Bach: Christmas Oratorio

(Parts 1 to 3)

Tuesday 17 December 2013
WELCOME TO CADOGAN HALL

In the interests of your comfort and safety, please note the following:

• Latecomers will only be admitted to the auditorium during a suitable pause in the performance.

• Cadogan Hall is a totally non-smoking building.

• Glasses, bottles and food are not allowed in the auditorium.

• Photography, and the use of any video or audio recording equipment, is forbidden.

• Mobiles, Pagers & Watches: please ensure that you switch off your mobile phone and pager, and deactivate any digital alarm on your watch before the performance begins.

• First Aid: Please ask a Steward if you require assistance.

Thank you for your co-operation. We hope you enjoy the performance.

Programme designed by Stephen Rickett and edited by Sabine Köllmann and Eleanor Cowie

London Concert Choir - A company limited by guarantee, incorporated in England with registered number 3220578 and registered charity number 1057242

Registered Office 7 Ildersly Grove, Dulwich, London SE21 8EU
Bach: Christmas Oratorio

(Parts 1 to 3)

Mark Forkgen Conductor

Nicholas Hurndall Smith Evangelist (tenor)
Helen Meyerhoff soprano
Christopher Lowrey counter tenor
Giles Underwood bass

London Concert Choir
Counterpoint

There will be an INTERVAL of 20 minutes after Part Two
Contact the Elderly is the only national charity which aims to alleviate acute loneliness among isolated, older people, aged 75 and over, who live alone without nearby family or friends.

Supported by a network of volunteers, the charity organises free monthly Sunday afternoon tea parties for small groups of older people within local communities across England, Scotland and Wales.

One Sunday a month, each older guest is collected from their home by a volunteer driver and accompanied to a volunteer host’s home for an afternoon of tea, chat and friendship. The group is warmly welcomed by a different host each month, but the drivers remain the same, which means that over the months and years acquaintances turn into friends and loneliness is replaced by companionship.

Our tea parties are a real lifeline of friendship for our older guests and bring people of all ages together. Through the gatherings, fulfilling friendships and support networks develop, and everyone involved has something to look forward to each month.

If you would like to know more about volunteering for Contact the Elderly please visit our website or call Freephone 0800 716543

There will be a collection for Contact the Elderly after the concert.

www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk

Contact the Elderly is a registered charity in England and Wales (1146149) and in Scotland (SC039377). Company Number (07869142) Registered office: 15 Henrietta Street, London WC2E 8QG.
In the 18th century the town of Leipzig celebrated the birth of Jesus and the events surrounding it not with a single feast day but with a ‘season’ – six special commemorations occurring between Christmas Day and the Feast of the Epiphany: the birth of Jesus (25th December), the announcement to the shepherds by a host of angels (26th December), the adoration of the child by the shepherds (27th December), the circumcision and naming of Jesus (New Year’s Day), the coming of the Magi from the East to find the child “born King of the Jews” (the Sunday after New Year’s Day), and finally the Magi’s worship with their gifts (6th January).

Bach dedicated a cantata to each of these days, recounting the story, and commenting and reflecting on the events and their meaning. Together these six cantatas formed the Christmas Oratorio, BWV 248, which was performed in the two main Leipzig churches with which Bach was associated, the Thomaskirche and the Nikolaikirche, over the Christmas season of 1734/35.

Owing to its cantata format the work is not an oratorio in the usual sense. Like the St Matthew and St John Passions it includes a tenor Evangelist, who narrates the story of the birth of Christ as it appears in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. In order to distinguish between narrative and commentary all the Evangelist’s recitatives – the Gospel texts – are secco (dry, with simple chords from cello and organ), while the other recitatives have obligato instruments or string accompaniment. These recitatives lead to lyrical meditations, or arias, while the voice of the people is represented in the chorales – rich and imaginative harmonisations of hymn tunes which would have been mostly well known to
Bach’s congregations. The compiler of the libretto remains unknown, but most scholars believe that Christian Friedrich Henrici, a German poet who, under the pseudonym Picander, was the librettist for many of Bach’s Leipzig cantatas, probably gathered and arranged the texts.

Bach had composed virtually all of his cantatas when he came to assemble the Christmas Oratorio. In fact many of the movements are adaptations (so-called parodies) of two earlier secular cantatas dating from 1733: *Laßt uns sorgen, laßt uns wachen* (*Hercules at the Crossroads*, BWV 213), composed for the 11th birthday of Friedrich Christian, Prince Elector of Saxony, and *Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten* (*Sound the drums, ring out the trumpets*, BWV 214), written to celebrate the birthday of Friedrich’s mother, Maria Josepha, Queen of Poland and Electress.

It has been suggested that in composing these secular works, Bach had always intended to adapt them for use in church, however this process of ‘parodying’ his own work makes it difficult to judge the extent to which he viewed the Christmas Oratorio as an entity. There are strong indications, such as the unifying aspect of the same chorale used in the first and last cantatas; the fact that the oratorio begins and ends in D major, and that all of the opening choruses are in three, a symbol of the Holy Trinity. Yet there is no one consistent structural pattern uniting these cantatas. Five of them begin with a rousing major-key chorus, and one with a sinfonia. All but one end with a chorale, but there is no uniformity in their presentation and they would not have been heard together under Bach’s direction.

Celebrating the season of Advent, tonight’s performance of the first three cantatas is thematically unified by the events surrounding the birth of Jesus, as described by St Luke.
Mark Forkgen conductor

Mark Forkgen has been Music Director of London Concert Choir since 1996. He is also Music Director of Canticum chamber choir, Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of Kokoro (the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra’s New Music Group), conductor of the Dorset Youth Orchestra and Director of Music at Tonbridge School. He has conducted major UK orchestras, including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, City of London Sinfonia, English Chamber Orchestra, English Northern Philharmonia and Manchester Camerata, appearing at major venues, including the Royal Festival Hall, the Barbican and the Royal Albert Hall.

A specialist in the field of choral and contemporary music, Mark has given the first performances of more than 100 works. He has also conducted stage works with the Trestle Theatre Company and Britten Sinfonia, and contemporary opera with the Unicorn Theatre Company and an ensemble from the Philharmonia, at the Linbury Studio, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

Mark’s wide range of conducting also includes performances with Deep Purple for the Henley Festival and recreating Pink Floyd’s Atom Heart Mother in the Chelsea Festival. He has been Conductor and Artistic Advisor for highly acclaimed festivals including: Sir Peter Maxwell Davies’ 70th Birthday; Stravinsky, ‘A Festival of Britten’, ‘Music of the Americas’, ‘Britain since Britten’ and ‘East meets West’. In Europe he has conducted in Denmark (performances of Stravinsky’s The Rite of Spring), Spain, France, Belgium, Germany, Holland, Eire, the Czech Republic and Italy (including Handel’s Messiah in Sienna and Israel in Egypt at the Viterbo Early Music Festival).

Recent seasons have included staged performances of Stravinsky’s The Soldier’s Tale, a major project for the Cultural Olympiad, recordings for BBC Radio 3 for ‘Music Nation’, a recital at the Royal Opera House and Sondheim’s Sweeney Todd. Last season included a production of Weill’s Threepenny Opera, a concert at the Royal Albert Hall involving 1500 performers and performances in Hong Kong and Bulgaria.
Nicholas Hurndall Smith

Evangelist (tenor)

Nicholas Hurndall Smith studied music at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, where he was organ scholar, before deciding to study singing at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

On the concert stage he has performed Bach cantatas with the Academy of Ancient Music, The Fairy Queen with the English Concert, and Coridon Acis and Galatea for the Gabrieli Consort in the Wigmore Hall. Nicholas regularly performs Bach cantatas with the Feinstein Ensemble and the London Bach Singers. He recently made his debut with the viol consort Fretwork in a recital of Purcell and Dowland. He is a regular guest soloist with the group Eclipse, bringing music, songs, dance and legends of the British Isles to venues throughout the UK and as far afield as Istanbul. His operatic roles include Lurcanio Ariodante (English Touring Opera), Tamino The Magic Flute and Flute A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Longborough Festival Opera), Ecclitico Il mondo della luna (Opera della luna), Normanno Lucia di Lammermoor (Iford Arts) and Sellem The Rake’s Progress (Opera East).

An established Britten singer, he has sung St Nicolas with the London Mozart Players and the English Chamber Orchestra and in Cumbria with Levens Choir. He has had a long association with Cumbria Choral Initiative, which combines the choral societies of Cumbria, and with them has sung Britten’s War Requiem, Finzi’s Intimations of Immortality and Howell’s In Paradisum. He has also sung Britten’s Serenade with the Haffner Orchestra.

Nicholas is a frequent visitor to Norway and Germany, and in particular to Schleswig Holstein, returning several times a year for performances of Schütz’s Weihnachtshistorie, Handel’s Messiah and Bach’s Christmas Oratorio and Passions. He has been a member of the award-winning solo voice ensemble I Fagiolini for twenty years, taking part in their innovative staged productions of Renaissance and Baroque music theatre works and singing the title role in Carissimi’s Jonah in the BBC Proms.

Nicholas also gives regular song recitals in Germany and throughout the UK, most recently a programme of music from Venice, ranging from Monteverdi to Arthur Sullivan. He is visiting singing teacher at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. Nicholas enjoys adding rock-climbs to his repertoire; in August 2012 he completed a traverse of the Matterhorn, raising £10,000 for the charity Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research.
Soprano Helen Meyerhoff has been praised in *The New York Times* for the “unabashed lushness” of her voice with her interpretation described by *The Independent* as “triumphant... having the utmost dramatic force”. Since making her debuts both at the Wigmore Hall and on BBC Radio 3 (live from the City of London Festival) Helen has frequently appeared as a recitalist with leading accompanists and ensembles and orchestras internationally.

London concerts include regular performances in the Purcell Room, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Barbican, St John’s, Smith Square and Cadogan Hall. She has also appeared as a guest artist in the Schoenberg Centre, Vienna, for Bargemusic in New York, and in recital with Jonathan Zak in Tel Aviv, as well as for festivals such as Edinburgh, Cheltenham, Leamington, Oxford Contemporary, Boxgrove and Bromsgrove.

Helen has sung the roles of Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Titania (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*) and Belinda (*Dido and Aeneas*) for Opera Shorts; Papagena (*Die Zauberflöte*) for the Aldeburgh Festival and Clorinda (*Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*) for the Northern Aldeborough Festival, and was a finalist in the New York Centre for Contemporary Opera Competition. In 2011 Helen sang in Haydn’s *Mass in Time of War* and Vaughan Williams’ *Dona nobis pacem* with London Concert Choir in Augsburg and London.

A specialist in the contemporary repertoire, she has given many UK and World premieres, recently singing Judith Weir’s *King Harald’s Saga* for the Vale of Glamorgan Festival and Sprechstimme in Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire* for the Rambert Dance Company. Helen has worked closely with Arvo Pärt, Judith Bingham and Naji Hakim; Hakim and Bingham both having written works for her voice. Helen has appeared and performed several times for BBC Radio 3’s *In Tune* and was featured on BBC Radio 4’s *A Voice Like Honey*. Her discography includes music by Pärt, Bliss, Langlais, Vierne, and Patterson.
Christopher Lowrey counter tenor

Originally from the United States, Christopher Lowrey holds degrees with distinction from Brown University, St John’s College, Cambridge, and the Royal College of Music International Opera School. He won the New England Regional Finals of the 2013 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, the London Handel Society’s Michael Oliver Prize in 2010, and was a finalist in the 2008 London Bach Society Competition. He has studied with Russell Smythe, Derek Lee Ragin, Ashley Stafford, and Pierre Massé.

Christopher has sung for such distinguished conductors as Laurence Cummings, Christian Curnyn, Stephen Layton, Masaaki Suzuki, Leonardo García-Alarcón, and Paul Agnew, in a wide range of venues including La Fenice, Festival d’Aix en Provence, London Handel Festival, and the Cadogan Hall. He last sang with London Concert Choir in Handel’s Messiah. His solo recordings include a disc of Handel Arias for the EMI Emerging Artists Series, Handel and Vivaldi Dixit Dominus and the Bernstein Missa Brevis. Upcoming engagements include Monteverdi’s Orfeo (Pastore) with the Academy of Ancient Music under Richard Egarr at the Barbican, a tour to France in the world premiere of Cavalli’s recently rediscovered opera Elena, Monteverdi’s Il ritorno d’Ulisse in Patria for Boston Baroque, and Bach’s Mass in B Minor with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

His recent roles include Joacim in Handel’s Susanna for the Iford Festival, Creonte in the world premiere of the Portuguese baroque opera L’Ippolito by Almeida at the Casa da Musica, the title role in Handel’s The Choice of Hercules for Bampton Festival Opera, the title role of Alessandro, Mirtillo in Il Pastor Fido, and Bertarido in Rodelinda for the London Handel Festivals 2009-11 respectively; Oberon in the Royal College of Music’s production of Britten’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, and Orpheus in Gluck’s Orfeo ed Euridice. Recent concert appearances include Handel’s Messiah with the Royal National Scottish Orchestra, Handel’s Il trionfo del tempo e del disinganno (Disinganno) with La Nuova Musica, Bach’s Christmas Oratorio in Denmark, Bach’s Mass in B Minor on tour, Messiah at St George’s Hanover Square, a programme of Handel’s Divine Music for Voices conducted by Benedict Hoffnung, and solo recitals with the Croatian Baroque Orchestra and the Providence Museum Orchestra.
Robert Rice bass

Among the younger generation of British baritones, Robert Rice has established a reputation as an insightful interpreter of challenging repertoire. He is a valued collaborator and creator of roles in modern chamber opera and music theatre, as well as a concert singer of distinction. Having been a choral scholar at King’s College, Cambridge, and a postgraduate at the Royal Academy of Music under Mark Wildman, he continued his studies with Richard Smart and Sheila Barnes.

As a concert artist Robert undertakes a wide variety of repertoire. Recent concerts have included Brahms’ Ein Deutsches Requiem in Birmingham Symphony Hall, plus Rossini’s Petite Messe Solennelle and Beethoven’s Mass in C. This season he can be heard in Monteverdi’s Vespers of 1610, Bach’s Passions, Elgar’s The Apostles and singing the role of Farismene in Handel’s Radamisto for The English Concert. In recital he has recently collaborated with guitarist Erich Schachtner in Bavaria and Berlin, and also with pianist Will Vann at the London English Song Festival and at York Late Music, where this coming April they will revisit the York Songbook.

His stage work often involves contemporary music: he has toured Bosnia, Scotland and England with Opera Circus, appearing as Hasan in Nigel Osborne’s well-received Differences in Demolitions, and in their previous production Arcane, with music by Paul Clark. Further stage appearances include Herakles in The Birds, Tempter in The Martyrdom of St Magnus, both for The Opera Group, and Maxwell Davies’ Eight Songs for a Mad King on the South Bank. He created the Ivory Carver in Judith Bingham’s The Ivory Tree at St Edmundsbury Cathedral.

Robert has recorded Judas in The Apostles with Canterbury Choral Society and the Philharmonia Orchestra. He is also featured on Monteverdi’s Vespers of 1610 with the Southern Sinfonia and the Rodolfus Choir, and the Dufay Collective’s The Play of Daniel. His recording of Cornelius’ Die Drei Könige (The Three Kings) with the choir Polyphony is a favourite on both Classic FM and BBC Radio 3 whenever Christmas approaches. A skilled arranger of vocal music in many genres, he is published by Novello & Co. Ltd.
London Concert Choir

London Concert Choir, founded as the Brompton Choral Society in 1960, now has around 150 members of a wide range of ages and is notable for its unusually broad musical repertoire. With Music Director Mark Forkgen the choir regularly appears at all the major London concert venues and in cathedrals and churches in and around the capital, as well as touring to European destinations. In 2011 a performance of Verdi’s Requiem with the Augsburg Basilica Choir in the Royal Festival Hall was followed by a joint concert at the Augsburg Peace Festival. A tour to Italy is planned for July 2014.

To celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2010 the choir sang Britten’s War Requiem at the Barbican with Southbank Sinfonia and in Salisbury Cathedral with Dorset Youth Orchestra. Since then Southbank Sinfonia have joined with LCC in Elgar’s Dream of Gerontius at the Royal Festival Hall, and for an exhilarating concert of French music at the Barbican. Major works in earlier seasons include Beethoven’s Missa Solemnis with the English Chamber Orchestra and Vaughan Williams’ Sea Symphony with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

On a smaller scale, LCC has sung rarely-heard settings of the Russian Orthodox liturgy and Rossini’s Petite Messe Solennelle. Performances with Counterpoint include Handel’s Messiah and Bach’s St Matthew Passion.

In July 2012 LCC was joined by the Kokoro ensemble, youth orchestras and choirs from local schools for the London premiere of Stephen McNeff’s opera-oratorio The Chalk Legend. Concert performances of operas and musicals have included Gluck’s Orfeo, Purcell’s Dido and Aeneas, Gershwin’s Porgy and Bess and Lerner and Loewe’s My Fair Lady. The choir often gives concerts for charity and has commissioned a number of new works.
Members of London Concert Choir

**Soprano**
Hannah Baker
Gillian Bibby
Dagmar Binsted
Mickey Bowden
Alison Carpenter
Eleanor Cowie
Rachael Crook
Sally Davis
Gillian Denham
Susan Deville
Nicola Dixon-Brown
Emily Dresner
Serena Ede
Sarah French
Lisa Gardner
Sonja Gray
Jennifer Greenway
Jennifer Hadley
Emma Heath
Ruth Hobbs
Laura Holland
Charlotte Hunt
Christine Ingram
Anna Isworth
Jane Joyce
Vickie Kelly
Anna Kosicka
Frances Lake
Tracy LeBrun
Susanna Lutman
Nadine Martin
Elsa Martinez
Jessica Metcalfe
Stephanie Moussadis
Carolyn Newman
Melissa Parkin
Jutta Raftery
Ella Salter

Ines Schlenker
Frances Shaw
Caroline Sheppard
Sarah Taylor
Amy Thomas
Teresa Tilden
Natalie Tompkins
Emily Tuite
Francesca Walsh
Janet Wells
Julie Wilson
Fiona Wilson

**Alto**
Helen Beddall-Smith
Frances Cave
Lucy Charman
Carys Cooper
Deborah Curle
Georgie Day
Kathleen Dormer
Rebecca Foulkes
Georgina Furr
Claire Garbett
Anna Garnier
Mary Glanville
Muriel Hall
Penny Hatfield
Andrea Hegedus
Joan Herbert
Caroline Holloway
China Jarvis
Chris Joseph
Sabine Koellmann
Joanna Kramer
Helene Labit
Lorna Lewis
Norma MacMillan
Bridget Maidment
Sophie Mariss
Anna Metcalf
Sopby Miles
Judith Paterson
Rachel Pearson
Gillian Perry
Katja Pluto
Dubravka Polic
Katie Prior
Pippa Ranger
Tabitha Strydom
Kate Tranter
Rachel Vroom
Gabriel West
Barbara Whent
Jane Whittaker
Belinda Whittingham
June Williams
Nathalie Wilson

**Tenor**
Andrew Bolan
Christopher Boustred
David Broad
Roy Carryer
Mark Cheesman
Dave Dosoruth
James Ede
Fabyan Evans
John Galt
Nicholas Hall
Sam Hsnsford
Richard Holmes
David Ireland
Tom Jewell
Carolyn Knight
Eli Konvitz
Ian Leslie
Ben Martin

Stephen Rickett
Tim Steer
Tim Thirlway

**Bass**
Colin Allies
Peter Banks
Ed Brown
Richard Burbury
Henry Cook
Bill Cook
Andrew Cullen
Albert Edwards
James Finlay
Richard Gillard
Nigel Grieve
Nigel Hartnell
Graham Hick
Richard Hughes
Ian Judson
Robert Kealey
Stefan Klaazen
Simon Livesey
Angus Macdonald
Alan Machacek
Ian Mackintosh
Christopher Powell-Smith
Simon Retallack
Morgan Roberts
Anthony Sharp
Ryszard Stepaniuk
William Tilden
Tony Trowles
Philip Vickers
Dai Whittingham
Thomas Wood
Counterpoint

The Counterpoint ensemble was formed in 2000 specifically to work with vocal ensembles. Its membership is drawn from the leading young period instrument specialists living and working in London, players who have performed and recorded with many of the leading British early music ensembles, such as the English Baroque Soloists, the Parley of Instruments, Florilegium, The Academy of Ancient Music and The English Concert. The ensemble uses original instruments or excellent copies made using the latest theories and techniques of historic instrument manufacture. Its members have a great deal of expertise and are therefore comfortable in a wide range of idioms from Monteverdi through to Beethoven.

Highlights of previous seasons include opening the prestigious Viterbo Early Music Festival in Italy, performing Handel’s *Israel in Egypt* with Canticum and Mark Forkgen; Handel’s *Messiah*, Bach’s *St John Passion*, *St Matthew Passion* and *Mass in B Minor*. They have performed Monteverdi’s *Vespers* at St Martin-in-the-Fields as well as Haydn’s *Creation* in the final concert of the Chichester Festival with Canticum. With London Concert Choir they have also taken part in Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* and Gluck’s opera *Orfeo*.

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<th>1st Violin</th>
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Supporting the Choir

London Concert Choir is committed to high standards and constantly strives to raise the level of its performances by means of workshops and other special events. The choir is grateful for the financial contribution of its regular supporters in helping to achieve these aims, and welcomes their active involvement.

LCC Supporters

Sue Blyth, Deborah and Girome Bono, Simon Cave, Bronwen Cook, Angela Cooper, Deborah Cullen, Dianne Denham, Geoffrey Deville, Karen Evans, John and Judith Greenway, Jeremy Groom, Nicholas and Maureen Halton, Tim Ingram, Miriam Kramer, Mark and Liza Loveday, Jill Marx, Janet and Michael Orr, Jennifer Powell Smith, Michael Shipley, Anthony Smith, Sybil and Nicholas Spence, Ruth Steinholtz, Alison Stone, Jill Tilden, Susan Wheatley, Anthony Willson

For information on helping the choir to maintain its position as one of the leading amateur choirs in London via the Supporters’ Scheme, please email:

steward@london-concert-choir.org.uk

The choir also offers opportunities for targeted giving and for corporate support through sponsorship or programme advertising and enquiries should be sent to the same address.

Life Friends

LCC is delighted to acknowledge the invaluable contribution made by the following individuals:

Peter Barley, Tim and Patricia Barnes, Anne Clayton, Mr and Mrs Michael Hunt, Sue McFadyen, Gregory and Helen Rose, Nicholas Spence

Joining the Choir

London Concert Choir welcomes new members, who are invited to attend a few rehearsals before an informal audition. If you are interested in joining the choir, please fill in your details online at www.london-concert-choir.org.uk/joinus

Mailing List

If you would like to receive advance information about our concerts, you can join the choir’s free mailing list by emailing mailinglist@london-concert-choir.org.uk

The information you provide is subject to the Data Protection Act and as such will be used exclusively by London Concert Choir.

www.london-concert-choir.org.uk
FORTHCOMING CONCERTS

Monday 17 March 2014, 7.30pm
Queen Elizabeth Hall, Southbank Centre, SE1

Tippett:  A Child of Our Time
70th Anniversary Performance

Erica Eloff soprano, Pamela Helen Stephen mezzo soprano
Michael Bracegirdle tenor, David Wilson-Johnson bass

City of London Sinfonia

Saturday 17 May 2014, 7.30pm
St Alfege, Greenwich

A Celebration of English Choral Music
on behalf of Age UK Bromley and Greenwich

Thursday 10 July 2014, 7.30pm
Cadogan Hall, Sloane Terrace, SW1

Haydn: The Seasons

Rachel Elliott soprano, Nathan Vale tenor
Toby Stafford-Allen bass

Southbank Sinfonia