



Ottawa Bach Choir
Dr. Lisette Canton, Founder and Artistic Director

St. Matthew's Church, Ottawa
Glebe Ave (West of Bank)

Sunday, August 11, 2013, 8 pm / le dimanche, 11 août 2013, 20h

Das ist meine Freude	Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767)
Cantate Domino	Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)
Beatus vir	Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)
Hear my prayer, O Lord	Henry Purcell (1659-1695)
Befiehl dem Engel, daß er komm, BuxWV 10	Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707)
Der Herr denket an uns, BWV 196 Sinfonia Der Herr denket an uns (Coro) Er segnet, die den Herrn fürchten (Soprano) Der Herr segne euch (Tenore, Basso) Ihr seid die Gesegneten des Herrn (Coro)	Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

INTERMISSION

O Jesu Christ, meins Lebens Licht, BWV 118b	Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
Calme des nuits, Op. 68, No. 1	Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)
O sacrum convivium!	Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)
Lux aurumque	Eric Whitacre (b. 1970)
Agneau de Dieu	Rupert Lang (b. 1948)
Immortal Bach	Knut Nystedt (b. 1915)
Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden, BWV 230	Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Programme Notes

The Ottawa Bach Choir is delighted to be singing in tonight's opening concert of the Royal Canadian College of Organists' *Orgelfest*. We celebrate the spirit of the Baroque period with music by five significant composers from Germany, Italy, and England, while contrasting works by nineteenth and twentieth-century masters from France, Canada, the United States and Norway. Works from the Baroque period showcase the rhythmic fervor, melodic intensity, and harmonic and textural contrasts typical of this era, while the later compositions highlight variations in style, color and harmony. Through all of the repertoire, the alternation of old and new styles is emphasized along with a personal and collective expression of artistic, emotional and spiritual devotion, culminating in the music of Bach and its influence throughout history.

The motet is considered to be one of the major musical genres from the thirteenth through the eighteenth centuries and beyond. During the Renaissance period it signified a polyphonic setting of a sacred Latin text, which, after 1600, eventually came to be associated with a distinctive compositional style derived from Palestrina, known as the *stile antico* (old style). In Germany during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the motet evolved into a sacred polyphonic vocal composition that used no independent instruments, i.e. only basso continuo and perhaps instruments doubling the vocal lines. Motets in eighteenth century Germany were cultivated from two main types of texts: biblical passages and chorales. Either type could be used individually or in combination to make a theological point. **Telemann**, who was one of the most significant composers in this period, based his motet, *Das ist meine Freude*, solely on a biblical text—Psalm 72:28. It is from a collection of seven motets in the *Partitura über Chor-Stücke zu Darmstadt*. While its date of composition is unknown, it is assumed to have been written during his tenure as director of music in Frankfurt (1712-1721). This joyous piece is representative of the early eighteenth century German motet, which used basso continuo accompaniment and was performed during Lutheran church services. Although the work is continuous, Telemann divides the work into sections and differentiates homophonic, contrapuntal and antiphonal techniques.

Claudio Monteverdi marked the transition from the Renaissance to the Baroque period through the promotion of the *seconda prattica* (or *stile moderno*), the new concerted music representative of the early Baroque period, and the development of early opera. In 1612, Monteverdi was appointed *maestro di cappella* at St Mark's Basilica in Venice, and his sacred compositional style frequently embodies both the *stile antico* (represented by Palestrina) and the *stile moderno*. The motet, *Cantate Domino*, is one of four polyphonic motets in an anthology published c.1615. The text uses verses from Psalms 96 and 98, which invite all to "sing a new song to the Lord." *Beatus vir* is a splendid example of the concerted motet, and was published in the collection, *Selva morale e spirituali*, in 1641, which contained forty virtuosic sacred settings and Monteverdi's most significant sacred polyphonic writing since the Vespers of 1610. Through the use of *concertato* and *concitato* styles, and an imaginative use of instruments and voices, Monteverdi achieves a sacred style of unparalleled expression. Most likely composed around 1631, *Beatus vir* is a setting of Psalm 112 and written for six-voice choir, two violins and continuo. It is based on his madrigal from book seven, *Chiome d'oro*, and structured in a tripartite form: the first section presents declamatory statements of the ritornello on *Beatus vir*, always led by the soprano voice; the second is in a lilting three (minus the alto voice), frequently contrasting soprano and tenor duets; and the third section recapitulates the opening material but in a more deliberate fashion. It is followed by a *coda* on the doxology, *Gloria Patri...*, where Monteverdi presents *concitato* figures on the text, *Gloria, et in saecula saeculorum*. The work comes to a close on a glorious *Amen*, sung by all voices.

In England, during the Restoration period, **Henry Purcell** was the dominant musical figure before Handel. His sacred music was influenced by the anthem repertoire of earlier generations, and spanned his entire creative life. Purcell's full anthems and early verse anthems with organ accompaniment are analogous to the motet and, yet, contain a much more developed sense of word painting and harmonic color than their Renaissance counterparts. *Hear my prayer, O Lord*, for eight voices and organ accompaniment, is based on the first verse of Psalm 102 and was composed in the early 1680s.

Dietrich Buxtehude, the principal composer of organ music before Bach, is famous for his position as organist and *Werkmeister* at the *Marienkirche*, Lübeck, which he held from 1668 until his death in 1707. His sacred vocal music, composed during an important developmental stage of the Protestant church cantata, combines the German sacred concerto, chorale and aria, and was performed frequently in the *Abendmusiken* concerts at St. Mary's. *Befiehl dem Engel, daß er komm*, BuxWV 10, is an example of an early chorale-based cantata, written for four voices and strings. Composed in three sections, the first, in duple metre, states the opening chorale material in the soprano with embellished paraphrases underneath. The second section is in a lilting three and the final section presents the *Amen* in a fast triple metre. Both voices and instruments share in the colorful presentation of chorale material and ask, in both boisterous and understated fashion, "the angels to keep watch over us."

Der Herr denkt an uns, BWV 196, is one of **JS Bach's** earliest cantatas. Composed in 1708 while he was employed in Mühlhausen, this joyous work is also a wedding cantata with a text based on four verses of Psalm 115, which asks for God's blessing and offers thanks. Scored for SATB chorus, soprano, tenor and bass solos, strings and continuo, the opening *Sinfonia*, in the French style with double-dotted rhythms, sets up the following movement for chorus. Though there is an absence of the German chorale and recitative that permeates Bach's later cantatas, the two choral movements are elaborate fugal structures that frame solo movements for soprano and tenor/bass duet. The work is a splendid act of praise and celebration by a youthful Bach, displaying profound meaning and spiritual devotion.

Bach's funeral motet, *O Jesu Christ, meins Lebens Licht*, BWV 118, exists in two versions, written in 1736-37 and 1746-47 respectively, differing only in instrumentation. Although this work has been left out of the collection of *Six Motets* by virtue of its independent instrumental accompaniment, Bach titled it "*Motetto*" and most likely intended it for special memorial church services in Leipzig. Based on an early 17th century hymn by Martin Behm, which emphasizes consolation and refuge through the light of Jesus Christ, Bach, in his use of *cantus firmus* and paraphrase techniques, composes a work offering comfort in the promise and joy of the afterlife, where we will "sing with the angels."

Camille Saint-Saëns was one of the first composers to promulgate the French Romantic musical tradition. The organist of *Paroisse de la Madeleine* in Paris, Saint-Saëns was influenced by Bach and Rameau, and was a master of form and subtle harmonic expansion. He wrote numerous songs to settings by earlier as well as contemporary poets. In *Calme des nuits*, the first of two settings of Op. 68 composed in 1883 in which he also wrote his own poetry, Saint-Saëns comments on the philosophical virtue of nature and its influence on the artist.

Olivier Messiaen exerted a remarkable musical influence, both in his native France and elsewhere. His musical language stems from a variety of sources, including Schönberg, Debussy, Hindu traditions, and bird-song, with his work and life deeply influenced by his faith as a Roman Catholic. *O sacrum convivium*, the only sacred motet of its kind among Messiaen's output, was composed in 1937 when he was a young organist working in Paris. The rich, slow-moving harmonies stretch like thick, luxurious bands to create both a spiritual and sensuous sound world.

The young American, **Eric Whitacre**, has come to represent an important compositional style influenced by Pärt and Tavener. Like many of his compositions, the brilliance of *Lux aurumque* lies in its juxtaposition of chords and their harmonic tension and release, as well as in its sophisticated word painting. Written in 2001 and based on the poem by English poet, Edward Esch, Whitacre uses the Latin translation by Charles Anthony Silvestri in a stirring composition for nine-part choir with soprano solo in which the musical color of each particular word is masterfully manipulated.

Rupert Lang, who hails from Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, published *Agneau de Dieu* (Lamb of God) in 2002. It is a beautiful French setting of the Latin Mass movement in which he varies the tri-fold text, contrasting a semi-chorus and tenor solo with the full choir, and expanding to eight voices at its highest point.

Norwegian composer, **Knut Nystedt**, unites older influences in the form of sacred texts, Gregorian chant and Renaissance polyphony with newer compositional techniques. *Immortal Bach*, written in 1988, is based on Bach's chorale, *Komm süßster Tod*, BWV 478 (Come, sweetest death). Nystedt first presents the chorale in its original four-part setting, followed by five groups of choristers singing the individual notes of the chorale at different time intervals. This modern interpretation creates an ethereal effect as the notes of each phrase float through the atmosphere, generating a synthesis of dissonance and consonance.

The pinnacle of the German Baroque motet, and indeed, the entire motet genre, is found in the motets of **J.S. Bach**. His scoring, texts, formal construction and homophonic textures derive from the German Baroque motet tradition along with a refined, eloquent contrapuntal language. Bach's motet, *Lobet den Herrn*, BWV 230, is based on the first two verses of Psalm 117 and is one of his brilliant examples in this genre. Written for four voices, most likely before Bach arrived in Leipzig in 1723, it includes three sections; the first is a double fugue structure in which Bach displays masterful counterpoint by presenting two subjects, first one at a time and then in combination with each other. The chorale-like middle section (though not formally based on one) takes us through various depictions of "grace" (*Gnade*) and "truth" (*Wahrheit*), culminating in the final section's dazzling display of "alleluias."

Notes de programme

Les membres du Ottawa Bach Choir sont heureux de présenter le concert d'ouverture du congrès Orgelfest 2013. Ils ont choisi de saluer l'époque baroque tout en incluant à leur programme des pages des XIX^e et XX^e siècles.

Le motet de **Telemann** qui a pour titre *Das ist meine Freude* s'appuie sur les paroles du verset 28 du psaume 72. De caractère joyeux, il illustre bien les motets allemands typiques du début du XVIII^e siècle qui étaient accompagnés d'une basse continue et qui étaient destinés au culte luthérien.

Claudio Monteverdi a vécu à la croisée de la Renaissance et de l'Époque baroque. En 1612, il est nommé maître de chapelle à la Basilique St-Marc de Venise. Ses œuvres empruntent à la fois le *stile antico* et le *stile moderno*. *Cantata Domino* fait partie des quatre motets polyphoniques d'une anthologie publiée en 1615. Il a pour texte des extraits des psaumes 96 et 98. *Beatus vir*, publié en 1641 dans la collection *Selva morale e spirituali* – la plus importante collection depuis la parution des Vêpres de 1610 – est un brillant exemple du motet de style dit concertant. Il met en musique le psaume 112 et est basé sur le madrigal *Chiome d'oro*. Les trois sections distinctes sont suivies d'une coda sur le *Gloria Patri* qui se termine par un Amen glorieux.

Henry Purcell fut, avant Handel, la figure prééminente de la période de la Restauration en Angleterre. Ses "full anthems" et premiers anthems basés sur des versets avec accompagnement d'orgue sont comparables au motet mais présentent un aspect plus descriptif et coloré sur le plan harmonique. La pièce présentée ici est basée sur le premier verset du Psaume 102.

Dietrich Buxtehude fut organiste et "Werkmeister" à la Marienkirche de Lübeck, de 1668 jusqu'à sa mort en 1707. Sa musique sacrée composée durant une période importante du développement de la Cantate liturgique protestante, renferme les éléments du concerto sacré allemand, du choral et de l'aria. Elle fut jouée fréquemment lors des concerts *Abendmusiken* à la Marienkirche. *Befiehl dem Engel, daß er komm*, BuxWV 10, basée sur le choral du même titre, figure parmi ses premières cantates. La première section énonce le choral au soprano, soutenu de paraphrases ornées. La deuxième section est dans un rythme ternaire puis la dernière section présente le Amen dans un tempo vif à trois temps. Le choral est partagé entre les voix et les instruments qui font entendre l'appel aux anges pour qu'ils veillent sur nous.

Der Herr denkt an uns, BWV 196 figure parmi les premières cantates de **Bach**. D'allure joyeuse, elle sert également de Cantate des noces avec un texte provenant du psaume 115 qui demande la bénédiction de Dieu et exprime l'action de grâce. La *sinfonia* de style français avec ses rythmes double-pointés, précède l'énoncé du choral. Les deux mouvements chorals suivants, d'une écriture contrapuntique, encadrent un solo pour soprano et un duo pour ténor et basse. Le tout se déploie en un splendide moment de célébration et de louange.

Le motet de **Bach** intitulé *O Jesu Christ, meins Lebens Licht*, BWV 118 existe en deux versions où seuls les accompagnements diffèrent. Bien qu'il ne figure pas parmi les Six Motets en raison de ses accompagnements indépendants, Bach lui accorde le titre de Motetto. Il utilise un choral du 17^e siècle dont le texte porte sur la consolation et notre refuge en Jésus-Christ. Il se dégage de cette musique le réconfort en la promesse et la joie d'une vie éternelle où nous « chanterons avec les anges ».

Camille Saint-Saëns est l'un des premiers compositeurs à promouvoir le style romantique français. Organiste à l'église de la Madeleine à Paris, son écriture illustre une maîtrise de la forme et un langage harmonique subtil et élargi. Dans l'oeuvre *Calme des nuits*, la première de deux oeuvres pour lesquelles il rédigea le texte lui-même, Saint-Saëns vante les vertus de la nature et son influence sur l'artiste créateur.

Le langage musical d'**Olivier Messiaen** relève des influences de Schönberg, Debussy, des traditions musicales hindoues et du chant d'oiseau tout en demeurant profondément lié à sa foi catholique. *O sacrum convivium*, son seul motet sacré, date de 1937 alors qu'il était jeune organiste à Paris.

La musique du jeune américain **Eric Whitacre** est influencée par Pärt et Tavener. Comme dans plusieurs de ses compositions, la beauté de *Lux aurumque* réside dans ses accords juxtaposés où se font entendre des résolutions et des frottements subtils pour dépeindre le texte. Whitacre, qui a composé cette oeuvre en 2001, se sert ici d'une traduction latine d'un poème anglais allant jusqu'à neuf parties vocales avec solo de soprano.

Originaire de Vancouver, **Rupert Lang** a publié "Agneau de Dieu" en 2002. C'est une très belle réalisation de cette partie de la Messe qui s'appuie sur un contraste entre les trois sections allant d'un solo de ténor avec une partie du chœur, puis un solo de ténor avec le chœur entier, puis un chœur à huit voix au sommet de l'oeuvre.

Le norvégien **Knut Nystedt** sait conjuguer des textes sacrés anciens, le chant grégorien et le style choral de la Renaissance avec des nouvelles techniques d'écriture. Composé en 1988, "Immortal Bach", s'appuie sur le choral *Komm süßer Tod*, BWV 478 (Viens, douce mort). Le choral est d'abord présenté en entier, puis est ensuite présenté par cinq groupes de choristes qui chantent les notes du choral de façon décalée.

Le motet allemand trouve son apogée dans les oeuvres de **Bach**. *Lobet den Herrn*, BWV 230 a pour texte les deux premiers versets du psaume 117. La première section renferme une double fugue. La deuxième partie, d'allure chorale, nous décrit les différents états de la grâce (Gnade) et de la vérité (Wahrheit) pour culminer en une éblouissante démonstration d'alleluias.

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