

# ENGLISH TOURING OPERA

Opera that *moves*

Information for choirs – Spring 2022 – Bach's *St John Passion*



Please click on image to see our video about the St John Passion in 2016

## Concept

- Our concept for Bach's *St John Passion* is to tell the story with a new, compelling approach, moving away from a traditional concert performance to explore the drama of the piece, with its positive spirit.
- Each choir should gain a new experience outside of what they already do, whether that be through performing a staged piece for the first time, singing classical music, or working with professional singers and musicians to create something extraordinary.

## Music and Scores

- The piece is structured musically around a narrative telling the Passion story (based on the account in St John's Gospel) sung by The Evangelist as "recitative" (a melodic line which follows the patterns of speech). It was originally written by Bach in 1724 to be performed on Good Friday, and tells the story of Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion.
- This is interspersed with arias (solo vocal numbers) performed by soloists taking the part of characters in the story (Jesus, his disciples, his mother, Pilate etc) and choruses sung by a 4-part choir (divided into sopranos, altos, tenors, basses) representing the people of Judea.
- In addition, spread through the piece, there are a number of "chorales" ("chorale" is a musical term describing a style of hymn common in the German Lutheran tradition of Bach's time) which were designed to be sung by people attending performances of the Passion together with the soloists / chorus singers. (Many people familiar with the hymn "All Glory, Laud and Honour" will recognise the melody used in the *St John Passion* in the chorale "In meines Herzens Grunde".)

**The chorales have been translated into English and all groups will be provided with a typeset copy of this music.**

- In our performances, the solo roles of the Evangelist (usually sung by a tenor) and Jesus (usually a bass) will be split between all the different soloists, both male and female.
- We will involve three groups of singers in each performance - Choir 1 (Bach), Choir 2 (Johann) and Choir 3 (Sebastian).
- Bach Choir will sing the choruses; they will have the most complex music and should probably be people who read music with some experience of similar sorts of work.
- Johann Choir will require a gospel or community choir. We envisage that they will sing mostly the chorales.
- Sebastian Choir is the children's choir, who will sing a couple of basic chorales and a line in the bass aria 'Himmel reisse'. They may sing in harmony or in unison; this can be flexible.
- Bach Choir will need to provide their own scores. **They should use the Bärenreiter edition.**
- For Johann and Sebastian Choirs – who are involved predominantly in the chorales and perhaps one or two movements – we will provide PDF documents of their music in advance.
- We will be performing the work in German, but the chorales will be sung in English.
- **The whole piece will be played down a semitone (i.e. 415Hz).**

## Rehearsals

- We would like each choir to take responsibility for its own musical preparation.
- Our conductor, assistant director and possibly one of our music associates will come to work with each choir at different points through the process and will be available for advice throughout.

All the performers – i.e. all the choirs, ETO’s soloists, conductor and orchestra – will come together for one rehearsal all together probably in the afternoon on the day of the concert itself.

## Allocation of Music – Who Sings What?

The table below shows how each movement in the piece should be allocated among the different choirs. Please alert us as soon as possible should you have any issues with the below.

Movement	Bach Chorus (main choir)	Johann Choir (community choir)	Sebastian Choir (children choir)	Soloists
1. [1.] Herr, unser Herrscher	X			X
(2. [2a] Recitative)				X
3. [2b] Jesum von Nazareth				X
(4. [2c] Recitative)				X
5. [2d] Jesum von Nazareth	X			X
(6. [2e] Recitative)				X
7. [3] <i>Oh deepest love</i>	X	X		
(8. [4] Recitative)				X
9. [5] <i>May good be done, by us, on earth</i>		X		X
(10 – 14. [6 – 10] Recitative & solo arias)				X
15. [11] <i>My Lord is so maltreated</i>		X	X	
15a. [11*] <i>Himmel reiße</i>			X	X
(16. [12a] Recitative)				X
17. [12b] <i>Bist du nicht</i>				X
(18 – 19. [12c – 13] Recitative & solo aria)				X
20. [13] <i>Peter by the charcoal's blaze</i>	X	X		

TUNING BREAK (1 minute)				
21. [15] <i>Thus Christ brings our holiness</i>		X		X
(22. [16a] Recitative)				X
23. [16b] <i>Wäre dieser nicht</i>	X			
(24. [16c] Recitative)				X
25. [16d] <i>Wir dürfen niemand</i>	X			
(26. [16e] Recitative)				X
27. [17] <i>Almighty King, thou Glorious of all ages</i>		X		
(28. [18a] Recitative)				X
29. [18b] <i>Nicht diesen</i>	X	bar 23 beats 3 +4 <u>only</u>  everybody to shout 'Barrabam!'	bar 23 beats 3 +4 <u>only</u>  everybody to shout 'Barrabam!'	X
(30 – 33. [18c – 21a] Recitative & solo arias)				X
34. [21b] <i>Sei begrüßet</i>	X			
(35. [21c] Recitative)				X
36. [21d] <i>Kreuzige, kreuzige</i>	X			X
(37. [21e] Recitative)				X
38. [21f] <i>Wir haben ein Gesetz</i>	X			
(39. [21g] Recitative)				X
40. [22] <i>Lord Jesus, your captivity</i>	X			X
(41. [23a] Recitative)				X
42. [23b] <i>Lässest du diesen los</i>	X			
(43. [23c] Recitative)				X
44. [23d] <i>Weg, weg mit dem</i>				X
(45. [23e] Recitative)				X
46. [23f] <i>Wir haben keine König</i>	X			
(47. [23g] Recitative)				X
48. [24] <i>Eilt, ihr angefochtenen Seelen</i>				X
(49. [25a] Recitative)				X
50. [25b] <i>Schreibe nicht</i>	X			
(51. [25c] Recitative)				X

52. [26] <i>In very deepest part of me</i>	X	X	X	
(53. [27a] Recitative)				X
54. [27b] <i>Lasset uns die nicht zerteilen</i>	X			X
(55. [27c] Recitative)				X
56. [28] <i>In His last hour wondering</i>			X	
(57 – 59. [29 – 31] Recitative & solo aria)				X
60. [32] <i>Mein teurer Heiland</i>			X (please sing soprano line in German with our soprano soloist. If this is not possible it can be omitted)	X
(61 – 64. [33 – 36] Recitative & solo aria)				X
65. [37] <i>Jesus, God's Beloved Son</i>	X	X		
(66. [38] Recitative)				X
67. [39] <i>Ruht wohl</i>	X (sing all but bars 60-72, and bars 112-124)			X
68. [40] <i>In your embrace my soul enfold</i>	X	X	X	X

**Contact**

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Jo Corrigan at English Touring Opera – [jo.corrigan@englishtouringopera.org.uk](mailto:jo.corrigan@englishtouringopera.org.uk)

Alternatively, you can call us on 020 7833 2555.