

For the Fifth Sunday after Easter (Rogate)

Annenkirche, Dresden

To Bach, frustrated and disgruntled in Leipzig, Dresden was a sort of Shangri-La. It was here that he had been crowned unopposed keyboard champion in 1717, and it was here that his *Missa* (the first two movements of what we know as the B minor Mass) was first performed in 1733. To see how music functions when it is properly valued and organised, he told the Leipzig Town Council, 'one need only go to Dresden and see how the musicians are paid... relieved of all concern for their living, free from *chagrin*...'. The multiple layers of the city's history seem difficult now for the foreign visitor to disentangle. Vestiges of the great eighteenth-century cultural metropolis are there for all to see in the rebuilt *Zwinger*, and the clean-up operation is gradually ridding the city of evidence of its gruesome 1945 bombing. Even that Baroque marvel the *Frauenkirche*, constructed like some celestial theatre, is on its way to being rebuilt [its glorious completion in October 2005 celebrated by the joint forces of the Monteverdi Choir and the Dresden Staatskapelle in June 2007]. The functional 1950s shoebox housing of the GDR era is still much in evidence, as are the former army barracks of the departed Russians.

We were due to perform in the grey-stoned and severe *Annenkirche*, a rare survivor of the night of horror thanks to its robust steel roof. We were packed like sardines onto the tiny stage area against the hard-surfaced back wall for two successive concerts that opened this year's Dresdner Musikfestspiele. I was not sure how we could make it work except to urge the singers and obligato players to face and engage with the audience, to be aware of the mysterious process of re-creation and response in which we and they are all bound. I wondered what the four Germans in our group would make of the occasion. Many of the English musicians showed signs of being aware

of the delicacy of the situation we found ourselves in. In addition to our habitual position of 'bringing coals to Newcastle', the potential impertinence of interpreting Bach to the Germans, we faced the far pricklier issue of performing Bach in the city whose cultural treasures had been wantonly destroyed by British bombs in one mad night towards the end of the war and with colossal loss of life.

The first concert on the Saturday night was a bit tense, the telling stillness at the end of each cantata disturbed by a persistent and enthusiastic early clapper. But on Sunday we were more relaxed and the audience seemed utterly caught up in the music, assenting to familiar words and chorales like all the other East German audiences we have encountered this year. For the things we most cherish in the music may not be what others respond to – and could of course be different to what Bach intended. This has struck me again and again in the course of the year: a 'meaningfulness' in Bach's music beyond that of its original message.

It all depends on your point of view, something noted by Bach's Leipzig contemporary Johann Martin Chladenius in his *Introduction to the Correct Interpretation of Reasonable Discourses*, 1742. No author, he claimed, could be aware of all that his writing might imply, the meaning of words going far beyond any specific intentions. Bach's first cantata for Rogation Sunday, BWV 86 **Wahrlich, wahrlich, ich sage euch** (1724), opens with a dictum from Christ's farewell address to his disciples (John 16) sung by the bass soloist as *Vox Domini*, accompanied by strings and oboes: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you'. In the context of who we were, where we were and to whom we were singing and playing, this opening cantata had a particular poignancy. With almost any other composer the treatment of this subject matter could easily come over as crass, impertinent even, since it invites the listener to ask how these words of Jesus can be reconciled with his or

her own experience. In presenting three fugal motifs reverentially and lucidly in the introduction, soon to be taken up by the bass soloist, Bach ensures that these are vocally conceived (as Dürr notes, it would be easy to sing the entire movement as a four-part motet with just continuo accompaniment).

Bach's anonymous librettist now expands his theme: we would all prefer to gather roses, even at the risk of being pricked by the thorns, but in the sure knowledge that our prayers will be answered (No.2); for God keeps his promises (Nos 3 and 4), even if his help may be delayed (No.5); and he doesn't set a time, but knows when it will be for the best (No.6). Bach reinforces the intrinsic optimism of the cantata's libretto by describing a downward modulatory arc, beginning and ending in E major, a key positioned at the upper limit of his tonal spectrum and hence a-glitter with positive associations and sentiments. The virtuosic breaking of chords by the obbligato violin in the alto aria (No.2) stands of course for the breaking of the rose stems. It illustrates the hazardous business of negotiating the thorns in order to reach the blooms (metaphor for spiritual joy and beauty). The cut here is no easy snip of the scateurs, but a twisting, tearing figure for 'brechen', and a dissonance for the 'stechen' (pricking) of the thorns. The gently evocative mood of the B section is abruptly intensified at the words 'that my entreaty and supplication will go straight to God's heart' in five bars of intense dissonance over a pedal E, with wild rhapsodic exclamations by the solo violin. Then abruptly the clouds lift, the violin is silent, and the alto (now with continuo alone) sings 'For He has pledged His word', Bach's perfect way of conveying that our prayers have reached their target and will indeed be answered in due course.

Next comes a chorale setting for soprano with two oboes d'amore and continuo (we chose bassoon) confirming God's promise and word. In its apparent disregard for the needs of the two d'amore players to refill their lungs (one passage has seventy-two consecutive

semiquavers for the first oboe!) this movement feels as if it might have been conceived as an organ chorale. Yet the oboists' task is to create the illusion of a graceful dance, suggesting to us the use of *notes inégales*, perhaps even the stratospheric circling of the angelic host referred to in Georg Grünwald's hymn. A short secco recitative (No.4), contrasting the ways of the world ('making many promises, keeping few') with God's delight in granting what he pledges, shows in miniature Bach's skill and panache in placing angular, dissonant intervals to reinforce his text and its meanings. Finally there is a return to E major for a tenor aria with full strings, a sturdy *bourrée*-like movement in which the singer is assigned only a fragment (just a bar and half) of the introductory motif. Though instrumentally derived, this phrase has sufficient lapidary concision – quirkiness, even – for the singer's recapitulations to etch the message in the listener's consciousness: 'God's help is sure', a declaration of faith, and one that is clinched by the closing chorale.

Whether Bach's congregation was up to noticing the presence of features shared with its predecessor from the year before in the structure of the opening movement of BWV 87 **Bisher habt ihr nichts gebeten in meinem Namen** – the opening Gospel quotation of Jesus' words set for bass voice and four-part strings doubled by oboes, the way its fugally-conceived polyphonic interplay of themes is taken up by the singer – we shall never know. But there, no doubt, propped up on his desk as a reminder and point of reference, was last year's cantata. On this occasion Bach seems intent on projecting a more complex, nuanced theological message, even if it means writing against the grain of his listeners' expectations. The stern, declamatory energy of the music accords with man's reprehensible neglect of Jesus' words of promise: 'Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name' (John 16:24). Nor is there any instant release; in fact Bach drags the listener down through three descending minor keys (d, g, c) for the first five of its

seven movements, all in the interests of emphasising the world as a place of suffering or, as the second motto from St John's Gospel puts it, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation'. It is the second half of that dictum, 'but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world' (John 16:33), which marks the beginning of the tonal upswing back to D minor. This is the third successive post-Easter cantata which Bach set in 1725 to texts by Christiane Mariane von Ziegler, all of them, as Eric Chafe notes, dealing with 'the understanding of Jesus' suffering within the context of victory and love, increasingly articulating how the tribulation of the world is overcome' in preparation for the Ascension.

In stark contrast to the dramatised urgency of its preceding recitative, the D minor aria 'Vergib, o Vater' ('Forgive, O Father, all our sins and be patient with us yet') unfolds in a mood of sustained reverence and penitence. The plangent sonorities of the paired oboes da caccia merge with those of the alto soloist. Their repeated slurred duplets for the word 'Vergib' contrast and alternate with ascending arpeggios in the (bassoon) continuo, so that gestures of grief and entreaty are registered concurrently. The urgent supplication intensifies in the middle section as Bach propels his continuo instruments upwards through seven chromatic steps (d, e, f, f#, g, g#, a) and then five diatonic intervals (d, e, f, g, a). This reflects the penitent's belief in plain-speaking ('no more... parables'), a reference to Jesus' promise that 'the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father' (John 16:25). Ziegler and Bach are here emphasising the Lutheran theme that prayer, corresponding to the depth of the human predicament, is the best means of establishing and retaining contact with God in a hostile world.

Dürr speculates that the second recitative (No.4), which does not appear in Ziegler's printed text (1729), may have originated with Bach himself. Its presence softens the abrupt transition to the 'comfortable words' of Jesus in No.5, which represent the turning point in a musical

design that Bach had been developing since his Mühlhausen days (in BWV 71 and 106). Bach ensures the prominence of this interpolated recitative by means of its string accompaniment, and by switching to the first person shifts the focus onto the individual believer's acknowledgment of his guilt, then via the subsequent tonal re-ascent to D minor charts the way that this guilt and anxiety is overcome through faith.

Just where you might expect a richly scored set-piece for Christ's last words from the same chapter of John's Gospel, Bach (and presumably Ziegler) decides to omit the emollient phrase 'These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace'. Instead, he shrinks his tonal palette and limits his *Spruch* to a continuo accompaniment (No.5): angular, severe and angst-ridden, in patterns hinting at a descending chromatic tetrachord. Even the pivotal phrase 'ich habe die Welt überwunden' is almost submerged, despatched in an upwards movement to E flat minor lasting a mere nine bars before lapsing back to C minor. It is not until the sixth movement, an extended B flat major *siciliano* for tenor, strings and continuo of ineffable beauty, that Bach's overall strategy becomes plain: to balance sorrow and joy, minor and major, and to show that the promise of comfort to the beleaguered soul is achieved at the cost of Christ's passion and crucifixion. So the prevalent mood of tender, lyrical, semi-pastoral contrition and acceptance is both spiked and spiced with momentary dissonance at the words 'leiden' ('suffer'), 'Schmerz' ('pain') and 'verzagen' ('despair'). This is confirmed in the final chorale drawn from the pietistic 'Jesu meine Freude', with its characteristic references to pain being sweeter than honey, and to the thousand sweet kisses Jesus presses upon us. The return to D minor, as Chafe notes, is a reminder of 'the necessary simultaneity in the world of suffering and of the divine love that ultimately overcomes it'.

The final piece in the programme was BWV 97 **In allen meinen Taten**, a cantata without liturgical designation first performed in 1734. It uses the haunting Heinrich Isaac hymn tune 'Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen' in both its opening and concluding movements. One theory is that, like the other three late chorale cantatas (BWV 100, 117 and 192), it started life as a wedding cantata. In retrospect, we should really have included this splendid cantata at the outset of our Pilgrimage, since Paul Fleming's hymn was apparently written to mark the start of a long and hazardous journey he undertook to Moscow in 1633. Bach sets all nine verses unaltered, four of them as arias, one as a duet and two as recitatives, so ensuring variety in instrumentation (unusually, he instructs the organ not to play in movements 3, 4 and 7) and in mood, in ways that keep both the performer and the listener fully engaged. He opens in ceremonial French overture style with antiphonal exchanges between reeds and strings. Only when the *grave* gives way to a *vivace* fantasia does he introduce his voices: sopranos intoning the 'Innsbruck' cantus firmus, the lower voices in animated imitation, borrowing the motivic outline from the instrumental lines, and all fluently embedded in the fugally conceived structure. The voices break into an urgent homophonic concluding statement: '[God] must in all affairs, if they are to succeed, counsel and act', an injunction Bach leaves ringing in the listeners' ears by eschewing the expected symmetrical return to the opening *Grave*.

Verse 2 is a proto-Schubertian Lied for bass and continuo with elegant 6/8 rhythms and emphatic 6/4/2 pivotal chords. Verse 4 is an astonishing tenor aria with one of the most elaborate violin obbligatos in all the cantatas, complete with virtuosic figuration, ample double stopping and three- and four-part broken chords placed as the dramatic launch-pad for the tenor soloist's syncopated exclamations of 'nichts!'. One wonders whether this reversion by Bach to the style he had developed in Weimar and Cöthen in his solo violin sonatas and partitas

was designed as a possible test piece for a particular virtuoso violinist, until one sees that the purpose here is to lay down the law – *his* laws of music, which are given a brilliant exposition in conformity with Fleming’s text, ‘I trust in His mercy... if I live by His laws’. The sixth movement is an alto aria in C minor with full strings: thick-textured, rich in passing dissonance and full of pathos, and with a natural swing adjusted to the distinct motions of preparing for bed, waking up, lying down or just walking along. The seventh verse is cast as a quirky, almost jazzy duet for soprano and bass with continuo, a line that keeps interrupting itself. This is a catch-as-catch-can stretto for the two singers, part canzonet, part Rossini. Perhaps it is the word ‘Unfall’ (‘mishap’ or ‘accident’) which triggered Bach’s musical imagination here, since he is constantly teasing the listener with the potential for false entries, collisions or collapse. There is more than a hint of cartoon chase to it; yet it is not at all frivolous, showing a distinct likeness to another ‘I-go-to-my-fate’ duet with a palpably speech-like continuo, the much more sinister ‘O Menschenkind, hör auf geschwind’ (BWV 20, No.10).

Order is restored in the delightful soprano aria with two oboes which follows (No.8): ‘I have surrendered myself to Him’, a carefree acceptance of God’s will that leaves it to Him whether to extend or conclude one’s lifespan. The final ‘Innsbruck’ chorale has three independent string parts augmenting the luminescent harmony.

In performing these cantatas we had to contend with the variable acoustic of Dresden’s unalluring *Annenkirche* – boomy yet shrill when empty, far drier when full – and with the uncomfortable sensation that the sounds we produced were dropping two paces in front of us. Clearly this was not a problem for the Dresden audience, whose response at the end of the concert was warm and generous. I got the impression that all of us were intensely moved to have been granted this opportunity to celebrate Bach’s music in the city of his dreams.

For the Sunday after Ascension Day (Exaudi)

Sherborne Abbey

Once the Cathedral seat of St Aldhelm, preacher, scholar and singer, and of the twenty-six Saxon bishops who succeeded him, Sherborne Abbey was built in the late eleventh century to adjoin an older Saxon church. Shared uneasily between Benedictine monks and the townspeople with their own secular priests, the Abbey was set alight in 1435, the walls, crossing and choir still visibly reddened by the heat of the fire. It took a century to complete the process of restoring and 'perpendicularising' the Norman building, and once the monks had been expelled in 1539 the parish gained, in effect, a new church at a cost of a hundred marks, or £66 13s 4d, complete with dazzling fan vaulting atop the old Norman aisle walls and arcade columns supported neither by pinnacles nor by flying buttresses. Instead of meeting the central ridge (as in King's College Chapel), the fans are set back very slightly, the gap filled with an intricate pattern of ribs with carved bosses at their main intersections.

Ham stone is so much warmer than Purbeck marble, and you could sense the musicians' spirits lift as they made their way into the Abbey following last week's Ascension Day cantatas in the impressive but chilly sobriety of Salisbury Cathedral, thirty miles to the east. Our programme for Exaudi began with a work once considered spurious but now generally accepted by scholars as Bach's first cantata. Though BWV 150 **Nach dir, Herr, verlangest mich** has no specified liturgical designation, its underlying theme – the believer's hopes of redemption in the hurly-burly of life – is particularly apt in the period between Easter and Ascension. We had given it five weeks before on Low Sunday in Arnstadt (Thuringia), its likely place of origin, where the twenty-year-old Bach in his first salaried post had to contend with a far from ideal group

of performers (see SDG Vol 23). I was eager to revisit this intriguing, if slightly experimental, cantata, his opus 1 as it were, and to observe any internal growth or change that might have taken place by osmosis in the intervening weeks.

Three things struck me. First was a sense of the care and consideration which had gone into the initial assembly of the text – three quotations from Psalm 25 concerned with prayer (No.2), guidance (No.4) and steadfastness (No.6), interleaved with three stanzas of anonymous verse. Bach gives vivid pictorial expression to the tussle experienced by the believer between the need to survive in a world of tribulation and the imperative of holding on, secure in God's protection. My second impression, notwithstanding other stylistic models (Nikolaus Bruhns in terms of the permutation fugues, and Bach's early interest in Albinoni's trio sonatas Op.1 (1694)), was of the clear debt the cantata owes to the surviving motets and sacred concertos of Johann Christoph Bach (1642-1703). He was JS Bach's first cousin-once-removed, known to him during his infancy as the organist of St George's, Eisenach, where he sang as a chorister, and the one ancestor he later singled out with the epithet, the '*profound* composer'. It was Johann Christoph, incidentally, who as *de facto* head of the family in 1702 (the year before his death) may have guided his young cousin and the Arnstadt town council towards one another when a vacancy for organ-assessor and organist of the *Neue Kirche* presented itself. The third feature to strike me on this occasion was the extent to which this little cantata is, in a sense, a blueprint for the more imposing Mühlhausen cantatas (BWV 131 and 71) Bach was soon to compose. The motivic links between the opening sinfonia and the ensuing Psalm verse, and the way the music is fluidly adjusted to the *Affekt* of each line of the text, is in clear anticipation of his similarly structured *Aus der Tiefen* (BWV 131), while the gentle lapping of the violin figuration and the slow oscillations of the bassoon in the prelude section of the sixth movement 'Meine Augen

sehen' could be seen as a dummy run for the gorgeous turtledove chorus in *Gott ist mein König* (BWV 71, No.6).

This time around we were searching for a more sensuous, mezzo-tinted sonority for this movement, a clearer aural inscription of all twenty-six rungs of the tonal ladder in No.4, a quicker and more graphic rendition of the storm-buffed cedar trees in No.5, and a more spacious way with the closing *chaconne*, balancing its portrayal of human affliction, very much a Johann Christoph speciality, above the true foundation of hope and faith (its ostinato bass). Traces of Bach's performance style are few and far between, even in movements such as Nos 2 and 4 of this cantata with their explicit tempo changes. It takes practice to find the most convincing proportions between the sections, a *tempo giusto* for each movement, a convincing balance between voices and instruments both contrapuntally and chordally, and above all the right 'tone' for each line and every word of the text.

The two Leipzig cantatas Bach wrote for Exaudi share the title **Sie werden euch in den Bann tun**, Jesus' warning to his disciples that 'They shall put you out of the synagogues' (John 16:2). Both in their separate ways depict an earthly voyage beginning with the prophecy of imminent persecution and the need for submission and surrender to the Holy Spirit. But there the similarity ends. BWV 44 was composed as part of Bach's first Leipzig cycle in 1724 and opens with a G minor prelude, a trio sonata for two oboes and continuo bassoon cast as an expressive lament, one which fans out into a quintet with the entry of the *Vox Domini*. For here, unusually for Bach and more typical of Schütz, the voice of Christ is assigned to two voices (tenor and bass) rather than one. In a way then more characteristic of Telemann, this leads without a break into a seismic 'turba' chorus, 'Yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God service'. It is punchy and arresting, with abrupt drops in volume at the words 'wer euch tötet' and, at only thirty-five bars long, a potent cameo, a shocking persecution

scene such as the world has seen repeatedly since the time of the early Christians. In its use of *figura corta* and the chromatic treatment by means of melismas on the word 'tötet' (kills), it is very similar to the 'Kreuzige' choruses from the *St John Passion*, which had received its first performance only six weeks earlier. Dürr observes that this cantata shares with three other post-Easter cantatas from the following year's cycle (BWV 6, 42 and 85) a similarity in overall design and in the emphasis placed on Christian suffering in the world. From this one might speculate that those three cantatas were perhaps planned by Bach to be incorporated into his first Leipzig cycle along with BWV 44, but were put on hold until the following year as a result of his having over-extended himself in composing and preparing the *St John Passion* in March 1724. With limited creative energy left for new composition, and in order to complete his first Leipzig cycle, he resorted to earlier cantatas (BWV 131, 12, 172 and 194) and to recycling secular material from his Cöthen years (BWV 66, 134, 104, 173 and 184).

Bach follows this opening chorus with a serene, elegiac C minor aria for alto with oboe, 'Christians on earth must be Christ's true disciples', in which even the inevitable 'torment, exile and sore affliction' in the B section is presented as though temporary, soon to be 'blissfully overcome'. Then we are back to a chorale which we encountered twice in early January, 'Ach Gott, wie manches Herzeleid' ('Ah God, what deep affliction'), with its insistence on the heart's pain and the narrow way to heaven. On this occasion it is assigned to the tenor over a bass line possibly modelled on the organ chorales of Georg Böhm, Bach's Lüneburg teacher, as it moves wearily and chromatically, yet still at twice the speed of the vocal melody it announces (No.4). The pivotal point of the whole cantata occurs in a pithy recitative for the bass (No.5) describing the evil power of the Antichrist. It uses the Baroque image of Christians likened to the branches of palm trees which, when weighted down, grow ever higher. This leads to a skilfully crafted aria for soprano

with two oboes and strings, 'Es ist und bleibt der Christen Trost'. Here Bach fuses elements of dance and song to capture in an Arcadian metaphor how 'after such tribulations the sun of gladness soon laughed'. The vocal line is adorned with tripletised melismas suggesting the singer's laughter at the impotent fury of the elements (cue for a vivid build-up of storm clouds, emblematic of affliction). To complete the journey from persecution to joy Bach turns once again to Heinrich Isaac's great 'Innsbruck' tune for his closing chorale, recalling its recent appearance in the *St John Passion* where it voiced the hurt reaction of the Christian community at the cuffing ('Backenstreich') Jesus receives during the Sanhedrin trial.

Bach's second setting of **Sie werden euch in den Bann tun** (BWV 183) a year later, this time to a text by Christiane Mariane von Ziegler, is of even higher artistic calibre, and directed towards a different theological target. It is as though Bach and Ziegler, either independently or with promptings by the Leipzig clergy, decided to give a more positive gloss to the Gospel reading than in the previous year. With Pentecost looming perhaps Bach persuaded his poet to review and reassemble with him many of the theological themes that he had brought to the surface in earlier weeks: worldly persecution (No.1), suffering mitigated by Jesus' protection (No.2), comfort afforded by Jesus' spirit (No.3), surrender to the guidance of the Holy Spirit (No.4), and the Spirit's role in pointing to prayer as humanity's means to obtain divine help (No.5). The opening *Spruch*, a five-bar *accompagnato*, is assigned here to four oboes (two d'amore and two da caccia) unique in Bach's output outside his *Christmas Oratorio* – one in which he also inscribes an ascent by the first oboe to symbolise in miniature the upward journey out of despair. It is as terse and dramatic a curtain-raiser to a cantata as Bach ever wrote, so different from his solution the previous year when for the identical line he took eighty-seven bars for the duet and a further thirty-five bars for the chorus! There follows an epic aria in E minor for tenor

with four-stringed cello piccolo, in which the singer protests that he does not fear the terror of death, while every ornate, feverish syncopation and rhythmic sub-pattern belies this. Meanwhile the cello maintains its serene and luminous course with sweeping arpeggios. Viewed one way the aria is an intimate *scena* in which we can follow the believer as he struggles to overcome his fear of persecution and of coming to a sticky end, sustained all the while by the soothing sounds of his companion, the 'Schutzarm' (Jesus' protective arm) referred to in the text – the cello piccolo. (I found myself comparing this to the relationship Philip Pullman describes in *His Dark Materials* between individuals and their 'daemons'.) By the end of the B section the penitent seems to have gained in confidence as a modulation to G major points to the 'reward' soon to be meted out to his persecutors. It is a long aria, hugely demanding of both singer and cellist. Under Sherborne's honey-coloured fan vaulting the effect was ethereal and utterly captivating.

Re-establishing the positive key of G major for a single bar before falling back into E minor, the alto *accompagnato* 'Ich bin bereit' ('I am prepared to give up my blood and wretched life for Thee, my Saviour') is characterised by four four-note exchanges between the two pairs of oboes, which we deployed antiphonally. Chafe identifies a 'transformational harmonic event' in the tritone-related juxtaposition of f sharp and C (already anticipated in the B section of the previous aria), one that reflects 'the experience of the Spirit within' in response to an admission of sudden human weakness ('should there be perhaps too much for me to suffer'). This serves to clarify the spiritual thematic progression of this cantata (far clearer to plot than its predecessor, BWV 44), as it culminates in a switch to C major for the soprano aria (No.4). This is an exuberant and elegant triple-timed dance intended, it seems, to celebrate the Spirit's effect on the believer, and in which the two *da caccias* act as go-betweens, doubling the first violins at the lower octave and then taking off with their own garlanded melismas. Even here in the

aria's B section Bach chooses to underline human frailty at prayer and a dependence on the Spirit's mediatory role by means of a modulatory plunge through the keys of d, g and c (just as he had done in BWV 87, No.6 two weeks ago), before settling back into C major. In addition he draws attention to the dialectic between the positive workings of the Spirit (chirpy, upward melodic figures in the first violins doubled by the *da caccias*) and its dissipation in the murky recesses of the human heart (downward arpeggios in the continuo). Finally, with four oboes available to him, Bach imbues his closing chorale (to the tune of 'Helft mir Gottes Güte preisen' from one of Paul Gerhardt's hymns) with exceptionally rich middle voices, perhaps to reinforce the idea that 'knowing how to pray is the gift of the Spirit within'.

To balance the performance of BWV 150 with which we opened the programme, I chose a work by Johann Christoph Bach. His five-voiced motet **Fürchte dich nicht** could hardly be more different from his younger cousin's later eight-part setting (BWV 228): full of Schützian word patterns and the spinning out of exquisite polyphonic lines. Indeed, Johann Christoph may turn out to be the missing link between Schütz and J S Bach that German musicologists have been searching for, as a result of his having studied with Fletin, one of Schütz's pupils. Whether all the pieces that have been attributed to him are genuinely his and not by one of the four other Bachs with the identical name (including J S Bach's eldest brother) has yet to be resolved by scholars. This motet derives 'directly or ultimately from Thuringian sources whose context arguably suggests [this particular] Johann Christoph as their composer, but does not guarantee it', according to Daniel Melamed. Acquaintance and direct experience of conducting other works *known* to have been composed by J C Bach of Eisenach convinces me that this impressive and touching piece is indeed by him. It combines a celebrated text, 'Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name: thou art mine' from Isaiah (43:1), with a passage from St Luke's Gospel

(23:43), 'Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise'. Held back for the first 38 bars which culminate with tender repetitions of 'Du bist mein' by the four lower voices, the sopranos now enter with the words 'O Jesu, du mein Hilf und Ruh', the sixth strophe of Johann Rist's *Kirchenlied* 'O Traurigkeit'. The effect is dramatic and poignant and the change of person with the use of 'du', first in reference to the believer (the lower four voices as a collective *Vox Domini*), then to Jesus (by the soprano-believer), is subtle and telling. It is music that seems to go beyond its text and leaves you dazed in its slipstream.

This was an uplifting programme given in a perfect architectural and acoustic setting to a receptive audience. As the applause died down and the musicians began to disperse, one lady exclaimed: 'Please don't go!'.

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From a journal written in the course of the
Bach Cantata Pilgrimage