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"Bach: Magnificat and other works" Fall Concert

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The background of the entire poster is a dense, repeating pattern of musical notation, including staves with notes, clefs, and various symbols, all rendered in a dark, textured style.

UNIVERSITY of
RICHMOND
CHOIR

James Erb, conductor

Bach: Magnificat
and other works

FALL CONCERT

Mon., November 14, 8:15pm

Cannon Chapel

UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND

CHOIR

FALL CONCERT

1983

Cannon Memorial Chapel

November 14

8:15 PM

PROGRAM

I.

Three Russian Folk Songs, Op. 41 . . . Sergei Rachmaninoff
(1873-1943)

1. A drake is crossing over the river. He tries to persuade a little gray female duck to follow him across; but she is afraid and will not, which causes him to weep in his loneliness.

2. Ah, bold Johnny, you're fearless. Why are you leaving me? Who will be my friend and care for me with you gone? There'll be no brother, no friend--only your grim old father, who makes me weep. Who will be with me during the icy winter to shorten the long dark nights?

3. Quick, get the powder off my cheeks, the rouge off my lips before my jealous husband gets here with his silk whip. He longs to lash me, and I can't think why. All I did was sneak off to a neighbors' party and sit next to a handsome bachelor whom I brought a cup of mead. As our fingers touched on the rim of the cup he said in front of everyone that I was beautiful. Quick--off with the powder and rouge before my jealous husband comes to beat me. I can't think why.

Debbie Reed, piano

Dedicated to, and first performed by, Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, these settings are based on old Russian tunes known to Rachmaninoff through friends he encountered in the years before he left Russia to settle in the West. The piano version used in this performance is the composer's own.

III.

Magnificat, BWV 243

J. S. Bach
(1685-1750)

Chorus: Magnificat anima mea

My soul doth magnify the Lord.

Soprano II aria: Et exultavit

And my spirit doth rejoice in God my savior.

Soprano I aria: Quia respexit

For he hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden;
Behold, from henceforth shall call me blessed . . .

Chorus: Omnes generationes

All generations.

Bass aria: Quia fecit mihi magna

For He that is mighty hath magnified me,
And holy is His name.

Alto-Tenor duet: Et misericordia

And His mercy is upon them that fear Him
To all generations.

Chorus: Fecit potentiam

He hath shown strength with His arm;
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination
of their hearts.

Tenor aria: Deposuit potentes .

He hath put down the mighty from their seat,
And hath exalted the humble and meek.

Alto aria: Esurientes

He hath filled the hungry with good things,
And the rich hath he sent empty away.

Chorus: Suscepit Israel

He remembering His mercy hath holpen His servant
Israel;

Chorus: Sicut locutus est

As He promised to our forefathers,
Abraham and his seed, forever.

Chorus: Gloria Patri

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
And to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and
ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Aria soloists (in order):

Trish Hussey, '86

Paul Rowles, '85

Betty Ann Hughes, '84

Kathryn Fessler, '86

Sean Sullivan, '87

The Magnificat has been sung at the end of Vespers since the sixth century. Luther's reforms of the liturgy affected Vespers very little, and so after the Reformation the Magnificat continued to be sung in protestant churches as well as catholic. The text comes from St. Luke, Chapter I, verses 46-55. Its ten verses, with a two verse "gloria Patri" appended, make up a twelve-verse lyric to which Bach supplies a musical commentary that is every bit as ingenious and wondrous as the more famous Mass in B Minor and that--because of its short text--is much easier to absorb in a single sitting.

Bach's characteristic use of symbolism is evident in this piece both at the large-form level and in detail. At the large-form level we hear the music of the first movement returning in the final chorus to the words "as it was in the beginning." At the level of detail examples can be found by the hundreds, but two contrasted ones may suffice to illustrate: the third movement (aria, Quia respexit) proceeds directly into the fourth movement (chorus, Omnes generationes) in order to convey a musical picture of a vast, restless crowd of "all generations" at the end of the aria; and the ninth movement (alto aria, Esurientes) ends with a single plucked bass note, symbolizing how the rich are to be sent away empty.

The Magnificat contains dozens of traits borrowed from musical traditions that stem from as far back as the middle ages, and that yet once more show that Bach remains the unequalled confluence of all that came before. What was and is new in his art was not the uncovering of the unknown, but rather the realization of how much there was yet in the known.

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