

Passion Tour 2003

Bach Collegium Japan

Sunday, April 6, 2003, 7 pm
Zellerbach Hall

Johann Sebastian Bach
St. Matthew Passion, BWV 244

Masaaki Suzuki, director

Soloists

Evangelist	Gerd Türk
Jesus	Peter Kooij
Soprano Arias	Yukari Nonoshita
Alto Arias	Robin Blaze
Tenor Arias	Makoto Sakurada
Judas, Pilate, Bass Arias	Jochen Kupfer

Soprano in Ripieno

Yukari Nonoshita and Robin Blaze

Bach Collegium Japan is represented in North America by
Frank Salomon Associates, New York City (www.franksalomon.com).
Jenna Grein, managing associate

Bach Collegium Japan is recording the complete works
of J.S. Bach for the Swedish recording label BIS.

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"We did not come to church on Good Friday to hear an Italian opera." So complained the parishioners of St. Thomaskirche after the premiere of the St. Matthew Passion on Easter Sunday, April 11, 1727. Such critiques were not uncommon among the Thomaskirche clergy. Bach's predecessor, Johann Kuhnau, had enjoyed success and popularity as cantor in Leipzig, a particularly conservative Lutheran town. Bach, on the other hand, was routinely criticized for his overly complex sacred compositions and his penchant for adding to his organ accompaniments ambitious embellishments that confused the congregation. As a result of this reputation, the Leipzig clergy expressed qualms about Bach's acceptance into their service, and, in fact, slated Bach as the third-choice candidate, favoring Telemann and Graupner. However, once these two composers refused the station, the clergy reluctantly accepted Bach's petition—the St. John Passion—and thus began what would prove a predictably difficult relationship.

Three years after Bach obtained his position at the Thomaskirche, he premiered the St. Matthew Passion. The performance of proprium music (i.e., music composed specifically for individual Sundays) on important feast days was an old tradition in Leipzig. In the mid-16th century and under the supervision of Martin Luther, Johann Walter supplied a canon of responsorial passions that he labeled "historia," in which the text was comprised almost exclusively of Biblical verse, with interpolations by freely composed choruses providing commentary on the content of the story. This type of proprium work fit well into the church's standard order of service, and was the norm until Kuhnau's St. Mark Passion established a new genre for the Leipzig church: the large, concerted Passion Oratorio, a work in which an Evangelist narrates and Biblical characters relate the Easter story in free alternation of scripture and newly composed libretto. Always hesitant to accept any type of change in service, the conservative church authorities presumably accepted this form only because of Kuhnau's popularity with the congregation. Nonetheless, the work premiered on March 26, 1717, thereby setting the precedent for Bach's passion settings.

Indeed, the St. Matthew Passion shares many characteristics with Kuhnau's work. However, Bach conceptualized his piece on a grander scale than did his predecessor, who intended his Passion as a supplement to the Walter/Luther services that had served tradition. Bach, instead, chose to entirely supplant Walter's settings with his own alternation of recitatives, arias, choruses, and traditional chorales, with new texts written and Biblical verses adapted by Christian Friedrich Henrici ("Picander"). He thereby created a work wholly in the 18th-century tradition, one that emphasized the drama and pathos of the Easter story. In short, he created an unstaged (though eminently stageable) opera, complete with a traditional "Greek" chorus, which both comments on the plot and serves as character groups, such as the rabble, etc. As we have already seen, this introduction of secular genre into sacred setting caused the Leipzig clergy discomfort, but apparently lent the work the same dramatic immediacy that had garnered an audience for opera throughout Europe in the years preceding, and the St. Matthew Passion enjoyed at least three repeat performances over the course of the next decade.

It is not merely the work's operatic tone that has won it praise. The Matthew Passion possesses a discernible structure, which helps maintain coherence despite the work's remarkable length. Perhaps the most noticeable guideposts are the innovative uses of the Greek choruses and traditional Lutheran chorales, some of which utilize double-choirs. For instance, the work begins with a double chorus, each choir with its own orchestral accompaniment. Near the close of this opening chorus, a third choir of sopranos intones the opening phrase of the Agnus Dei: "[Behold the] Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world," thus reminding us of the story's protagonist and setting the stage for the narrative to begin. Besides these remarkable choruses, Bach inserts arrangements of traditional Lutheran chorales, as well as arias, duets, and chamber pieces. Both the texts and musical forms progress in a logical fashion, which, throughout most of the work, follow a standard sequence of events: first, a portion of the Biblical story, sometimes delivered by the Evangelist, a third-party narrator, and sometimes in dramatic fashion by the actual characters of the story; next, a reflection, in recitative, on what has just happened; and, finally, an aria, chorus, or vocal chamber piece that further reflects on the emotional implications of the preceding events. In all, Bach supplies 13 chorales and 13 arias, doubtless symbolizing through numerology the focal characters of the story: Christ and his 12 disciples.

To fully understand the St. Matthew Passion, its history and reception, and its place in the 21st century, it is useful to compare it with a work that may well be regarded as a "sister composition." Handel's *Messiah*, composed some 14 years after Bach's oratorio, has enjoyed success as one of the most popular musical works of all time. Its simple disposition of one chorus and orchestra, no chorale settings, regular alternation of recitative and aria, and its more manageable length have lent *Messiah* a type of familiarity that the St. Matthew Passion is not likely ever to achieve. However, this fact says nothing about the quality of either work. Handel's life as a well-traveled musician and his principal aim of earning a reputation as an opera composer offered him the tools with which to develop an immediate and popular style; indeed, one might even argue that Handel is the most "consumer-based" of the important 18th-century musical figures. Bach, on the other hand, while admired by his family, professional students, and colleagues, never garnered great acceptance among his contemporary public. However, for Bach, popularity was not a principal goal. Bach wrote to please neither his employers nor his public, but from a position of confident and intensely personal self-motivation. If anything, the very characteristics that on the surface may lend the St. Matthew Passion a somewhat "difficult" façade—its length, its massive forces, its variety of genres—also point to its most remarkable attribute. This work offers its listeners an exceptional view into one of history's most complex,

thoughtful, and spiritual musical minds. In short, the St. Matthew Passion endows us with a wonderful gift: a glimpse of the sublime.

—Laurette Goldberg
and Jonathan Rhodes Lee

The Bach Collegium Japan (BCJ) was founded in 1990 by music director Masaaki Suzuki with the aim of introducing Japanese audiences to period-instrument performances of great works of the Baroque period. As the name of the ensemble indicates, its main focus has been on the works of Johann Sebastian Bach and those composers of German Protestant music who preceded and influenced him, notably Buxtehude, Schütz, Schein, and Böhm. Since 1995, BCJ has acquired a formidable reputation for its recordings of Bach's church cantatas.

BCJ comprises both Baroque orchestra and chorus, and its major activities include an annual concert series of Bach's cantatas as well as a number of instrumental programs. In addition, BCJ presents major works such as Bach's St. Matthew Passion, Handel's Messiah, Monteverdi's Vespers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and smaller programs for soloists or small vocal ensembles.

BCJ is based in Tokyo and Kobe but performs throughout Japan, and for many of its projects has been pleased to welcome European artists as collaborators. The group has recently extended its activity on the international music scene, appearing at major festivals including Santiago de Compostela, Tel Aviv, Leipzig, and Melbourne in 2000, the 250th anniversary year of Bach's death. In 2001 and 2002, BCJ scored great successes in Italy (Milan, Rome, Florence, Treviso) and Spain (Ordino, Barcelona, Salamanca, San Sebastian, Valencia).

Among BCJ's numerous awards are the Mobil Music Award in 1999; the Cannes MIDEM Award in 1999 (Bach's St. John Passion); the Record Academy Award in 1999; and the Ongakuno-tomo Award in 2000.

Masaaki Suzuki (director) was born in 1954 in Kobe, Japan. When he was 12 years old, he began to play the organ for church services each Sunday. After graduating from Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music, with a degree in composition and organ performance, he continued to study harpsichord and organ at the Sweelinck Conservatory in Amsterdam under Ton Koopman and Piet Kee.

Having achieved soloist diplomas in both of his instruments in Amsterdam, Suzuki was awarded second prize in the harpsichord competition (1980) and third prize in the organ competition (1982) at the Vlaanderen Festival in Bruges, Belgium. From 1981–83, he was a harpsichord instructor at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Duisburg, Germany.

Since his return to Japan, Suzuki has given many concerts all over the country as an organist and harpsichordist. He has also organized a well-known concert series at the chapel of Shoin Women's University in Kobe, where a French classical organ built by Marc Garnier is installed.

Meanwhile, Suzuki has acquired an outstanding reputation as a conductor. Since 1990, he has been the music director of Bach Collegium Japan. In this capacity, Suzuki works regularly with renowned European soloists and ensembles. He has earned worldwide praise for his recordings of Bach's cantatas on the BIS label. In addition, Suzuki has just begun to record Bach's complete cembalo music for BIS.

Since 1983, Suzuki has given organ concerts in France, Italy, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Austria, and other countries each summer. In 1995 and 1997, he was invited by Philippe Herreweghe to conduct the Collegium Vocale.

As a professor of organ and harpsichord, as well as a faculty member of a new early music division, Suzuki teaches at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. He has won numerous awards, including the Mobil Music Award in 1999; the Ongakuno-tomo Award in 2000; and the Mainichi Newspapers Art Award.

Robin Blaze (countertenor) is now established in the front rank of interpreters of Purcell, Bach, and Handel. His busy schedule has taken him to Europe, South and North America, Japan, and Australia. Blaze studied music at Magdalen College, Oxford, and won a post-graduate scholarship to the Royal College of Music, where he trained with assistance from the Countess of Munster Trust and is now a professor of vocal studies.

Blaze has worked with the most distinguished conductors in the early music field, including Christophers, Cleobury, Gardiner, Herreweghe, Hickox, Hogwood, Jacobs, King, Koopman, Kraemer, Leonhardt, McCreech, McGegan, MacKerras, Pinnock, and Suzuki. He has visited festivals in Ambronay, Arolsen, Barossa Valley, Beaune, Boston, Edinburgh, Halle, Jerusalem, Innsbruck, Karlsruhe, Leipzig, Lucerne, Saintes, and Utrecht. He regularly appears with the Academy of Ancient

Music, Bach Collegium Japan, Collegium Vocale, The English Concert, The Gabrieli Consort, The King's Consort, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, RIAS Kammerchor, and The Sixteen. Other engagements have included the National Symphony Orchestra (Washington), the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, La Chapelle Royale, City of London Sinfonia, CM90, Israel Chamber Orchestra, Manchester Camerata, and Tafelmusik.

His opera engagements have included *Rodelinda* for Glyndebourne Touring Opera and at the Göttingen Handel Festival (McGegan), and *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* at the Teatro Sao Carlos, Lisbon, with The Sixteen (Christophers).

Chamber music is an important part of Blaze's musical life and he regularly works with Concordia, Fretwork, and the Palladian Ensemble. He has given recitals at the Théâtre Grévin in Paris; in Karlsruhe, Innsbruck, and Göttingen; at the York Early Music Festival; for BBC Radio 3; and at Wigmore Hall. His lute song programs with Elizabeth Kenny are popular throughout Europe and Japan.

With a fast-growing number of acclaimed recordings to his name, Blaze continues to enjoy fruitful relationships with BIS and Hyperion records. For BIS, he is adding to their Bach cantata cycle with Bach Collegium Japan, and his recent projects with Hyperion include two recital discs of lute songs with Elizabeth Kenny, as well as *Salve Regina*, a program of Italian cantatas with The Parley of Instruments. Among his other recordings are *Didymus in Theodora* with The Gabrieli Consort/McCreesh for DG Archiv; music by Vivaldi, Kuhnau, and Knüpfer with The King's Consort; Blow and Gibbons anthems with the Choir of Winchester Cathedral/ David Hill for Hyperion; and Purcell Odes with Collegium Vocale Gent/Herreweghe for Harmonia Mundi.

Blaze's 2002–03 engagements include the current US tour with Bach Collegium, his English National Opera debut as Arsamenes in *Xerxes*, his Royal Opera House debut as Athamas in *Semele* with Sir Charles MacKerras, and *Theodora* for Glyndebourne Festival Opera. He will give a joint recital at Wigmore Hall with soprano Carolyn Sampson and appear with The King's Consort, Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, Academy of Ancient Music, The Sixteen, the BBC Philharmonic, and The Hallé Orchestra.

Peter Kooij (bass) began his musical career at age six as a choir boy and sang many solo soprano parts in concerts and recordings. He started his musical studies, however, as a violin student. This was followed by a vocal scholarship to study with Max van Egmond at the Sweelinck Conservatory in Amsterdam, which led to a diploma for solo performance.

Kooij has been an active soloist all over the world, appearing in important concert halls including the Concertgebouw, Musikverein, Carnegie Hall, Royal Albert Hall, Teatro Colon, Palais Garnier, and Suntory and Casals-Hall (Tokyo). He has performed with conductors including Philippe Herreweghe, Ton Koopman, Frans Brüggen, Gustav Leonhardt, René Jacobs, Sigiswald Kuijken, Roger Norrington, and Ivan Fisher.

Kooij's wide repertoire includes music from Schütz to Weill and he has made over 100 recordings for Philips, Sony, Virgin Classics, Harmonia Mundi, Erato, EMI, and BIS. With BIS, he was invited to record the complete Bach cantatas, passions, and masses with Bach Collegium Japan, under the direction of Masaaki Suzuki.

Peter Kooij is the artistic director of the Ensemble Vocal European. From 1991–2000, he was a professor at the Sweelinck Conservatory in Amsterdam. He has also taught at the Musikhochschule in Hannover and Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music. Kooij has been invited to give master classes in Germany, France, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, Finland, and Japan.

Jochen Kupfer (baritone) was born in 1969 in Grimma, Germany, and started his vocal training at the age of 10. Beginning in 1989, he studied with Helga Former at the Musikhochschule Leipzig. He also attended master classes by, among others, Aldo Baldin, Theo Adam, and Elio Battaglia. Kupfer completed his studies with Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Elisabeth Schwarzkopf.

Kupfer has won several prizes and awards, including the 1991 Mozart-Fest-Wettbewerb in Würzburg; a special award of the Academia Vocalis Tirolensis in 1991; a prize at the International J.S. Bach Competition in Leipzig in 1992; first prize at the VDML Bundeswettbewerb in Berlin in 1992; first prize at the Mendelssohn Bartholdy Competition in Berlin in 1993; an award of a Richard Wagner stipend in 1994; and second prize at the Meistersänger Competition in Nuremberg (1995).

Kupfer's operatic performances include roles in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Così fan tutte*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Tannhäuser*, *La Cenerentola*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In the concert field, Kupfer has sung works from Bach and Handel to Mendelssohn and Britten and appears with the Thomanerchor Leipzig,

the Gachinger Kantorei, the Berliner Singakademie, the Rias Kammerchor, and the Bachchor Salzburg.

Kupfer has performed Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* with the Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig, conducted by Kurt Masur; *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw under Hans Vonk; and Mendelssohn's *Erste Walpurgisnacht* with the Orchestre der Beethovenhalle Bonn under Marc Soustrot. He has also performed the *St. Matthew Passion* (Jesus) with René Jacobs in various European cities, and made a tour of Japan with the Royal Orchestra of Flanders, conducted by Philippe Herreweghe.

Kupfer's great love for the lieder repertoire is expressed in a steadily growing number of recitals (Amsterdam, Utrecht, Leipzig, and Dresden). A highlight in this field was a number of evenings of Brahms lieder together with the actor Klaus Maria Brandauer. For Channel Classics, he has recorded lieder by Franz Schreker and Schumann.

Yukari Nonoshita (soprano) was born in Oita, Japan, and is a graduate of the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. She studied in France, graduated from the vocal and opera course at the Conservatoire National de Saint-Maur, and received a diploma from the Ecole Normale de Musique de Paris.

Nonoshita has studied with Hiroko Nakamura, Mady-Mesplé, Camille Maurane, and Gérard Souzay. She also studied methods of Baroque vocal decorations under Toshinari O'hashi. She has received many prizes and appeared in operatic roles such as Rosina of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* at Rennes and *Siébel* in *Faust* at Rennes and Angers.

After returning to Japan, she extended her activities from medieval to contemporary music, focusing on French, Spanish, and Japanese songs. She has also participated in the Baroque Opera Project with Ryo Terakado.

In the field of contemporary music, Nonoshita performed Toshiro Mayuzumi's *Sphénogramme*, Berio's *Sequenza III* under Hiroyuki Iwaki in Osaka, and several premiere performances of new compositions. She has taken part in various Japan premieres of operas, including Chabrier's *Une éducation manquée* and Fauré's *Pénélope*.

Since April 2002, she has been an associate professor of the early music division of the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music.

Makoto Sakurada (tenor) studied with Tadahiko Hirano at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. After he received his master's degree, he studied at the National Conservatory "G.B. Martini" (Italy/Bologna) with Gianni Fabbri. He is also studying with William Matteuzzi and Gloria Banditelli in Italy.

As a soloist in Baroque oratorios, Sakurada has performed with many famous conductors and orchestras in Japan. He has collaborated with Bach Collegium Japan since 1995, and has appeared in many concerts and on CDs as a soloist. Sakurada has also collaborated with Ottavio Dantone/Accademia Bizantina, Ensemble Concerto, La Stagione Armonica, and I Madrigalisti Ambrosiani.

In 2000, Sakurada participated in tours with Bach Collegium Japan in Europe, Israel, and Australia, and also collaborated with Philippe Herreweghe. In 2002, he participated in a Schütz program with Sigiswald Kuijken and La Petite Bande. Recently, he performed in the International Monteverdi Festival in Cremona with Andrea Marcon and the Venice Baroque Orchestra.

His repertoire includes roles in Bach's *St. John Passion*, *St. Matthew Passion*, and *Magnificat*; Handel's *Messiah*; Mozart's *Requiem*; and works by Haydn and Monteverdi. In the field of opera, he has a wide repertoire, including Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, Don Basilio in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and Don Ramiro in *La Cenerentola*.

Makoto Sakurada is the winner of the second prize at the International Early Music Concours (Belgium) in 2002.

Gerd Türk (tenor) began his vocal training as a member of the Boys Choir of the Limburg Cathedral in Germany. He went on to study music education, church music, and choral direction at the Frankfurt Conservatory of Music with, among others, Helmuth Rilling and Arleen Auger.

After two years at the Speyer Institute of Church Music, Türk devoted his attention entirely to singing. Studies of Baroque singing and interpretation at the renowned Schola Cantorum Basiliensis (with René Jacobs and Richard Levitt) and master classes with E. Haefliger, K. Equiluz, and N. Shetler, among others, led to a career as a sought-after soloist, touring regularly in Europe, Asia, and North and South America.

Gerd Türk has performed at the most important early music festivals, under the baton of such conductors as Herreweghe, Jacobs, Koopman, Savall, Corboz, and Suzuki. He also has a great affinity for ensemble singing and has been performing with numerous groups in Germany and France.

Türk is also very active on the opera stage, having been invited to perform in Montpellier, Innsbruck, Barcelona, Antwerp, and Madrid. Most recently, he took part in a production of Monteverdi Madrigals at the Nederlandse Reisopera, as well as in Monteverdi's Orfeo at the Liceu in Barcelona.

Gerd Türk has made more than 100 recordings with Sony, Erato, BIS, BMG, Virgin, and Harmonia Mundi France, including all of the Bach oratorios, Monteverdi's Vespers, Mozart's Requiem, and lieder by Carl Orff. He is regularly involved in the recordings of Bach Collegium Japan, which have been highly acclaimed by the international press.

Gerd Türk is currently a professor at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Switzerland and gives master classes at the Tokyo National University of Music and Fine Arts.