



MARSH CHAPEL AT BOSTON UNIVERSITY

University Interdenominational Protestant
Service of Worship
Sunday, February 7th, 2016 -11:00 a.m.
The Last Sunday after the Epiphany
The Transfiguration of the Lord

The Reverend Doctor Robert Allan Hill, Dean

THE BACH EXPERIENCE

Performed during the Interdenominational Protestant Worship Service

This program is an insert to your worship bulletin.

Johann Sebastian BACH
(1685-1750)

Der Himmel lacht! Die Erde jubiliert, BWV 31

Carey Shunskis, *soprano*
Ethan DePuy, *tenor*
Samuel Kreidenweis, *bass*

Benjamin Fox, *oboe*

MARSH CHAPEL CHOIR AND COLLEGIUM

SCOTT ALLEN JARRETT *CONDUCTING*

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J. S. BACH Der Himmel lacht! Die Erde jubiliert, BWV 31 (1715)

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-seventh cantata performed by the Marsh Chapel Choir and Collegium as part of The Bach Experience. Its duration is approximately 20 minutes.

BWV 31 was composed in Weimar for Easter Sunday and first performed on 21 April 1715. It is scored for soprano, tenor, and bass soloists, five-part choir (SSATB), three oboes, taille (tenor oboe), bassoon, three trumpets, timpani, strings (with divided violas and cellos), and continuo. Of the five reed instruments, all except oboe I are marked ad libitum; we perform today with oboe I, oboe II, and bassoon, omitting the oboe III and taille parts.



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J.S. Bach's sacred vocal music is in no small way defined by his career in Leipzig, spanning from 1723 to the end of his life in 1750. The first two cantatas of this season's Bach Experience (BWV66 and BWV6) were composed for his first two Easter weekends there; this spring's performances of his St. Matthew Passion BWV244 and the *Easter Oratorio* BWV249 also present music from Leipzig. The remainder of the Bach Experience, however, turns to Bach's earlier posts at Weimar (1708-17) and Mühlhausen (1707-8). His church works from these years remind us of the German 17th-century tradition, contrasting beautifully with the more polished "High Baroque" style epitomized by the Leipzig works.

Der Himmel lacht! Die Erde jubiliert BWV31 was composed for Easter Sunday on 21 April 1715 for the court chapel at Weimar. Weimar (later the home of both Schiller and Goethe) was the seat of a small duchy in the Holy Roman Empire, one without electoral privilege and wealth (such as Bach's later royal employer in Dresden) but still with no small amount of local power and influence. Bach's position here differed significantly from his civic appointment in Leipzig: he served as *Konzertmeister* ("second in command," below the *Kapellmeister*), and his position involved the composition and performance of both sacred and secular music for the religious services and leisure entertainment of the Duke. (Limited space prevents the discussion of other amusing aspects of his Weimar employment, including the quarrels between the two(!) dukes in residence there and Bach's house arrest to prevent his taking up a new position in Cöthen.) Ranking merely as *Konzertmeister*, Bach's composition of cantatas was limited to just one every four weeks, alternating with his peers in the court chapel.

The Leipzig cantatas generally demonstrate a regularity in instrumentation, logical given the circumstances of performance there; the string and continuo groups remain consistent, and wind instruments vary but never drastically; Bach relied on his compositional skill to create variety in instrumentation and timbre within a cantata. In Weimar and Mühlhausen, however, Bach varied his instrumentation drastically in search of effect, a technique representative of the great 17th-century German composers Heinrich Schütz and Michael Praetorius. *Der Himmel lacht* exhibits this trait: in its original Weimar performance, not only did it call for the three trumpets and timpani, oboe, strings and

continuo (plus five vocal parts, of course) that you hear today, but an *additional* oboe choir that doubles either the strings or the voices for added color. Issues of pitch prevented him from using the oboe choir in later Leipzig reprisals, but its initial existence points to the stylistic differences between Bach's music before and after 1723.

The text is an extrapolation of the Easter Gospel from a cycle by Salomo Franck, and it is permeated by the now-familiar theme of inserting the Christian worshiper into the presence of Christ. The joyful opening sonata, chorus, and recitative/aria pair declaim the glory of the Resurrection (perhaps the Resurrection is depicted by the festive sonata's rising unison arpeggios at the beginning). But a remarkable shift occurs at the tenor recitative/aria pair, in which the "resurrectee" is no longer Christ, but the Christian him- or herself, the sinner whose internal "Adam must decay.../If the new man is to be saved." The Lutheran obsession with death as a gateway to salvation is evident in the second half of the cantata; after all, Christ (and Lazarus) both died before their return to life. The final chorale, *Wenn mein Stündlein vorhanden ist*, summarizes the metaphor: "thus I fall asleep and rest sweetly,/no one can awaken me,/for Jesus Christ, the Son of God,/will open the gate of heaven,/leading me to eternal life." As with the other Easter cantatas by Bach, the ebullience of Christ's Resurrection is not tempered, but rather supplemented, by the Christian's own salvation; similarly emphasized is the gateway of death by which both resurrections must occur.

The opening chorus is remarkable for its complexity of organization and counterpoint, compacted into just a few minutes (we remember the opening chorus of *Erfreut euch*, which lasts about ten minutes). The opening fugue begins fittingly with statements by the three highest voices, perhaps representative of Jesus' female disciples being the first to discover his absence from the tomb. Cadences amidst the rampant counterpoint are marked by the trumpets and timpani. A moment of respite and intimacy occurs at an Adagio for the text *Der sich das Grab zur Ruh erlesen,/der Heiligste kann nicht verwesen* ("He who has selected the grave for rest, the Holy One, cannot be corrupted") - the trumpets pause, and the texture reduces to a more comprehensible homophony. But the moment lasts for but a blink before the Allegro returns with a quick, 5-voice quasi-canon on this last phrase of text. An instrumental *ritornello* version of the chorus's opening measures closes out the chorus.

The bass recitative that follows has frequent, explicit changes between Allegro and Adagio, accompanied with highly melismatic passages in both continuo and voice. This *secco* recitative is still imbued with the celebration of the prior two sections. Similarly, the "molto adagio" continuo aria for bass succeeding it utilizes a halting, dotted accompaniment, fitting for its opening line describing Christ as a "strong fighter" against torment and death.

As mentioned above, the text's mood shifts to the listener's own experience of death and resurrection at the following tenor recitative and aria. The recitative is more sparsely composed: simple harmonic accompaniment in the continuo supports only occasional melismas on such words as *flieht* ("flees"). Similarly intimate is the succeeding aria for strings which, in its text and music - a large leap is always followed by a smooth melody - describes both Adam's fall and man's salvation in Christ. A muted comfort is exuded by the full sonority of the strings and a tenor that avoids Bach's common extremes of register (although this could also be because of the cantata's original sounding key a whole step higher than the Leipzig revision).

Bach concludes the cantata with two chorales, the first cleverly inserted below the faster-moving melodies of the obbligato oboe and soprano in the aria *Letzte Stunde*. Played by the violins and violas, the chorale *Weil du vom Tod erstanden bist* ("Since you have arisen from death") provides a counterpoint of music, text, theology, and history to the soprano's own aria in which she proclaims excitement for her own resurrection, a counterpoint as only Bach can create. The final chorale depicts our entry into heaven, complete with a breathtaking instrumental descant and Bach's characteristically rich harmonization; particularly poignant and unmistakably Bach is the alto motion toward a flat-seven before the final cadence.

These three Easter cantatas are striking for their integration of the everyday Christian with the story of Christ's death and resurrection. The same bridge is created by the arias and chorales of the Passions, but the cantatas' intimacy and the explicit textual associations created in their libretti allow for a more personal hearing. (*Christ lag in Todesbanden* BWV4, to be sung here in April, is a slightly different case, but similarly connective in its exclusive use of what was a familiar chorale tune and text.) Today, Bach's vocal music is almost exclusively the domain of the secular concert hall (Marsh Chapel's liturgical performances being one of few exceptions in North America); while his music is most definitely worthy of such performance, closer inspection reveals that the music remains but one component of a holistic attempt to guide the worshiper on his or her own personal experience with Scripture and, in the spirit of Martin Luther, directly with Christ Himself.

-Brett Kostrzewski, February 2016

MARSH CHAPEL COLLEGIUM

Violin I

Heidi Braun-Hill, *concertmaster*
Sean Larkin
Kay Rooney Matthews

Violin II

Heather Braun
Rose Drucker
Julia Erhard

Viola I

Dan Doña
Chris Nunn

Viola II

Anna Griffis
Merrick Nelson

Cello

Joshua Rohde
Sassan Haghighi

Contrabass

Nathan Varga

Oboe

Benjamin Fox
Elizabeth England

Bassoon

Jensen Ling

Trumpet

Christopher Belluscio
Geoff Shamu
Adam Gautille

Timpani

Jonathan Hess

Organ

Justin Blackwell

Managers/Librarians

Margaret Weckworth
Kevin Neel

Text and Translation

I. Sonata

II. Chorus

Der Himmel lacht! die Erde jubiliert
Und was sie trägt in ihrem Schoß;
Der Schöpfer lebt! der Höchste triumphieret
Und ist von Todesbanden los.
Der sich das Grab zur Ruh erlesen,
Der Heiligste kann nicht verwesen.

*Heaven laughs! Earth exults
and all she bears in her lap;
the Creator lives! The Highest triumphs
and is freed from the bonds of death.
He who has selected the grave for rest,
the Holy One, can not be corrupted.*

III. Recitative (bass)

Erwünschter Tag! sei, Seele, wieder froh!
Das A und O,
Der erst und auch der letzte,
Den unsre schwere Schuld in Todeskerker setzte,
Ist nun gerissen aus der Not!
der Herr war tot,
Und sieh, er lebet wieder;
Lebt unser Haupt, so leben auch die Glieder.
Der Herr hat in der Hand
Des Todes und der Hölle Schlüssel!
Der sein Gewand
Blutrot bespritzt in seinem bitterm Leiden,
Will heute sich mit Schmuck und Ehren kleiden.

*Longed-for day! O soul, be happy again!
The A and O,
the first and also the last,
who placed our heavy guilt in the prison of death,
is now wrested from danger!
The Lord was dead,
and behold, He lives again;
if our Head lives, so also the limbs live.
The Lord has in His hand
the key to death and hell!
He whose garment
was sprinkled blood red in his bitter suffering,
will robe Himself today with adornment and honor.*

IV. Aria (bass)

Fürst des Lebens, starker Streiter,
Hochgelobter Gottessohn!
Hebet dich des Kreuzes Leiter
Auf den höchsten Ehrenthron?
Wird, was dich zuvor gebunden,
Nun dein Schmuck und Edelstein?
Müssen deine Purpurwunden
Deiner Klarheit Strahlen sein?
Fürst des Lebens, starker Streiter,
Hochgelobter Gottessohn!

*Prince of life, strong fighter,
highly-praised Son of God!
Does the ladder of the Cross raise You
up to the highest throne of honor?
Does that which previously bound You
now become Your adornment and jewel?
Shall Your purple wounds
be now the rays of Your brilliance?
Prince of life, strong fighter,
highly-praised Son of God!*

V. Recitative (tenor)

So stehe dann, du gottergebne Seele,
Mit Christo geistlich auf!
Tritt an den neuen Lebenslauf!
Auf! von des Todes Werken!
Laß, daß dein Heiland in der Welt,
An deinem Leben merken!
Der Weinstock, der jetzt blüht,
Trägt keine tote Reben!
Der Lebensbaum läßt seine Zweige leben!
Ein Christe flieht
Ganz eilend von dem Grabe!
Er läßt den Stein,
Er läßt das Tuch der Sünden dahinten
Und will mit Christo lebend sein.

*So rise up then, you God-given soul,
with Christ in spirit!
Step onto the new course of life!
Up! Away from the works of death!
Let your Savior take notice
of your life in the world!
The vine, that now blooms,
bears no dead fruit!
The tree of life lets its branches live
A Christian flees
with great haste from the grave!
He leaves the stone,
he leaves the cloth of sin behind
and wishes to be living with Christ.*

VI. Aria (tenor)

Adam muß in uns verwesen,
Soll der neue Mensch genesen,
Der nach Gott geschaffen ist.
Du mußt geistlich auferstehen
Und aus Sündengräbern gehen,
Wenn du Christi Gliedmaß bist.

*Adam must decay in us,
so the new person can be born,
who is created in God's image.
You must be resurrected spiritually
and go forth from the tombs of sin,
if you are one of Christ's members.*

VII. Recitative (soprano)

Weil dann das Haupt sein Glied
Natürlich nach sich zieht,
So kann mich nichts von Jesu scheiden.
Muß ich mit Christo leiden,
So werd ich auch nach dieser Zeit
Mit Christo wieder auferstehen
Zur Ehr und Herrlichkeit
Und Gott in meinem Fleische sehen.

*Because the head naturally
draws the limbs after it,
so I cannot part myself from Jesus.
If I must suffer with Christ,
so also hereafter I will
be resurrected again with Christ
to honor and glory
and see God in my own flesh*

VIII. Aria (soprano)

Letzte Stunde, brich herein,
Mir die Augen zuzudrücken!
Laß mich Jesu Freudenschein
Und sein helles Licht erblicken,
Laß mich Engeln ähnlich sein!
Letzte Stunde, brich herein!

*Last hour, break forth,
to press closed my eyes!
Let me gaze upon Jesus' joyous glow
and His bright light,
let me be like the angels!
Last hour, break forth!*

IX. Chorale

So fahr ich hin zu Jesu Christ,
Mein' Arm tu ich ausstrecken;
So schlaf ich ein und ruhe fein,
Kein Mensch kann mich aufwecken,
Denn Jesus Christus, Gottes Sohn,
Der wird die Himmelstür auftun,
Mich führn zum ewgen Leben.

*Thus I go away to Jesus Christ,
stretching out my arm;
thus I fall asleep and rest sweetly,
no one can awaken me,
for Jesus Christ, the Son of God,
will open the gate of heaven,
leading me to eternal life.*

Translation: Pamela Dellal

MARSH CHAPEL CHOIR

Scott Allen Jarrett, Conductor

Justin Thomas Blackwell, Associate Conductor

Sean Watland, Conducting Fellow

Margaret Weckworth and Kevin Neel, Managers

Sopranos

Jaime Guyon, Brewster, MA
Bernie Lai, Singapore
Catherine Lindsay, Hamden, CT
*MaryRuth Lown, West Columbia, SC
Phoebe Oler, Boston, MA
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

Tenors

*Ethan DePuy, Rochester, NY
George Silvis, III, Cambridge, MA
John Verkuilen, Green Bay, WI
*Patrick T. Waters, Guilford, CT
Sean Watland, Chicago, IL

* Choral Scholar

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
*Kim Leeds, Watertown, MA
Melissa Lesh, Doylestown, PA
Kimi Macdonald, Londonderry, NH
Nellie Morley, Nantucket, MA
Britt Simonson, Okemos, MI

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

BOSTON UNIVERSITY Marsh Chapel

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