

■ *Nantwich Choral Society* ■

J S BACH
MASS IN
B MINOR



SATURDAY 10th MAY
1997

The Parish Church of St. Mary, Nantwich
at 7.30pm.

*For sponsorship of this concert
Nantwich Choral Society
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and

THE HARDING TRUST

■ *Nantwich Choral Society* ■

NANTWICH SINFONIA
(Leader: Catherine Fletcher)

Fiona Motherway, *soprano*

Marjorie Seddon, *contralto*

Paul Phoenix, *tenor*

Andrew Tinkler, *bass*

Patrick Larley, *continuo*

Conducted by
Stephen Buckman

NATIONAL FEDERATION
OF MUSIC SOCIETIES



~ PROGRAMME ~

MASS IN B MINOR

J S Bach (1685 - 1750)

Kyrie eleison	(chorus)
Christe eleison	(soprano & contralto)
Kyrie eleison	(chorus)
Gloria in excelsis Deo	(chorus)
Laudamus te	(soprano)
Gratias agimus	(chorus)
Domine Deus	(soprano & tenor)
Qui tollis	(chorus)
Qui sedes ad dexteram patris	(contralto)
Quoniam tu solus sanctus	(bass)
Cum sancto spiritu	(chorus)

~ INTERVAL ~

Credo in unum Deum	(chorus)
Patrem omnipotentem	(chorus)
Et in unum Dominum	(soprano & contralto)
Et incarnatus est	(chorus)
Crucifixus	(chorus)
Et resurrexit	(chorus)
Et in spiritum sanctum	(bass)
Confiteor unum baptisma	(chorus)
Sanctus	(chorus)
Benedictus	(tenor & chorus)
Agnus Dei	(contralto)
Dona nobis pacem	(chorus)

Johann Sebastian Bach became Kantor of the Thomasschule in Leipzig in 1723, and remained in this post for the rest of his life. His duties revolved around providing the music for Sunday and Feast Day services at the city's two main churches. Bach was a composer with a prodigious output; at Leipzig his church music included 4 or 5 cantata cycles, the Magnificat, and the St John and St Matthew Passions. However, from about 1729 his interest in the composition of church music declined sharply, and most of his later sacred works consisted mainly of 'parodies', ie. arrangements of earlier works. Bach's parodies included the **Mass in B minor** and the Christmas Oratorio. It is in this sense that Bach can be said to have compiled, rather than composed, the **Mass in B minor**.

The opportunity to begin work on the first section of the **Mass in B minor** arose in 1733, with the death of August the Strong, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland. As a mark of respect, a period of mourning was declared throughout Saxony, and all musical performances were banned for five months. Bach wrote his 'Missa' (a technical term for just the Kyrie and Gloria) as an attempt to ingratiate himself with the new Elector, from whom he hoped to gain a court appointment.

It is not clear why the composer returned to complete his setting of the full text of the Catholic mass in the last decade of his life, but it is obvious that it became something of an obsession with

him. He neglected many more urgent projects to work on the completion of the **Mass in B minor**. Bach's motives are unclear because there was never any possibility of a performance of the complete work in his lifetime. The mass could not have been performed in any Protestant church, and was unacceptable as part of the Catholic liturgy because of both the impermissible layout of the closing sections and the enormous dimensions of the work.

It is believed that the composer wanted to find a way of securing his place in the great musical heritage of the Bach family. When he was 50 he prepared a family tree and Bach musical archive. This genealogical project demonstrated the immense influence his ancestors had exercised over musical life for several generations. He was aware of the growing power of his own sons, and was anxious not to be overlooked by posterity. During the closing years of his life he concentrated his efforts on composing works which demonstrated his absolute mastery of all the musical genres within which he had worked.

Of the five 'missae breves' composed by Bach, it is significant that he chose the first, his **Missa in B minor**, to be the core of his choral monument. To this opening he added the Sanctus which he had written for Christmas 1724. Once again he chose his first, largest and most polished setting. As implied above, the rest of the **Mass in B minor** is a parody, a reworking of movements from other works; such reworking though that can only be seen as the painstaking creation of choral perfection by a true master.

In 1817 the Swiss critic and publisher Hans-Georg Nägeli described the **Mass in B minor** as the "greatest work of music of all ages and of all peoples". Today critics are more guarded in their praise of any work, but it is not difficult to see precisely what Nägeli meant.

FIONA MOTHERWAY (soprano) comes from Western Australia. In 1994 she completed her studies at the Royal Academy of Music, London, graduating with the Dip.R.A.M. for Opera. At the R.A.M. she performed the roles of the Governess, 'Turn of the Screw' (Britten), Countess Lisa, 'Das Land des Lachens' (Lehar), 'Semele' (Handel), and Fiordiligi, 'Così fan tutte' (Mozart) a role she has subsequently performed with other opera companies, including British Youth Opera. With the R.A.M. orchestra she was the soprano soloist in Mahler's 4th Symphony conducted by Sir Colin Davis.

An experienced operatic performer her repertoire includes the Countess and Susanna 'Le Nozze di Figaro', Musetta 'La Bohème', Pamina 'Die Zauberflöte', Gilda 'Rigoletto' and Olympia 'Les Contes d'Hoffmann'. Fiona has a particular interest in the operas of Handel and has performed the roles of Melissa 'Amadigi di Gaula', Atalanta 'Xerxes' and the title role of 'Semele'.

Fiona has given recitals at major London venues including Handel arias and duets at St John's, Smith Square and a French song recital at St Martin's in the Field. Her oratorio work includes Messiah (Handel), Creation, Nelson and Harmony Masses (Haydn), Requiem, C Minor, Coronation and Credo Masses (Mozart), Magnificat and Requiem (Rutter) and the Bach B Minor Mass.

MARJORIE SEDDON (Contralto) was born in Macclesfield and now lives in Betley, North Staffordshire. She trained as a biology teacher in Birmingham and it was then that she started singing lessons with Norma Goldie. She has since studied with Ellis Keeler and Jane Ginsborg.

Marjorie made her Poteries debut as Carmen in a staged version of Bizet's opera. She has built a strong reputation as a soloist with her warm, beautiful voice and sensitive artistry.

Previous engagements include singing Clod of Clay in the opera 'Lamentations of Thel' by Dmitri Smirnov, Didymus in Handel's 'Theodora' and Brahms's 'Alto Rhapsody'. Oratorio performances include Dvorak's 'Stabat Mater', Bach's 'St Matthew Passion', Handel's 'Judas Maccabeus' and many performances of 'Messiah'.

PAUL PHOENIX (Tenor) graduated from the Royal Northern College of Music in 1991. Since then he has been increasingly in demand both as a soloist and as a member of several choirs and ensembles, including London Voices and the Monteverdi Choir, with whom he took part in Beethoven's 'Leonore' this summer in Europe and the USA.

Solo engagements during 1996 included Bach's 'St Matthew Passion' with Nantwich Choral Society, Mozart's 'Requiem' and Puccini's 'Messa di Gloria' in Kendal, and Handel's 'Messiah'.

Paul also enjoys working as a 'session singer', taking part recently as a backing vocalist in the revival album of the 1970's group 'Sparks', as well as backing Elaine Page in concert. This year will see the release of a solo album with the Dutch group 'Janus', the culmination of a six-year project.

Paul is a founder member of 'Gradualia', a specialist vocal quartet which performs a wide variety of styles, from music of the Renaissance to specially commissioned folk song arrangements. The group have recently released their debut C.D.

When not performing Paul teaches singing at Westminster Under School.

ANDREW TINKLER (Bass) is currently a chorister at English National Opera. Andrew started his musical training as a treble in Westminster Abbey Choir and from 1984-89 studied at the Royal College of Music.

His opera roles include Collatinus - Rape of Lucretia for Opera East, Pistol - Falstaff for Opera 70, Commendatore - Don Giovanni for New London Opera, the Abbot-Curlew River for Prince Consort Opera, Prince Gremin - Eugene Onegin for Oxford University Opera Club, Ferrando - Trovatore for European Chamber Opera, Masetto - Don Giovanni for the Bernini ensemble and Don Magnifico - Cenerentola for Camberwell Pocket Opera and several roles for English National Opera.

Recent Oratorio includes Christus - St John Passion in St Martin's in the Field, Nelson Mass in Chichester Cathedral and Bath Abbey, Pater profundus - Mahler's Eighth Symphony in Norwich Cathedral, Faure Requiem in Malvern Priory, The Dream of Gerontius in Inverness, Verdi's Requiem in Cheltenham and Faure's Requiem in St Paul's Knightsbridge.

Andrew sings for many professional ensembles throughout the UK and abroad. Amongst these are the Addington Singers and Permanent Wave (vocal quartet).

STEPHEN BUCKMAN (conductor) studied organ, harpsichord, composition, conducting and singing in London and Paris. He has divided his professional life between the concert hall and the theatre. Stephen has toured the U.K., France and Germany as organist, harpsichordist and conductor, and has worked as a musical director in London's West End and in New York.

As well as conducting, Stephen is well-known as a Voice Coach specialising in the field of vocal characterisation. He has broadcast on BBC television and radio. Stephen has written many orchestral and choral arrangements for broadcast and live performance, as well as scores for several radio and television plays.

Stephen began conducting Nantwich Choral Society in 1983, and has been the Conductor of Horsham Chamber Choir since 1993.



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