



# *Stations of the Cross: A Musical Offering*

Good Friday

March 29, 2024 at 4 p.m.

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church  
Richmond, Virginia

# Stations of the Cross: A Musical Offering

Welcome to this musical offering, intended to complement the installation of the Stations of the Cross.  
During the program you may sit, kneel, and pray, or continue viewing the stations in silence.

Fantasy in c minor, BWV 537i

J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

*Da Jesus an dem Kreuze stund* (As Jesus stood on the cross), BWV 621

J.S. Bach

*Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit* (God's time is the best time of all), BWV 106

J.S. Bach

I. Sonatina

II. Chorus – Aria – Aria – Chorus

*Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit.*

*In ihm leben, weben, und sind wir  
so lange er will.*

*In ihm sterben wir zu rechter Zeit, wenn er will.*

*Ach, Herr, lehre uns bedenken, dass wir sterben müssen,  
auf dass wir klug werden.*

*Bestelle dein Haus! Denn du wirst sterben und  
nicht lebendig bleiben.*

*Es ist der alte Bund: Mensch, du musst sterben.*

*Ja, komm, Herr Jesu!*

God's time is the best time of all.

In him we live and move and have our being,  
according to his will. (Acts 17:28)

In him we die at the time appointed, according to his will.

Oh, Lord, teach us to reflect that we will die, so that we  
may become wise. (Psalm 90:12)

Set your house in order! For you must die, and cannot  
remain alive. (Isaiah 38:1)

This is the ancient pact: man, you must die. (Sirach 14:17)

Yes, come, Lord Jesus! (Revelation 22:20)

Matthew Hassmer TENOR   Will Conn BASS   Abby Outlaw SOPRANO

III. Aria – Aria – Chorale

*In deine Hände befehl' ich meinen Geist;*

*du hast mich erlöst, Herr, du getreuer Gott.*

*Heute wirst du mit mir im Paradies sein.*

*Mit Fried' und Freud' ich fahr' dahin in Gottes Willen,*

*Getrost ist mir mein Herz und Sinn, sanft und stille,*

*wie Gott mir verheissen hat; der Tod ist mein Schlaf worden.*

Into your hands I commend my spirit; (Psalm 31:6)

you have redeemed me, O Lord, God of truth.

Today you will be with me in Paradise. (Luke 23:43)

In peace and joy I will depart according to God's will.

My heart and soul rest assured, gentle and still,

as God has promised to me; my sleep has become death.

chorale melody and text of "*Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin*" (In peace and joy I will depart)  
(text after the Nunc dimittis) by Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Quinn Bitsas COUNTERTENOR   James Smith-Parham BARITONE

IV. Chorus

*Glorie, Lob, Ehr' und Herrlichkeit*

*sei dir, Gott Vater und Sohn bereit,*

*dem heil'gen Geist mit Namen!*

*Die göttlich' Kraft mach' uns sieghaft,*

*durch Jesum Christum. Amen.*

Glory, praise, honor, and splendor

be to you, God, Father, and Son,

and to the Holy Spirit!

May divine strength make us victorious,

through Jesus Christ. Amen.

text by poet Adam Reusner (c. 1496-1575)

*Trio super "Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend"* (Lord Jesus Christ, turn towards us), BWV 655

J.S. Bach

*Ecce quomodo moritur justus*

*Ecce quomodo moritur justus*

*et nemo percipit corde.*

*Viri justī tolluntur*

*et nemo considerat.*

*A facie iniquitatis sublatus est justus*

*et erit in pace memoria eius:*

*In pace factus est locus ejus*

*et in Sion habitatio ejus.*

*et erit in pace memoria ejus.*

Jacob Handl (1550-1591)

Behold how the righteous man dies

and no one understands.

Righteous men are taken away

and no one considers:

the righteous man has been taken away from present iniquity

and his memory shall be in peace.

In peace is his place

And in Zion is his homestead.

And his memory shall be in peace.

Text: 6th of the Responsories for Holy Saturday

*Nun danket alle Gott* (Now thank we all our God), BWV 657

J.S. Bach

## NOTES ON THE MUSIC

This program is offered alongside our installation of the Stations of a Cross as a musical meditation on the Passion narrative. It features Bach's famous cantata *Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit*, which, although not originally intended for performance on Good Friday, powerfully weaves together a statement of faith in the indivisibility of our mortality from the mortality of Christ, and the assurance of our redemption. It was composed as a funeral cantata for one of Bach's earlier posts in the city of Mühlhausen when Bach was about 23 years old, and later also became known by the title "Actus Tragicus," emphasizing its sacred oratorio compositional style. Bach had made his famous visit to Lübeck to learn from the composer Dietrich Buxtehude about two years earlier, during which he had observed, and likely participated in, large-scale performances of celebratory and funereal sacred dramas. The music for Buxtehude's works is sadly lost, but it is highly likely that the music of *Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit* owes a large debt to Buxtehude, helping establish it as one of Bach's earliest masterworks.

For the cantata's texts, Bach took as a model a section of the 1668 "*Christliche Bet-Schule*," or "Christian School of Prayer" by Johann Olearius that bore the heading "*Tägliche Seuffzer und Gebet um ein seliges Ende*," "Daily Sighing and Prayer for a Blessed End." These prayers, and the cantata in its setting of them, were intended as a lesson in the Lutheran art of dying (*ars moriendi*), demonstrating how the dying believer can proceed from acknowledging that one has to die to a state of consolation in which one gives oneself and one's fears over to Christ.

Bach added the texts for the opening and closing choruses to create a chiasmus, or symmetrical "cross-wise" structure in which the order from the beginning to the center is repeated in reverse order from the center to the end, creating relationships between the first and last texts, the second and second-to-last texts, etc. In this way, the closing chorus, beginning with the seventh verse of Adam Reusner's chorale "*In dich hab ich gehoffet, Herr*," responds to the opening chorus, the chorale "*Mit Fried und Freud*" responds to Psalm 90:12, Jesus' words from Luke 23:43 respond to those of Isaiah 38:1, and Psalm 31:6 responds to Sirach 14:17. At the cantata's center is the cry of the faithful believer, sung by a soprano soloist, with the words from Revelation 22:20: "Yes, come, Lord Jesus!" The unaccompanied singing of these words at the end of the central movement powerfully depicts the moment of death. This is followed by Jesus' welcome, along with the angelic singing of the chorale "*Mit Freud und Freud*," ushering the believer's soul to heaven.

In hearing the soprano soloist's ornately sung statement of faith at the cantata's center, the key to the work is formed by the faithful invitation by the listeners of Jesus into our hearts. As scholar Markus Rathey writes, "The idea of Christ's presence in the heart manifests itself in different ways in Bach's major vocal works: the heart is the manger in which the baby Jesus can rest, or the heart is the grave in which the body of Jesus is buried. In the image of the heart, two theological images converge: the idea of the divine-human relationship as a love relationship and the continuous presence of the divine in the *inhabitatio Christi*." This eternity of Christ is "God's time" that is extolled in this cantata.



The cantata is surrounded in this program by musical echoes of the traditional service of Good Friday Vespers as it was known in Leipzig during Bach's time. The service would begin with a prelude, represented here by the Fantasy in c minor, BWV 537, one of several of Bach's free organ works expressing an *Affekt*, or character, of tragedy, yearning, and elegy appropriate to such a service. The service would have continued with the congregational singing of the chorale, "*Da Jesus an dem Kreuze stund*" (As Jesus stood on the cross), whose text is:

*Da Jesus an dem Kreuze stund,  
und ihm sein Leichnam war verwundet,  
so gar mit bittern Schmerzen,  
die sieben Wort die Jesus sprach,  
betracht in deinem Herzen.*

Just as Jesus stood on the cross,  
with his body wounded,  
consider in your heart  
with equal bitter pain  
the seven words that Jesus spoke.

The chorale invites one directly into the pathos of the Passion narrative, and emphasizes the necessity of finding union with Jesus in our time, and in all times, through the heart. This chorale, and the other chorales sung in the Good Friday Vespers service, are represented in this program by organ settings of the chorales by Bach from various points in his life. Lutheran theologians had long implored believers to prepare their hearts in Advent as a manger for Christ's birth, such as in the aphorism of 17th-century mystic and poet Angelus Silesius, "If Christ had been born a thousand times in Bethlehem, but not in you, you would be lost forever." On Good Friday, believers were impelled to see in this manger the cross, and experience the crucifixion with their savior.

The opening congregational chorale would be followed in the Good Friday Vespers service by the first part of a choral and orchestral setting of the Passion narrative from the Gospel chosen for that year. Bach composed settings for all four Gospels during his time in Leipzig, only two of which survived. They are sacred dramatizations of the Passion, and the closest that Bach came to writing opera. The first part of the Passion would be followed by the congregational singing of the chorale "*Herr Jesus Christ, dich zu uns wend*" (Lord Jesus Christ, turn towards us), the pulpit hymn for all main and Vespers services in Leipzig. The first verse is:

*Herr Jesu Christ! dich zu uns wend,  
Dein' Heil'gen Geist du zu uns send:  
Mit Hilf' und Gnad', er uns regier  
Und uns den Weg zur Wahrheit führ.*

Lord Jesus Christ! Turn towards us,  
send your Holy Spirit to us:  
with her help and grace may he rule us  
and lead us on the way to truth.

The sermon would follow this chorale, which would in turn be followed by the second half of the musical setting of the Passion. It had already become the tradition in Leipzig before Bach's time that the Passion would be followed by the singing of the much older unaccompanied choral motet by Jacob Handl, "*Ecce quomodo moritur justus*" (Behold how the righteous man dies). Written in the style of an opera chorus by Handl's Italian contemporaries, the piece seeks through its moving *Affekt* and rhetorical approach to drive home the tragedy of the Passion in the listener's hearts.

The Handl motet would have been followed in the Good Friday Vespers service by a collect prayer and the reading of Isaiah 53:5, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed." The service would have concluded with the congregational singing of the chorale "*Nun danket alle Gott*" (Now thank we all our God), whose original text is essentially the same as that of our Hymn 397.

## SANCTUARY

SOPRANO Lorin Leake, Abby Outlaw, Kelsey Snyder, Ellie Swanson  
ALTO Quinn Bitsas, Cassie Cipolla, Gaelyn Krickovic, Alyssa Shevchuk  
TENOR Matthew Hassmer, Aaron Todd  
BASS William Conn, Travis Krickovic, James Smith-Parham

Brent te Velde DIRECTOR AND ORGAN Diana Chou ORGAN Sarah Glosson VIOLA DA GAMBA  
Brady Lanier VIOLA DA GAMBA Kelsey Schilling RECORDER Sarah Schilling RECORDER Katharine Tibbetts CELLO