

Finchley Chamber Choir

Conductor - DAVID LARDI

John Winter - Continuo

Linden Baroque Orchestra

Leader: Tassilo Erhardt

7:45pm - Saturday 10th May, 2003

Mass in B Minor

J S Bach

Tonight's performance, with a Baroque Orchestra, has been made possible by an anonymous donation for which Finchley Chamber Choir is extremely grateful.

There will be an interval of 20 minutes, during which refreshments will be available in the hall adjoining the church.

Finchley Chamber Choir is affiliated to Making Music (formerly The National Federation of Music Societies) and is a registered charity (Charity No. 2900104).

Programme Notes £1.00

Mass in B Minor, BWV 232

Johann Sebastian Bach

(1685–1750)

Bach, like most eighteenth-century composers, relied on patronage either of the aristocracy or of the Church. The musicians of the time were employees, and as such were expected to compose according to the whims of their employers; the concept of waiting for the Muse to descend in a cloud of inspiration was not to be encountered until the Romantic era of the nineteenth century. Between 1717 and 1723, Bach had been in the service of Prince Leopold at Cöthen, and for his patron had composed the *Orchestral Suites*, the *Brandenburg Concertos* and various other secular works. In 1723, Bach moved to Leipzig, and among his various duties was that of *Director musices* at the *Thomasschule*, the *Thomaskirche* and the larger *Nikolaikirche*. It was for Leipzig that he wrote most of his sacred cantatas, the *Magnificat* and the *Passions* according to St. John and St. Matthew.

The reasons for composing the *Mass in B minor* – the title itself dates from the nineteenth century – will probably never be certain. Bach was a Protestant and a Lutheran. The Lutheran tradition encompassed a *Missa Brevis* ('short Mass') which comprised the *Kyrie* and the *Gloria* of the traditional Roman Catholic mass. A setting of the *Sanctus* might be sung at major celebrations, and Bach indeed wrote and adapted several settings. The material which was later incorporated into the B minor Mass was first performed at Christmas, 1724, and subsequently at Easter, 1727. In 1733, the death of the Elector caused a long period of mourning and enabled Bach to take a break from his routine of composing cantatas. In July of that year, Bach proffered a *Kyrie* and *Gloria* to the new Elector Friedrich August II at Dresden. We know from contemporary records at Leipzig that Bach was in continual conflict with the Church and council authorities and was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with his appointment. His letter to the new Elector sought either a new appointment, or an honorary position which would improve his status in his home city.

The *Kyrie* and *Gloria* would have been too long for the Catholic liturgy of Dresden, and the mixture of styles, ranging from archaic fugues to the more 'galant' dance-like movements, would doubtless have fallen into the state of offending many tastes

while seeking to please all. Scholars are uncertain whether the *Kyrie* and *Gloria* were ever performed as such.

During the last decade of his life, Bach began a process of 'tidying up' his work, composing a second set of keyboard preludes and fugues to form the '48', the last part of his *Clavierübung*, *The Musical Offering*, many canons and *The Art of Fugue*. Many of these works seem to have been composed without the thought of immediate performance. Bach also began the compilation of the *Mass in B minor*. In addition to the *Kyrie*, *Gloria* and *Sanctus*, he adapted music from his cantatas to write the *Symbolum Niceum* (Creed) and the *Osanna*, *Benedictus*, *Agnus Dei* and *Dona nobis pacem*. Subsequent research has shown that most of the music is derived or adapted from earlier works.

Whenever two or three musicologists are gathered together they will rarely agree on matters of Baroque performing practice; when that work is the *Mass in B Minor*, the differences of opinion become even greater. Yet with any great work of art, more than one approach is valid, and, indeed, to be welcomed, as long as it reflects, as far as is possible, the composer's intentions.

The solemnity of the work is evident from the start with a four-bar introductory statement of the words 'Kyrie Eleison', a rich harmonisation of Luther's own intonation in his *German Mass* of 1525, and marked 'Adagio' in the Dresden parts. There follows a long and intricate fugue for five-part choir, featuring the 'cross motif' that pervaded much of Bach's music. B minor was a profound, often tragic key for Bach, and with hindsight it is possible to realise why music in this style was not appreciated by the ordinary people of Leipzig. The subsequent *Christe eleison*, however, is scored for two sopranos, frequently singing in mellifluous thirds and sixths in a more galant style that might have been more appealing to the court at Dresden.

The following *Kyrie eleison* reverts to solemnity and complexity; whereas the first movement used many notes for each of the two words set, this movement generally sets each syllable to a single note with much repetition of an intense and chromatic subject.

If B minor was a key of tragedy, its counterpart, D major, is a key of great brilliance especially when enhanced by eighteenth-century trumpets. It is the key of the opening movement of the *Gloria - Gloria in excelsis Deo* - one which is somewhat reminiscent of the concerto style of Vivaldi, a composer much admired by Bach, and whose style demonstrates the close

relationship in the Baroque era between sacred music and the dance, the mood becoming gentler at the words 'Et in terra pax'. Florid writing of a virtuoso nature is found in the *Laudamus te*, a soprano aria, which leads into the more archaic, fugal style of the *Gracias agimus tibi. Domine Deus* is set for soprano and tenor in the manner of an Italian operatic duet, with the parts moving in thirds and sixths. The music modulates from the calm of G major to the solemnity of B minor and leads into *Qui tollis peccata mundi*, whose opening melodic figure may be seen as a bowed or drooping head. In *Qui sedes ad dextram Patris*, Bach makes prominent use of the oboe d'amore, which is treated virtually as an equal partner with the alto soloist. The orchestration of the following bass solo, *Quoniam tu solus sanctus*, is especially unusual, comprising a corno da caccia ('hunting horn' – its only use in the whole work), two bassoons and continuo. Several scholars have attempted, generally without success, to explain this curious instrumentation. The music, however, emphasises a truly confident proclamation that 'Thou only art the Lord'. The *Gloria* ends as it began with a jubilant chorus in D major.

The overall form of the Creed is deliberately symmetrical, and opens with a fugal movement based on the traditional intonation of the words 'Credo in unum Deum'. The second section of the Creed is rare in Bach's works, setting more than one text simultaneously – the words 'Patrem omnipotentem' are heard in the bass part while the others reiterate 'Credo in unum Deum'. *Et in unum Dominum* reflects Bach's love of canon, a form to which he increasingly turned during his later years. This canon is a particularly close one, with the vocal parts allocated to the two sopranos. The central tenets of the Creed show Bach at his most expressive. The music of *Et incarnatus est* returns to the home key of B minor, starting with a poignant little figure played by the violins, and the movement is based upon this motif.

The *Crucifixus* is built over a ground bass whose notes descend chromatically – a device used by many composers for scenes of great grief, but rarely with such sadness and intensity as here. At its close (the words 'Et sepultus est'), the movement shifts to the serenity of G major before the tremendous outburst of *Et resurrexit* in D major, with choir and trumpets almost seeming to tumble over each other with excitement.

In contrast, the bass solo, *Et in Spiritum Sanctum*, evokes a pastoral mood, both in its melodic line and by the use of the oboe

d'amore. The following chorus, *Confiteor*, reverts to a close fugal style in the more archaic manner, with especially chromatic harmonies at the words 'in remissionem peccatorum' ('for the remission of sins'). But has any composer ever looked for the resurrection of the dead, *Et expecto*, with such joy?

Any writer of programme notes must quail when approaching the *Sanctus*, the grandest of Bach's settings of these familiar words; and arguably the greatest ever composed. Any description in words must sound trite in comparison with the music: suffice it to say that the chorus is divided into six parts and the grandeur of the opening leads into a dance-like fugue at the words 'Pleni sunt coeli'.

Osanna in excelsis makes use of a choir divided into eight parts – two choirs each of four parts – and retains the jubilation of D major. Two ideas dominate: the six-note motif sung at the start, and the florid passage-work subsequently heard and developed; these two motifs are alternated and combined throughout. Bach did not specify a solo instrument in the Benedictus to act as counterpart to the tenor soloist; in tonight's performance, a flute is used for a setting which is more 'galant' in style than other movements already heard. The *Osanna* is then repeated. As the *Agnus Dei* is the spiritual climax, liturgically, so it is the emotional climax, musically. Bach used the key of G minor, the only time in the whole work in which a flat key is used.

It was not uncommon for composers to conclude a Mass setting with music heard earlier – in such a way could some degree of unity be achieved. For his setting of *Dona nobis pacem*, Bach uses the music heard in the *Gloria* for the words 'Gratias agimus tibi'. Later composers often demanded peace in a rather aggressive fashion; others set the words with a spineless sentimentality. Not so Bach. His mood of peace radiates an inner strength and confidence that brings this great work to its conclusion.

For the musician, this is a work of fascinating complexity and contrast of styles; for the Christian, a joyous affirmation of faith. And for those of us who claim to be both, an experience for which words are hopelessly inadequate.

Programme note © JOHN WINTER

AUTHENTICITY - A NOTE ON TONIGHT'S PERFORMANCE

Until recently, most English people's introduction to Baroque music was probably through performances of Handel's *Messiah* given by large choral societies and orchestras, frequently cut, arranged and re-orchestrated. While it is fashionable to decry such performances as tantamount to a crime against humanity, it is too easy to forget that without such concerts all the great Baroque masterpieces would have remained virtually unknown to all but a handful of academics.

It is only since the nineteenth century that musicians have shown any real interest in music of earlier periods. Even then, that which did survive or was revived was invariably adapted and arranged to suit contemporary tastes. *Messiah* was arranged and re-orchestrated in 1789 by no less a person than Mozart!

In the last fifty years some musicians have felt that best way to realise a composer's true intentions would be attempt to recreate, as closely as possible, the sound and style of original performances. This has been a gradual and continuing process starting with the use of smaller forces and reviving obsolete instruments, such as harpsichords and oboe d'amore, and continuing on to much more complex (and contentious) areas such as rhythm, phrasing and style in general.

Below are a few areas relevant to tonight's performance which may be of general interest:

TEXT: Based on "Neuen Bach-Ausgabe" (Bärenreiter) but re-edited, especially with regard to phrasing, articulation verbal underlay and introducing a few melodic variants found in original material.

PITCH: A = 415 (i.e. a semi-tone lower than modern pitch, A = 440). This is based on that of surviving Dresden organs of the 1730's and causes havoc not only to those choir members with 'perfect' pitch, but also the accompanist.

LATIN: Despite the work's origins, we are using 'standard' Italianate Latin pronunciation (as probably used by the mainly Italian singers at the Dresden court) rather than the Teutonic version used in Germany today.

CHOIR: While most scholars have accepted the use of a small choir, one (Joshua Rifkin) has gone so far as to suggest that Bach only intended one singer to each line, i.e. a total of 5-8 voices. His recording, based on his findings, is a fascinating and refreshing

document (NONSUCH 79036), but in practical terms of a live performance it might well prove impossible with regard to balance and especially stamina!

Bach's choir at Leipzig had only male voices (with boy sopranos and falsettist altos), but the court at Dresden used only adult singers (including female sopranos). As the work was not specifically conceived in its entirety for either establishment, it can be considered authentic to use female voices. It is sometimes not realised that in Bach's time, boys' voices broke considerably later than they do today, the age of 18 or 19 not being exceptional.

SOLOISTS: As in Bach's time, tonight's soloists are taken from among the choir, as in all FCC concerts.

ORCHESTRA: Not one single instrument tonight is the same as its modern equivalent. Details of tonight's orchestra, the *Linden Baroque*, appear later in this programme.

CONDUCTOR: The most anachronistic element of tonight's performance is the use of a conductor, who wasn't really 'invented' until the nineteenth century. Until that time, concerts were directed jointly by the keyboard continuo player and the leader of the violins, no doubt with varying degrees of success and ensemble! There seem to be far more advantages in keeping a conductor than dispensing with his services. On the other hand, I would say that!!

STYLE: This is the most subtle, complex and contentious area of all. Up until at least the 1950's performances tended to large scale, and frequently slow and stodgy. The effects of authenticity should be to make the music lighter, airier, well-articulated with a clean pure sound free from a perpetual overlay of vibrato, with some of the faster movements reflecting their dance origins. Unfortunately, a few musicians see authenticity as an end in itself and give performances that might be authentic but also boring and without depth. Bach was not only a composer but also a man with real emotions and a deep faith, and surely to be completely authentic, a performance must not only employ original-style instruments but also reflect the spirit and faith of the original.

DAVID LARDI

DAVID LARDI was born in Manchester, originally studied at Trinity College of Music, London, and read a degree at King's College, London. He studied orchestral conducting with Bernard Keeffe, choral conducting with Charles Proctor and Laszlo Heltay, and operatic conducting with Marcus Dods. It was during this time that he was awarded the *Ricordi Conducting Prize* and the *City Livery Prize*.

During the next two years he continued his studies at the *Accademia Musicale Chigiana*, Siena, Italy under Maestro Franco Ferrara. Within weeks of his arrival he was invited to conduct concerts and was awarded the *Diploma di Merito* before being asked by Maestro Ferrara to work with him in Rome. He has three times won a *PRS Award for Enterprise*.

He is currently Conductor and Musical Director of Finchley Chamber Choir, Finchley Chamber Orchestra and North London Symphony Orchestra and has worked with many different orchestras and choirs as well as with some of today's leading soloists. He has conducted hundreds of concerts in England and throughout Europe, in scope ranging from chamber ensembles at such venues as the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and Wigmore Hall to a choir of 1,000 voices and orchestra of 120 at the reopening concert of the Great Hall, Alexandra Palace.

He has performed repertoire of over 1,000 works ranging from early music with authentic instruments to commissions and first performances. He has given over 3,000 Lecture/Recitals and was a Professor at Trinity College of Music for over twenty years.

He has broadcast on Italian and German radio as well as for the BBC, a R3 recording being selected for R4's *Pick of the Week*. Television appearances include both ITV and BBC, including portraying Beethoven conducting the first performance of his Seventh Symphony as part of the major BBC 2 series *Great Reputations*, now released on Warner DVD. In 2002 he recorded a documentary for LWT's *Artworks* series.

JOHN WINTER was born in East Suffolk, and studied at Watford School of Music and Trinity College; he subsequently studied the organ with Stephen Cleobury, David Sanger and with Marie-Claire Alain in Paris. As a freelance organist he has given recitals throughout Britain, ranging from St Paul's Cathedral and Oxbridge colleges to the Edinburgh Fringe, the northernmost Scottish islands and the Gaiety Theatre, Isle of Man. He has given concerts in Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Gibraltar, Holland, Norway and Switzerland and toured the United States on seven occasions.

He has a PhD from the University of East Anglia on post-war church music and an MA in Medieval Studies, which had no musical content whatsoever!

FINCHLEY CHAMBER CHOIR was originally formed as an off-shoot of the choir of Finchley Methodist Church. It now runs independently, but maintains close musical links with Finchley Chamber Orchestra, both groups giving regular seasons at Trinity Church, including some joint concerts.

The Choir consists of approximately 30 local singers of a calibre to provide its own soloists for virtually all its concerts. It has sung throughout London, including at the Royal Festival Hall, as well as elsewhere in Britain and abroad. In 1999, the Choir was invited to the International Festival of Choral Music at Jihlava in the Czech Republic, where it gave four performances. Its recognition as one of London's leading smaller choirs was reflected in 1994 when part of a BBC Radio 3 broadcast was selected for BBC Radio 4's *Pick of the Week*.

The Choir has three times received an *Award for Choral Enterprise* from the Performing Rights Society, and has recently been selected for the *Adopt a Composer* scheme.

LINDEN BAROQUE was formed in 1982 by a group of early music enthusiasts in the front room of a house in Linden Gardens, Chiswick. Unusually - and uniquely anywhere at that time - it combined the talents of young professionals, amateurs and advanced students (both British and from overseas) and many members have moved on to have prominent careers in the early music field. From the beginning, the musical director was the well-known baroque oboist Paul Goodwin. Now pursuing a busy international conducting career, Paul is Honorary President and Walter Reiter - a leading baroque violinist - is the Musical Director. The orchestra has played at venues from Norfolk to Rome (where it gave the first performances there of Purcell's *King Arthur*). It has worked with many renowned early music specialists including Peter Holman, Catherine Mackintosh and James Bowman.

The instruments are either eighteenth-century originals or modern copies - some made by the players themselves - and they play at 'baroque pitch' of 415Hz. The instruments are at a lower tension than modern concert pitch and their design and set-up means they sound much softer and rather more subtle than today's steel-strung and multiple-keyed successors, allowing the music to be heard closer to the way it was when composed.

Together with the Linden Baroque Choir the orchestra has given first modern performances of music by Jean Gilles and J F Fasch. Their first CD, issued on the Meridian label of music by Fasch (a *Missa Brevis*, a colourful orchestral suite and a stirring violin concerto with trumpets and drums), was well received and was recently played on Radio 3.

Linden Baroque is a self-financing charitable organisation and in addition to promoting its own concerts each year, mostly in London, is available for choral societies, music festivals and special events. For further details please look at the web-site: www.Lindenbaroque.org.

FINCHLEY CHAMBER CHOIR

Sopranos	Jennie Abelman Celia Bangham Marianne Barton Patricia Christie Amy Edwards Christine Fisher Jean Freedman Kerry Gaskell Eileen Goddard Margaret Green Helen Hayward Jo King Jessica Percival	Altos	Joan Bloomfield Ann Butters Caroline Doig Linda Foster Gill Healey Isobel Lee Meryn Nance Angela Parks Sarah Patey Ann Sellis
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Tenors	Mike Bray Michael Dickinson John Harbottle Michael Hope Jim Nelhams Chris Tebbutt	Basses	Cliff Abelman Ian Anderson Richard Cox Frank Harrison Michael Henderson Rupert Lee Andrew Ward
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Chairman	Jim Nelhams	Committee Members	Celia Bangham
Secretary	Jennie Abelman		Joan Bloomfield
Treasurer	Meryn Nance		Jessica Percival
			Anne Sellis
Conductor	David Lardi	Accompanist	John Winter

There are a few vacancies in some sections of Finchley Chamber Choir. Amateur singers of good ability are invited to audition and are advised that opportunities for solo work also exist, since soloists are usually drawn from regular choir members.

If you would like further details, please contact The Secretary, Jennie Abelman, 19 Courthouse Road, N12 7PH. Telephone: 020 8446 2881.
Email: secretary@fcchoir.co.uk

LINDEN BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

1st Violins	Tassilo Erhardt Liz Kenna Alex Webb Alan Selwyn Giovanna del Perugia	Flutes	William Summers Anna Doedens
2nd Violins	Michael Jenner Eleanor Harrison Zenovia Edwards Linda McDonald	Oboes	Zilla Gillman Simon Galton Debbie England
Violas	Ruth Player John Sutherland	Bassoons	Sally Holman Mathew Dart
Cellos	Jenny Bullock Sarah Roberts	Horn	Anneke Scott
Bass	Andrew Kerr	Trumpets	Alison Balsom, Mike Diprose Daniel Newell
		Timpani	Donna Maria Landowski

FINCHLEY CHAMBER CHOIR – PATRONS SCHEME

PATRONS

The Choir runs a Patrons Scheme. Their financial support enables us to extend our repertoire and sponsor new music. However, it is not only their financial contribution that we value; in many ways, it is more important that we have a group of people who are interested in our efforts, to whom we can circulate information on our concerts and who will attend if at all possible.

Mrs M Anderson	Mr G & Mrs M Anderson
Mr J Baines	Mrs G Barton
Dr E Bloomfield	Mrs L Brett
Mrs P Christie	Mrs E Cooper
Mrs B Costello	Mr M Folan
Ms J Foster	Mr M Green
Mr R & Mrs R Hobbs	Mr & Mrs Lattimer
Miss S London	Mr D Lowe
Ms J Lowe	Mr J Olbrich
Mr K Richards	Mr & Mrs Rodwell
Miss M Stewart	Mr & Mrs Wax

and many others who wish to remain anonymous.

HONORARY PATRONS

Eileen Goddard	Don Jennings
Ray Taylor	Celia Warren
Tug Wilson	

For a subscription of a minimum of £5.00 or £7.50 for couples, we offer:

- Advance information on all our concerts
- Free refreshments during concert intervals
- Your name in concert programmes (unless you prefer otherwise)
- Opportunities to purchase choir recordings (which are not for public sale)

If you would like to become a Patron, forms are available in the foyer or can be obtained from Joan Bloomfield, telephone no. 020 8440 1899. Many thanks for your support; it is most appreciated.

A similar scheme is run by Finchley Chamber Orchestra.