

EMMANUEL MUSE



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Bach's Great St. Matthew Passion to be Performed This Weekend by Emmanuel Music

As Emmanuel Music's 2008-09 season moves toward its close, the eagerly anticipated performance of the *St. Matthew Passion* appears on this week's calendar. The Orchestra and Chorus of Emmanuel Music, with John Harbison conducting, will present Bach's magisterial and sweeping Passion on Friday, April 3, at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, April 5, at 3 p.m.

The Bach family called it "The Great Passion." Bach composed his *St. Matthew Passion*, BWV 244 from 1724 to 1731, during his Leipzig years. He revised it in 1736, but it was not heard outside Leipzig for close to a century until Felix Mendelssohn revived it to great acclaim. It traces the final days and crucifixion of Jesus as related in the Biblical text of Matthew 26-27.

Among the many distinguishing features of the *St. Matthew Passion* are its use of a two-part choral ensemble, its status as the largest original work by Bach, the inclusion of many musical forms and familiar arias of heart-wrenching beauty, such as *Mache dich, mein Herze, rein and Erbarme dich, mein Gott*. Christian Friedrich Henrici (known as Picander) wrote the libretto.

Two Emmanuel Music standouts, tenor Charles Blandy and baritone Donald Wilkinson, will sing the roles of the Evangelist and Jesus, respectively. Other solo roles in the *St. Matthew Passion* will be sung by members of the Chorus of Emmanuel Music. They will sing the arias and will take the parts of Judas, Peter, Pilate, Pilate's Wife, First and Second Handmaidens, and First and Second High Priests.

Tickets, now in limited supply, may be purchased by phone, 617-536-3356, or by credit card online at Emmanuel Music's secure site: www.emmanuelmusic.org. The *St. Matthew Passion* performances take place at Emmanuel Church, 15 Newbury Street, Boston, where Emmanuel Music is the Ensemble-in-Residence. Emmanuel Church is easily accessible from the Arlington Street Green Line MBTA stop and from the Boston Common Garage, just across the Public Garden on Charles Street.

Each concert will be preceded by a lecture one hour before the performance by celebrated musicologist, prolific writer, and Bach scholar, Christoph Wolff. He is the author of *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician*, which connects the composer's life, times and music. He serves on the faculty of Harvard University and is the director of the Bach Archive in Leipzig.

Also on Sunday, April 5, there will be a special program in cooperation with the Emmanuel Center, *The Passions of the Passion*, featuring Emmanuel Church's Priest-in-Charge, Pamela Wernitz, Rabbi Howard Berman of Boston Jewish Spirit, and Charles Blandy, St. Matthew soloist at 12:30 p.m. in the Emmanuel Library. This talk is free and open to the public.

*Emmanuel Music is the Ensemble-in-Residence at Emmanuel Church.
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