arts Commission. Special thanks to Boeing Company, Seafirst, Western Pianos and the Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany

## **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 boys choir. 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, as well as more effective crowd scenes in the choral parts.

The opening dramatic recitative begins the Last Supper portion of the work. Note that 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 a direct heritage from earlier works such as the **Seven Last Words** by Scheutz.

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, the woman anointing 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. The "form" of story section followed by recitative and aria 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. His answer is again in direct contrast to the mood of 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 twelfth disciple, Judas, for the next recitative. Judas asks, "Is it I, Rabbi?" Judas asks the

question in a different manner from the other disciples. With this difference Bach sets up the actual betrayal scene which occurs later in the 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 soprano recitative and aria which comments on Jesus' words comes one of the more descriptive of Jesus' recitatives. Notice the upward moving scale which starts in the cello part and ends in the Evangelist's lines as they ascend the Mount of Olives. 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 tonality 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 Jesus telling Peter 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 recitative 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 (oboe da caccia) in canon is the first of the 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 recitative "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 "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 changes the tonality from minor to major.

Leading to the end of Part One are the Evangelist's sections describing Jesus praying in the garden and how none of the disciples maintained the vigil with Him. Then the soldiers and priests come for Jesus and, in one of the most dramatic moments in the Evangelist's 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 the 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, bind 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 recitative comes the final chorus of the first part: "O Man, bewail thy grievous sin" in Bach's most beautiful setting of this chorale tune. This movement was originally composed to be the opening chorus of the **St. John Passion** (in a key one-half step lower), but Bach abandoned that idea and used it as a hopeful closing chorus here.

Part Two opens with an unusual dialogue between the alto 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 with the introduction of the two false witnesses who sing a very bizarre duet. Jesus, however, remains silent. The tenor recitative is accompanied by oboes and an arpeggiated figure in the cello and has exactly 39 strokes, symbolizing the scourging of Jesus. In the aria Bach has used great contrasts in setting

the text, portraying the emotional meanings of the words patience, shame, scorn, and false tongues.

Jesus' trial in the Judgment Hall is followed by outbursts from the crowd. 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 is particularly bittersweet.

Next comes Peter's denial. Peter is asked by two individuals and by a third group of people if he knows who is this man (Christ). All three times Peter's reply is 'no' and after each denial the cock crows. In the original clefs in which the piece was written, the last line of Peter, "I know this man not" and the following line "And immediately the cock crew," were identically written notes.

The Evangelist's 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 worldly return to the story comes with Judas trying to return the thirty 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. In the weird duet for 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. Pilate asks the crowd which prisoner should be set free, and their unanimous outburst is "Barabbam!" This exclamation is immediately followed by the "Crucify Him!" chorus, which is a fughetta with an angular subject that tonally describes the ugliness of the crowd and the act of crucifixion.

The heart of the entire work follows in the soprano recitative and aria "For love of me my Saviour is dying." This aria is accompanied only by obbligato flute and two English horns. As the movement ends and a calm mood is established, the Evangelist interrupts and the crowd repeats the "Crucify" chorus, 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 recitative and aria which 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 cello. 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 the burdens of the people. 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, can't he take himself down from the cross. Another occurrence of unusual orchestration is in the following alto recitative and aria where the second chorus interrupts the soloist, 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 the continuo organ and cello. With constant harassment by the

crowd, Jesus cries out His last words and dies, followed by the final, most moving setting of the Passion Chorale.

With a burst of virtuostic 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 most wonderful two bars in the entire work.

The story is completed with a beautiful bass recitative and aria, but not quite. The crowd comes in once more and in 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 recitative and chorus bids Jesus good-night in a very sad, yet praising manner. The closing chorus "Here at the grave we all sit weeping" ends the work on Good Friday. There has been no resurrection. The work concludes with a deeply moving yet unfinished tragic feeling.

## Historical Notes

by Kay Benningfield

The tradition of presenting the Passion story on Good Friday began in the Middle Ages. Priests would recite or chant the works from the Gospels, different men each taking a different character. 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 people of the parish) 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 Passion contains a great variety of musical forms, but the spiritual feeling is constant 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. However, 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.

## **Guest Artists & Soloists-**

#### The Columbia Boys Choir

The Columbia Boys Choir, which includes boys ages 8 years to "voice change," was founded by Steve Stevens in 1984. In addition to an annual concert series, the boys choir sings in a variety of venues including conventions, concert halls, cathedrals, public and private schools, retirement homes, and on radio and television. Its repertoire spans many centuries of classical choral literature.

Among the many honors the choir has received is being named the 1989 "Choir of the Year" at Bournemouth Music Festival in Bournemouth, England. That same year they were participants in the International Musical Eisteddfod in Llangollen, Wales. In 1990 the choir was honored to tour Russia at the invitation of the government. They were the first non-Soviet-block group to be invited to the Tchaikovsky Music Festival, in the town of Chaikovsky, USSR.

Steve Stevens is one of the most experienced children's choir directors in the United States. Having dedicated his life to teaching music to young people through singing, he is a frequent adjudicator and clinician of choirs for young people. Choirs under Mr. Stevens' direction have concertized in 49 states of the United States, Canada, Mexico, the British Isles, Scandinavia, Europe, Japan, Hong Kong, and Russia. They have also appeared on national network television in the U.S., France, Japan, and Russia; have sung for the Pope, the President of the United States, and for members of the British royal family.

#### Alan Bennett, Lyric Tenor/Evangelist

Alan Bennett is a native of North Carolina and received his Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance and Master of Music in Choral Conducting degrees from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. As a member and soloist with the Robert Shaw Festival Singers he toured southwest France in the summers of 1988, 1989 and 1992

and has recorded on the Telarc label with this group. Mr. Bennett was also a featured soloist on "Music in Medieval Europe" released by Focus Records as a companion to a book of the same title by Jeremy Judkin. He has a diverse repertoire which centers around oratorio, including Bach's Evangelist roles, concert performances and art-song recitals.

An active performer, some of Mr. Bennett's appearances for the 1991/92 season included a Messiah in Washington D.C. Last May he appeared with the Oratorio Soceity of New York in a Carnegie Hall performance of Handel's Israel in Egypt. This past November he sang the Evangilist role in the Christmas Oratorio with the Baltimore Choral Arts Society and Lukas in Die Jahreszeiten in a concert conducted by Thomas Dunn. In January he performed Mahler's Songs of a Wayfarer. He is scheduled to perform with Theatre of Voices in January and March of '94.

#### Michael Delos, Bass/Jesus

Michael Delos has appeared throughout the United States, Canada and Europe, dividing his time between opera and the concert platform. A Northwest native, Mr. Delos has appeared extensively with Orchestra Seattle/Seattle Chamber Singers in the major Bach choral works, Beethoven's Missa Solemnis, Vaughn-Williams' Hodie, Handel's Messiah and Haydn's The Seasons. In 1987 he joined the roster of the New York City Opera. He has made frequent Seattle opera appearances since his debut in the 1978-79 season, and is also a welcome guest artist with the Chicago Opera Theater and Hawaii Opera, as well as the companies of Salt Lake, Portland, Vancouver, Las Vegas, and St. Louis. In the winter of 1991, Mr. Delos appeared with the Opera of Monte Carlo, Monaco in Stravinsky's Rake's Progress, garnering international acclaim.

Mr. Delos' upcoming schedule includes performances of **La Boehme**, **Carmen**, **Aida** and **Don Giovanni**, as well as **Messiah** performances in Japan and South Korea.

#### **Catherine Haight, Soprano**

Catherine Haight is a graduate of Seattle Pacific University and has a busy vocal studio on the east side. She has appeared as soloist with Orchestra Seattle and Seattle Chamber Singers in their presentations of the Fauré **Requiem**, Haydn's oratorio **The Seasons**, past productions of **Messiah**, and Bach's cantata for soprano solo, **Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen**. In addition to her many appearances with Orchestra Seattle and Seattle Chamber Singers, Ms. Haight has also sung solos with the Bellevue Chamber Chorus, Pacific Northwest Ballet, and the Skagit Valley Bach Choir.

#### **Emily Lunde, Mezzo Soprano**

Northwest native Emily Lunde made her solo debut with Orchestra Seattle/Seattle Chamber Singers in their 1989 presentation of Bach's **b minor Mass**. Ms. Lunde makes frequent solo appearances with many other Northwest ensembles, she has soloed in Seattle Symphony's Baroque series under the baton of Gerard Schwarz, was the featured soloist with City Cantabile Singers in the world premiere of Fred West's oratorio in celebration of Earth Day, **Upon this Land**, and was heard in the Pacific Northwest Ballet production of **A Midsummer's Night Dream**. Emily's solo appearances with the New Whatcom Choral Society of Bellingham include Handel's **Messiah** and the Dyorak **Mass in D**.

#### Stephen P. Wall, Tenor

Stephen P. Wall has appeared many times with Orchestra Seattle and the Seattle Chamber Singers. He was the tenor soloist in last fall's performance of Beethoven's Missa Solemnis and Symphony #9 ,as well as appearing in the title role in Monteverdi's The Return of Ulysses. His credits with Seattle Opera include roles in Tannhauser, Die Meistersinger and War and Peace. Mr. Wall has been a featured soloist with

the Seattle, Spokane, Vancouver, B.C. and Sapporo (Japan) Symphonies. He currently is Professor of Voice at PLU and Seattle Community College.

#### **Brian Box, Bass**

Brian Box is a native of Washington and received his Master of Music degree in vocal performance from Western Washington University. Mr. Box has appeared frequently with OS/SCS. Among his credits are performances of Brahms' Four Last Songs with the Western Washington University Orchestra and the leading role in Dominic Argento's opera Postcard from Morocco at the University of British Columbia. He is a regular performer with Northwest Opera in Schools, Etc. and Seattle Opera's education program and made his Seattle Opera solo debut as the Corporal in The Daughter of the Regiment.

#### Tamara Still, Organist

Tamara Still is a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts at the University of Washington. She holds a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of California at Los Angeles and a Performance Certificate from the Sweelinck Conservatory in Amsterdam. In 1991 she was winner of the Northwest Region Young Artists Competition of the American Guild of Organists. Ms. Still has performed concerts in England, Holland and Canada. In Seattle she has performed frequently with Seattle Pro Musica and Orchestra Seattle. She is Music Director at Christ Episcopal Church in Seattle, and Associate Minister of Music at Green Lake Church of Seventh-day Adventists.

#### Tim Scott, Viola de Gambist

Tim Scott has been a member of the Oregon Symphony for 19 years. Mr. Scott has studied viola de gamba in Europe. He has regularly performed the Bach Passions at the Oregon Bach Festival with Helmut Rilling.

## Seattle Chamber Singers

George Shangrow, music director

## Choir I

#### Sopranos

Mildred Culp
Crissa Cugini
Dana Durasoff
Christina Fairweather
Meg Harrison
Penelope Nichols
Meryl Seely
Pamela Silimperi
Barbara Stephens
Mina Lee Thomas
Liesel van Cleeff

#### Altos

Laila Adams
Margaret Alsup
Kay Benningfield
Korcaighe Hale
Jane Lund
Suzanne Means
Laurie Medill
Nancy Robinson
Nancy Shasteen

#### Tenors

Ralph Cobb David Adams Vince Pillow

#### Basses

Paul Benningfield Gustave Blazek Douglas Durasoff Jim Macemon Robert Platt John Stenseth Richard Wykoff

### Choir II -

#### Sopranos

Jane Blackwell Susan Cobb Kyla DeRemer Schele Gislason Kathy Hansen Julia Jaundalderis Jill Kraakmo Jennifer Miletta Paula Rimmer

#### Altos

Sharon Agnew Luna Bitzer Marta Chaloupka Mary Beth Hughes Ann Minzel Janet Ellen Reed Linda Scheuffele Nedra Slauson Vicki Thomas

#### **Tenors**

Tom Nesbitt Ron Haight Ed Winkey

#### Basses

DeWayne Christenson Andrew Danilchik Mitsuhiro Kawase Robert Pincus Philip Rohrbaugh Skip Satterwhite Robert Schilperoot Jesse Stern

## Columbia Boys Choir

Steve Stevens, founder & conductor

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Andy Beers
Paul Bloodgood
John Bohman
Christopher Campbell
lan Chapman
Keven Dowdell
Aaron Emde
Jason Gould

William Harvey
Vincent Huberty
Hans Hurn
Andrew Ivanhoe
Mark James
Federico Johnson
Jeremy Kowalski
Christopher Krey
Jacob Livingston

Cameron Lomax Brian McGee Daniel McGrath Jonathan Nelson Adam Opsata Glenn Price Paul Vingo David Yusen



## **Orchestra Seattle**

George Shangrow, music director

Orchestra Seattle operates on a basis of rotating seating, therefore personnel are listed alphabetically in each section.

### Orchestra I

#### **VIOLIN**

Susan Abrams
Sue Herring
principal 2nd
Fritz Klein, concert master
Diane Lange
Sally Macklin
Avron Maletzky
Lief-Ivar Pedersen
Rebecca Soukup,

#### **VIOLA**

Bryn Cannon Katherine McWilliams Robert Shangrow Karen Stella, principal

#### **CELLO**

Rosemary Berner Julie Reed Valerie Ross Maryann Tapiro, principal

#### **VIOLA DE GAMBA**

Tim Scott

#### **BASS**

Allan Goldman, principal Jay Wilson

#### **FLUTE**

Kate Alverson, principal Kirsten James McNamara

#### OBOE/ENGLISH HORN/ D'AMORE

M. Shannon Hill, principal Terry Pickering

#### **BASSOON**

Chris Harshman

#### **HARPSICHORD**

Robert Kechley

#### ORGAN

Tamara Still

### Orchestra II -

#### VIOLIN

Dean Drescher
Carlos A. Flores
Jenny Hermanson
Deb Kirkland, concert master
Eileen Lusk, principal 2nd
Pam Macheledt
Gregor Nitsche
Janet Showalter

#### **VIOLA**

Deborah Daoust, principal Alice Leighton Stephanie Read

#### **CELLO**

Evelyn Albrecht Gary Anderson Margaret Wright, principal Matthew Wyant

#### **BASS**

Josephine Hansen, principal Anna Pal

#### FLUTE

Anne Carlson, principal Libby Gray

#### **OBOE**

King Chai Colin Mailer, principal

#### **BASSOON**

Tricia Gabrielson



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