

QERDDORION VOCAL ENSEMBLE

James John
Artistic Director

PRESENTS

Four Musical Luminaries:

Palestrina, Lassus, Bach and Handel

*With guest artists Dongmyung Ahn, Carlene Stober,
Gabe Shuford, and students and alumni from the Aaron Copland School of
Music Baroque Ensemble, Dongmyung Ahn, Director*



Friday, March 24, 2017, 8 pm
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
199 Carroll Street, Brooklyn

Sunday, March 26, 2017, 3 pm
St. Ignatius of Antioch
87th Street & West End Avenue,
Manhattan

THE PROGRAM

Missa Brevis Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525–1594)

Kyrie and Gloria

Mark Hewitt, tenor



Surgens Jesus Orlande de Lassus (ca. 1530–1594)



Credo (from *Missa Brevis*) Palestrina

Mark Hewitt, tenor



Timor et tremor Lassus



Sanctus and Benedictus (from *Missa Brevis*) Palestrina

Anna Harmon, soprano; Jamie Carrillo, alto; David Letzler, tenor



Jubilate Deo Lassus



Agnus Dei I and II (from *Missa Brevis*) Palestrina



Musica Dei Donum Optimi Lassus

❖❖❖ *Intermission* ❖❖❖

Coronation Anthem, HWV 259

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

1. Let Thy Hand Be Strengthened
2. Let Justice and Judgement
3. Alleluia



Christ lag in Todes Banden, BWV 4

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

1. Sinfonia
2. Versus 1—Chorale: *Christ lag in Todesbanden*
3. Versus 2—Duet (Soprano, Alto): *Den Tod niemand zwingen kunnt*
4. Versus 3—Chorale (Tenor): *Jesus Christus, Gottes Sohn*
5. Versus 4—Chorale: *Es war ein wunderlicher Krieg*
6. Versus 5—Aria (Bass): *Hier ist das rechte Osterlamm*
7. Versus 6—Duet (Soprano, Tenor): *So feiern wir das hohe Fest*
8. Versus 7—Chorale: *Wir essen und leben wohl*

Guest artists:

Dongmyung Ahn & Dora Kim,* violin; Kate Goddard* & Naomi Florin,* viola;
Carlene Stober, cello; Gabe Shuford, organ

*Students and alumni from the Aaron Copland School of Music
Baroque Ensemble, Dongmyung Ahn, Director



About the Artists

Now in its twenty-second season, **Cerddorion** (the name, pronounced *kehr-DOHR-ee-on*, is Welsh for “musicians”) is one of New York’s most highly regarded volunteer choral ensembles. A chamber group of up to twenty-eight mixed voices, it is known for its eclectic repertoire, encompassing music from the Renaissance to the contemporary. Audiences have come to appreciate the group’s interpretive depth and technical excellence in many styles. Cerddorion has also frequently commissioned new works by such composers as Paul Moravec, Martha Sullivan, David Schober, David Stern, Lisa Bielawa, David Lang, Elliot Z. Levine, Robert Dennis, and Julie Dolphin.

Besides presenting its own varied programs, Cerddorion is frequently invited to perform with other acclaimed artists. In 2011, the men of Cerddorion sang with esteemed French organist Francis Chapelet in the second inaugural recital of the Manton Memorial Organ at the Church of the Ascension in New York; they were invited back in 2014 to perform in Chapelet’s farewell concert. Past collaborations have included 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 Dessooff 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.

In November 2016, Cerddorion performed highlights from its Fall program, *¡Viva España!*, at the Fall 2016 conference of the New York State Chapter of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA). Ten years ago, Cerddorion sang at the Eastern Divisional Convention of the ACDA, presenting the works they had commissioned from three New York composers for their tenth anniversary season. September 2007 marked the release on the Tzadik label of *A Handful of World*, Cerddorion’s first commercial recording. The CD is dedicated to vocal works by New York composer Lisa Bielawa and includes Cerddorion’s performance of Lisa Bielawa’s *Lamentations for a City*, which was commissioned and first performed by Cerddorion in 2004.

Cerddorion is a proud member of the New York Choral Consortium.

JAMES JOHN is in his seventh season as Artistic Director of the Cerddorion Vocal Ensemble. He is also Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities at the Aaron Copland School of Music, Queens College–CUNY, where he conducts the Queens College Choir, Vocal Ensemble and Choral Society, teaches choral conducting, and serves as advisor to the graduate program in vocal performance. Recent professional highlights include guest conducting the Tokyo Oratorio Society in a performance of Brahms’s *Ein deutsches Requiem* in Tokyo’s Suntory Hall, and an invited performance by the Queens College Choir at the 2012 Eastern Division Conference of the American Choral Directors Association in Providence, Rhode Island.

Under Dr. John’s leadership the choral program at the Aaron Copland School of Music has become recognized as one of the finest collegiate choral programs in the region. Past performances with the School of Music’s choral ensembles include Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*, award-winning productions of Argento’s *Postcard from Morocco* and Monteverdi’s *L’Orfeo*, Requiems by Mozart and Verdi, “A Night at the Opera” with Queens College alumna Erika Sunnegårdh of the Metropolitan Opera, Benjamin Britten’s *War Requiem*, and world premieres of works by Sidney Boquiren, Leo Kraft, Meg Collins Stoop and others. His choirs have performed in many of New York’s prestigious venues, including Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Weill Recital Hall, St. Patrick’s Cathedral and Trinity Church Wall Street. Under his direction the Queens College Vocal Ensemble released its first CD, featuring premiere recordings of partsongs by Scottish composer Hamish MacCunn, and the Queens College Choir recorded Bright Sheng’s *Two Folksongs from Qinghai*, soon to be released on the Naxos label.

Dr. John’s guest conducting appearances include Avery Fisher Hall’s annual Messiah Sing-In, a concert of American choral music with the Virginia Chorale (Virginia’s only professional choral ensemble), chorus master for the Queens Symphony, regional honor choirs throughout New York State, and a recording with jazz trumpeter Michael Mossman. He has given presentations at both divisional and national conventions of the American Choral Directors Association, and is in demand as a clinician and adjudicator throughout the United States. In Fall 2013, Dr. John returned to Tokyo to conduct Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*.

As a teacher and scholar, Dr. John has served as Guest Lecturer in conducting at the Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg, Germany, and presented seminars on American choral music in Basel and Stockholm. His dissertation on Brahms’s *Nänie*, Op. 82, won the Julius Herford Prize from the American Choral Directors Association and will be published in revised form as a book by The Edwin Mellen Press. His articles have appeared in *Choral Journal*, *American Choral Review*, and Chorus America’s *Research Memorandum Series*. He served as Editor of *American Choral Review* from 2011 to 2016, and he has also been a member of ACDA’s National Research and Publications Committee.

Dr. John received his Doctor of Musical Arts in Conducting from the Eastman School of Music. Prior to his current position at the Aaron Copland School of Music he served as Director of Choral Activities at Tufts University in Boston, Director of Choral Activities at Nassau Community College in Garden City, NY, and as Dartmouth College's first Conducting Fellow. He received his Master of Arts in Conducting from the Aaron Copland School of Music.



Guest Artists

Period violinist **Dongmyung Ahn** is a performer, educator, and scholar, whose interests span from the twelfth to eighteenth centuries. She is co-founder of Guido's Ear and regularly performs with the Sebastians, TENET, Early Music New York, Green Mountain Vespers, Clarion, and Bach Vespers. She has also played the rebec in the *The Play of Daniel* at the Cloisters. A dedicated educator, Dongmyung is the director of the Queens College Baroque Ensemble and has taught music history at Vassar College and Queens College. She is a Ph.D. candidate in musicology at the Graduate Center, CUNY, and has published an article on medieval liturgy in the Rodopi series *Faux Titre*.



Cellist **Carlene Stober** is a member of Empire Viols, Abendmusik and the Grenser Trio. She performed as continuo cellist for Bach Vespers at Holy Trinity for 15 years and has appeared on "Prairie Home Companion," was featured musician in Theatre for a New Audience's production of "Pericles" at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and has performed with the Utah Shakespeare Festival. As a modern cellist, Carlene is a member of the Saratoga Opera Festival Orchestra and has performed at the Manitou Chamber Music Festival in Colorado. She served as principal cellist of the Tucson Symphony Orchestra and performed throughout the United States as a member of the Delphi String Quartet. Carlene holds degrees from the Eastman School of Music and can be heard on the Deux Elles, MSR, Ravello, and Quill Classics labels. She is also a music librarian, holding adjunct positions at New York University and the Morgan Library, and designs sound for theatrical productions.



Organist **Gabe Shuford** is the recipient of the 2011 Baron Prize from Stony Brook University, and top prize at the 2007 Mae and Irving Jurow International Harpsichord Competition. He is a member of Repast Baroque Ensemble and has performed with A Far Cry, The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Dorian Baroque, Antioch Chamber Ensemble, Speculum Musicae, and The St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic. He has presented programs with recorder player Paul Leenhouts at the Boston Early Music Festival and the Music Before 1800 concert series in New York City. A sought-after soloist, he has been featured with the Colonial Symphony of New Jersey, Glorious Revolution Baroque, and the Ithaca College Chamber Orchestra, where he performed C.P.E Bach's Concerto for Harpsichord and Fortepiano with acclaimed fortepianist Malcom Bilson. He has served on the faculties of Luther and Sarah Lawrence Colleges, and was co-director of the Stony Brook University Pre-College Jazz Workshop from 2005 to 2009. Gabe holds a doctorate from Stony Brook University, where he studied with harpsichordist Arthur Haas. He currently serves as Music Director at First United Methodist Church in Stamford, Connecticut.



Since its inception in the Spring of 2009 for Queens College's production of Monteverdi's L'Orfeo, the **Queens College Baroque Ensemble** has been performing works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Under the direction of baroque violin specialist Dongmyung Ahn, the group focuses on the music of the Baroque period using baroque bows and historically informed performance practice. In addition to the group's regular performances at Lefrak Hall (Queens College), the group has also performed at The Church of the Holy Trinity (New York), The Church in the Gardens (Forest Hills), King Manor Museum (Jamaica, Queens), and on the acclaimed Chamber Music Live series.

Four Musical Luminaries Program Notes

A Note from the Artistic Director

Palestrina, Lassus, Bach, and Handel emerged as guiding lights at the apex of the Renaissance and Baroque eras. Palestrina and Lassus were towering figures at the end of the sixteenth century, Bach and Handel during the middle of the eighteenth. Intriguing parallels between their careers provided the inspiration for this program.

Despite achieving widespread renown, Palestrina and Bach remained in their native countries (Italy and Germany) and worked within a relatively small geographical radius; they composed primarily sacred music, and the elements of their style are still used today as the basis for teaching counterpoint. By contrast, Lassus and Handel were well-traveled musicians of international fame; they spent the latter portion of their lives working in foreign lands (Lassus in Germany, Handel in England); and they wrote prolifically in all genres, both sacred and secular.

Palestrina and Lassus died in the same year (1594), and during the 1550s both worked as *maestro di cappella* at the same church in Rome (St. John Lateran); Bach and Handel were born in the same year (1685), and though they knew of one another, they never actually met. The generations that followed ushered in new epochs, and in this sense the *oeuvre* of each pair constitutes a culmination of what came before, rather than a new beginning. The works of Palestrina and Lassus represent a final flowering of imitative polyphony, even as younger composers (such as Monteverdi) were stripping music of contrapuntal artifice in fervid pursuit of textual expression—a development that led to the invention of opera around 1600. Bach and Handel stand in a similar position approximately 150 years later, when the new generation (including Haydn) was less interested in complexities of counterpoint and more enamored with clarity and balance—traits that became the foundation of the Classical style.

All four composers were exceptionally productive, and assembling a program of their works meant exercising a high degree of selectivity. Ultimately, I decided to focus on sacred music—an approach that is quite natural for Palestrina and Bach (what of theirs could be more representative than a Mass setting and a cantata?), but less so for Handel (though virtually all of his choral works employ sacred texts), and egregiously unrepresentative of Lassus, who excelled in the secular vocal genres of his day (*madrigal*, *chanson*, and *lied*), and who suffers most from this self-imposed limitation.

When Lassus is juxtaposed with Palestrina, however, it is easy to hear how different the two are: Lassus's adventurousness appears in high relief against Palestrina's sublime restraint. Handel and Bach, when heard back-to-back, also contrast more than one might expect. The short coronation anthem we are performing captures, in miniature, the monumentality of Handel's style; Bach's cantata is more ruminative, exploring in depth the meaning of each verse of a Lutheran chorale. Pairing these *four musical luminaries* together provides insight into the uniqueness and profundity of their compositional legacies.

Palestrina, *Missa Brevis* Lassus, Selected Motets

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (ca. 1525–1594) takes his name from the small town about 20 miles east of Rome where he was born. Details of his early life are not well known, but he probably received initial training at the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. He spent the remainder of his career in and around that city, where his principal appointments included *maestro di cappella* at both St. John Lateran and Santa Maria Maggiore, and *magister cappellae* of the Cappella Giulia (the choir of St. Peter's Basilica). He was extraordinarily prolific, with an output that includes 104 masses, over 300 motets, and more than 140 madrigals (both secular and spiritual). Despite his commitment to serving the church, he only once considered taking priestly orders (after the tragic death of his wife and two sons in the plague of the 1570s), but he soon changed his mind and decided to marry the widow of a prominent furrier; during the last decades of his life, he was heavily involved in running the family business.

One of the pivotal events of Palestrina's lifetime was the Council of Trent (1545–1563). As legend describes, his *Pope Marcellus Mass* (published in the composer's Second Book of Masses in 1567) was written to assuage church authorities seeking to purge sacred music of licentious elements (such as *cantus firmi* derived from ribald secular melodies) and to liberate it from the complexities of florid counterpoint, which was perceived as rendering the words unintelligible. Palestrina rose to meet these challenges with such success that he supposedly “saved” music. Though certainly an exaggeration, his style displays remarkable clarity of line, strictly controlled dissonance, and ingenious contrapuntal textures—all harnessed to a high degree in service of textual expression.

These qualities are on clear display in Palestrina's *Missa Brevis*, one of his most popular works. It was published in 1570 as part of his Third Book of Masses and thus was written in relative proximity to the *Pope Marcellus Mass*. The title *Missa Brevis* ('short mass') is misleading, for only in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did it come to signify an abbreviated mass setting. At least one scholar has speculated that in this instance the word 'brevis' refers to the note value that initiates the head motive of the Kyrie (a 'breve,' transcribed as a modern 'whole note'), which plays an integral role in unifying the entire work. Our performance intersperses movements of the *Missa Brevis* with four motets by **Orlande de Lassus** (ca. 1530–1594).

Lassus was born in Mons (now part of southern Belgium), and he is among the last of several generations of Franco-Flemish composers (including such famous musicians as Dufay, Ockeghem, Josquin, and Willaert) who exerted extraordinary influence on music in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Many of them lived and worked in Italy, at least for a time, and Lassus was no exception. An apocryphal story tells of how the composer, as a young choirboy, was abducted because of the beauty of his voice and taken to serve in an Italian court. Though he may not have been kidnapped, we know for certain that by age 12 he had gone to Italy in the service of Ferrante Gonzaga, and he spent time not only amidst the rich musical life of the Mantuan court, but also in Sicily, Milan, Naples, and finally Rome—where as a young man he very likely crossed paths with Palestrina, especially since Palestrina succeeded him in 1555 as *maestro di cappella* at St. John Lateran.

Lassus left his position in Rome to visit ailing parents, but by the time he arrived home they had both died. For a short time afterward, he may have traveled in France and England, but by 1556 he had accepted a position at the Bavarian court of Duke Albrecht V in Munich, where he spent the rest of his long career. In the 1570s, Maximilian II conferred a patent of nobility upon him, and Pope Gregory XIII made him a Knight of the Golden Spur—rare honors indicative of the international stature he had achieved. Lassus's oeuvre encompasses some 500 motets, fifty masses, 100 Magnificat settings, ninety German lieder, and 300 madrigals and chansons. Though the four motets on our program span more than thirty years, all of them were written during the composer's tenure at the Bavarian court.

Text setting in the two earlier works, *Surgens Jesus* (1562) and *Timor et Tremor* (1564), is bold and explicit. Every line of *Surgens Jesus* receives a clear musical image: Rising scales at the beginning depict the resurrection; at the words "peace be with you" ("pax vobis"), forward motion ceases, and the text is rendered in long notes; when the "disciples rejoice at the sight of the Lord" ("gavisus sunt discipuli viso Domino"), dance-like triple meter is followed by lively alleluias. The joy of this vibrant motet contrasts with a visceral portrayal of "fear and trembling" in *Timor et Tremor*, where the opening phrase undergoes chromatic treatment that is stunningly evocative of these emotions. Virtuoso word painting abounds throughout the piece, but in particular the final line of text, the plea "non confundar" ("let me never be confounded"), features a series of syncopations in the top part that are literally capable of "confounding" even the best vocalists.

Jubilate Deo (1585), and *Musica dei donum optimi* (1594) seem to bear out scholar Harold Mayor Brown's assertion that the "fire and brilliance" of Lassus's youth was replaced with the "sobriety and austerity" of old age. However, these pieces also embody the text with a degree of mastery far exceeding the skill displayed in the earlier compositions. *Jubilate Deo* ("Sing joyfully to God") does not contain obvious word painting, but it distinctly captures the joyful spirit of Psalm 100. In a similar fashion, Lassus's setting of *Musica Dei donum optimi* ("Music, gift of the highest God") embellishes the essence of this anonymous poem without explicitly portraying each line. Published in the year of the composer's death, it is a touching tribute to the power of music that may have been one of Lassus's final compositions.

—James John, *Artistic Director*



Sedet ad dexteram Patris
et iterum venturus est cum gloria
judicare vivos et mortuos,
cujus regni non erit finis.
Et in Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum
et vivificantem,
qui ex Patre Filioque procedit.
Qui cum Patre et Filio simul
adoratur et conglorificatur;
qui locutus est per Prophetas.
Et unam sanctam catholicam
et apostolicam Ecclesiam.
Confiteor unum baptisma,
in remissionem peccatorum.
Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum.
Et vitam venturi saeculi.
Amen.

He sitteth at the right hand of the Father;
and He shall come again with glory
to judge the living and the dead;
and His Kingdom shall have no end.
And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord
and giver of life
Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son,
Who together with the Father and the Son
is worshipped and glorified;
Who has spoken by the Prophets.
And I believe in one holy catholic
and apostolic Church.
I confess one baptism
for the remission of sins.
And I await the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

Lassus—Timor et tremor
(Text from Psalms 31, 55, 57, 61, & 71)

Timor et tremor venerunt super me,
et caligo cecidit super me:
miserere mei, Domine,
miserere mei,
quoniam in te confidit anima mea.

Fear and trembling came over me,
and darkness fell over me:
have mercy on me, O Lord,
have mercy on me,
for my soul trusts in you.

Exaudi, Deus, deprecationem meam,
quia refugium meum es tu et adjutor fortis.
Domine, invocavi te,
non confundar.

Hear, O God, my prayer,
for you are my refuge and my strong helper.
Lord, I have called upon you,
I shall not be confounded.

Palestrina *Missae Brevis*—Sanctus

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus
Dominus Deus Sabaoth
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.
Benedictus qui venit
in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis

Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God of Hosts.
Heaven and Earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Lassus—Jubilate Deo
(Text from Latin Vulgate Psalm 99)

Jubilate Deo, omnis terra;
servite Domino in laetitia.
Intrate in conspectu ejus
in exultatione.
quia Dominus ipse est Deus.

Sing joyfully to God, all the Earth;
Serve ye the Lord with gladness.
Come before His presence
With exceeding great joy.
For the Lord He is God.

Palestrina *Missae Brevis*—Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Dona nobis pacem.

Lamb of God,
who takes away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.
Grant us peace.

**Lassus—Musica Dei donum
optimi
(Anonymous text)**

Musica Dei donum optimi
trahit homines, trahit deos.
Musica truces mollit animos
tristesque mentes erigit.
Musica vel ipsas arbores
et horridas movet feras.

Music, the gift of the supreme God,
draws men, draws gods.
Music makes savage souls gentle
and uplifts sad minds.
Music moves the trees themselves
and the wild beasts.



G.F. Handel: Let Thy Hand Be Strengthened

One of the final acts of King George I of England before his death in 1727 was to sign “An Act for the naturalizing of George Frideric Handel and others.” Thus did the German-born Händel (1685–1759) secure his legacy in the English music scene of the 1700s. When he arrived in London in 1710, he convinced the manager of the King’s Theatre to allow him to write an opera. *Rinaldo* was composed within two weeks and proved to be Handel’s most critically acclaimed work up to that time. After *Rinaldo*, Handel spent the next few years writing and performing for English royalty, including Queen Anne and King George I. This connection served him well and ultimately led to the composition of four anthems to commemorate the coronation of George II in 1727 (*Let Thy Hand Be Strengthened*, *Zadok the Priest*, *The King Shall Rejoice*, and *My Heart is Inditing*). Each anthem was performed at a specific moment in the coronation ceremony, and their texts were derived from passages in the Bible that reflected God’s approval of the new sovereign. The original sequence in which they were performed is disputed; modern performances frequently feature individual anthems. The text of *Let Thy Hand be Strengthened* is paraphrased from Psalm 89:13, 14. It is the shortest of the set, divided into three brief movements (fast-slow-fast) totaling less than ten minutes.

Notes by Todd Wachsman

**Let Thy Hand Be Strengthened
(Text paraphrased from Psalm 89: 13, 14)**

1. Let thy hand be strengthened and thy right hand be exalted.
2. Let justice and judgment be the preparation of thy seat!
Let mercy and truth go before thy face.
Let justice, judgment, mercy and truth go before thy face.
3. Alleluiah.

J.S. Bach: Christ lag in Todes Banden

By his early twenties, Johann Sebastian Bach had firmly established a reputation for virtuosity in his position as organist of the New Church in Arnstadt, Germany. However, his tenure there was sullied somewhat by disciplinary issues, including reprimands for flummoxing congregations with unexpected chorale embellishments, avoiding the student choir whenever possible, and, of course, the fist fight with Geyersbach the bassoonist, who by all accounts struck the first blow after Bach had disparaged his musicianship.

Not surprisingly, in 1707 Bach leapt to apply for the newly vacated position of organist in Mühlhausen, a post whose responsibilities included vocal composition. His official audition took place on Easter Sunday, 1707, and scholars surmise that the work he chose to showcase was the Easter cantata *Christ lag in Todes Banden*. It is possible that he wrote the piece specially for the occasion; regardless, the cantata undoubtedly dates to this general period, and, yes, Bach got the job.

The original version of the cantata has not survived; the score that has come down to us dates to a later period and likely reflects at least a few modifications. However, the structural formalism of *Christ lag* pegs it as an early work. It is a strict chorale cantata, presenting (after a short orchestral introduction) all seven stanzas of Luther’s 1524 hymn. “Strict” is relative, however: The movements are as stylistically diverse as any seven randomly chosen Goldberg variations, and they display high technical and artistic maturity in rendering each verse’s devotional message.

The brief opening *sinfonia* introduces and elaborates on the first phrase of the chorale melody, highlighting in particular the dramatic descending half-step motif (corresponding to “*Christ lag*” in the first verse), which Bach features prominently throughout the rest of the work. The subsequent seven movements follow a palindromic symmetry with respect to the number of voice parts assigned: chorus, duet (SA), solo (T), chorus, solo (B), duet (ST), chorus.

In the monumental opening chorus, the sopranos declaim the chorale melody in elongated form over imitative counterpoint from the chorus and orchestra. Except for the beginning and end of the movement, the chorus foreshadows each soprano entrance with an elaborate mini-fugue based on the upcoming chorale phrase. At the end, the sopranos abandon their angelic aloofness to join the rest of the chorus in an energetic *stretto* fugue on the word *Hallelujah*.

In the next movement, the sopranos and altos sing in sustained tones over an instrumental “walking bass,” as they bemoan the indomitable power of Death. Punctuating this sentiment with a final *Hallelujah* seems almost paradoxical; the women deliver the word in a heartbreakingly simple sequence of suspensions and resolutions.

The tenors then follow with a nearly verbatim statement of the chorale melody over a vigorous obligato string accompaniment. The text announces the arrival of Jesus Christ to redress Man’s sins and remove the sting of Death.

The middle chorus, and centerpiece, of the cantata depicts a “wondrous war” between Life and Death. This time, the altos carry the *cantus firmus* as the other voice parts deliver fragments of the chorale melody in tight, almost frantic, canonic imitation. The result indeed has a warlike feel, and despite the triumph of Life, the final *Hallelujah* seems to grind down to its final cadence as if from battlefield exhaustion.

The next movement is by far the most melodic, as the basses sing lovingly of Christ’s sacrifice, over a rich and highly chromatic string accompaniment. The composition takes representational turns at several junctures: Note particularly the melodic genuflection on “*Kreuzes*” and the downward death-plunge of a diminished 12th on “*Tode*.”

Notwithstanding the minor key, the mood then turns gleeful as the tenors and sopranos call on the faithful to partake joyfully of the Easter celebration. The singers vocally dance a *gigue* through multiple series of parallel triplet figures. This sets up the concluding, finely realized congregational chorale (probably introduced during Bach’s Leipzig period in place of earlier music), over a text emphasizing the presence of Christ in the bounty of the Easter feast.

—*Ralph Bonheim*

J.S. Bach: Christ lag in Todes Banden

(Text by Martin Luther)

1. Sinfonia

2. Versus 1—Chorale: Christ lag in Todes Banden

Christ lag in Todesbanden
Für unsre Sünd gegeben,
Er ist wieder erstanden
Und hat uns bracht das Leben;
Des wir sollen fröhlich sein,
Gott loben und ihm dankbar sein
Und singen halleluja,
Halleluja!

Christ lay in death’s bonds,
sacrificed for our sins.
He has risen again
and brought us life;
therefore we shall be joyful.
Praise God, and be thankful to him
And sing Hallelujah.
Hallelujah!

3. Versus 2—Duet (Soprano, Alto): Den Tod niemand zwingen kunnt

Den Tod niemand zwingen kunnt
Bei allen Menschenkindern,
Das macht’ alles unsre Sünd,
Kein Unschuld war zu finden.
Davon kam der Tod so bald
Und nahm über uns Gewalt,
Hielt uns in seinem Reich gefangen.
Halleluja!

No one among all mortals
could conquer death.
Our sin causes all this;
no innocence was to be found.
Therefore death came so soon,
seized power over us, and
held us captive in his realm.
Hallelujah!

4. Versus 3—Chorale (Tenor): Jesus Christus, Gottes Sohn

Jesus Christus, Gottes Sohn,
An unser Statt ist kommen
Und hat die Sünde weggetan,
Damit dem Tod genommen
All sein Recht und sein Gewalt,
Da bleibet nichts denn Tods Gestalt,
Den Stach'l hat er verloren.
Halleluja!

Jesus Christ, the Son of God,
has come in our stead
and taken away our sin.
Thereby he has taken from death
all its dominion and power.
Nothing remains but death's mere form;
it has lost its sting.
Hallelujah!

5. Versus 4—Chorale: Es war ein wunderlicher Krieg

Es war ein wunderlicher Krieg,
Da Tod und Leben rungen,
Das Leben behielt den Sieg,
Es hat den Tod verschlungen.
Die Schrift hat verkündigt das,
Wie ein Tod den andern fraß,
Ein Spott aus dem Tod ist worden.
Halleluja!

It was a strange war
when life and death struggled;
life retained the victory;
it has devoured death.
The scripture has proclaimed this,
how one death consumed the other;
death has become a mockery.
Hallelujah!

6. Versus 5—Aria (Bass): Hier ist das rechte Osterlamm

Hier ist das rechte Osterlamm,
Davon Gott hat geboten,
Das ist hoch an des Kreuzes Stamm
In heißer Lieb gebraten,
Das Blut zeichnet unser Tür,
Das hält der Glaub dem Tode für,
Der Würger kann uns nicht mehr schaden.
Halleluja!

Here is the true Paschal Lamb
whom God has offered;
he is high on the stem of the cross,
roasted in burning love.
His blood marks our door, and
faith holds this up before death;
the slayer can harm us no more.
Hallelujah!

7. Versus 6—Duet (Soprano, Tenor): So feiern wir das hohe Fest

So feiern wir das hohe Fest
Mit Herzensfreud und Wonne,
Das uns der Herre scheinen lässt,
Er ist selber die Sonne,
Der durch seiner Gnade Glanz
Erleuchtet unsre Herzen ganz,
Der Sünden Nacht ist verschwunden.
Halleluja!

Therefore we celebrate the high feast
with joyous heart and great delight
that the Lord allows to shine upon us.
He is himself the sun,
who through the splendor of his grace
wholly illuminates our hearts;
the night of sin has vanished.
Hallelujah!

8. Versus 7—Chorale: Wir essen und leben wohl

Wir essen und leben wohl
In rechten Osterfladen,
Der alte Sauerteig nicht soll
Sein bei dem Wort der Gnaden,
Christus will die Koste sein
Und speisen die Seel allein,
Der Glaub will keins andern leben.
Halleluja!

We eat and live well
on the true Passover bread;
the old leaven shall not exit
beside the word of grace.
Christ desires to be the food
that alone will feed the soul;
faith wants to live on no other.
Hallelujah!



Help Conclude Cerddorion's 22nd Season!

Thank you for attending this performance. Please join us on June 2 and 4 when Cerddorion will present a program titled "Reverent Cadence and Subtle Psalm," featuring Benjamin Britten's *Hymn to St. Cecilia*, Charles Villiers Stanford's *Beati Quorum Via*, and the winner(s) of Cerddorion's Fifth Annual Emerging Composers Competition.

Be sure to check www.Cerddorion.org for up-to-date information about these future performances!



Support Cerddorion

Ticket sales cover only a small portion of our ongoing musical and administrative expenses.

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Cerddorion NYC, Inc.) to:

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The members of Cerddorion are grateful to James Kennerley and the Church of Saint Ignatius of Antioch for providing rehearsal and performance space for this season. Thanks also to Vince Peterson and St. Paul's Episcopal Church for providing a performance space for this season.

CERDDORION

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Rebecca Schwartz
Talya Westbrook

Altos

Jamie Carrillo
Judith Cobb
Rebecca Fasanello
Linnea Johnson
Myrna Nachman
Katie Wilkes

Tenors

Ralph Bonheim
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