



# MARSH CHAPEL AT BOSTON UNIVERSITY

University Interdenominational Protestant  
Service of Worship

Sunday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015 -11:00 a.m.

The Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

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The Reverend Doctor Robert Allan Hill, Dean

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## THE BACH EXPERIENCE

*Performed during the Interdenominational Protestant Worship Service*

*This program is an insert to your worship bulletin.*

Johann Sebastian BACH  
(1685-1750)

Bleib bei uns, denn es will Abend werden, BWV 6

Kim Leeds, *mezzo-soprano*

Patrick T. Waters, *tenor*

Ryne Cherry, *baritone*

Heidi Braun-Hill, *violin*

Guy Fishman, *cello*

Elizabeth England, *English horn*

MARSH CHAPEL CHOIR AND COLLEGIUM

SCOTT ALLEN JARRETT *CONDUCTING*

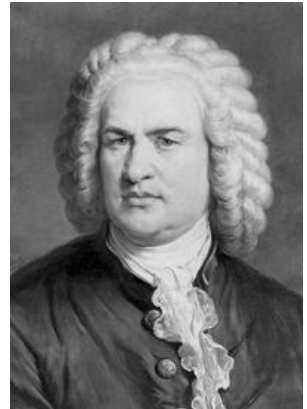
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## J. S. BACH *Bleib bei uns, denn es will Abend werden*, BWV 6 (1725)

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*Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Eisenach on 21 March 1685 and died in Leipzig on 28 July 1750. He composed hundreds of cantatas for both sacred and secular purposes, over 200 of which survive. This is the twenty-sixth cantata performed by the Marsh Chapel Choir and Collegium as part of The Bach Experience.*

*BWV 6 was composed in Leipzig for Easter Monday and first performed on 2 April 1725. It is scored for two oboes, oboe da caccia (played today on English horn), violincello piccolo (played today on cello), strings, and continuo. Its duration is approximately 20 minutes.*



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The weekend of Easter in 1725 witnessed yet another display of Johann Sebastian Bach's compositional genius, but in some ways with a less radical bent than the prior year. A toned-down reprisal of the *St. John Passion* BWV 245 was performed on Good Friday, followed by a sacred parody of a secular cantata on Easter Sunday. In the midst of his second complete cantata cycle in Leipzig, Bach's only newly-composed work of the weekend was the cantata *Bleib bei uns, denn es will Abend werden* BWV 6 for Easter Monday, presented this morning as the second installment of the 2015 Bach Experience at Marsh Chapel.

Easter Monday also occasioned the first cantata of this year's Bach Experience, *Erfreut euch, ihr Herzen* BWV 66, but each cantata's treatment of the day's theological implications differs significantly. Immediately obvious is the explicit integration of the Easter Monday Gospel into *Bleib bei uns*, which tells the story of two travelers on the road to Emmaus who encounter Jesus after his resurrection; the story had only been implicitly referred to in *Erfreut euch*, but takes on a prominent role in the theology of today's cantata.

The context of the weekend was not dissimilar from the prior year: as was already mentioned, the *St. John Passion* was performed after revision, at the request of Bach's superiors. This year, it was for Easter Sunday and Monday that Bach reserved most of his time and efforts. On Easter Sunday, Bach presented *Kommt, gehet und eilet*, the precursor of the Easter Oratorio BWV 249, a vastly expanded "cantata" clocking in at nearly 50 minutes and with no fewer than 11 distinct sections. (The mature Easter Oratorio will be performed by the Marsh Chapel Choir and Collegium in concert on Saturday, 16 April 2016.) A sacred parody of a secular cantata (*Entfliehet, verschwindet, entweicht, ihr Sorgen* BWV 249a), its magnitude and many unique attributes marked a significant departure from the typical Sunday work.

With the *St. John Passion*, the early Easter Oratorio, and *Bleib bei uns*, Bach presents narrative works whose texts tell the stories of their respective holy days. *Bleib bei uns* begins with a chorus that directly quotes the moment in the Gospel when the travelers ask the unrecognizable Jesus to join them upon the onset of evening. This moment of hospitality suggests many metaphors for the resurrected Jesus' presence in the life of the contemporary Christian, the most significant (for this cantata) being His

source of light as darkness falls on the world. The alto aria, soprano chorale, bass recitative, and tenor aria all expound on the idea of light versus darkness, and the Christian's need to simply turn to Jesus for salvation. The final chorale is a straightforward plea for Jesus' protection of the earthly church.

The opening chorus is one of intense drama, its pulsating eighth notes, wind melodies, and descending scales all reminiscent of the original opening chorus of the *St. John Passion* (removed in the 1725 revision). The chorus consists of only one sentence of text, but the first three words *bleib bei uns* ("remain with us") comprise most of the chorus's music. The singers begin by stating these words in homophony twice (mimicking the wind entries at the beginning of the cantata), before breaking into polyphony and continuing the sentence; even after completing the sentence, however, these three words return emphatically and are repeated several times. This declamation, combined with the somber and solemn mood established by the instrumental ritornello, significantly alters the almost casual invitation by the travelers as portrayed by the Gospel into a plea of serious need by contemporary Christians. Midway through the chorus, a fugue begins on the text *denn es will Abend werden...* ("for it is towards evening..."); and yet, ever present are the words *bleib bei uns*, sung in long notes to accompany the fugue. After the motive is sung twice, once by the bass and once by the soprano (darkness and light?), it begins appearing in the orchestra's participation in the fugue – now associated with words, this frees up all four vocal lines to participate in the fugue's otherwise rapid polyphony. The fugue culminates in a dramatic unison cry of these three words by each voice in four octaves, a remarkable moment extremely rare (perhaps unique) in Bach's music. The opening ritornello, beginning with the singers' opening statement of *bleib bei uns*, returns to complete the chorus.

The richly scored cantata calls for, in addition to strings and continuo, two oboes and an oboe da caccia. The oboe da caccia (literally "hunting oboe") is a gorgeous instrument, shaped like a horn and with a flared bell, providing a rich and warm tone in the alto register. The instrument was new in Bach's day, and he employed them commonly in his large works (both passions call for two) and in a handful of cantatas. His choice of an oboe da caccia instead of a third standard oboe creates a gorgeous timbre in the alto aria that follows the chorus. (In a later reprisal of the cantata, the oboe da caccia was replaced by a viola, another alto instrument.) The aria continues the theme of darkness and light; beautifully executed text-painting is employed on the upward arpeggio of *Hochgelobter* ("highly praised") and the descending whole tones of *Finsternis* ("darkness"). The choice of both alto singer and instrument, the low range of the high voices, might represent the conflict between darkness and light described in the aria's text.

Following the aria is a beautiful setting of two chorale verses for soprano (today sung by the section) and violoncello piccolo, with continuo. The exact nature of the "violoncello piccolo" in Bach's music is a question yet to be fully answered, but it is most likely a four- or five-string instrument played *da spalla* (sideways, under the chin) or even *da braccio* (like a violin) as opposed to *da gamba* (like a modern cello). Here, in contrast with the alto instruments of the aria, the violoncello piccolo is a high range of the lower voices – the contrast between dark and light still present, but perhaps favoring the latter with the soprano's unwavering statement of two verses from the chorale *Vespera iam venit* (in its German version, with the second verse having been added later).

The secco recitative that follows the chorale begins with a jarring seventh chord, surprising by its own dissonance and rough transition from the placid conclusion of the chorale. The bass, rather obviously, descends to his lowest notes in his observation of darkness's apparent victory, joined by a descending chromatic line in the continuo as the consequences of a lack of faith are described. A reference to Revelation is made ("You have knocked over their candlesticks"), leading Alfred Dürr to suspect the anonymous librettist's theological background.

The dark recitative precedes a G-minor aria for tenor and strings, where wide eighth-note leaps form cross figures in the melodies of the violin and the singer. The florid and virtuosic melody lines alternate between sixteenth-note duple and triplet figures, and absent a *da capo*, the aria's bipartite structure allows a sense of narrative to occur: the first half describes the Christian's plea, the second Jesus' light in answer. The cantata's closing chorale is from Martin Luther's own *Erhalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort*, setting a verse that strips away the heady theology and Gospel narrative of the cantata into a very straightforward request.

It is speculation that Bach conceived of his music for the weekend of Easter as a musical whole, and we may be applying more modern musical concepts of scale to an era in which music-making was more consciously craft than pained artistic labor (John Eliot Gardiner suggests evidence for an interruption in Bach's two ideal cantata cycles at Easter weekend based on such a conception). And yet the difference between the music for these two weekends of 1724 and 1725 is noteworthy. The former was saturated with dark, dramatic music in Good Friday's *St. John Passion* and Easter Sunday's *Christ lag in Todesbanden* BWV 4, followed by a warm celebration of the resurrection in Easter Monday's *Erfreut euch*. Instead of focusing on the narratives of their respective Gospel readings, the 1724 cantatas instead highlight the spiritual and theological dimensions of the weekend and how they can inform the life of the contemporary believer. The music one year later was quite different: a large-scale narrative oratorio was performed on Easter Sunday, in which even the Evangelist was eliminated for the sake of more direct story-telling; and the smaller cantata for Easter Monday directly quotes the Gospel, aligning the contemporary believer with the experience of explicit characters in Scripture. The comparison demonstrates a deeper level of variety in Bach's compositional language: his imagination in musical composition was limitless, of course, but visible here is a variety in theological communication, a different take on Christianity's greatest holy day on which the questions, and answers, remain elusive year after year. –Brett Kostrzewski, November 2015

Sources:

Dürr, Alfred. *The Cantatas of J.S. Bach*. Revised and translated by Richard D.P. Jones. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Gardiner, John Eliot. *Johann Sebastian Bach: Music in the Castle of Heaven*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.

Vanscheeuwijck, Marc. "Recent re-evaluations of the Baroque cello and what they might mean for performing the music of J. S. Bach." *Early Music* 38, no. 2 (2010): 181-92.

# Text and Translation

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## I. Chorus

Bleib bei uns, denn es will Abend werden,  
und der Tag hat sich geneiget.

*Stay with us, for evening falls,  
and the day has declined.*

## II. Aria (alto)

Hochgelobter Gottessohn,  
Laß es dir nicht sein entgegen,  
Daß wir itzt vor deinem Thron  
Eine Bitte niederlegen:  
Bleib, ach bleibe unser Licht,  
Weil die Finsternis einbricht.

*Highly-praised Son of God,  
let it be not displeasing to You,  
that we now, before Your throne,  
lay down a petition:  
remain, ah, remain our Light,  
because the darkness breaks forth.*

## III. Chorale (soprano)

Ach bleib bei uns, Herr Jesu Christ,  
Weil es nun Abend worden ist,  
Dein göttlich Wort, das helle Licht,  
Laß ja bei uns auslöschen nicht.

*Ah remain with us, Lord Jesus Christ,  
because evening approaches now,  
Your divine Word, the bright light,  
let it not be extinguished among us.*

In dieser letzt'n betrübten Zeit  
Verleih uns, Herr, Beständigkeit,  
Daß wir dein Wort und Sakrament  
Rein b'halten bis an unser End.

*In these last, troubled times  
grant us, Lord, perseverance,  
that we may preserve Your word and sacrament  
pure until our end.*

## IV. Recitative (bass)

Es hat die Dunkelheit  
An vielen Orten überhand genommen.  
Woher ist aber dieses kommen?  
Bloß daher, weil sowohl die Kleinen als die Großen  
Nicht in Gerechtigkeit  
Vor dir, o Gott, gewandelt  
Und wider ihre Christenpflicht gehandelt.  
Drum hast du auch den Leuchter umgestoßen.

*The darkness has  
taken over in many places.  
Where, however, does this come from?  
Simply enough, since the small as well as the great  
do not walk in righteousness  
before You, o God,  
and work against their Christian duty.  
Therefore You have thrown down their lanterns.*

*Please turn the page quietly.*

## V. Aria (tenor)

Jesu, laß uns auf dich sehen,  
Daß wir nicht  
Auf den Sündenwegen gehen.  
Laß das Licht  
Deines Worts uns heller scheinen  
Und dich jederzeit treu meinen.

Jesus, let us look upon You,  
so that we do not  
walk on the paths of sin.  
Let the light  
of Your word shine brightly upon us,  
and continually bring You to mind.

## VI. Chorale

Beweis dein Macht, Herr Jesu Christ,  
Der du Herr aller Herren bist;  
Beschirm dein arme Christenheit,  
Daß sie dich lob in Ewigkeit.

Reveal Your strength, Lord Jesus Christ,  
You who are Lord of Lords;  
protect Your poor Christianity,  
so that it praise You in eternity.

Translation: Pamela Dellal

## MARSH CHAPEL COLLEGIUM

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### **Violin I**

Heidi Braun-Hill, concertmaster  
Sean Larkin  
Andrew Salo

### **Violin II**

Heather Braun  
Julia Erhard  
MaeLynn Arnold

### **Viola**

Andrew Waid  
Colin Webb

### **Cello**

Guy Fishman  
Joshua Rohde

### **Contrabass**

Lizzie Burns

### **Oboe**

Benjamin Fox  
Laura Shamu

### **English Horn**

Elizabeth England

### **Bassoon**

Jensen Ling

### **Organ**

Justin Blackwell

### **Managers/Librarians**

Margaret Weckworth  
Kevin Neel

# MARSH CHAPEL CHOIR

Scott Allen Jarrett, Conductor

Justin Thomas Blackwell, Associate Conductor

Sean Watland, Conducting Fellow

Margaret Weckworth and Kevin Neel, Managers

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## Sopranos

Amanda Bierschen, Oklahoma City, OK

Jaime Guyon, Brewster, MA

Bernie Lai, Singapore

Catherine Lindsay, Hamden, CT

\*MaryRuth Lown, West Columbia, SC

Erin Sanborn, Wakefield, MA

Kasey Shultz, Holden Village, WA

\*Carey Shunskis, Upper Darby, PA

Sharon Solomon, Marietta, GA

\*Jacquelyn Stucker, Jamaica Plain, MA

Margaret Weckworth, Greensboro, NC

Rebecca Whittington, Hanover, NH

## Altos

Ivy Alphonse-Leja, Miramar, FL

Candace Brooks, Branford, CT

Anna Carro, Nashville, TN

Wee-Kiat Chia, Johor Bahru, Malaysia

Meredith Cler, Ripon, WI

\*Douglas Dodson, Spearfish, SD

Elizabeth Eschen, Natick, MA

Maddy Frumkin, Charlotte, NC

Anna Kimble, Boston, MA

Stephanie Kukolich, Lexington, MA

\*Kim Leeds, Watertown, MA

Melissa Lesh, Doylestown, PA

Kimi Macdonald, Londonderry, NH

Nellie Morley, Nantucket, MA

Britt Simonson, Okemos, MI

## Tenors

\*Ethan DePuy, Rochester, NY

George Silvis, III, Cambridge, MA

John Verkuilen, Green Bay, WI

\*Patrick T. Waters, Guilford, CT

Sean Watland, Chicago, IL

## Basses

David Ames, Newton Centre, MA

Benjamin Coleman, Bethesda, MD

Daniel Fallu, Goffstown, NH

Alex Handin, Guilderland, NY

\*Sam Kreidenweis, Cincinnati, OH

\*Dominick Matsko, Philipsburg, PA

Kevin Neel, Charlotte, NC

Steve Pinner, Hudson, MA

Daniel Russell, Chadbourn, NC

Tim Sullivan, Somerville, MA

\* Choral Scholar

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**Jessica Chicka**

University Chaplain for International Students *ad interim*

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Director of Marsh Chapel

**Scott Allen Jarrett, DMA**

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**Justin Thomas Blackwell**

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