

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

Gamut Bach Ensemble
Wednesday, May 10 – 7:30 PM
Church of the Holy Trinity

PROGRAM

Wer weiß, wie nahe mir mein Ende, BWV 27

Johann Sebastian Bach

Born: March 31, 1685, Eisenach, Germany

Died: July 28, 1750, Leipzig, Germany

Composed: 1726

Duration: 16 minutes

Composed for the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity, which fell on October 6, 1726, Bach's Cantata No. 27 "Wer weiss, wie nahe mir mein Ende" (Who knows how near is my end; BWV 27) sets a lugubrious text by an unknown author on the Lutheran preoccupations of the pain and suffering of life and the reward for the just in heaven through the Lord's intercession. The cantata is scored for tenor, alto, soprano and bass soloists, chorus, natural horn, oboe da caccia, organ obbligato, pairs of oboes, strings, and basso continuo. This cantata is harmonically atypical in that it closes in a tonality other than the tonality in which it opens.

Sie werden euch in den Bann tun, BWV 44

Johann Sebastian Bach

Composed: 1724

Duration: 19 minutes

"He who kills you will think he does God a service", sings the chorus at the beginning of this cantata. This text was intended for the Sunday after Ascension, a desolate period before the inspiration of Whitsuntide. Jesus is trying to explain to his disciples that their lives will not always be easy, particularly in a world where some people will reject them. Bach supports these warnings with a strict canon, a composition method whereby the different voices follow one another very precisely. This is well suited to the menacing tone of the words. The sense of urgency is emphasised by the chorus that joins in suddenly. It sounds like an uprising from the *St. John Passion*, which had been performed for the first time one and a half months earlier.

It is only in the last aria and final chorus that persecution makes way for faith. This cantata is also striking for Bach's use of the bassoon. Bach was not often so specific about the instruments he wanted to use for the bass parts, but here he explicitly asks for a bassoon in all the movements.

Am Abend aber desselbigen Sabbats, BWV 42

Johann Sebastian Bach

Composed: 1725

Duration: 28 minutes

This work may once have been the first part of a concerto for two oboes, bassoon, and orchestra. The long alto aria, 'Wo Zwei und Drei versammelt sind', might then have been the slow movement. Here, too, the oboes and bassoon have a prominent role, which makes the cantata almost top heavy. But there is plenty in store in the rest as well. In 'Verzage nicht', the bass line is divided in two, so that besides the duet for soprano and tenor, a duet is also created for bassoon, cello, and harpsichord on the one hand, and organ and double bass on the other. And in the triumphant closing aria, there are two solo violins. The cantatas has four singers, all of whom have solos, and the piece closes with a final chorale sung altogether.