IU

JACOBS SCHOOL OF MUSIC

INDIANA UNIVERSITY
Bloomington

Four Hundred Seventy-Eighth Program of the 2011-12 Season

Pro Arte Singers
Chamber Orchestra

William Jon Gray, *Conductor*

Johannes-Passion, BWV 245

(St. John Passion)

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

The Narrative

Evangelist – Brendon Marsh, *Tenor*   Jesus – Scott Hogsed, *Baritone*

Pilate – Benjamin Geier, *Tenor*   Peter – Jeremy Johnson, *Baritone*

The Commentary

Arwen Myers, Jessica Beebe, *Sopranos*

Brennan Hall, *Countertenor*   Laura Thoreson, *Mezzo-Soprano*

Michael Porter, Samuel Green, *Tenors*

Stephan Pace, Jeremy Johnson, *Baritones*

Instrumental Soli

Jessica Lipstone, Casey Clyde, *Flutes*

Rachel Edwards, Natasha Wallin, *Oboes*

Reiss Schoendorf, *Bassoon*

Lydia Umlauf, Dechapol Kowintaweewat, *Violins*

Nicholas Mariscal, *Cello*

Hannah Robbins, *Viola da gamba*

Daniel Carson, *Bass*

Alice Baldwin, *Organ*

William Jon Gray, *Harpsichord*

Auer Concert Hall
Friday, February Third
Saturday, February Fourth
Eight O'Clock

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Part I
Betrayal and Arrest
Denial

Intermission (15 minutes)

Part II
Interrogation and Scourging
Condemnation and Crucifixion
The Death of Jesus
Burial

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Notes on the Program
Johannes-Passion, BWV 245
(St. John Passion)
JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Eisenach, Thuringia, on March 21, 1685, and died in Leipzig, Saxony, on July 28, 1750. The Johannes-Passion, *Bach's earliest known Passion, was performed for the first time on Good Friday, April 7, 1724 at the Nikolaikirche, one of the two churches in Leipzig for which Bach supplied liturgical music. It was repeated the following year with several important changes. At that time, Bach replaced the opening chorus, "Herr, unser Herrscher," with a gentle Lutheran chorale fantasia on the penitential hymn "O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde gross" (later transferred to the St. Matthew Passion). Three of the original arias were replaced, and the simple closing chorale was omitted in favor of a more complex setting of the German* Agnus Dei, *"Christe, du Lamm Gottes." Sometime in the early 1730's Bach cancelled all these revisions, added some music which is now lost, and concluded the Passion with the chorus "Ruht wohl." The fourth performance of the* Johannes-Passion *under Bach's own direction took place on April 5, 1749. Apart from some changes of words, the version used was basically that of the conjectural first version of 1724.*

Intending to preserve the Johannes-Passion *in the manner of the* Matthäus-Passion *three years earlier, in 1739 Bach began a new, revised fair copy of the score. This revision was abandoned after the first ten movements, which, in the revised score contain numerous minor changes. Our performance this evening does not attempt to recreate any actual performance of the work under the direction of the composer. We will perform the first ten movements in the composer's final revised versions, completing the work in the final copyists version of the 1724 draft score.*

The score for the Johannes-Passion *calls for tenor, bass, and soprano soloists to convey the Scriptural narrative (the Evangelist, Jesus, Pilate, Peter, the Servant, and the Maid), and soprano, alto, tenor, and bass soloists to provide poetic commentary on the narrative in the form of contemplative recitatives and arias. The chorus performs in both narrative and commentary roles in the work, in the crowd choruses, in the Lutheran chorales, and in the large framing choruses. The instrumentation calls for two flutes, two oboes (doubling oboes d'amore and oboe da caccia), bassoon, viola da gamba, strings, organ, and harpsichord.*

A few years before Bach arrived in Leipzig in 1723 the musical style to which the Passion was sung on Good Friday had been drastically revised. The ancient plainsong Passion with brief polyphonic interpolations, used there since the sixteenth century, was replaced by a setting of the entire biblical text in continuous polyphony. This "motet" passion soon yielded in turn to the more modern "oratorio passion" in which the scriptural passages were rendered in recitative, with interpolated chorales and arias functioning as devotional commentary. In 1724 Bach had his first opportunity to present a Passion of this newest type, and for this purpose he chose the narrative found in St. John's Gospel, the text traditional on Good Friday.

Despite the overwhelming richness and magnificence of the arias and choruses in the Bach Passions, one must never forget that the words of the Evangelist are the essential core from which these expressive elements spring. They are reactions to and reflections on the events set forth by the Evangelist. Most of the aria texts in the St. John Passion derive from a passion oratorio libretto by the Hamburg poet, B. H. Brockes, first set to music in 1712 by Reinhard Keiser. Bach may have selected all the "commentary" texts himself from this and other sources. If so, he also chose unfailingly appropriate chorale strophes, drawing on his unsurpassed knowledge of the chorale tradition.

The liturgical reading of the Passion on Good Friday does not include the long farewell discourses of Jesus which are placed by John in the context of the last supper. It begins with the scene of the betrayal and arrest of Jesus in the garden. From that point the narrative in the Gospel according to John is comparatively brief, only 82 verses, compared to 141 in the prescribed St. Matthew text. Events in the St. John Passion – and hence in Bach's setting of this text – succeed each other with frightening urgency and violence" the lyrical meditations and reflective chorales provide only infrequent respite.

The epic theme of the *Johannes-Passion* deals with the perception of truth in the midst of the chaos of human existence. In Part One, Peter – one of Jesus' most trusted disciples – lies three times, denying his association with Jesus in order to avoid being arrested, tortured, and executed himself. At the end of Part One he realizes that his dishonesty is an act from which he will never recover for the rest of his life. Part Two consists of a long, legalistic interrogation of Jesus by Pontius Pilate. Pilate tells the truth to the crowd, insisting that Jesus has committed no crime and is innocent, yet he allows Jesus to be executed in order to preserve his political career.

The eight arias and two accompanied recitatives of the St. John Passion waver between sympathetic reflection on the Savior's sufferings and guilty self-recrimination that they were caused by sin. In his music Bach reflects the potent images of the poetry. A typical instance occurs in the alto aria "Von den stricken meiner Sünden mich zu entbinden" ("To free me from the *bondage* of my sins is my Savior *bound*"). The music portrays vividly the winding toils which bind Jesus literally and the sinner figuratively. The chorale strophes dispersed throughout the Passion serve roughly the same purpose. Bach combined aria and chorale in the touching aria with chorus from Part Two, "Mein teurer Heiland." Poetry from the Brockes Passion alternates with the final strophe of the Lutheran chorale *Jesu Leiden, Pein und Tod*.

Structural analyses of the St. John Passion have demonstrated the important organizational function of the crowd choruses as well, exemplified by the repetition of the same music with different texts. For example, Bach illuminates the cynicism of the crowd's insistence on condemning Jesus for his infractions of Jewish law ("we have a law"), while telling Pilate that: "If *you* let this man go free, *you* are no friend of Caesar." The matter of making choices is also tellingly illustrated for the crowd's choice of Barrabas ("Nicht diesen") and the high priests' claim before Pilate that: "We have no king but Caesar."

The final version of the St. John Passion contains two extended framing choral movements. It opens with the relentless "Herr, unser Herrscher," a chorus whose length establishes the epic dimensions of the entire work and musically sets the stage for the twisted machinations and suffering to come. The pulsing bass and crying, sustained woodwinds frame the agitated, restless string figurations and the choral outbursts of "Herr!" How different is the other, large-scale chorus at the end, "Ruht wohl," a massive sigh of resignation, and a prayer for peace. The significance of the final chorale which follows the touching movement cannot be underestimated. It formed part of the original version of the Passion. Bach omitted it from his second and third versions, but reinstated it in what became the final version. From its appearance in two cantatas for the feast of St. Michael it is evident that Bach thought of it not only as a funeral chorale but also as the bearer of an angelic, heavenly message of consolation and quiet triumph – a fitting conclusion to the turbulence of the St. John Passion.

Pro Arte Singers

William Jon Gray, *Conductor*

Juan Carlos Zamudio, *Associate Conductor*   Alice Baldwin, *Basso continuo*

Soprano
Jessica Beebe
Christine Buras
Alicia DePaolo
Matilda Edge
Jenny Kim
Jillian Law
Arwen Myers
Kimberly Redick

Mezzo-Soprano / Countertenor
Brennan Hall
Michael Linert
Alyssa Martin
Shelley Qian
Hannah Spence
Laura Thoreson
Bernadette Wagner

Tenor
Mason Copeland
Colin DeJong
Samuel Green
Andrew LeVan
Christopher Mechell
Michael Porter
Danny Xie

Baritone / Bass
Nicholas Bergin
Nathan Blustein
Paul Child
Kornilios Michailidis
Stephan Pace
Jonathan Rudy
Adam Walton
Juan Carlos Zamudio

Chamber Orchestra

Violin I
Lydia Umlauf
Yerim Lee
Lee Sheehan
Bo Yoon Choi
Brittany Henry
Jinty McTavish
Yuko Tatsumi

Violin II
Dechapol Kowintaweewat
Azusa Chapman
Megan Zapfe
Pablo Munoz
Seowon Lee
Hanna Woo

Viola
Laurent Grillet
Emilee Newell

Olivia Chew
Sekyeong Cheon

Cello
Nicholas Mariscal
Hanearl Kim
Julian Müller
Joseph Tatum

Bass
Daniel Carson
Steven Metcalf

Flute
Jessica Lipstone
Casey Clyde

Oboe / Oboe d'amore /
  English Horn
Rachel Edwards
Natasha Wallin

Bassoon
Reiss Schoendorf

Viola da gamba
Hannah Robbins

Organ
Alice Baldwin

Harpsichord
William Jon Gray

Orchestra Manager
Anna Tsai
Yuko Tatsumi, ass't.

Librarian
Mariel Stauff