

CAMBRIDGE TAVERNER CHOIR

Owen Rees - *director*

J. S. BACH – THE MOTETS

Concert I

John Butt - *guest conductor*

with

Paul Nicholson - *organ*

Richard Campbell - *viola da gamba*

Henrietta Wayne - *baroque violin*

Jesus College Chapel, Cambridge

Sunday 31 January 1999

8.15 pm

PROGRAMME

Komm, Jesu, komm - BWV 229 Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Duo Sonata, Op. 1 no. 5 in C Dietrich Buxtehude (c1637-1707)

Vivace - violino solo - Largo - (Forte/Piano) - Adagio – Allegro

Ich laße dich nicht Johann Sebastian Bach/
Johann Christoph Bach (1642-1703)

INTERVAL

Tristis est anima mea Johann Kuhnau (1660-1722)

Duo Sonata, Op. 1 no. 6 in D minor Dietrich Buxtehude

Grave - Allegro - Con discretione - (Forte/Piano) - Poco presto

Der Geist hilft - BWV 226 Johann Sebastian Bach

The Cambridge Taverner Choir

Guest Conductor - John Butt

Sopranos - Diana Baumann, Julia Caddick, Andrea Cockerton, Josie Dixon,
Bryony Fisher, Helen Garrison, Rachel Godsill, Margaret Simper, Sally Terris

Altos - Ally Barrett, Rachael Beale, Toby Gee, Simon Godsill

Tenors - David Allinson, Paul Baumann, Finlay Lockie, Tom Salmon, Joss Sanders

Basses - James Durran, Frank Salmon, Gary Snapper, Paul Watson

Organ - Paul Nicholson

Baroque Violin - Henrietta Wayne

Viola da Gamba - Richard Campbell

The Cambridge Taverner Choir performs in Jesus College Chapel
by kind permission of the Master and Fellows of the College.

TEXTS

Komm, Jesu, komm, mein Leib ist müde,
Die Kraft verschwindt je mehr und mehr,
ich sehne mich nach deinem Frieden;
der saure Weg wird mir zu schwer!

Komm, Jesu; ich will mich dir ergeben;
du bist der rechte Weg,
die Wahrheit und das Leben.

Drum schliess ich mich in deine Hände
und sage, Welt, zu guter Nacht!
Eilt gleich mein Lebenslauf zu Ende,
ist der Geist wohl angebracht.
Er soll bei seinem Schöpfer schweben,
weil Jesus ist und bleibt
der wahre Weg zum Leben.
(*Paul Thymich, 1697*)

Ich laße dich nicht,
du segnest mich denn,
mein Jesu, ich laße dich nicht,
du segnest mich denn!
(*Genesis Ch 32, v 26*)

Weil du mein Gott und Vater bist,
so weiß ich, daß mich nicht vergißt
dein väterliches Herz,
Ich bin ein armes Erdenkind,
auf Erden keinen Trost ich find.
(*Hans Sachs*)

Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem;
sustinete hic et vigilate mecum.

Iam videbitis turbam, quae circumdabit
me, vos fugam capietis. Et ego vadam
immolari pro vobis.

Come, Jesu, come, my flesh is weary,
My strength is fading fast,
and I long for Thy peace;
The thorny path is too hard for me,

Come, come, I will yield myself to Thee.
Thou art the way,
the truth and the life.

So I give myself into Thy hands,
and bid goodnight to you, oh world!
Though the course of my life hastens to its
end, the spirit is truly ready.
Let it dwell with its creator,
since Jesus is and ever shall be the true
way of life.

I will not leave Thee
until I am blessed.
My Jesu, I will not leave Thee
until I am blessed.

Since Thou art my God and Father,
I know Thy fatherly heart will not neglect
me.
I am a poor child of the world
and find no consolation on earth.

My soul is sorrowful even unto death; stay
here and watch with me.

Soon you will see the crowd which will
surround me; you will take flight. And I
shall go to be sacrificed for you.

Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf,
denn wir wissen nicht, was wir beten
sollen, wie sich's gebühret; sondern der
Geist selbst vertritt uns aufs beste mit
unaussprechlichem Seufzen.

(Romans Ch 8 v 26)

Der aber die Herzen forschet, der weiß,
was uns des Geistes Sinn sei; denn er
vertritt die Heiligen nach dem, das Gott
gefället.

(Romans Ch 8 v 27)

Du heilige Brunst, süßer Trost,
nun hilf uns, fröhlich und getrost
in deinem Dienst beständig bleiben,
die Trübsal uns nicht abtreiben.
O Herr, durch dein Kraft uns bereit
und stärk des Fleisches Blödigkeit,
daß wir hier ritterlich ringen,
durch Tod und Leben zu dir dringen.
Halleluja.

(Martin Luther, 1524)

The spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for
we know not what we should pray for as
we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh
intercession for us with groanings which
cannot be uttered.

And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth
what is the mind of the Spirit, because he
maketh intercession for the saints
according to the will of God.

Thou sacred flame, sweet consolation,
now help us with joy and confidence
to remain constant in Thy service
and not shun troubles.
Lord, prepare us with Thy power
and strengthen the foolishness of the flesh
that we may struggle valiantly
through death and life to Thee.
Alleluia!

**Forthcoming concerts by the Cambridge Taverner Choir
in Jesus College Chapel
with
John Butt - guest conductor**

Sunday 14 March at 8.15pm

J S Bach: The Motets - Concert II
Lobet den Herrn; Jesu, meine Freude
Schütz: Magnificat; Lobet den Herrn

Sunday 2 May at 8.15pm

J S Bach: The Motets - Concert III
Fürchte dich nicht; Singet dem Herrn
J C Bach: Fürchte dich nicht
Schütz: Singet dem Herrn

Tickets £8 (concessions £6) from
The Cambridge Corn Exchange Box Office
01223 357851

"Motet ... is a notated musical composition, heavily adorned with fugue and imitation, based on a biblical text and purely for singing without instruments (apart from the thorough bass). However, the vocal parts can also be filled out and strengthened with all kind of instruments."

J G Walther's definition (in his *Musicalisches Lexicon* of 1732) of the motet of Bach's era is significant both for its clarity and its vagueness: motets are works based on biblical texts (and, incidentally, chorales) without the madrigalian elements of cantatas and their concomitant musical forms of recitative and da capo arias; all the musical lines are sung, either unaccompanied or doubled by various instruments. No details are given of the purpose of the form and few references are made to the musical devices employed. Indeed a variety of works belong to the genre of motet: both those written in the tradition of Renaissance polyphony, performed every week in the Lutheran liturgy and the staple diet of the lesser choirs under Bach's jurisdiction, and those written for special occasions.

Bach's compositions in the second category are the only works of their kind: all elements of their style and form can be traced in various compositional traditions, but as occasional works, employing all the talented singers at Bach's disposal, they are unique and unsurpassed. Most seem connected with funerals but only *Der Geist hilft* contains a specific autograph dedication, for the funeral of J H Ernesti, rector of the Thomasschule, in October 1729.

✓ *Komm, Jesu, komm* was probably written also for a Leipzig funeral; the text, from a poem by Paul Thymich, had previously been set by Johann Schelle in 1684 for the internment of another headmaster of the Thomasschule. Bach sets the first strophe in eight parts, employing a new musical idea for each line of the text, and vividly capturing, in the emotional rise and fall of the musical phrases, the sense of world-weariness and yearning which pervades the text. In the second strophe, Bach adopts a simple, chorale style in four parts.

Der Geist hilft falls into four sections, each different in character and each with a different time signature. The opening verse, with its striking melismatic runs and contrasting, more syllabic, writing at "*denn wir wissen nicht*", is lightly set for two choirs which often rapidly echo each other's words. A change of metre at "*sondern der Geist ...*" brings a more contrapuntal texture, with some vivid word-painting at "*unaussprechlichem Seufzen*". For the second verse, the choirs join forces in a four-part fugue on two themes, heard separately and then together. It is not certain whether Bach intended the concluding hymn, by Luther, to be part of the motet. It was certainly sung at the same occasion as the motet, and it undoubtedly has an uplifting spirituality which perfectly balances the rest of the work.

As a child Bach would have been closely acquainted with his father's cousins, the brothers Johann Christoph (1642-1703) and Johann Michael (1648-1694). Christoph, as both town and court organist in Eisenach, may well have been the first organist Sebastian ever heard. Sebastian referred to him in his Genealogy of the family as a "profound composer" and Emanuel Bach also admired him. While his organ works are indistinguishable from most of their period, his vocal works are extraordinarily expressive and are among the most striking works of their age. So closely associated with high musical quality did Christoph become that it is even possible that some of his works have become confused with early works of Sebastian. The Bach scholar, Daniel Melamed, has argued strongly that the motet *Ich laße dich nicht, du segnest mich denn* is, in fact, the work of the younger Bach. The very problem of authorship demonstrates the point that in Sebastian's youth originality and the notion of copyright were hardly at a premium. Throughout his career, Sebastian's concern was for the highest of musical quality regardless of authorship; Christoph and Sebastian would doubtless have been more interested in the musical strength of *Ich laße dich nicht* than in which of them actually wrote it.

✓ The name of Johann Kuhnau (1660-1722) often evokes a shadowy figure who lives in the footnotes of Bach biographies, someone who forms part of the background musical culture against which Bach can ever more brightly shine. Indeed it was Kuhnau who inspired Bach in his choice of the title *Clavierübung* for four keyboard publications, it was he who collaborated with Bach in the examination of the organ at Halle in 1716, and it was he whom Bach succeeded as cantor of the Thomaskirche, Leipzig, in 1723. Furthermore, Kuhnau's nephew, Johann Andreas, was Bach's first principal copyist of cantata parts and must have enjoyed a close association with the new cantor.

Only comparatively recently has Kuhnau's church music been given a modicum of the attention it deserves. The impression gained from his later reputation and apparent antipathy towards innovation is entirely overturned. Indeed, his church music is full of just the Italianate forms he condemned in the overly operatic church composers of the time. The motet *Tristis est anima mea* shows the preservation of the traditional church style (in keeping with the traditional Latin text); it is conservative in texture but extremely expressive within the bounds of the motet style (eg the chromatic scale for "ad mortem"). This piece, apparently performed by J S Bach, is not securely attributable to Kuhnau. However, it shows the work of a skilled and highly imaginative composer with considerable dramatic flair.

Dietrich Buxtehude (c1637-1707) was born in Oldesloe in Holstein and later settled in Lübeck where he was organist of the Marienkirche for nearly 40 years. His fame was so wide-spread that J S Bach walked all the way from Arnstadt to Lübeck to hear the great man play. Buxtehude's output was considerable, ranging from choral and instrumental works for church use through to chamber music and keyboard music of a more secular nature. The two *duo sonatas* which we shall hear tonight date from early in Buxtehude's career, and both are part of his Opus 1 collection "VII. SUONATE à doi, Violino & Violadagamba, con Cembalo".

Programme notes by John Butt with Nicholas Perkins and Diana Baumann

CAMBRIDGE

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