

Music of Comfort
Harmonium, A Classical Choral Society
March 18 and 19, 2000

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[Tristis est anima mea](#) Orlandus Lassus (1532-1594)
[Die mit tränen säen](#) Johann Hermann Schein (1586-1630)
Darren O'Neill, guitar

[Three Motets](#) Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924)
Beati quorum via
Justorum animae
Caelos ascendit hodie

Three Romantic Motets

[Os Justi](#) Anton Bruckner (1824-1894)
[O Tod, wie bitter bist du](#) (Op.110 No.3) Max Reger (1872-1916)
[Lass dich nur nichts nicht dauren](#) Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

INTERMISSION

[Cantata No. 21: Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis](#) Johann Sebastian Bach(1685-1750)

First Part: *Sinfonia*
 Chorus: Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis
 Aria
 Marilyn Lenat, soprano
 Recitative and Aria
 Marc Persing, tenor
 Chorus: Was betrübst du dich?
 Leslie Leeman, Kathryn Deguire, Jim Branigan, Edward Corson, solo quartet

Second Part: *Recitative and Aria*
 Darlene Wyzga, soprano; John Lamb, bass
 Chorus: Sei nun wieder zufrieden
 Linda Lancaster, Kate Kurz ,Peter Kurz, soloists
 Aria
 Marc Persing, tenor
 Chorus: Das Lamm, das erwürget ist
 Peter Kurz, James Kemp, Laura Wolverton, Leslie Adler, soloists

ORCHESTRA:

Rebecca Harris, Nancy Lederer, Gabriel Schaff, Jonathan Dinklage, Ruth Zumstein; violin.
Maggie Speier, Mary Babiars; viola.
Marnie Kaller, Vladimir Morgovsky; cello.
Jim Buchanan; bass.

Delia Montenegro; oboe.
 Richard Clymer, Ken De Carlo, Mark Lord; trumpets.
 Judy Hirshman; timpani.

PROGRAM NOTES:

The great Renaissance composer Orlandus Lassus composed a Maundy Thursday gem of a motet filled with text painting and subtle surprises in *Tristis est anima mea*. The motet starts with a sobbing motive, followed by a sustained, rising, suspensions ("sustinete hic") and an upward sweeping melisma pleads "keep watch with me." The circling of the mob is depicted by lines which circle up and down around themselves without really getting anywhere, while "vos fugam capietis" is a series of imitative "head motives." The sum total is an effective expression of Christ's suffering for our sins.

My soul is sorrowful even unto death.
 Remain here and watch with me.
 Now you will see the crowd which will surround me.
 You will take flight, and I will go to be sacrificed for you. ([to top](#))

Text painting is taken to an even more intense level in Schein's *Die mit tränen säen*, a setting of Psalm 126, vs. 5-6. This psalm captures the theme of this whole concert:

Those who sow in tears will reap with shouts of joy!
 He that goes forth weeping, bearing the seed for sowing,
 Shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

The rising chromatic lines and dissonant suspensions of the weeping sections contrast with the joyful leaps and triple rhythms of the joyous parts. Schein, like Schütz, followed in the tradition of Hassler, uniting the sweetness of the Italian madrigal style with a German seriousness. ([to top](#))

Stanford, with Parry heralded an English musical Renaissance, and his settings of Communion services and Evening Canticles are still widely used in the Anglican Church today. He was teacher to many important composers including Vaughan Williams, Ireland, and Holst. The three a cappella motets Op. 38, or (Op. 51 in some sources) are filled with expressive part-writing. They were written as graces, to be sung "in Hall" at Trinity College, Cambridge where Stanford was Professor of Music.

Beati quorum via

Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. (Psalm 119:1)

Justorum animae

The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and the torment of malice shall not touch them: in the sight of the unwise they seemed to die, but they are in peace. (Wisdom iii)

Caelos ascendit hodie

Today Jesus Christ the King of Glory ascended to the heavens. Alleluia!
 He sits at the right hand of the Father. Alleluia!
 He rules heaven and earth. Alleluia!
 Now all the psalms of David are fulfilled. Alleluia!
 Now the Lord sits with the Lord as one God. Alleluia!
 In this greatest triumph let us bless the Lord. Alleluia!
 Praised be the Holy Trinity. Alleluia!
 Thanks be to God! Alleluia! ([to top](#))

Anton Bruckner's motets are short masterpieces by the devout Catholic Austrian church musician and orchestral composer. *Os Justi*, with its long expansive lines, clear counterpoint, and expressive suspensions is one of his best. The text is appropriate for All Saints celebrations:

The just man shall expound to us wise and worthy things,
 His speech shall tell us of righteousness.
 The statutes of God shall be ever in his heart. ([to top](#))

Although Reger's organ music holds an important place in the repertoire, his vast output of orchestral and choral music, piano and chamber music is generally neglected outside of Germany. His unaccompanied motets are quite difficult, in the chromatic late romantic harmonic language of Wagner or early Schoenberg (such as *Friede auf Erden*). Reger's motet *O Tod wie bitter bist du* was completed in 1912. Reger wrote in a letter of the time "I have just finished the compilation of the text for a very sad motet for a five-voice a cappella choir. The words are taken from the Bible, and the composition will turn out a very sad work with a transfiguring conclusion, that is to say the conclusion is simply transfiguring death." Although written on five lines, with the divisi the work is really an eight-part (SSAATTBB) work. The source for the text is the Book of Jesus Sirach, the Jewish book of Wisdom, written about 190 B.C., which describes Death both as the spoiler of all joy and the benefactor of the sad, the weak, and the hopeless. Despite the dense, Wagnerian harmonies, the music also shows the influence of Bach, especially at the transfiguring second verse, the chorale-like comforting E major section.

O death, how bitter it is to remember you for a man
 At peace among his goods who prospers in everything
 And still has the strength to feed himself.

O death, your sentence is welcome to a man in want
 Whose strength is failing, to a man worn out with age,
 Worried about everything, disaffected beyond endurance. ([to top](#))

Bach's music was influential to Reger and Brahms, both organists. This motet, *Lass dich nur nichts nicht dauren* is also known as the *Geistliches Lied* (Op.30) (Spiritual Song) originally for organ and voices; performed here in a new arrangement in which string orchestra takes the part of the organ. This astoundingly lyrical and comforting work also shows Brahms' mastery of counterpoint--a double canon in ninths, tenor imitating the soprano, and bass the alto. This intellectual device yet remains subservient to the expressiveness of the music.

Lass dich nur nichts nicht dauren Paul Flemming (1609-1640), transl. John Floreen and Susan

McAdoo

Let not your heart be troubled with sorrow;
 Be calm now, for God provides;
 Content shall be my spirit.

Why would you now have cares for tomorrow?
 The Lord God omnipotent
 Shall grant to you his blessings.

So be in all your doings unswerving,
 Be steadfast; what God ordains
 Will always be your treasure. Amen. ([to top](#))

J. S. Bach's deep Lutheran faith led him to welcome rather than fear death, and he expressed this in many of his works, none more so than in Cantata 21: *Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis*. Although written "per ogni tempo" (for any time), the Cantata deals with grief over the death of a loved one, possibly Bach's dying friend and pupil, Prince Ernst of Weimar. The cantata begins mournfully, but ends joyously, as the spirit turns to heaven and finally with a festive chorus of praise that promises resurrection.

The opening Sinfonia of oboe and strings sets the mood of grief. The first chorus illustrates the contrast between the suffering of the soul (*Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis*) and the Lord's comfort (*deine Tröstungen erquickten meine Seele*) which is the theme of the entire cantata. The tempo changes, a characteristic of Bach's earlier cantatas, illustrate these changing moods. The soprano and tenor arias show a more "modern" style, with vivid sighing and weeping motives and concertante writing. The final chorus of the first half (*Was betrübst du dich?*) again turns from despair to hope.

The second part begins with a not unusual baroque dialog between soprano and bass representing bridegroom and bride, that is, Christ and the Soul. The next chorus uses the familiar chorale tune *If Thou But Suffer God that Guide Thee* which was often sung at funerals. By the final tenor aria, the soul has been comforted and is rejoicing, and by the final chorus festive trumpets and timpani join in the fugal hymn of praise.

Bach scholar Alfred Durr wrote "*Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis* is probably the most magnificent example of the cantatas of Bach's youthful period, and at the same time a farewell to them..." In any case, this many-faceted work presents a cohesive musical progression from sorrow to joy, weeping to praise. ([to top](#))