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For further information about Cerddorion's thirteenth season,
please visit our website: www.cerddorion.net.
We also invite you to visit our guest ensemble's website:
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CERDDORION

VOCAL ENSEMBLE

Kristina Boerger
Artistic Director

PRESENTS

Psalmus

With special guests,

THE EXCELSIOR TROMBONE ENSEMBLE

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Richard Clark, alto and tenor trombones (11/18)
Paul Bellino, tenor trombone
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Michael Meidenbauer, bass trombone



Sunday, November 11, 2007 - 4:00 p.m.
Oratory Church of St. Boniface
190 Duffield Street
Brooklyn, New York

Sunday, November 18, 2007 - 4:00 p.m.
Church of St. Luke in the Fields
487 Hudson Street
Manhattan, New York

CERDDORION

NOW IN ITS THIRTEENTH SEASON, CERDDORION is one of New York's most highly regarded volunteer choral ensembles. A chamber group of twenty-eight mixed voices, it is known for its eclectic repertoire, encompassing music from the early Renaissance to the contemporary era. Audiences have come to appreciate the group's interpretive depth and technical excellence in many styles.

Besides presenting its own varied programs, Cerddorion is frequently invited to perform with other acclaimed artists. Past collaborations include: the North American premiere of Sir John Tavener's all-night vigil, *The Veil of the Temple*, performed at Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall (with Dessoff Choral Consortium and choristers from London's Temple Church); several appearances with the Christopher Caines Dance Company; Baroque opera performances with the early-music instrumental ensemble Concert Royal; and serving as the resident teaching ensemble for the Dennis Keene Choral Festival in Kent, Connecticut.

Cerddorion was selected to sing at the 2006 Eastern Divisional Convention of the American Choral Directors Association, where they presented the works they had commissioned of three New York composers for their tenth anniversary season.

This fall marked the release on the Tzadik label of *A Handful of World*, the first commercial recording featuring Cerddorion. The CD is dedicated to vocal works by New York composer Lisa Bielawa and includes Cerddorion's performance of Bielawa's "Lamentations for a City," which was commissioned and first performed by Cerddorion in 2004.

Kristina Boerger

An accomplished singer, conductor, and choral arranger, Kristina Boerger received her formative musical training from pianist Annie Sherter and holds the doctorate in Choral Conducting and Literature from the University of Illinois. She lectures in music history at Barnard College and teaches choral conducting at the Manhattan School of Music.

Her work in the 1990s as founding director of AMASONG: Champaign-Urbana's Premier Lesbian/Feminist Chorus, is the subject of the documentary film *The Amasong Chorus: Singing Out*, which after touring festivals in the U.S., Canada, Europe, and Australia has enjoyed repeated broadcast on PBS. Her work as a guest conductor and choral clinician has brought her recently to the University of Illinois Chamber Singers and The Chicago Children's Choir, as well as to repeat engagements with the Kalamazoo Bach Festival Society and the Syracuse Schola Cantorum.

As a singer in a variety of styles, she has appeared on stage and on disc with the King's Noyse, Rocky Maffit, the Tallis Scholars, Early Music New York, Vox Vocal Ensemble, Bobby McFerrin, Alarm Will Sound, and Urban Bush Women. She is a member of the acclaimed early music ensemble Pomerium and of the Western Wind Vocal Ensemble, a sextet renowned for its performing, recording, and music education activities.

This is Dr. Boerger's eighth season as Artistic Director of Cerddorion.

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Our concerts would not be possible without a great deal of financial assistance. Cerddorion would like to thank the following, who, in addition to many of our members, have generously provided financial support for our activities.

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Many thanks to Robb Moss and FloraCulture for the unique and beautiful florals.

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PSALM 114

Alleluja.
Liebe erfüllt mich, weil der Herr
die Stimme meines Flehens erhört hat,
weil er sein Ohr zu mir neigte:
mein Leben lang will ich ihn anrufen.
Es umgaben mich die Schmerzen des Todes,
es trafen mich die Gefahren der Hölle.
Trübsal und Schmerz fand ich,
da rief ich den Namen des Herrn an:
“O Herr, erlöse meine Seele!”
Barmherzig ist der Herr, und gerecht.
Unser Gott ist barmherzig.
Der Herr bewahret die Kleinen:
Ich war gedemütigt, und er half mir.
Kehre zurück, meine Seele, in deine Ruh:
denn der Herr hat dir wohlgetan,
denn er errettete meine Seele vom Tode,
meine Augen von den Tränen,
meine Füße vom Falle.
Ich will gefallen dem Herrn
im Lande der Lebendigen.

Alleluia.
Love wells up within me, for the Lord
hath heard the voice of my supplication,
for He hath inclined His ear to me:
I shall call upon Him all of my days.
The pains of death surrounded me,
the perils of Hell accosted me,
and grief and affliction were mine,
when I called upon the name of the Lord:
“O Lord, redeem my soul!”
Merciful is the Lord, and just.
Our Lord is merciful.
The Lord watches over the lowly:
I was brought low, and He helped me.
Return, o my soul, unto thy rest:
for the Lord hath wrought well for thee,
for he hath rescued my soul from death,
mine eyes from weeping,
my feet from stumbling.
I shall favor the Lord
in the land of the living.

—Psalm 116

Translations, K. Boerger

Psalmus

Loben

Lobet den Herren alle Heiden

Michael Praetorius
(1571–1621)

Lobt den Herren ihr Heiden all

Michael Praetorius

Excelsior Trombone Ensemble

Lobt Gott mit Schall

Heinrich Schütz
(1585–1672)

Michael Meidenbauer, bass trombone

Lobet den Herrn (BWV 230)

J.S. Bach
(1685–1750)

Motomi Igarashi, violone (11/11/07)

Jay Elfenbein, violone (11/18/07)

Schaffen

Schaffe in mir, Gott, ein reines Herz

Heinrich Schütz

Excelsior Trombone Ensemble

Schaffe in mir, Gott

Johannes Brahms
(1833–1897)

Blasen

Excelsior Trombone Ensemble

French Dances from *Terpsichore*

Branle gay
Branle double
Courante
Bourrée
Spagnoletta
—*K. Boerger, percussion*

Michael Praetorius
arr. Pia Bucher

Drei Equali

Andante
Poco adagio
Poco sostenuto

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770–1827)

Pange lingua

Anton Bruckner
(1824–1896)
arr. Ralph Sauer

Gipfeln

Inveni David

Psalm 114

Excelsior Trombone Ensemble

Anton Bruckner

Anton Bruckner

Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden,
und preiset ihn, alle Völker!
Denn seine Gnade und Wahrheit
waltet über uns in Ewigkeit.
Alleluja.

Praise the Lord, all ye lands,
and worship Him, all ye peoples!
For His mercy and truth
abide with us forever.
Alleluia.

—Psalm 117

Schaffe in mir, Gott, ein reines Herz,
und gib mir einen neuen gewissen Geist.
Verwirf mich nicht von deinem Angesicht,
und nimm deinen heiligen Geist nicht von
mir.

Tröste mich wieder mit deiner Hilfe,
und der freudige Geist erhalte mich.

Create in me, O God, a pure heart,
and renew my spirit in righteousness.
Cast me not away from Thy countenance
and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.

Comfort me once more with Your succor
and sustain me with Your joyful spirit.

—from Psalm 51

Inveni David servum meum:
oleo sancto meo unxi eum.
Manus enim mea auxiliabitur ei
et brachium meum confortabit eum.
Alleluja.

I have found David my servant:
with my holy oil have I anointed him.
My hand shall sustain him,
and my arm shall comfort him.
Alleluia.

—from Psalm 89

Texts

Lobet den Herren alle Heiden,
preiset seinen Namen, alle Völker.
Dann seine Gnad und Wahrheit
waltet über uns in Ewigkeit.
Ehr sei dem Vater und dem Sohn,
dazu auch dem heiligen Geiste,
als es im Anfang was und nun
bleibet bis in Ewigkeit. Amen.

Praise the Lord, all ye lands,
worship His name, all ye peoples.
For His mercy and truth
abide with us forever.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and also unto the Holy Ghost,
as it was in the beginning and now
remains to eternity. Amen.

—Psalm 117, with Doxology

Lobt den Herren, ihr Heiden all,
preiset ihn, ihr Völker, mit Schall.
Denn seine Treu und Güte
waltet über uns allzumal
in Ewigkeit behüte.
Alleluja, singen mit Freud
daß wir sehen ein guter Zeit
in unsers Gottes Namen
und durch Christum werden geleitt
ins ewig Leben. Amen.

Praise the Lord, all ye lands,
worship Him resoundingly, all ye peoples.
For His faithfulness and kindness
abide with us forever,
protecting us in eternity.
Alleluia, sing with joy,
for we behold a time of goodness
in the name of our God
and through Christ will be led
into eternal life. Amen.

—Psalm 117, paraphrased and glossed

Lobt Gott mit Schall, ihr Heiden all,
ihr Völker, preist den Herren,
Sein Gnad und Gunst walt über uns,
Er hilft von Herzen gerne,
Was er verspricht, das trüget nicht,
Ewig sein Wort wird bleiben.
Mit fröhlichem Mund von Herzensgrund
singen wir zu allen Zeiten:
Alleluja, mit Freuden!

Praise God resoundingly, all ye lands,
ye peoples, worship the Lord.
His mercy and grace abide with us;
He helps us willingly, from the heart.
What He promises never deceives;
His word shall remain forever.
With cheerful voice, from deep in our hearts,
let us sing for all time:
Hallelujah with joy!

—Psalm 117, paraphrased and glossed

The Excelsior Trombone Ensemble

The Excelsior Trombone Ensemble excites audiences with a rare versatility, offering repertoire from the majestic origins of the trombone during the Renaissance, as well as classical, jazz, pop, and modern idioms. Founded in 2005, the group performs in concert halls and sacred spaces, often in collaboration with vocal ensembles and organists. ETE also presents programs in schools, colleges, and universities as part of their ongoing commitment to education and artistic creativity. This season, Excelsior has enjoyed repeat concert broadcasts on *Performance Today*.

Don't miss Cerddorion's upcoming performances!

The Place Just Right: A Concert of Sacred Music from the United States

Sunday, February 24, 2008, 4 P.M., at First Unitarian Congregational Society, 50 Monroe Place (at Pierrepont Street), Brooklyn Heights

Saturday, March 1, 2008, 8 P.M., at St. Ignatius of Antioch, 552 West End Ave. (entrance on 87th Street), Manhattan

Spectacular Vernacular

Music inspired by folkloric and popular singing traditions from disparate continents composed or arranged for the Western concert stage.

Sunday, May 11, 2008, 4 P.M., at the Oratory Church of St. Boniface, 11 Willoughby St. (on the MetroTech Campus), Brooklyn

Sunday, May 18, 2008, 4 P.M., at the Church of St. Luke in the Fields, 487 Hudson St. (south of Christopher Street), Manhattan

Both programs: General admission \$20. Students/seniors \$15.
For information: 212-260-1498.

Program Notes

In 1502, Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony, established a university at Wittenburg. In 1508, an Augustinian monk named Martin Luther was made professor of philosophy at the university. Less than a decade later, Luther's protest against Church corruption ignited the Protestant Reformation, radically altering the course of religious and political history. Music history, too, bears the stamp of this visionary priest's teachings.

Luther was a lover of the polyphonic art, owning several manuscripts of music by Renaissance masters. He favored the singing in church of sophisticated Mass settings and liturgical motets as a fitting glorification of God. Such compositions, however, were sung only by the clerical choirs, whose expertise had been developed during their long years of monastic education and practice. One of Luther's convictions was that laypersons, too, could—and must—enjoy direct relationships with God; just as common individuals could confess directly to God without the intercession of a priest, so could they sing their own praises to Him during the Mass. It was the Psalm texts especially—and close paraphrases of them—that Luther commended as particularly suitable for congregational singing.

One of the most important innovations of the Reformation was the *metrical Psalter*, a paraphrase of all or part of the Book of Psalms in vernacular poetry, meant to be sung as hymns by all worshippers in church. These settings featured easily discernable melodies, a strong, straightforward pulse, and simple, four-part harmony. While the congregation sang the tune, church musicians supplied harmonic support. The German composer Johann Walter, a friend and musical consultant of Luther, created the first polyphonic setting of the complete Psalter; for this and his other contributions to Lutheran music, his name has been enshrined in the Lutheran Calendar of Saints.

A year after Walter's death in 1570, **Michael Praetorius (1571–1621)** was born the son of a Lutheran pastor. After positions as court organist and Kapellmeister at Wolfenbüttel, he was installed in the Saxon court at Dresden. His nine-volume *Musae sioniae* contains more than a thousand pieces of service music for the Lutheran liturgy, ranging from the simplest hymn settings to highly contrapuntal, polychoral, concerted motets for choirs of singers and instrumentalists. We open with a four-part hymn in two verses—the complete text of Psalm 117, followed by the Doxology. Our arrangement highlights the congregational function of the Lutheran hymn's melodic dominance. Our second Praetorius hymn features a paraphrase and gloss on the Psalm 117 text and is distinguished by the lively, danceable rhythms that result when the prosody of the text is faithfully represented. Our use of trombones to support our singing accords with historical practice.

Our concert culminates as Cerddorion and Excelsior collaborate in music composed to display equally the powers of the chorus and of the trombone ensemble. Whereas in our earlier music, the trombones were assigned to voice-part doublings or relegated to harmonic support, our last selections feature them in independent lines created expressly for their special qualities.

The text to **“Inveni David,”** a piece from the same year as “Pange lingua,” comes from Psalm 89. Bruckner set the text as a brief communion motet for male chorus and trombone quartet. The harmonic language here reveals Wagner's influence in a series of deft shifts between distantly related chords.

Influences on **Psalm 114** (as Bruckner somehow mistakenly designated his setting of text from Psalm 116) are more traditional and place the work firmly in the heritage of the other German Psalms heard tonight. Bruckner composed this fairly early work in 1852 while at Saint Florian, the place of his childhood training as a choirboy and the location—as per his request—of his burial, beneath the organ in the sanctuary. The active concert life at the monastery featured performances of sacred and secular music; it was these concerts that inspired Bruckner's lifelong admiration for Schubert and Mendelssohn.

Psalm 114 would appear to be the direct inheritor of the Bach motet tradition. Set in the vernacular, it comprises three sections; the first is an “Alleluia” in strict chorale style, and the last is an exuberant fugue, complete with countersubject, whose subject undergoes multiple transpositions, a few inversions, and a stretto or two. We know that prior to writing this piece, Bruckner had studied the fugues of Albrechtsberger and of Bach, particularly the latter's *Der Kunst der Fuge*. But he had not yet undertaken his famously rigorous counterpoint studies under Simon Sechter, and once or twice his voice leading here, for all its ambition, rather endearingly backs itself into a corner, the escape from which is necessarily clumsy. Neither was his familiarity with the Bach choral oeuvre complete; he knew only the chorale harmonizations. How is it, then, that the Bach motet legacy rings out so clearly from the pages of this score? In 1853, the year following *Psalm 114*'s composition, a mentor admonished Bruckner to learn the motets of Bach; it would not do to restrict himself to the Mendelssohn Psalms as his model. And there we have it. Mendelssohn, of course, was a critical agent of the so-called Bach Revival of the early 19th century, and his emulations of the formal features of Bach's Lutheran motets succeeded in communicating the tradition forward to the maturity of the Romantic era and into the Roman Catholic liturgy.

—Kristina Boerger and Lisa Albrecht,
with thanks to Sabine Feisst

Excelsior returns us to music for weightier occasions with the three *Equali* of **Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)**. It was while visiting Linz, Austria, in 1812 (with intent to meddle in his brother’s marriage plans) that Beethoven encountered the tradition of the *Equali*. According to Franz Xavier Glöggel, Kappellmeister of the Linz Cathedral:

At funeral rites, a short mourning music (Equale) with trombones...is played upon arrival of the clergy, following which the funeral procession commences, this also being accompanied by wind mourning music. These short and choral-like movements, called *Equale*, *Aequale*, or *Aequali*, are written for three or four similar instruments, especially trombones, and when provided with a text, are often performed by a choir. They are however also played on the evening of All Saint’s Day and on the morning of All Souls’ Day from the balcony of the town hall, “to proclaim a solemn *memento mori* to the living.”

According to Glöggel’s son, when his father asked Beethoven to write an Equal for six trombones:

Beethoven...wished to hear an Aequal as played in Linz during the funeral rites. My father then arranged to have three trombonists to come one afternoon, since Beethoven in any case dined with us, and had them perform one such Aequal. Beethoven thereupon sat down and wrote one for six trombones, which my father had his trombonists perform.

The three *Equali* were actually composed for four trombones (not six) and were performed by a trombone quartet and men’s choir at Beethoven’s own funeral in 1827.

The inclusion of trombones in Catholic worship under the Hapsburg Empire can be traced to the powerful influence of the Gabrieli tradition, which was imported by the many northern Italian composers serving Austrian courts. By the 18th century, composers in Austrian courts and monasteries were writing virtuosically for the trombone. The continuation of this tradition distinguishes the sacred repertoire of **Anton Bruckner (1824–1896)**, a devout Roman Catholic. Bruckner’s output is typically divided into three stages, corresponding to his appointments to the Augustinian monastery in Saint Florian, the Linz Cathedral, and the Vienna Conservatory. Works featuring trombone date from all three periods and include—in addition to his own set of *Equali* for three trombones—several Latin motets for chorus and trombone trio or quartet. Excelsior will close its set with a transcription of Bruckner’s communion motet **“Pange lingua”** from 1868, a setting of Thomas Aquinas’s hymn on the mystery of the transubstantiation. Originally scored for the Linz Cathedral choir *a cappella*, the motet is only a step away from its original performance tradition when played by trombones, and this rendering displays the beautiful affinity between the *Posaune* and the human voice.

Germany is thought to be the country of origin of the *Posaune*, which was a modification of the Renaissance slide trumpet. While some Protestant reformers forbade the playing of instruments in church, Luther welcomed it. By the middle of the 16th century, church bands were commonplace, with trombones used in alternation with the singers or playing along in support on the vocal lines. With the introduction of the Baroque style in the beginning of the 17th century, composers began to write independent lines for an array of specific instruments. This practice flourished in Venice, where trombones were used prominently in Catholic services. It was the Lutheran composers of Saxony, heavily influenced by the Venetian style, who composed the first great Protestant music, making extensive use of the trombone. These include Praetorius and also Heinrich Schütz.

Having begun his musical life as a choirboy, **Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672)** abandoned his university law studies to pursue composition in Venice under Giovanni Gabrieli. He subsequently obtained a position as church organist in Kassel, eventually securing an appointment in 1615 as court composer to the Elector of Saxony. He kept this position in Dresden until the end of his life, with some notable leaves of absence: In 1628, he made a second study trip to Venice, and when the Thirty Years’ War disrupted life at court, he took a post for several years at Copenhagen. Schütz was the first great composer of the German Baroque, combining his mastery of Franco-Flemish counterpoint with the new, soloistic vocal style that in Italy had inspired the emergence of opera and other dramatic forms. Several of his collections feature elaborate scorings for multiple groupings of singers and instrumentalists. When composing during the devastation of the War, he granted his blessing for churches with dwindling coffers to perform the grander works in reduced textures; he had constructed them to hold up nevertheless, albeit less brilliantly.

Schütz’s first published collection after his appointment to the Dresden court was the *Psalmen Davids* of 1619. These grand settings for multiple choirs of voices and instruments take their texts directly from Luther’s Bible. More accessible to lay singers was his *Becker Psalter*, metrical settings of all 150 Psalms as paraphrased in German verse by the Leipzig theologian Cornelius Becker. This hymnbook was promulgated by official command of the Saxon authorities in 1661, much to the benefit of the printing houses in Leipzig, who thrived on the popular market for devotional songbooks. **“Lobt Gott mit Schall”** comes from this Psalter and features a paraphrase of Psalm 117 for SATB choir. A separate line for a supporting bass instrument is printed in the score, and tonight it will be played on bass trombone.

Schütz, too, is listed on the Lutheran Calendar of Saints, being celebrated on July 28th, along with **Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)**. Bach needs no introduction to the concertgoing audience. His sacred choral oeuvre includes a handful of Lutheran Masses and the great Mass in B Minor, the monumental Passion settings, two Magnificats, and more than 200 cantatas—all multi-movement works demanding every skill an accomplished musician can bring to them. On the miniature scale, by contrast, are almost two hundred

harmonizations of Lutheran chorale (hymn) tunes. Of his six complete, extant motets, five are datable to Bach's mature, Leipzig years. Though they vary in length, form, and scoring, all of them are fiercely demanding. They were most likely commissioned for funerals or other special occasions, the particularities of which would have dictated their scorings.

Lobet den Herrn (Psalm 117), the undatable outlier (whose attribution to Bach cannot even be conclusively proved), is the only one that includes a separate part for basso continuo. In fact, it is assumed that even the motets in exclusively vocal scorings were performed with continuo support, which could have included both organ and harpsichord as well as lutes. (Performing as we are—like Schütz's choirs—in wartime, we will make do with a lone violone.) This motet contains several features common throughout the set and directly emulated by later composers: a formal division into discrete sections, if not separate movements; a reference in at least one section to the simple, congregational hymn style; and the use in at least one other section of fugal writing. It is with a lively fugue that *Lobet* begins, presenting each phrase from verse 1 of the Psalm in its own fugue subject. The second section of the motet begins on verse 2. Here is the reference to the style of the first metrical Psalms: all voices move together in stately and regular chords on “Denn seine Gnade und Wahrheit...” before opening out into long, demanding melismas. Despite its simple beginning, this section gains in complexity until its final cadence. A sprightly, imitative “Alleluia” in an accelerated meter concludes the piece.

I will close my discussion of this motet with the choicest gem unearthed during my Internet research, written by a seasoned choral singer and director: “It takes a choir that doesn't suck just to get through these pieces.” (www.bach-cantatas.com/Vocal/BWV225-231-Harnoncourt.htm)

I chose our next Schütz piece as a companion to the Brahms that follows it. Both motets set verses 10 through 12 of Psalm 51. The Schütz “**Schaffe in mir, Gott, ein reines Herz**” comes from the *Kleine geistliche Konzerte* and was originally written for one tenor and one soprano over organ continuo. In the spirit of Schütz's desire to have his music performed even if the resources at hand did not match his scorings, I had no compunction about arranging it for two-part, treble chorus over three trombones.

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897) is tonight's only composer with a significant choral oeuvre who never depended on a church appointment for his livelihood. His personal irreligiousness notwithstanding, he undertook intensive study of the great sacred collections of composers before him—especially Bach, Schütz, Praetorius, and Palestrina. It was through his choral works that he mastered counterpoint—particularly canonic technique (the writing of complex “rounds”)—and arrived at his own mature style, identifiable in the instrumental works that followed. *Schaffe in mir, Gott* (Opus 29, No. 2) demonstrates Brahms's successful extension of polyphonic technique into the harmonic environment of the 19th century.

Taking the Bach motets as his model, Brahms sets Opus 29, No. 2, in four sections. The opening seems at first to be written in hymn texture; four voice parts begin by declaiming the text together in simple triads. But there is a fifth voice underneath that is not keeping up, and it is soon apparent that all of the voices have separated into independent lines. What is actually happening is that the soprano melody is being followed by the basses in an augmentation canon: The basses have the same melody as the sopranos but in rhythmic values that are twice as long. Thus, by the time the basses have finished singing verse 10 of the Psalm, the sopranos have sung it twice. In between these structurally defining voices, the altos, tenors, and baritones imitate and harmonize with fragments of the melody.

The second section, dedicated to verse 11 of the Psalm, is a strict, condensed, and complex fugue. We hear each voice part entering successively on the subject with the words “verwirf mich nicht von deinem Angesicht.” The astute listener will also detect a countersubject, a chromatic countermelody carried in one voice part whenever another is singing the subject. As the movement unfolds, Brahms's subject undergoes all of the types of transformation seen in the defining fugue practice of Bach: transposition to other keys, augmentation, inversion (literally turning the melody upside down), and *stretto* (overlapping entrances between two or more parts).

Verse 12 contains two words—“comfort” and “joyful”—that motivated Brahms's composition. The third section of the motet opens in a gentle, rocking meter whose comforting effect almost conceals the tight, canonical construction between the top and bottom voices. Although the entire Psalm verse has been sung by the end of this section, Brahms is not yet finished communicating his text. He elides the third section into the concluding section, presenting the end of the verse again in a raucous fugato that emphasizes the text's joyfulness. The final cadence recalls a full-bodied “Amen” sung by a large, happy, and grateful congregation.

With Praetorius's *French Dances from Terpsichore*, the Excelsior Trombone Ensemble gives us a reprieve from the gravity of so much worship and supplication. The 300 instrumental pieces collected in *Terpsichore* represent the composer's only surviving secular work. The contents of *Terpsichore* are often assumed to be fully original, though in his dedication to Duke Heinrich Julius, Praetorius wrote that “these assorted French bransles, dances and melodies” had been “brought by your Royal Highness's dancing master Antoine Emeraud from France” for him to arrange. In their original renderings, it is likely that violins, lutes, and other stringed instruments would have played them as dance accompaniments or as an instrumental suite. However, as Praetorius himself describes in his encyclopedic treatise *Syntagma musicum*, Renaissance brasses could also be employed in a consort of similarly timbered instruments. Drawing on this tradition, Excelsior presents these dances in the traditional brass voicings that would have been common during the 1600s: alto, tenor, and bass trombones, with percussion to accentuate the rhythmic qualities particular to each dance form.