

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Today's program celebrates two giants of Baroque music. Antonio Vivaldi was a composer of concertos, choral music and opera who worked primarily in Venice. A few years older than J. S. Bach, he was far more famous than his contemporary, and his music was performed throughout Europe. Bach knew Vivaldi's music and was strongly influenced by his style. He even made arrangements for keyboard of several of Vivaldi's instrumental concertos.

The reputations of both composers declined precipitously after their deaths. Bach's works were largely forgotten, known and studied primarily by composers who recognized their pedagogical value. Vivaldi's music also fell into disfavor, left behind by changing musical tastes. The revival of Bach's music famously began with Mendelssohn's performance in 1829 of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. Renewed interest in Vivaldi's music did not come until the early part of the 20th century, when several hundred of Vivaldi's works long thought lost were rediscovered. One of these works, which lay hidden for centuries in a monastery library, was Vivaldi's setting of the *Gloria* that we are performing today.

This afternoon's program begins not with Bach or Vivaldi, but with Victoria. Tomás Luis de Victoria, a Spanish composer who worked both in Rome and in Spain, was one of the great masters of the late Renaissance period. He died 400 years ago this August, and the Chorale marks the occasion by performing the Kyrie and Gloria of his *Missa Ascendens Christus in Altum*. This mass is what is known as an imitation or "parody" mass, as its musical material is drawn from Victoria's motet for Ascension Day, *Ascendens Christus in Altum*. The translation of the Kyrie follows:

Kyrie eleison.	Lord have mercy.
Christe eleison.	Christ have mercy.
Kyrie eleison.	Lord have mercy.

For the translation of the Gloria text, please see below.

Bach's *Ascension Oratorio* was also written for Ascension Day, and was first performed in Leipzig on May 19, 1735. The story of the Ascension is ultimately a joyful one, but though the oratorio begins and ends in joy, the journey in between is filled with wonder, fear and grief at Jesus' departure from this world. In the glorious first movement the full orchestra and the "assembled choirs" sing the praises of God.

Chorus:

Lobet Gott in seinen Reichen,	Praise God in his kingdoms,
Preiset ihn in seinen Ehren,	extol him in his honors
Rühmet ihn in seiner Pracht;	acclaim him in his splendor.
Sucht sein Lob recht zu vergleichen,	Seek to express his praise rightly
Wenn ihr mit gesamten Chören	when with assembled choirs
Ihm ein Lied zu Ehren macht!	you make a song to his honor!

In the second movement the tenor soloist, who serves as the narrator, begins to describe the Ascension miracle. The joyful character of the opening movement is quickly forgotten in the face of Jesus' imminent departure. The bass soloist begs for a delay of the inevitable, as the flutes depict the dropping of tears.

Tenor (Evangelist):

Der Herr Jesus hub seine Hände auf	The Lord Jesus raised his hands
und segnete seine Jünger,	and blessed his followers,
und es geschah, da er sie segnete,	and it happened that while he was blessing them
schied er von ihnen.	he parted from them.

Bass:

Ach, Jesu, ist dein Abschied schon so nah?	Ah Jesus, is your departure already so near?
Ach, ist denn schon die Stunde da,	Ah, is it already the hour
da wir dich von uns lassen sollen?	when we must let you leave us?
Ach, siehe, wie die heißen Tränen	Ah, see how the hot tears
von unsern blassen Wangen rollen,	roll down our pale cheeks,
wie wir uns nach dir sehnen,	how we gaze after you
wie uns fast aller Trost gebricht.	how almost all our comfort is lost.
Ach, weiche doch noch nicht!	Ah, do not go away yet!

The following alto aria dwells on the melancholy that comes from being left behind. If this aria sounds familiar, it is because Bach later reworked the music into the Agnus Dei of his *B Minor Mass*.

Alto:

Ach, bleibe doch, mein liebstes Leben,
ach, fliehe nicht so bald von mir!
Dein Abschied und dein frühes Scheiden
bringt mir das allergrößte Leiden.
Ach ja, so bleibe doch noch hier;
sonst werd ich ganz
von Schmerz umgeben.

Ah, stay yet, my dearest life,
ah, do not flee so soon from me!
Your departure and your early leaving
bring me the greatest suffering.
Ah then, still stay here;
otherwise I shall be quite
overwhelmed with sorrow.

The tenor continues the narrative, and Jesus disappears from view. The chorus then sings a chorale written in a low key, as if they are bowing down to pay homage with the angels, princes and all the elements.

Tenor (Evangelist):

Und ward aufgehoben zusehends
und fuhr auf gen Himmel, eine
Wolke nahm ihn weg vor ihren Augen,
und er sitzt zur rechten Hand Gottes.

And in their sight he was lifted up
and went towards heaven,
a cloud took him away from their eyes,
and he sits on the right hand of God.

Chorus:

Nun lieget alles unter dir,
dich selbst nur ausgenommen;
die Engel müssen für und für
dir aufzuwarten kommen.
Die Fürsten stehn auch auf der Bahn
und sind dir willig untertan;
Luft, Wasser, Feuer, Erden
muß dir zu Dienste werden.

Now all lies beneath you,
all but you yourself;
the angels must for ever and ever
come to wait on you.
Princes also stand by the road
and are willingly subject to you;
air, water, fire and earth
must all be at your service.

The tenor returns to continue the story, in which two men in white robes appear to comfort the disciples. The alto then has one last chance to express despair before the tenor concludes his account of the events.

Tenor (Evangelist):

Und da sie ihm nachsahen
gen Himmel fahren,
siehe, da stunden bei ihnen
zwei Männer in weißen Kleidern,
welche auch sagten:

And as they gazed after him
travelling to heaven,
see, there stood by them
two men in white robes,
who said:

Tenor and Bass (Two Men):

Ihr Männer von Galiläa,
was stehet ihr und sehet gen Himmel?
Dieser Jesus, welcher von euch
ist aufgenommen gen Himmel,
wird kommen,
wie ihr ihn gesehen habt
gen Himmel fahren.

You men of Galilee,
why do you stand here and gaze towards heaven?
This Jesus, who has been taken
from you to heaven,
will come again,
as you have seen him
travel to heaven.

Alto:

Ach ja! so komme bald zurück:
tilg einst mein trauriges Gebärden,
sonst wird mir jeder Augenblick
verhaßt und Jahren ähnlich werden.

Ah then! return again soon:
wipe away once and for all my sad demeanor,
otherwise for me each moment
will be hateful and become like years.

Tenor (Evangelist):

Sie aber beteten ihn an,
wandten um gen Jerusalem von dem
Berge, der da heißet der Ölberg,
welcher ist nahe bei Jerusalem
und liegt einen Sabbater-Weg davon,
und sie kehrten wieder gen Jerusalem
mit großer Freude.

But they worshipped him,
then went back to Jerusalem from the mount
which is called the Mount of Olives,
and which is near Jerusalem
and is situated a Sabbath's journey away,
and they returned back to Jerusalem
with great joy.

The soprano soloist then sings a refreshing and truly remarkable aria. Bach symbolizes Jesus' Ascension by setting the aria for the high voices only: soprano, flutes, oboe, and upper strings. It is almost as if the lower world has dropped away and we find ourselves in heaven.

Soprano:

Jesu, deine Gnadenblicke
kann ich doch beständig sehn.
Deine Liebe bleibt zurücke,
daß ich mich hier in der Zeit
an der künftigen Herrlichkeit
schon voraus im Geist erquicke,
wenn wir einst dort vor dir stehn.

Jesus, your gracious look
I can still see continually.
Your love remains behind,
so that here in this present time
I may now refresh myself in spirit
with the glory that is to come,
when we shall one day stand before you there.

Trumpets and timpani announce the return of the real world, where the full chorus and orchestra look forward to Jesus' second coming with renewed confidence, joy and anticipation.

Chorus:

Wenn soll es doch geschehen,
wenn kömmt die liebe Zeit,
daß ich ihn werde sehen,
in seiner Herrlichkeit?
Du Tag, wenn wirst du sein,
daß wir den Heiland grüßen,
daß wir den Heiland küssen?
Komm, stelle dich doch ein!

When will it happen,
when will the dear time come
that I shall see him
in his glory?
You, day, when will you come
that we may greet the Savior,
that we may kiss the Savior?
Come, be present soon!

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Vivaldi's *Gloria* was composed for the *Ospedale della Pietà*, a charitable institution for orphaned and abandoned girls, where Vivaldi was employed intermittently from 1703 to 1740. The *Pietà* was famous for its music program and its orchestras, and visitors came from all over Europe to hear the young women play. Though there is some question as to how the work was originally performed, it now seems likely that all four voices parts of the *Gloria* (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass) were sung by women.

Like the *Ascension Oratorio*, the *Gloria* is set in the brilliant key of D major. The drama in the *Gloria*, however, is a musical one, as there is no story line and no narrator. It is not known if this *Gloria* is part of a larger complete setting of the entire mass that is now lost. Certainly the work stands on its own, and is separated into twelve movements, each with its own distinct character.

The opening chorus is full of joyful energy and infectious rhythm, and the second movement is a perfect contrast with its long, expressive lines and adventurous harmony.

Chorus:

Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Et in terra pax
hominibus bonae voluntatis.

Glory to God in the highest.
And on earth peace
to all those of good will.

The next movement features two soprano soloists in an exuberant duet. The chorus then follows with a pair of relatively short movements, the first homophonic and declamatory, the second fugal.

Soprano Duet:

Laudamus te. Benedicimus te.
Adoramus te. Glorificamus te.

We praise thee. We bless thee.
We worship thee. We glorify thee.

Chorus:

Gratias agimus tibi
propter magnam gloriam tuam.

We give thanks to thee
according to thy great glory.

The following movement is another duet, this time for soprano solo and oboe. The chorus then returns with a jaunty movement filled with dotted rhythms reminiscent of a French overture.

Soprano:

Domine Deus, Rex coelestis
Deus Pater omnipotens.

Lord God, Heavenly King,
God the Father almighty.

Chorus:

Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe.

Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son.

The mood abruptly changes as the alto soloist pleads for mercy. She is supported by the responses and interjections of the chorus, which then continues the entreaty on its own. The alto completes the supplication in an aria that evokes the soul's mortal peril.

Alto and Chorus:

Domine Deus, Agnus Dei,
Filius Patris.
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.

Lord God, Lamb of God,
Son of the Father.
Thou who takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.

Chorus:

Qui tollis peccata mundi,
suscipe deprecationem nostram.

Thou who takest away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer.

Alto:

Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,
miserere nobis.

Thou who sittest at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy upon us.

The music of the opening chorus returns in abbreviated form for movement eleven, and the work ends with a grand final fugue.

Chorus:

Quoniam tu solus sanctus.
Tu solus Dominus.
Tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe.
Cum Sancto Spiritu
in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

For Thou alone art holy.
Thou alone art the Lord.
Thou alone art the most high, Jesus Christ.
With the Holy Spirit
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

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