



**SYMPHONY CHOIR
OF CAPE TOWN**

50th Anniversary Celebration

The Symphony Choir of Cape Town presents

Bach
*CHRISTMAS
ORATORIO*

Conducted by Levi Alexander

2 December 2023

Lutheran Church

Strand Street

7PM

Doors open at 6.15PM



**50th Performance Anniversary
Celebration Concert**

A note from our Director

"Jauchzet, Frohlocket!"

After another busy year, there is so much to celebrate: being alive and well, family, friends, colleagues, community, music, relative peace and stability.

Shake off your burdens and let your spirit dance free in the glorious music of Bach. Whether your journey is religious and this performance sets you off on a glorious Adventide as you prepare your heart for the coming season - "*Offne dich, mein ganzes Herze, Jesus kommt und ziehet in.*" (BWV 61, Soprano Aria); if your presence is for a sensational aural and spiritual awakening; or if you are here because you love good classical music, there is nothing that compares to the glitter and joy of Christmas - revel in every minute!

Thank you for supporting the Symphony Choir of Cape Town, our choir members, musicians and soloists - we truly appreciate it.

I'd like to wish you all a blessed Christmas and a wonderful New Year.

**Levi Alexander
Director, Symphony Choir of Cape Town**

PROGRAMME

Paul Manz – E'en So, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come

J S Bach – Cantata Nun Komm der Heiden Heiland BWV 61

**J S Bach – Christmas Oratorio (*Weihnachtsoratorium*)
BWV 248 (Part 1)**

****** Interval ******

**J S Bach – Christmas Oratorio (*Weihnachtsoratorium*)
BWV 248 (Parts 2-3)**

PROGRAMME NOTES

Paul Manz – E'en So, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come

Paul Otto Manz (1919 – 2009), was an American composer for choir and organ. His most famous choral work is the Advent motet "*E'en So, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come*". Written in 1953, the lyrics (from the Book of Revelation) were adapted by his wife, Ruth Manz at a time when their threeyear-old son was critically ill. Paul Manz performed in churches and cathedrals in the USA and abroad, and was in great demand for his hymn festivals, which are his legacy as a church musician. In these events, instead of playing traditional organ recitals, Manz would generally lead a "festival" of hymns from the organ, in which he introduced each hymn with one of his famously creative organ improvisations based on the hymn tune in question. His most famous organ works are his volumes of neo-Baroque chorale preludes and partitas. He is listed as one of the "101 Most Notable Organists of the 20th Century".
(thanks Wikipedia)

What is a Motet?

In Western classical music, a motet is mainly a vocal musical composition, of highly diverse form and style, from the high medieval music to the present. The motet was one of the pre-eminent polyphonic forms of Renaissance music.

A piece of music in several parts with words is as precise a definition of a motet as will serve from the 13th to the late 16th century and beyond.

(Wikipedia)

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750)

Johann Sebastian Bach has been called *the* definitive Baroque composer. He was born in 1685 in Eisenach in Germany, and was a prolific composer, organist, harpsichordist, violist and violinist. The music he wrote ranged from solo instrumental works to huge sacred choral pieces; instrumental concertos and collections of keyboard music that pushed his contemporary instrumentalists to their limits.

www.classicfm.com

What is Baroque music?

The Baroque period refers to an era that started around 1600 and ended around 1750, and included composers like Bach, Vivaldi and Handel, who pioneered new styles like the concerto, the sonata and opera.

The loosening of the Church's political control of Europe at that time meant that non-religious music could now flourish, in particular instrumental music. The idea that instruments should be grouped together in a standard way created the first versions of the modern orchestra.

Bach is regarded as one of the greatest geniuses in the history of music. He demonstrated an approach to harmony that dominated music until the late 19th century.

<https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/periods-genres/baroque/>

J S Bach – Cantata Nun Komm der Heiden Heiland

Johann Sebastian Bach composed the church cantata, *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* (Now come, Saviour of the heathens), **BWV 61**, for the first Sunday in Advent, the Sunday which traditionally begins the liturgical year. It was first performed exactly 309 years ago, on 2 December 1714 in Leipzig.

The cantata text was provided by Erdmann Neumeister, who quoted the Book of Revelation and framed his work in part from Martin Luther's "*Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*", the main hymn for Advent with a melody based on Medieval chant.

J S Bach – Christmas Oratorio

J S Bach's Christmas Oratorio (in German *Weihnachtsoratorium*), BWV 248, was completed for the Christmas season of 1734. Bach wrote it for two Leipzig churches, St. Thomas and St. Nicholas, for which he served as music director. It is in six parts, each part a cantata intended for performance on six different feast days over a two-week period during the festive season. Each cantata has its own story, and its own sound. This evening we present the first three parts, or cantatas.

The **first part** describes the birth of Jesus; the **second** the annunciation to the shepherds; and the **third** the adoration of the shepherds.

While in cantata format (chorus plus soloists), the oratorio includes an 'evangelist' who narrates the story in the form of a recitative.

We do not know if this Oratorio was ever presented during Bach's lifetime after its initial performance, for the work quickly faded into oblivion and was unheard for more than a century. Now, however, it is performed extensively in Europe, and has become the seasonal equivalent to the English-speaking world's 'Messiah'.

Cantata, oratorio, or opera?

Cantatas and oratorios are sung musical performances from the Baroque period that include recitative arias, choruses and duets. They lack staging, sets, costumes or action, which distinguishes them from opera.

A **cantata** is the shortest of the three and is a piece of sacred music used in various religious services, but it doesn't necessarily tell a story. It features soloists, a chorus and an orchestra.

An **oratorio** is a long religious work that tells a story and is usually a concert piece. Oratorio singers don't act out their parts on stage. They stand with the rest of the chorus while a narrator explains the scenes.

The plot of an **opera** tells a story but is not usually religious.

<https://alldifferences.com/difference-between-cantata-and-oratorio/>

A little more about the Weihnachtsoratorium

The Christmas Oratorio is mostly a skilful parody of movements from a number of secular cantatas composed by Bach in 1733 and 1734. He used the music and added new texts appropriate for the individual Christmas festivals.

The music of six of the movements comes from a cantata written for the 11th birthday of Prince Friedrich Christian of Saxony while another six were taken from cantatas written for the birthday of his mother, Maria Josepha, Electress of Saxony and Queen of Poland and for the accession to the throne of his father, August II/III Elector of Saxony and King of Poland.

Some have had problems with Bach adapting royal birthday cantatas to celebrate the birth of Christ, but in the period prior to the French and American revolutions royalty was understood in theological terms. When Bach and his contemporaries celebrated the earthly majesty of their ruler they did so with the understanding that such dignity is God-given, and that, however imperfectly the ruler may exercise his office, it is the office embodied by the person, rather than the person itself, that is being celebrated. From Bach's point of view, the celebration of the birthday of a prince is also a celebration of the majesty of God, and therefore the music composed for such an occasion can be reused for the overt praise of the 'royal' birth of the Son of God.

Thanks to John Butt: The Cambridge Companion to Bach

Who blinded Bach?

In April 1750 Bach went under the knife of English eye surgeon John Taylor, with disastrous results. After years of poring over manuscripts in semi-darkness, Bach was scarcely able to see and 'had a very painful disorder in the eyes'. John Taylor, surgeon to King George II, was in Leipzig in April 1750 and carried out two operations on Bach for cataracts.

At first, the treatment seemed to be a success, but very soon, Bach became completely blind. Taylor apparently paid little regard to hygiene when he worked, and his operations were frequently followed by serious complications. Despite his condition, Bach continued to compose, his son-in-law acting as his scribe. But by July 1750, he slipped into a coma and died. Whether or not his death came directly as a result of Taylor's treatment remains unknown.

<https://www.classical-music.com/>

The Lutheran Swan

Have you noticed the swan above the pulpit?

Jan Hus (1370-1415), whose name literally means 'goose' in the Bohemian language, had a strong influence on Martin Luther and the Reformation. He was excommunicated for his beliefs and burned at the stake in July 1415. Just prior to being burned, he was ordered to recant his teachings. He responded:

"You are now going to burn a goose, but in 100 years you will have a swan which you can neither roast nor boil".

Almost exactly 100 years later, in October 1517, Martin Luther posted his Theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg, and the Reformation was started. Lutheran art frequently portrays Luther with a swan, and it has become the symbol of the Lutheran Church.

LEVI ALEXANDER – Director



Levi Alexander graduated *cum laude* with a Masters in Music, specialising in Choral Conducting from Stellenbosch University. He studied for a Bachelor's Degree of Music in baritone saxophone performance and conducting at the SACM (UCT). He earned his Licentiate Diploma (LTCL) in baritone saxophone performance and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education specialising in the Music and Creative Arts from Rhodes University.

He has been a multi-woodwind-instrumentalist in the musical orchestras of the Gilbert and Sullivan Society and has performed in a number of Wind Ensembles and Bands and is an *ad hoc* saxophonist to the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra. He is currently a member of True Voices *ad hoc*, Cape Consort *ad hoc* and the St Michael's and All Angels Church Choir.

Levi was appointed assistant conductor of the SCCT (2015-2021). He is currently the Department Head of Music at SACS High School (2021) where he started his tenure in 2015.

As Director of the SCCT since 2021, Levi hopes to grow both the SACS Music Department and Symphony Choir of Cape Town, his two primary focus areas, to continue to raise the high standard over the coming years.

WARREN PATIENTIA – SCCT accompanist



In 2021, Warren Patientia was appointed as the resident accompanist (piano and organ) for the Symphony Choir of Cape Town.

He started his music training from an early age in the New Apostolic Church and went on to graduate from the University of Cape Town with a B.Mus.Ed degree in 2010, after which he studied conducting under Margaret Barlow (choral) and Alexander Fokkens (orchestral). He has performed in and accompanied various ensembles in Cape Town.

His focus is on music education, and he is the choir director for the SACS High School Choir, where a number of significant performances include *African Sanctus* (2013), Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* (2014), John Rutter's *Requiem* (2015) and Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man* (2019). He has led the SACS choir in collaborations with other school choirs, the Cape Town Youth Choir and the Cape Town Male Voice Choir.

Soprano: Elsabé Richter



Elsabé Richter has a M. Mus. degree in Vocal Performance from the North-West University, where she studied under baritone Werner Nel. During her studies she was awarded numerous prizes and bursaries, most notably a Norwegian scholarship for a year's academic study at the Norwegian Academy of Music. Here she studied under the guidance of Svein Bjørkøy, Håkan Hagegård and Mona Julsrud. She has received masterclasses from various singers and musicians including Kobie van Rensburg, Marcel Beekman, Maarten Koningsberger, Albie and Hanna van Schalkwyk, Mimi Coertse, Erica Eloff, Eric Müller, Patricia Misslin, Paul Kiesgen and Lawrence Zazzo.

Her repertoire encompasses a wide range of early music, art songs and opera as well as oratorio and other sacred works. She is a voice lecturer at Stellenbosch University and also teaches at La Rochelle Girls' High School. She regularly performs with various ensembles, choirs and orchestras.

Baritone: William Berger



William Berger was a member of the Drakensberg Boys' Choir and the inaugural recipient of the Deon van der Walt UNISA/SAMRO bursary at age 17, before commencing his studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London supported by the Kathleen Ferrier Bursary Award and the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust.

William has distinguished himself as a performing artist on the international stage and has appeared in both the Royal Opera House, London and Kennedy Center, Washington D.C.

Recent local engagements have included regular collaboration with the Cape Town Baroque Orchestra including Monteverdi's *Vespro della Beate Vergine*, Mahler's *Rückert Lieder* with the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra, and Bizet's *Les Pêcheurs du*

Perles and *Le Nozze di Figaro* for Cape Town Opera. A former Principal Artist with English National Opera, William Berger was awarded the honour "Associate of the Royal Academy of Music" in 2009.

Tenor: Arthur Swan



Arthur Swan studied opera at the South African College of Music and was a member of Cape Town Opera's Young Artists' Programme. His lyric tenor has been in demand on both the concert and opera stage, in repertoire ranging from the baroque to late romantic, thanks to what critics have described as a "nobility" and "warmth" of tone, as well as his natural vocal flexibility and versatility.

He has performed most of the standard oratorio repertoire, including the Evangelist and Arias in J.S. Bach's *St. John* and *St. Matthew Passions*, and Handel's *Messiah*, as well as some lesser-known works. His opera repertoire includes works by Mozart, Rossini, Donizetti, Bizet, Puccini and Offenbach. After a professional career that took him from Cape Town to Windhoek and London to Hong Kong, Arthur is now happily settled in Cape Town.

Alto: Lente Louw



Lente Louw is an established oratorio, chamber music and ensemble singer, originally from Pretoria. She holds an LLM from North West University, where she began her voice training under Werner Nel. After relocating to Cape Town, she regularly sang under the baton of Barry Smith from 2008 until his retirement in 2015. In 2015 she completed the practical requirements for an MMus in Singing Performance at the University of Stellenbosch.

Having developed a keen interest in early music, she founded the Lutesong duo for early music with lutenist husband Uwe Grosse in 2017. They have performed at arts festivals and concert venues in Cape Town and Germany. This expanded to the Lutesong Consort, an ensemble of up to 12 singers and lute-family instruments that specialize in vocal repertoire from mostly the 16th and 17th centuries. They regularly perform at the Cape Town Baroque Festival and the Cape Town Baroque Orchestra for performances and educational projects. Lente teaches singing at Bishops Diocesan College and Herschel School for Girls in Cape Town.

THE SYMPHONY CHOIR OF CAPE TOWN

The Symphony Choir of Cape Town (SCCT) is a non-profit organisation consisting of between 50 and 70 members from all walks of life with a common love of singing, especially choral music. The Choir was founded in 1972 by Dr Barry Smith as an adjunct to the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra, performing major choral works each year under the baton of well-known guest conductors. Since 1993 the Choir has been an independent body and has promoted and managed its own concerts.

Under the direction of Levi Alexander, with Warren Patientia as accompanist, the choir aims to provide quality music to the public in conjunction with community organisations and emerging young soloists and conductors.

As we celebrate our 50th performance anniversary as a choir in Cape Town, here are some fun facts:

- The choir's debut performance was early in **1973** – a performance of Beethoven's 9th Symphony with what later became the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra, and conducted by Louis Fremaux.
- Ten years later, in May **1983**, the same work was performed, conducted by visiting Japanese conductor Yoshimi Takeda; and
- Ten years after that, in **1993**, the work was again performed by the SCCT, conducted by Romanian-German conductor, Erich Bergel.

In 2007, Alexander Fokkens became our director.

Levi Alexander took over director duties in 2021.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church, Strand Street

The church complex originated in the 1760s and has functioned as a church from the 1780s. There is very little in this church that is not original, and all the detail is in the remarkable carvings by 18th century sculptor, Anton Anreith.

Notice the tall Gothic-arched windows, the stinkwood and yellowwood panelled galleries and of course, the pulpit, which is the church's masterpiece.

If you are wondering why there are limited or no sight-lines in the gallery, thank our ancestors. Slaves in the Cape Colony had to sit upstairs and were only allowed to see "die predikant op die preekstoel."

More information may be obtained from www.outsiderswithin.co.za and Duncan, P. and A. Proust, 2013 "Hidden Cape Town". Struik

Our ability to continue as a choir and to be able to perform choral music for music lovers of Cape Town is entirely dependent on the generosity of our sponsors.



Rupert Music Foundation

This evening we thank especially

Rupert Music Foundation

for their ongoing support.

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