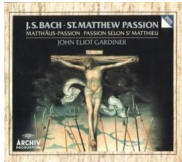


Bach – St. Matthew Passion (Gardiner)



CD 1 01. Chorus 'Kommt, ihr Tochter, helft mir klagen' - 'O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig' 02. (Evangelista, Jesus) 'Da Jesus diese Rede vollendet hatte' 03. Choral 'Herzliebster Jesu, was hast Du verbrochen' 04. (Evangelista) 'Da Versammelten sich die Hohepriester' 05. Recitativo (Alt) 'Du lieber Heiland du' 06. Aria (Alt) 'Buss und Reu' 07. (Evangelista, Judas) 'Da ging hin der Zwölfen einer' 08. Aria (Sopran) 'Blute nur, du liebes Herz' 09. (Evangelista) 'Aber am ersten Tage der süssen Brot' 10. Choral 'Ich bin's, ich sollte bussen' 11. (Evangelista, Jesus, Judas) 'Er antwortete und sprach' 12. Recitativo (Sopran) 'Wiewohl mein Herz in Tränen schwimmt' 13. Aria (Sopran) 'Ich will dir mein Herze schenken' 14. (Evangelista, Judas) 'Und da sie den Lobgesang gesprochen hatten' 15. Choral 'Erkenne mich, mein Huter' 16. (Evangelista, Petrus, Jesus) 'Petrus aber antwortete und sprach zu ihm' 17. Choral 'Ich will hier bei dir stehen' 18. (Evangelista, Jesus) 'Da kam Jesus mit ihnen zu einen Hofe' 19. Recitativo (Tenor) 'O Schmerz! Hier zittert das gequalte Herz' - Choral 'Was ist die Ursach' 20. Aria (Tenor) 'Ich will bei meinen Jesu wachen' - Chorus 'So schlafen unsre Sunden ein' 21. (Evangelista, Jesus) 'Und ging hin ein wenig' 22. Recitativo (Bass) 'Der Heiland fällt vor seinem Vater nieder' 23. Aria (Bass) 'Gerne will ich mich bequemen' 24. (Evangelista, Jesus) 'Und er kam zu seinen Jungern' 25. Choral 'Was mein Gott will, das g'scheh allzeit' 26. (Evangelista, Jesus, Judas) 'Und er kam und fand sie aber schlafend' 27. Aria (Duett - Sopran, Alt) 'So ist mein Jesus nun gefangen' 28. (Evangelista, Jesus) 'Und siehe, einer aus denen, die mit Jesu waren' 29. Choral 'O Mensch, beweine deine Sünde gross' Total 66.06

CD 2 01. Aria (Alt) 'Ach! Nun ist mein Jesus hin' - Chorus 'Wo ist denn dein Freund hingegangen' 02. (Evangelista) 'Die aber Jesum gegriffen hatten' 03. Choral 'Mir hat die Welt traglich gericht' 04. (Evangelista, Testis I, II, Pontifex) 'Und wiewohl viel falsche Zeugen herzutraten' 05. Recitativo (Tenor) 'Mein Jesus schweigt zu falschen Lügen Stille' 06. Aria (Tenor) 'Geduld! Wenn mich falsche Zungen stechen' 07. (Evangelista, Pontifex, Jesus) 'Und der Hohepriester antwortete' 08. Choral - Wer hat dich so geschlagen 09. (Evangelista, Ancilla I, II, Petrus) 'Petrus aber sass draussen im Palast' 10. Aria (Alt) - Erbarme dich, mein Gott 11. Choral 'Bin ich gleich von dir gewichen' 12. (Evangelista, Judas) 'Des morgens aber hielten alle Hohepriester' 13. Aria (Bass) 'Gebt mir meinen Jesum wieder' 14. (Evangelista, Pilatus, Jesus) 'Sie hielten aber einen Rat' 15. Choral 'Befiehl du deine Wege' 16. (Evangelista, Pilatus, Chori) 'Auf das Fest aber hatte der Landpfleger Gewohnheit' 17. Choral 'Wie wunderbarlich ist doch diese Strafe' 18. (Evangelista, Pilatus) 'Der Landpfleger sagte' 19. Recitativo (Sopran) 'Er hat uns allen wohlgetan' 20. Aria (Soprano) 'Aus Liebe will mein Heiland sterben' 21. (Evangelista) 'Sie schrieen aber noch mehr' 22. Recitativo (Alt) 'Erbarm es Gott' 23. Aria (Alt) 'Konnen Tränen meiner Wangen'

Johann Sebastian Bach – St. Matthew Passion (Gardiner)

Written by bluesever

Wednesday, 21 October 2009 12:01 - Last Updated Saturday, 10 March 2012 21:56

Total 50.03 CD 3

01. (Evangelista) 'Da nahmen die Kriegsknechte' 02. Choral 'O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden' 03. (Evangelista) 'Und da sie ihn verspottet hatten' 04. Recitativo (Bass) 'Ja freilich will in uns das Fleisch und Blut' 05. Aria (Bass) 'Komm, susses Kreuz, so will ich sagen' 06. (Evangelista) 'Und da sie an die Stutte kamen' 07. Recitativo (Alt) 'Ach Golgatha' 08. Aria (Alt) 'Sehet, Jesus hat die Hand' - Chorus 'Wohin' 09. (Evangelista, Jesus) 'Und von der sechsten Stunde an' 10. Choral 'Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden' 11. (Evangelista) 'Und siehe da, der Vorhang im Tempel zerriss' 12. Recitativo (Bass) 'Am Abend, da es kuhle war' 13. Aria (Bass) 'Mache dich, mein Herze, rein' 14. (Evangelista) 'Und Joseph nahm den Leib' 15. Recitativo 'Nun ist der Herr zur Ruh gebracht' - Chorus 'Mein Jesu, gute Nacht' 16. Chorus 'Wir setzen uns mit Tranen nieder'

Total 41.21 Anthony Rolfe Johnson, Evangelist (tenor) Andreas Schmidt, Jesus (bass) Barbara Bonney, Pilate's Wife (soprano) Ann Monoyios (soprano) Anne Sofie von Otter (alto) Michael Chance (countertenor) Howard Crook, Second witness (tenor) Olaf Baer Pilate & High Priest I (baritone) Cornelius Hauptman, Judas & Pontifex (bass) English Baroque Soloists & The Monteverdi Choir John Eliot Gardiner – conductor

Gardiner's St. Matthew Passion represents the pinnacle of his Bach recordings and now clearly makes first choice for any serious CD collector. The English Baroque Soloists, on period instruments accompany the resplendent Monteverdi Choir and the magnificent soloists (with Michael Chance outstanding among the male singers and Anne Sofie von Otter among the females). Rolfe Johnson as the evangelist makes the recitatives compelling and lively, treating them in a variety of ways, so that the listener can relate more closely to the Passion story. Gardiner too interprets each chorale differently so that the listener cannot dismiss merely as "hymns".

The choruses are superb, especially the opening "Come, ye daughters". Instead of using all boy soloists for the chorale tune in this chorus, Gardiner also uses a teenage female choir, which, using no vibrato, is totally in context with the rest of the recording. The singers' German is perfect. This recording, although it has the price disadvantage of coming on three full-price CDs, is a clear first choice for the discerning Bach fan. Gardiner's best recording yet. ---David Irving

Bach's St Matthew Passion is a sacred drama on an unprecedented scale. He created it as an integral part of the Good Friday Vespers in the strict Lutheran stronghold of Leipzig where it was

first performed, perhaps as early as 1727. At their most fundamental, the disparate elements comprising Bach's St Matthew Passion can be placed under distinct headings: the narrative element in which the Evangelist (tenor) and Christ (baritone) play the central role; a lyrical and contemplative element provided by the arias; a meditative and communal element provided by the chorales, the traditional hymn-tunes of Bach's time; and the choruses which comment on events taking place emphasizing their significance with immense, at times almost overwhelming, power. The interdependence of these diverse components is only fully realized in a performance which comprehends Bach's vast tableau in its entirety. John Eliot Gardiner has considered the work's structure very carefully seeing in each of its two parts a division into two scenes, creating an effect similar to that of the Stations of the Cross. I am not sure that I see it quite as dear-cut as that, but I warmly respond to the importance he attaches to theology and rhetoric, distancing himself as far as circumstances permit from perfunctory aspects of mere recording.

Gardiner's approach to the St Matthew Passion is fervent and contains a vivid sense of theatre. He has not sought an approximation to the performing conditions that Bach had at his disposal at various times. We are far from certain about what they were, but know that they must often have been less than ideal. Instead, various quite sensible compromises have been made. The Monteverdi Choir consist of mixed voices and the solo team likewise. Bach certainly had no such choice available to him and might, indeed, not have wanted it, anyway. The orchestra of period instruments, on the other hand, would have seemed, at least on the face of it, familiar to him. The forces which Bach required to perform the St Matthew Passion are greater than those he assembled for almost any other of his compositions: two choruses, two orchestras, each with their own continuo organ, and another group of treble voices to sing the cantus firmus of the opening chorus. Gardiner seems to have based the size of his choral and instrumental groups on those cited in Bach's memorandum in 1730 to the Leipzig town council, "For a well-appointed church music".

Apart from one or two instances where I find it difficult to fall in with Gardiner's interpretation, this performance is impressive for the integrity which he shows towards the drama and for the uniformly high level of executancy, voices and instruments alike. It will come as no surprise to those familiar with Gardiner's performances that a distinctly individual presence can be felt to a greater or lesser extent throughout. To define it would be difficult but to spot it, less so. In short, it can most readily be discerned in matters of expression and perhaps occasionally, tempo. Gardiner's dynamic range is considerably wider than that of Nikolaus Harnoncourt (Teldec/ASV), Philippe Herreweghe (Harmonia Mundi) or Peter Schreier (Philips), for example; but he shares with Harnoncourt a feeling for theatrical gesture which some listeners will enjoy more than others. Christian Gerger's famous quotation attributed to an old lady of the nobility, "God save us.... it's just as if one were at an opera" probably did not refer specifically to Bach's St Matthew Passion; but it did relate to similar works being performed in Saxony at around the same time, and it is important not to lose sight of dramatic, indeed often theatrical aspects of Bach's music influenced by secular custom. Gardiner breathes life into every section of the work

and, unlike almost any other performance that I have known, manages to convey the optimism underlying Bach's profound testament to the Christian faith.

The solo voices comprise an impressive group. Anthony Rolfe Johnson declaims the Evangelist's role with clarity and with all the subtle inflexion of a good story teller. Furthermore, his voice sounds smoother than it has sometimes done in recent recordings and his delivery even and well-controlled. Andreas Schmidt makes a fine Jesus, eloquent, restrained and authoritative, and I have little but praise for the other members of the solo cast. I found Anne Monoyios captivating in "Blute nur, du liebes Herz" (No. 8 in the Barenreiter edition) and "Aus Liebe will mein Heiland sterben" (No. 49) where she is beautifully partnered by a flute and two oboes da caccia. Howard Crook, who sings the tenor aria, is admirable in "Geduld" (No. 35) and is complemented here by sensitive oboe playing, in fact, almost throughout the work I found myself filled with admiration for the consistently alluring instrumental textures. Nowhere perhaps, can this better be illustrated than by the tender performance of "Erbarme dich" (No. 39) by Michael Chance, with Elizabeth Wilcock (solo violin). Chance's impeccable delivery, a wonderfully light pizzicato string continuo and a beautifully shaped, shimmering violin solo, produce a deeply affecting result. I liked the slightly brisker than usual tempo of "Buss und Reu" (No. 6) admirably sung by Anne Sofie von Otter, but felt that Gardiner pushes the soprano aria, "Ich will dir mein Herze schenken", a little too hard. It is lyrically sung by Barbara Bonney, and she is exquisitely accompanied by two oboes d'amore, with a light-footed basso continuo; but its dance-like character (6/8) is diminished by a tempo which does not allow either for sufficient poise or punctuation.

The Monteverdi Choir respond to Gardiner's direction with all the fervour and precision to which we have grown accustomed. Entries are usually clean, and notes and intervals pitched accurately though there are one or two weak entries in the first chorus of Part 2, "Wo ist denn dein Freund hingegan" (No. 30). The pacing of the chorales struck me as being ideal with plenty of definition. In the great opening chorus Gardiner's own choir are joined by the naturally youthful-sounding voices—small boys and notso-small girls—of the London Oratory Junior Choir. I have long admired this choir but it is, nevertheless, in this movement of the work that I found myself at odds with Gardiner's interpretation. The gradual crescendo leading up to the first choral entry is too marked for me and seems unrelated to the rise and fall of the melody. I am not arguing for terrace dynamics but rather for finer shadings than some of the contrasts which occur here.

Notwithstanding issues such as these, Gardiner's St Matthew Passion is a considerable achievement. Singing and playing of this order deserve to win many friends and Gardiner's mature and evidently deeply-felt account of the music is one which I shall want to hear many times over. Recorded sound is clear and appropriate though occasionally I found perspectives a little odd- the viola da gamba in the bass aria, "Komm, susses Kreuz" (No. 57), for instance,

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sounded a little too backward. Full texts included. Congratulations! --- Nicholas Anderson, Gramophone [10/1989]

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