"Bach: Magnificat and other works" Fall Concert

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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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.
Three Moravian Anthems

1. Lord Jesus, Who Didst Redeem Us
   Johann Heinrich Rolle (1718-1785)

2. O, The Blessedness is Great
   Johann Christian Bechler (1784-1857)

3. All the World Shall Sing His Praise
   Francis Florentine Hagen (1815-1907)

The Moravians, German-speaking members of the Hussite Church of the Brethren, began settling in large numbers in Pennsylvania and North Carolina from the 1730's. Unlike otherwise similar protestant groups they used instruments in their service music, which was of great importance in their worship. Many of their composers were born and trained in this country in a living tradition that endured for over a century. Consequently there exists today a large number of anthems in 18th-century European style, with instrumental accompaniment. That this fine music has not received wider use may be explained by the fact that until recently most of the German texts were unavailable in English translation. Our performances are based on editions published in 1956 with English Texts by Clarence Dickinson.

Intermission
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
Betty Ann Hughes, '84
Sean Sullivan, '87
Paul Rowles, '85
Kathryn Fessler, '86
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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