

J. S. BACH
St. John Passion

EUROPA SINGERS

**LINDEN
BAROQUE
ORCHESTRA**

Conductor

SIMON DEARSLEY

**SATURDAY
11th APRIL 1992**

**ADMISSION £6.00
(Concession £4.00)**



St. JAMES' PICCADILLY W1

Enquiries 081-840 2974

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

(1685 - 1750)

St. John Passion

BWV 254

Conducted by

SIMON DEARSLEY

J J Barnes - Evangelist

Robin Cockett - Jesus

Rodney Eastwood - Pilate

EUROPA SINGERS

LINDEN BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

Leader Nicola Hayston

Continuo

Tatty Theo - Violincello

David Pollock - Organ

The drawing by Hans Rashbrook on the cover of the programme is a copy of a woodcarving by Grinling Gibbons in St James Picadilly

PROGRAMME NOTES

The reciting of the Passion during Holy Week dates back to Pre-Reformation times when the Gospel accounts of the Crucifixion were sung in Latin, first to plainchant and then, later, on to plainchant combined with polyphony. Under Luther the vernacular began to be introduced into the church and by about 1650 the type of passion that is recognized today as being typical of the genre was beginning to emerge - a passion that used instruments and also hymns to break up the narrative.

J S Bach's (1685-1750) St John Passion is one of two that survive (the other being the St Matthew Passion), out of a possible five according to Bach's obituary. Both were written during Bach's period at Leipzig where he was cantor at St Thomas' church and the city's Director of Music from 1725 - 1750.

The St John Passion (written in 1723) was first performed in 1724 on Good Friday (7 April) at the Nikolaikirche, and probably three other times (1725, 1730 and ca.1746-9) during Bach's lifetime, each time revised and altered. It originally opened with the chorus "O Mensch beweine deine Sünde gross" which was transferred to the St Matthew Passion in 1736.

Unlike the St Matthew Passion with a text by Picander, there is a distinct lack of textural unity in the St John Passion as the text comes from at least three different sources - mainly from Bröcke's Passion libretto "Der für die Sünden der Welt gemarterte und sterbende Jesus", but also from the Gospels of Matthew and John, and the texts of Lutheran hymns. It is divided into two (somewhat unequal) parts in accepted oratorio tradition to allow for a sermon in the middle, with five out of the eight arias close together towards the end of the second part. Most of the *turba* (crowd) choruses are in rapid succession at the beginning of the second part. This is due to the structure of the gospel narrative and is something Bach had no control over.

The St John Passion falls into the genre of oratorio passion - which represented a fusion of devotional and dramatic elements, the latter represented by the recitative which succeeded plainchant, as well as arias and choruses, the uses of which had been illustrated in opera and oratorio.

The passion is designed to work on three levels:

- (i) New Testament narrative (represented by recitatives and *turba* choruses);
- (ii) personal and contemplative level (represented by arias);
- (iii) devotional and corporate response (represented by chorales).

It also adheres to the tradition of having a tenor sing the part of the Evangelist and a bass sing the part of Jesus. Bach uses varied instrumentation, including almost obsolete instruments such as the oboe da caccia and viola da gamba.

The St John Passion is undoubtedly a monumental work, designed as a piece of drama, and also as a vehicle to a corporate act of worship, helped by the inclusion of popular hymn tunes and texts in the form of chorales. It is as relevant now as when it was written due to Bach's skilful setting of the text and his music. It also combines two different time-scales; that of the Biblical and that of the present day (Bach's or our own - 11 April 1992).

Tatty Theo
Oxford 1992.

EUROPA SINGERS

Europa Singers was founded in 1969 by Clive Wearing, the renowned Lassus scholar. It draws amateur singers from all over London and regularly performs a wide repertoire ranging from the Renaissance to Broadway Musical songs. Apart from regular concerts in London, it also frequently tours Europe and in 1991 visited Southern Germany. Simon Dearsley who has directed the choir for two years, teaches at Westminster school and is organist at St Gabriel's Church, Pimlico.

Soprano

Hilary Bentley *
Lisa Colclough *
Sally Donegani
Barbara Downie
Clare Galton
Jennifer Haylett *
Pip Ormerod
Lucilla Rodino

Alto

Libby Bertram
Jill Caudle
Mary Ellen Coyte
Claudia Feddern *
Deborah Jones
Andrew Lloyd

Tenor

Chris Beynon
Nick Ford
Simon Lillystone *
David Ridge *

Bass

Robin Cockett
Rodney Eastwood
John Edwards *
Simon Fletcher
Hans Rashbrook *

* Soloist

LINDEN BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

The Linden Baroque Orchestra was founded in 1984 by a group of London musicians who specialise in playing early style instruments. It has given concerts in London, Essex, Norfolk, Kent and Oxford in a wide and varied repertoire from the Baroque and Classical periods. The group has worked with some of London's leading baroque players.

Violin

Nicola Hayston (Leader)
Ben Constantine
Ilana Cravitz
Rachel Eyres
Barbara Grant
Hannah Patrick
Stephen Patrick
Alan Selwyn
Paula Tysall

Cello

Tatty Theo (continuo)
Valerie Cullen
Sean Turpin

Flute

Nicholas Jackman
Andrew Crawford

Bassoon

Mathew Dart
Renate Maria Wendel

Oboe

Anthony Bevis
Simon Galton

Violone

William Hunt

Viola da Gamba

William Hunt

Oboe Da Caccia

Anthony Bevis

Viola

Andrew Giles
Deborah Johnson
Ron Porta

Organ

David Pollock