

Con Gioia Program Notes
Fall 2025

A Tribute to St. Cecilia

We dedicate our program today to a woman we rarely speak of— St. Cecilia—also known as Cecilia of Rome.

Today, November 22, being the Feast Day for St. Cecilia, Patron saint of Musicians, we open our concert with the opening fanfare by oboes and strings from George Friedrich Handel's *Ode to St. Cecilia*—the Overture (in the French style)—followed by the soprano aria “*With Ravished ears*” from Handel's other work honoring St. Cecilia—*Alexander's Feast*— accompanied only by the same instruments.¹

Bach's music will again dominate our program. The tenor aria, “*Hebt euer Haupt empor*” of *Wachet!betet!betet!wachet!*, BWV 70, composed for the 26th Sunday after Trinity 1723 (coincidentally, 21 November) is a fitting opener for this, and is accompanied by an oboe, the obbligato instrument of choice of Bach for almost one-half of the second chorale cantata year. The original version was composed for Weimar but altered and expanded since it could not have been used during the pre-Christmas fasting period in Leipzig. The biblical source is Matt. 25 (3:16), pertaining to the Last Judgement, but Bach omitted the last line: the “last day will come.”

We continue with the opening aria for bass from the cantata, *Es ist euch gut, dass ich hingehe*, BWV 108 (*Now it is good that I go forth*) which is identified as an “arioso,” i.e., indicating it is less demanding than the regular “aria.” Yet, you, the listener, will hopefully agree that there is nothing that appears to reduce the quality of this exquisite introductory movement to the cantata. It was performed at the end of the 2nd year of Bach's so-called “Chorale cantata” cycle with which he began his many years of composing cantatas for Leipzig. The text is by the famous Leipzig poet laureate Christiana Mariana von Ziegler (whose works Bach adapted for nine of his cantatas). The text contains two sayings by Jesus, which are taken directly from the Sunday gospel reading (John 16:5-15). The quotation opening the cantata was set by Bach as a bass aria. The solo oboe d'amore and strings play a staccato rhythm portraying the Lord's steps as He leaves his disciples and those of the comforter. Cantata BWV 108 quotes from John 16:7, “but I say to you that it is beneficial to you that I go away, for if I don't, the comforter will not come to you.” The bass aria with obbligato oboe is followed by an even more intensively expressive aria for the tenor, with obbligato violin, which time alone prevents us from presenting.

It was in October 1713 that J. S. Bach, Konzertmeister at the Weimar court was assigned the task of composing a vocal work to celebrate the 52nd birthday of his employer, Duke Wilhelm Ernst. Following its performance, probably in the famous *Himmelsburg* Chapel (Heaven's Chapel), it is highly likely that “*Alles mit Gott und nichts ohn' ihn*,” for soprano, string ensemble and basso continuo, BWV 1127 was stored away among works that were no longer useful. Thus, it is not surprising that it was discovered by Bach-scholar Michael Maul, only in 2005, almost three centuries later in its original resting place, having survived several fires in the now famous

¹In the late 1730s Handel worked on setting music to honor St Cecilia. In 1736 he performed at Covent Garden his ode *Alexander's Feast*, based on a libretto by John Dryden and extolling the power of music and its ability to control human emotions. Three years later he composed the *Ode to St. Cecilia*, highly influenced by Henry Purcell, who had composed several works in praise of St. Cecilia. In Christianity, the term “Ravished ear” describes an ear that is profoundly moved by beautiful sounds or music. It denotes not only a deep appreciation for the auditory experience but also emphasizes the emotional impact that music can have on an individual.

library of Duchess Anna Amalie. The author of the text, Johann Anton Mylius chose the duke's motto, *Omnia cum deo et nihil sine eo*, as the source for a poem. Thus, this aria, unlike typical ones by Bach, has 12 stanzas and refers to aspects of the dedicatee's life and the motto connected with the dedicatee. We will present the first two stanzas which will give you an idea of the entire joyful piece. It is likely that our performance is the first in Los Angeles and we are very happy to share it with you.

The cantata *Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder: Weicht all ihr Übeltäter, BWV 135*, was composed for the 3rd Sunday after Trinity and first performed on June 25, 1724, in the second year of Bach's Chorale Cantatas. It is based on Psalm 6. "*Ach Herr strafe mich nicht in deinem Grimm* (O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger) was written by a 16th-century Weimar administrator Cyriakus Schneegass. It contrasts the sinner's anguish with the soothing comfort of Jesus.

The prescribed readings for the Sunday were from the First Epistle of Peter, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord" (1 Peter 5:6–11), and from the Gospel of Luke, the parable of the Lost Sheep and the parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:1–10).² The tenor aria expresses his need for help and the bass aria a mood of hope with a virtuosic exhilarating string accompaniment.

The cantata, *Ich lebe, mein Herze, zu Deinem Ergötze, BWV 145*, poses problems for those seeking its origins and sequence of movements. Today, some experts question its sources, linking both Telemann and C.P.E. Bach to it. We present the undoubtedly fine duet for soprano and tenor, with a virtuosic obbligato violin, representing a dialogue between Jesus and the Soul, adding a dancing rhythm. (As we know, many of the several hundred cantatas Bach composed for church services and other public occasions are lost due to past neglect in preserving music that didn't seem to be of value beyond its immediate use.)

****Intermission****

Bach composed several cantatas for solo bass voice; *Ich habe genug [genug] BWV 82* (*I have enough*) was for Candlemass, the Feast of Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary on February 2, 1727. It was repeated on several more occasions, partially altered, including a version for solo soprano in E minor and for mezzo-soprano in c minor and possibly e minor. The final version, chosen for our performances, is also for bass. The anonymous libretto is not in the Bible, but the first movement includes text similar to those of Simeon addressing God after holding the

We follow this aria with two stunningly effective arias for tenor and for bass from the baby Jesus in his arms (*Luke 2*). The first recitative and following aria are also found in Anna Magdalena Bach's *Klavierbüchlein* (Notebook), 1725, indicating its appeal to Bach's second wife, who herself was an admired singer. Indeed, the first aria with an elaborate oboe obbligato, recalls the beloved theme in "*Erbarme Dich*" (*St. Matthew Passion*) and "*Wenn kömmst Du, mein Heil*" (BWV 140).

We return now to Handel's world and present an unusual work also found in his *Ode to St. Ceilia: What Passion cannot Music raise and quell*." This movement has a highly expressive (obbligato) cello accompaniment, which Handel composed to complement the soprano's voice, supported by occasional flourishes by the upper strings.

Our final aria by Bach is the second of two in this beloved cantata for solo soprano *Ich bin vergenügt in meinem Glücke, BWV 84*. The Gospel refers to Matt. 20:1-16. The first aria

²The Parable of the Lost Sheep is one of the parables of Jesus. It appears in the Gospels of Matt. 18:12–14 and Luke 15:3-7. It is about a man who leaves his flock of ninety-nine sheep in order to find the one which is lost. In Luke 15, it is the first member of a trilogy about redemption that Jesus addresses to the Pharisees and religious leaders after they accuse him of welcoming and eating with sinners.

conveys a serious mood. The second joyfully accepts the hand dealt. The soprano plays the role of a laborer or Christian who is more than satisfied with whatever lot God has dealt him. The cheerful mood conveyed by the obligato oboe and violin leaves us yearning for more.

The arias and duet offered today present voices in a wide range of colors and moods. These vocal tessituras can be used to fully express the satisfaction and delight that the human voice can convey. With a relatively sparse accompaniment and/or woodwind and string obligato supported by the continuo, we are transported to savor rarely heard moments of sonic beauty that only a practiced ear and inherent skills can convey.

Wolfgang Amadé MOZART (1756–91)

Mozart's recently discovered string trio (now identified as, **Serenade in C major, K. 648**) had been gathering dust (if you will) until 2023 in the library of the City of Leipzig, Germany for a good 250 years prior to being discovered and is now delighting all who have since then been performing or listening to it.

Today, we in Los Angeles are proud to join them and bring back to life these moments of Mozartian "magic". Needless to say, many have found it a close relation to the composer's famous *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, K. 525 and we can surely agree on its kinship with that famous serenade. Typical of such "outdoor" works, it already is known as "*Eine ganz kleine Nachtmusik*," reminding the listener of its kinship with its famous predecessor, K. 525, are movements such as a menuet and trio. Here we find even two pairs of this combination of movements inserted at chosen moments. The second pair leads to the finale.

PdeS, 2025

Aria Texts and Translations

Handel

Aria für Sopran aus Alexander's Feast or the Power of Musick, HWV 75:

#8. With Ravish'd Ears

Bach, BWV 70

Aria, Tenor: *Wachet! Betet! Betet! Wachet.*

"Hebt euer Haupt empor"

Hebt euer Haupt empor

Und seid getrost, ihr Frommen,

Zu eurer Seelen Flor!

Ihr sollt in Eden grünen,

Gott ewiglich zu dienen.

Bach, *Es ist Euch gut, dass ich hingeh*, BWV 108 Aria, Bass

Es ist euch gut, daß ich hingeh; denn so ich nicht hingeh, kömmt der Tröster nicht zu euch.

So ich aber gehe, will ich ihn zu euch senden.

(John 16:7)

Bach, *Alles mit Gott und nichts ohn' ihn* BWV 1127. Soprano

1. Alles mit Gott und nichts ohn' ihn

Wird einher Wundersegen ziehn.

Denn Gott, der Wunder tut im Himmel und auf Erden, will denen Frommen selbst, zum

Wundersegen werden,

Der Mensch bemüht sich, will Wunder viel verrichten, und voller Unruh ist sein Sinnen,

Denken, Dichten.

Soll einher Wundersegen ziehn,

alles mit Gott und nichts ohn' ihn

2. Alles mit Gott und nichts ohn' ihn

Wird einher Jesus' Segen ziehn.

Der grosse Segensherr kann rechten Segen bringen, tritt er nur in das Schiff, so muss es wohl gelingen.

Wär aller Segen gleich vorhero weit entfernt

Wohl dem, der dieses wohl bei bei seiner Arbeit lernet.

Soll einher Jesus' Segen ziehn,

alles mit Gott und nichts ohn' ihn...“

Handel

Aria for soprano from **Alexander's Feast or the Power of Musick, HWV 75:**

#8. With Ravish'd Ears

The monarch hears; assumes the god,
affects to nod: and seems to shake the spheres.

Bach, BWV 70

Aria, Tenor: Watch! Pray! Pray! Watch!

Watch! Pray! Pray! Watch!

Lift up your heads

and be comforted, O righteous ones,

even to the bloom of your souls!

You shall flourish in Eden,

serving God eternally.

Bach, *It is good for you that I leave*, BWV 108 Aria, Bass

It is good for you that I leave; for if I did not go, the Comforter would not come to you. Since I go, however, I will send him to you. (John 16:7)

Bach, *All things with God, without him nought* BWV 1127. Soprano

1. All things with God, without him nought" will hither Wondrous blessing bring.

For God hath wonders wrought in heaven and on earth and

would for the just himself become a wondrous blessing.

Mankind is striving much, would wonders many fashion, and ever restless in its senses, thoughts, intentions.

Should hither Wondrous blessing come, all things with God, without him nought

2. All things with God, without him nought will hither Jesus blessing bring.

The mighty Lord of grace can truly bring us blessing if he but board the ship, most surely shall we prosper.

Though every blessing may at first seem all so distant, blest he who learns this well amidst his labors:

"Should hither Jesus blessing come, all things with God, without him nought..."

**Bach, Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder, BWV135
Verse 3. Aria, Tenor**

*Tröste mir, Jesu, meine Gemüte,
Sonst versink ich in den Tod,
Hilf mir, hilf mir durch deine Güte
Aus der großen Seelennot!
Denn im Tod ist alles stille,
Da gedenkt man deiner nicht.
Liebster Jesu, ist's dein Wille,
So erfreu mein Angesicht!*

**Verse 5. Aria. Bass
Weicht, all ihr Übeltäter,**

*Mein Jesus tröstet mich!
Er läßt nach Tränen und nach Weinen
Die Freudensonne wieder scheinen;
Das Trübsals Wetter ändert sich,
Die Feinde müssen plötzlich fallen
Und ihre Pfeile rückwärts prallen.*

**Bach, Duet, Sopr, Tenor BWV 145 –
Ich lebe, mein Herz zu deine Ergötzen.**

*Ich lebe, mein Herze, zu deinem Ergötzen,
– Du lebest, mein Jesu, zu meinem Ergötzen, –
Mein Leben erhebet dein Leben empor.
– Dein Leben erhebet mein Leben empor. –
Die klagende Handschrift ist völlig zerrissen,
Der Friede verschaffen ein ruhig Gewissen
Und öffnet den Sündern das himmlische Tor.*

**Handel, Aria Sopran aus Ode for St. Cecilia's
Day, HWV 76**

*What Passion cannot music raise and quell!
When Jubal struck the chorded shell.
His listening brethren stood around
And wond'ering on their faces fell,
To worship that celestial sound.*

*Less than a God they thought
There could not dwell within the
hollow of that shell, that spoke so sweetly
and so well.
What Passion cannot music raise and quell!*

**Bach, "Ich habe genug [Genug]."Aria #1 Bass,
BWV 82.**

*Ich habe genug,
Ich habe den Heiland, das Hoffen der Frommen,
Auf meine begierigen Arme genommen;*

**Bach, Ah Lord, poor sinner that I am, BWV
135, Verse 3. Aria, Tenor**

*Comfort, Jesus, my spirit,
or else I will collapse in death,
help me, help me through your goodness
out of the most grievous anguish of the soul!
For everything is silent in death,
there no one thinks about you.
Dearest Jesus, if it is your will,
bring joy again to my face!*

**And Verse 5. Aria. Bass
Hence, all you evildoers,**

*My Jesus comforts me!
He makes, after tears and weeping,
the sun of joy shine again;
the storm of trouble alters,
the enemies must suddenly fall
and their arrows hurtle backwards.*

Bach, Duet, Sopr, Tenor BWV 145

I live, my heart, for your pleasure,
*I live, my heart, for your pleasure,
– You live, my Jesus, for my pleasure, –
My life uplifts your life on high.
– your life uplifts my life on high. –
The accusing signature is completely torn up,
peace engenders a quiet conscience
and opens the heavenly gate to sinners.*

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HWV 76**

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There could not dwell within the
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What Passion cannot music raise and quell*

**Bach, "Ich habe genug [Genug]."Aria #1 Bass,
BWV 82.**

*I have enough,
I have taken the Savior, the hope of the
righteous, into my eager arms;*

*Ich habe genug
 Ich hab ihn erblickt,
 Mein Glaube hat Jesum ans Herze gedrückt;
 Nun wünsch ich, noch heute mit Freuden
 Von hinnen zu scheiden.*

**Bach, *Ich bin vergnügt mit meinem Glücke*,
 BWV 84**

Aria #3. Soprano

*Ich esse mit Freuden mein weniges Brot
 Und gönne dem Nächsten von Herzen das Seine.
 Ein ruhig Gewissen, ein fröhlicher Geist,
 Ein dankbares Herze, das lobet und preist,
 vermehret den Segen, verzuckert die Not.*

I have enough!
 I have beheld him,
 my faith has pressed Jesus to my heart;
 now I wish, even today with joy
 to depart from here.

**Bach, I am pleased with the fortune that my
 dear God bestows on me, BWV 84**

Aria #3. Soprano.

I eat my little bit of bread with joy and heartily
 leave to my neighbor their own.
 A peaceful conscience, a happy spirit,
 a thankful heart, that gives praise and thanks,
 heightens its blessing, sweetens its sorrow.

Translations:

* All Arias by Bach, except BWV 1127:
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BWV 1127: Z. Philip Ambrose, The University of
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