



MARSH CHAPEL AT BOSTON UNIVERSITY

University Interdenominational Protestant
Service of Worship
Sunday, September 25th, 2016 -11:00 a.m.
The Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Reverend Doctor Robert Allan Hill, Dean

THE BACH EXPERIENCE

The twenty-ninth cantata performed during the Interdenominational Protestant Worship Service

This program is an insert to your worship bulletin.

Johann Sebastian BACH
(1685-1750)

Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam, BWV 7

Kim Leeds, mezzo-soprano
Patrick T. Waters, tenor
Junhan Choi, baritone

Heidi Braun-Hill, violin
Heather Braun, violin
Guy Fishman, cello
Justin Thomas Blackwell, organ

MARSH CHAPEL CHOIR AND COLLEGIUM

SCOTT ALLEN JARRETT *CONDUCTING*

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J. S. BACH Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam, BWV 7

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-ninth cantata performed by the Marsh Chapel Choir and Collegium as part of The Bach Experience.

Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam was first performed on 24 July 1724 for the Feast of St. John the Baptist. It is scored for ATB soloists, SATB chorus, two oboes d'amore, two solo violins, strings, and continuo. Its duration is approximately 24 minutes.



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The four cantatas chosen for this year's Bach Experience at Marsh Chapel could be said to share depictions of *arrival*. Today's cantata depicts Jesus's baptism, his arrival at ministerial maturity and the beginning of his journey to Calvary. The second cantata was composed for the Feast of the Visitation; this setting of the Magnificat text, the canticle sung by Mary following the Annunciation, commemorates the arrivals of both Jesus and John the Baptist in Mary's and Elizabeth's pregnancies. Our third cantata, for the Feast of the Purification, celebrates Mary's arrival at the temple and sets the Nunc dimittis, a canticle describing Jesus's own arrival at the temple. And the final cantata of the series celebrates Pentecost, the arrival of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of Christ's church on Earth.

Any depiction of "arrival" in the Baroque period is suited by a French overture, a form invented by Jean Baptiste Lully in the seventeenth century but quickly adopted by composers all over Europe and popular into the late eighteenth century; it is marked by a stately dotted homophonic texture that gives way to a faster polyphonic one. Bach was no exception in his regular implementation of the device, but his ever-inimitable creative deployments most certainly are exceptional; see, for example, the sixteenth variation of his "Goldberg" set BWV988 and the opening recitative of *Schweigt stille, plaudert nicht* BWV211 (the "Coffee Cantata"). And of course, there is the opening chorus of the present cantata *Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam* BWV7, written for the Feast of John the Baptist on 24 June 1724. Ergo this chorus ushers in not just the cantata at hand, but a Bach Experience dedicated to some of the most important arrivals in the New Testament.

This cantata was the third in Bach's cycle of chorale cantatas, but the chorale is remarkably difficult to locate; in fact, the original text of the chorale and, for that matter, the chorale tune, are only stated verbatim in the first and final verses, those inner movements instead a librettist's extrapolation of the correlating verses in the chorale. In the opening chorus, the heavily-manipulated French overture motif dominates the music and structure; Bach buried the chorale cantus firmus in the tenor line amidst imitative polyphony in the other voices that often has little motivic similarity to the tune itself, and it is never doubled by an instrument. The chorus's French style is reinforced by Bach's scoring: two concertante violins supplement the typical divisi violins and viola string section, and two oboes d'amore double the top string lines in the opening measures of each French overture section. This operates as the

chorus's ritornello; the surprising shortness of each vocal statement, each a single line of the chorale's first verse, contributes to the halting effect of the entire movement, whose variety is almost exclusively owed to the creative and surprising harmonic travel through each ritornello-chorale statement pair, not unlike a contemporaneous instrumental concerto.

It is perhaps this musical sense of arrival with which Bach sought to reconcile the distinction between the liturgical day, the Feast of St. John the Baptist's birth, and the feast of the libretto, the Baptism of Jesus. Indeed, Martin Luther's eponymous chorale which forms the foundation of the libretto does not once connect with John's birth, instead merely referring to his role in Jesus's ministry, and only then as his baptizer. In typical fashion, the libretto extrapolates those lessons to the present-day Christian, most explicitly in the first aria for bass: "Merkt und hört, ihr Menschenkinder!" ("Mark and hear, you children of Men!") That first *da capo* aria, with its obbligato accompaniment masked as a continuo line, considerably sweetens the atmosphere after the rich opening chorus. Continuous descending lines in the continuo may depict the descent to earth of "Gottes Wort und Gottes Geist" ("God's Word and God's Spirit") in the form of baptismal water.

The recitative and aria for tenor which follow describe the events of the baptism as they are told in Scripture; Bach's employment of the typical Evangelist voice type is certainly not coincidental. Only at the end of the aria does the text pivot from a summary of Scripture to the lesson it holds for the immediate listener: "Damit wir ohne Zweifel glauben,/Es habe die Dreifaltigkeit/Uns selbst die Taufe zubereit." ("So that we without doubt believe, that it was the Trinity itself who prepared baptism for us.") Flowing motives from the concertante violins preserve the aural depiction of water.

Just as the tenor told the story of the baptism from Scripture, the bass returns to quote (in paraphrase) Jesus's final words to his disciples before the Ascension. Upon the recitation of those words, the string section increases its activity, hinting at the string "halo" Bach would later use to support the words of Jesus in the *St. Matthew Passion* BWV244 barely three years later. Here the libretto (remember, extrapolating Luther's chorale) completes the story of Jesus's ministry on earth from baptism to Ascension, sending the believer forth to continue his work.

The final aria contains the cosmic, universal lesson of Jesus's baptism, and is appropriately sung by the alto, to whom such metaphysical and theological aria texts are often assigned. The description of our "Sünden angeboren" ("inborn sins") is accompanied by startling chromatics and wide leaps, and the Lutheran theology of *sola fides* appears in the statement that "deeds and holiness count for God at no time." The Christian is saved by "faith and baptism" alone, the avenue to God's grace and the overcoming of original sin.

The seventh verse of the chorale is quoted in its entirety with no elaboration; Luther's skill in vivid allegory is on full display as the water of baptism becomes the Blood of Christ shed for us in a "rote Flut" ("red flood"). It is also the first time the chorale is immediately recognizable in this ostensible chorale cantata. Bach's loose musical treatment of the chorale tune is juxtaposed by his remarkably thorough theological treatment of its contents (and the libretto's extrapolation of those themes), further suggesting his own personal devotion to and understanding of his Lutheran faith.

Texts and Translations

I. Chorus

Christ unser Herr zum Jordan kam
Nach seines Vaters Willen,
Von Sankt Johans die Taufe nahm,
Sein Werk und Amt zu erfüllen;
Da wollt er stiften uns ein Bad,
Zu waschen uns von Sünden,
Ersäufen auch den bitteren Tod
Durch sein selbst Blut und Wunden;
Es galt ein neues Leben.

*Christ our Lord came to the Jordan
according to His Father's will,
He received baptism from Saint John,
to fulfill his work and destiny;
thus He wishes to draw us a bath,
to cleanse us from sin,
to drown bitter death as well
through His own blood and wounds;
it permitted a new life.*

II. Aria (B)

Merkt und hört, ihr Menschenkinder,
Was Gott selbst die Taufe heißt.
Es muß zwar hier Wasser sein,
Doch schlecht Wasser nicht allein.
Gottes Wort und Gottes Geist
Tauft und reiniget die Sünder.

*Mark and hear, you humans,
what God himself calls baptism.
Indeed water must be there,
yet not merely water alone.
God's word and God's Spirit
baptizes and purifies the sinner. (da capo)*

III. Recitative (T)

Dies hat Gott klar
Mit Worten und mit Bildern dargetan,
Am Jordan ließ der Vater offenbar
Die Stimme bei der Taufe Christi hören;
Er sprach: Dies ist mein lieber Sohn,
An diesem hab ich Wohlgefallen,
Er ist vom hohen Himmelsthron
Der Welt zugut
In niedriger Gestalt gekommen
Und hat das Fleisch und Blut
Der Menschenkinder angenommen;
Den nehmet nun als euren Heiland an
Und höret seine teuren Lehren!

*This God has clearly
provided with words and with pictures,
at the Jordan the Father allowed openly
Christ to hear his voice during baptism;
He said: this is My beloved Son,
with Whom I am well pleased,
He is, from the high throne of heaven
for the world's sake
come in lowly form,
and has taken on the flesh and blood
of humanity;
now take Him as your Savior
and listen to His valuable teachings!*

IV. Aria (T)

Des Vaters Stimme ließ sich hören,
Der Sohn, der uns mit Blut erkaufte,
Ward als ein wahrer Mensch getauft.
Der Geist erschien im Bild der Tauben,
Damit wir ohne Zweifel glauben,
Es habe die Dreifaltigkeit
Uns selbst die Taufe zubereit'.

*The Father's voice can be heard;
the Son, Who bought us with His blood,
was baptized as a true man.
The Spirit appeared in the image of the dove,
so that we might believe without doubt,
the Trinity itself has
prepared baptism for us.*

V. Recitative (B)

Als Jesus dort nach seinen Leiden
Und nach dem Auferstehn
Aus dieser Welt zum Vater wollte gehn,
Sprach er zu seinen Jüngern:
Geht hin in alle Welt und lehret alle Heiden,
Wer glaubet und getauft wird auf Erden,
Der soll gerecht und selig werden.

*As Jesus there, after His passion,
and after the Resurrection
was ready to go to the Father out of this world,
He spoke to His disciples:
go forth into the world and teach the heathens,
he who believes and is baptized on earth,
he shall be justified and blessed.*

VI. Aria (A)

Menschen, glaubt doch dieser Gnade,
Daß ihr nicht in Sünden sterbt,
Noch im Höllenpfuhl verderbt!
Menschenwerk und -heiligkeit
Gilt vor Gott zu keiner Zeit.
Sünden sind uns angeboren,
Wir sind von Natur verloren;
Glaub und Taufe macht sie rein,
Daß sie nicht verdammlich sein.

*People, believe this grace now,
so that you do not die in sin,
nor are lost in the pit of hell!
Human deeds and holiness
matter not at all before God.
Sin is born within us,
we are by nature lost;
faith and baptism purify,
so that you are not damned.*

VII. Chorale

Das Aug allein das Wasser sieht,
Wie Menschen Wasser gießen,
Der Glaub allein die Kraft versteht
Des Blutes Jesu Christi,
Und ist für ihm ein rote Flut
Von Christi Blut gefärbet,
Die allen Schaden heilet gut
Von Adam her geerbet,
Auch von uns selbst begangen.

*The eye sees only water,
as the water is poured by man,
faith, however, understands the power
of the blood of Jesus Christ,
and it is for faith a red stream
colored by Christ's blood,
that heals well all harms
that were inherited from Adam,
also that we brought about ourselves.*

Translation: Pamela Dellal

MARSH CHAPEL CHOIR

Scott Allen Jarrett, Conductor

Justin Thomas Blackwell, Associate Conductor

Sean Watland, Conducting Fellow

Margaret Weckworth and Phoebe Oler, Music Program Administrators

Sopranos

Heather Bachelder, Palmer, AK

Xing Hu, Chengdu, China

Annette Jochum, Durham, NC

Catherine Lindsay, New Haven, CT

*MaryRuth Lown, West Columbia, SC

Phoebe Oler, Boston, MA

Emily Regier, Belmont, MA

Erin Sanborn, Wakefield, MA

Kasey Shultz, Seattle, WA

*Carey Shunskis, Upper Darby, PA

Sharon Solomon, Marietta, GA

*Jacquelyn Stucker, Jamaica Plain, MA

Margaret Weckworth, Greensboro, NC

Tenors

*Ethan DePuy, Rochester, NY

Christopher Grills, Joplin, MO

Steven Merrill, Wausau, WI

George Silvis, III, Cambridge, MA

*Patrick T. Waters, Guilford, CT

Sean Watland, Chicago, IL

* Choral Scholar

Altos

Candace Brooks, Branford, CT

Meredith Cler, Ripon, WI

*Douglas Dodson, Spearfish, SD

Elizabeth Eschen, Cazenovia, NY

Maddy Frumkin, Charlotte, NC

Kira Garvie, Ghent, NY

Sadie Klein, Fort Lauderdale, FL

*Kim Leeds, Watertown, MA

Kimi Macdonald, Londonderry, NH

Katie Moore, Moorestown, NJ

Britt Simonson, Okemos, MI

Basses

David Ames, Newton Centre, MA

*Junhan Choi, South Korea

Daniel Fallu, Goffstown, NH

Alex Handin, Guilderland, NY

Samuel Horsch, Gibson City, IL

*Joseph Hubbard, Pflugerville, TX

Kevin Neel, Charlotte, NC

Steve Pinner, Hudson, MA

Tim Sullivan, Somerville, MA

MARSH CHAPEL COLLEGIUM

Violin I

Heidi Braun-Hill, *concertmaster*

Sarah Atwood

Emily Dahl Irons

Michael Hustedde

Violin II

Heather Braun

Nelli Jabotinsky

Andrew Salo

Viola

Dan Doña

Chris Nunn

Cello

Guy Fishman

Contrabass

Nathan Varga

Oboe d'amore

Elizabeth England

Laura Shamu

Organ

Justin Blackwell

Librarians

Margaret Weckworth

Phoebe Oler

BOSTON UNIVERSITY Marsh Chapel

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Br. Lawrence A. Whitney, LC+

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Jessica Chicka

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