

Bach at the Thomasschule

The Lutheran hymn tune *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme* (Wake up, the voice cries to us), was written by Philipp Nicolai (1556–1608). JS Bach (1685-1750) used this tune as the basis for his now famous Cantata 140, by the same name. The choral harmonization in the final movement is surely one of Bach's most celebrated chorale settings.

Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach (1732-1795) was the eldest surviving son of Bach's second marriage, to Anna Magdalena Bach. JCF was the third of Bach's four sons. A known composer at the time, JCF's setting of *Wachet auf* can be seen as an homage to his father. In fact, the final chorale from the JS Bach setting is quoted directly. By the time JCF came into his own, composers were no longer writing great choral motets (JS Bach himself wrote "only" 6.....but what 6 they are). This motet was probably written around 1780.

In 1829, at the age of 20, Felix Mendelssohn conducted a performance of the JS Bach *St. Matthew Passion*. This was the first performance of the Matthew Passion since Bach's death. The success of this performance was instrumental in the revival of Bach's music, first in Germany and eventually internationally. The performance of the Matthew Passion brought Mendelssohn wide acclaim. There are many references to Bach throughout Mendelssohn's choral music. Mendelssohn used the *Wachet auf* chorale tune in his oratorio *Paulus* (St. Paul). We first hear the chorale tune in the opening moments of Paulus, set majestically for winds, brass and low strings. Mendelssohn later sets the chorale tune for chorus, winds and string, with brass fanfares interspersed among the lines of the chorale.

For a more in-depth analysis of the pieces presented at this concert, see the program notes by Seth Lachterman that follow.

SOLOIST BIOGRAPHIES



Kristina Bachrach recently graduated with her Master of Music degree in Voice Performance from Mannes College, the New School for Music. She has performed as a recitalist in many venues around New York City, including the All Souls Unitarian Church, the New York Historical Society, the Bechstein Institute, the Center for Jewish History, and most recently the Graduate Center at the City University of New York. In the fall of 2009 she played the role of the Flower Mask in the world premiere of Robert Cuckson's opera *A Night of Pity*. Since moving to New York City she has appeared in opera scenes as Euridice from Gluck's *Orfeo*, Ophelie from Ambroise Thomas' *Hamlet*, and Marzelline in *Fidelio*, with such organizations as Mannes College and New York

Summer Opera Scenes.

In November of 2011 she will appear as Lucinda in the world premiere in Nico Muhly's opera *Dark Sisters* and will later appear in the same role with the Opera Company of Philadelphia. She graduated summa cum laude in 2008 with her Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. While in Illinois, she was featured frequently in opera productions and as a soloist in recital and oratorio. This summer she attended SongFest at Pepperdine University as a Marc and Eva Stern Fellow where she appeared in recital with legendary accompanist Graham Johnson at the piano.

This is Ms. Bachrach's first appearance with the Berkshire Bach Society.



David Baranowski is a highly versatile accompanist, performing on piano, keyboards, organ and harpsichord, with repertoire ranging from Bach to Deep Purple. He has played numerous chamber music and choral concerts in the Westchester area, and is the accompanist for the Westchester Choral Society as well as the New Haven Oratorio Choir. As an organist, Mr. Baranowski has performed such works as the Brahms, Fauré and Duruflé *Requiems*, the Dvořák *Mass in D*, and Handel's *Messiah*. As a conductor, he has directed the Poulenc *Gloria*, Schubert *Mass in G*, the Rutter *Magnificat*, and this past summer, conducted Mozart's *Così fan tutte* from the harpsichord. He has also been named the harpsichordist for the newly formed American Baroque Orchestra, under the direction of Maestro Mark Bailey.

For the past seven years, he has been touring internationally with rock icon Ritchie Blackmore, as a keyboardist and singer. He has played over 100 concerts and visited nearly 25 countries as a member of *Blackmore's Night*. *Blackmore's Night* has been on the charts in Germany, Czech Republic, and England, and recently, the USA. Mr. Baranowski has appeared on German television multiple times, and was featured on the primetime program *Hit Giganten*, as well as *Fernsehgarten*, reaching millions of viewers.

Mr. Baranowski is currently the Director of Music and organist at Saint Joseph Roman Catholic Church in Danbury, Connecticut.

David has studied piano with Paul Ostrovsky and Steven Lubin, organ with Robert Fertitta, and voice with Stefano Algieri. He received both his Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from the Purchase College Conservatory of Music.

This is his first appearance with the Berkshire Bach Society.



Bradford Gleim, Baritone

Baritone **Bradford Gleim** enjoys an active singing career devoted to opera, oratorio, song and choral music. Hailed as "someone to watch" by the Boston Music Intelligencer, his repertoire spans the past four centuries and he excels in styles as disparate as Puccini and DuFay.

This season, Bradford Gleim returns as a soloist and chorister with the Handel and Haydn Society under the baton of Harry Christophers, joins Martin Pearlman and Boston Baroque in their concert season and is the bass soloist for the Boston-based ensemble, Canto Armonico, in the U.S. premiere of a new critical edition of the exuberant *Magnificat* by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach under the direction of Simon Carrington. He also performs the role of Lucifer in Arthur Sullivan's rarely heard cantata, *The Golden Legend* with the Longfellow Chorus in Portland, Maine and sings the role of Bhaer in *Little Women* with the Boston Opera Collaborative. An avid recording artist, Mr. Gleim is featured on recordings of rarely performed Renaissance music with the early music ensemble Cut Circle for Jesse Rodin's upcoming book on Josquin Desprez and his contemporaries as well as with Conspirare on their recording entitled *Sing Freedom: African American Spirituals* for the Harmonia Mundi label.

In the 2009-10 season Bradford Gleim performed as a soloist with the Handel and Haydn Society under the direction of Harry Christophers in an all-Bach program in Boston's Symphony Hall, sang the role of John Proctor in *The Crucible* with Boston Opera Collaborative, joined the all-male chorus of *Tancredi* with Opera Boston and was heard in recital in a concert of Hugo Wolf's *Eichendorff Lieder* in the inaugural season of the [plain] song. Mr. Gleim also worked with the period vocal ensemble Exsultemus in performances of rarely heard Baroque and Renaissance repertoire and sang the role of Pilate and the bass solos in Bach's *St. John Passion* with the Concord Chorus. In the summer he returned to the Connecticut Early Music Festival to sing the bass solos in Bach's Cantata 194 in and joined the Santa Fe Desert Chorale in their summer concert season.

In April 2008, Bradford Gleim made his Jordan Hall debut as a guest artist with the Borromeo String Quartet where he sang Samuel Barber's *Dover Beach*. He did so as a recipient of the quartet's Guest Artist Award.

A dedicated teacher, Mr. Gleim has a private studio in his home in Jamaica Plain, MA and works as a Choral Artist for the Metropolitan Opera Guild. This is his first appearance with the Berkshire Bach Society.



Daniel Molkentín, tenor, graduated from Mannes College of Music in 2006 and has since been actively performing works ranging from the 16th century to the present day in the U.S. and abroad. His collaborations with composers, such as Robert Cuckson, David Loeb, James Blachly, Matt Johnson, Paul Smith and Terry Champlin, have led to the premieres of over a dozen solo works. The Spoon River Duo, formed by Daniel and guitarist/composer Paul Smith, presents works exclusive to the voice and guitar medium or that share a special place in the history of the ensemble.

In addition to Daniel's performance activities, he teaches diction courses in the Mannes Extension Division, is the diction coach for the Oratorio Society of New York and has served as the German diction coach at the Bard Summer Music Festival and Berkshire Choral Festival. His translations and pronunciation guides of such works as *Matthäus Passion*, *Die Schöpfung*, *Paulus*, and *Ein deutsches Requiem* are being used with increasing frequency by choral organizations in the United States.

"The King of Chorales": Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme: J. S. Bach, J. C. F. Bach, Felix Mendelssohn

It might appear unlikely that a Lutheran hymn tune would possess a musical aesthetic beyond the scope of worship and liturgy. However, two hymns written by pastor and sixteenth-century "Meistersinger" Philipp Nicolai are superb chorale melodies that have been inspiring great composers for centuries. Besides *Wachet auf* ("Awake!"), Nicolai set *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern* ("How brightly shines the morning star"), a hymn popular during Advent and Christmas. Like *Wachet auf*, this second tune was to become the basis of a cantata by J. S. Bach one hundred thirty years later. No other chorale melodies have been better loved.

Nicolai was pastor in the North Rhine-Westphalia town of Unna, where in 1597 nearly the entire population succumbed to plague. Regarding his own survival as divine intervention, he published the two tunes with spiritual reflections in a book, *Freudenspiegel des ewigen Lebens* ("Mirror of joy of eternal life"). The two tunes enjoyed great popularity throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Both make cryptic reference to dedicatees by providing acrostics with the starting letter of each verse. In *Wachet auf*, we have a reverse acrostic: **W** ("Wachet auf" – verse 1), **Z** ("Zion hört" – verse 2), and **G** ("Gloria" – verse 3) referring to **Graf Zu Waldeck**, the Unna count who was Nicolai's pupil and who died in the plague at age fifteen. The other tune, *Wie schön leuchtet*, was dedicated to **Wilhelm Ernst Graf Und Herr Zu Waldeck**, where each stanza would begin with the initial letters of the count's name and title.

Nicolai's melody conformed to the seminal "bar form" structure in which a theme is heard twice (each called a "Stollen") and is then followed by a longer section, the "Abgesang," that provided both a contrast and closing reference to the Stollen. Thus, the structure of a "bar form" composition might be diagrammed as (A A) | B. The vast majority of chorale tunes demonstrate this form. Casting new melodies to existing poetry (liturgical or secular) was central to the art of the Meistersingers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The arcane compositional aesthetic behind chorale construction was made popular by the portrayal of cobbler-composer Hans Sachs in Richard Wagner's opera *Die Meistersinger*. Wagner's historical protagonist gives us a vivid account of bar form, albeit skewed to Wagner's own musical exegesis. It is interesting, though, that Nicolai appropriated the last strophe of Hans Sach's tune *Silberweise* ("Silver tone"), incorporating it three times in *Wachet auf*: at the close of each Stollen and, as well, in the Abgesang. Between Nicolai's time and the twentieth century are works by Bach, Prætorius, Scheidt, Kuhnau, Buxtehude, and Max Regner that celebrate the beauty and spirit of Nicolai's melodies.

Johann Sebastian Bach's setting of *Wachet auf*, S.140¹, was performed on the twenty-seventh Sunday after Trinity, November 25, 1731, well after the bulk of other so-called "chorale cantatas" that Bach wrote for the second liturgical year (1724-25) after assuming duties as Cantor at St. Thomas. The general procedure in such chorale cantatas was to base at least two movements on *both* the words *and* melody of a given hymn. The remaining movements could be freely composed, and would frequently paraphrase other verses of the chorale text. Some chorale cantatas, for example, *Christ lag in Todesbanden* (S.4), set each movement's text and music on the given chorale. In the case of the latter, all of Luther's verses are subsumed in Bach's composition. However, such complete adherences are rare, and in most cases the unadorned tune (the *cantus firmus*) is woven in the contrapuntal texture of an elaborate opening movement, and once more in a plain four-part hymn in the last movement. Sometimes, as is the case of *Wachet auf*, the center movement becomes another *cantus-firmus* variation. In *Wachet auf*, the opening chorus is a breathtaking choral depiction of a procession in the stately regal style of a French overture. Ejaculatory "Wach aufs" and fleeting string figures recall some of the poem's symbolism as a *Tageweise* ("Morning Song"); the trope of a castle guard's horn alerting lovers in a midnight tryst for the coming morn is a symbolic call for the union of Jerusalem's innocent virgins with Jesus as bridegroom. The contrapuntal ingenuity and rhythmic energy of this movement is a brilliant illumination of the text's symbolic underpinnings. However, the setting of *Zion hört*, Nicolai's second verse, has become the best-known music of this cantata. A lilting bridal dance is combined with the solemn *cantus firmus* in a slightly dissonant but completely captivating

¹ S.140 refers to Wolfgang Schmieder's *Bach Werke Verzeichnis* ("BWV"), the catalog of J. S. Bach's works. The BWV numbers (or "S" numbers) are not chronological but are categorical. (Vocal works first, organ works next, etc.) The first two hundred fifty numbers enumerate the cantatas in an arbitrary order. For example, S.141 was written seven years before S.140.

way. Bach later arranged this movement for organ solo in the *Schübler Chorales* of 1746, which became widely known throughout the eighteenth century. A simple, but joyous, four-part harmonization concludes the work.

Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach (1732-1795), the “Bückenburg Bach,” is the least known of J. S.’s musical progeny. Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emanuel were sons of Bach’s first wife, Maria Barbara; Johann Christoph Friedrich and Johann Christian were sons of Bach’s second wife, Anna Magdalena. After being carefully tutored in music by his father, J. C. F. pursued a degree in law, but, when Sebastian’s health failed in 1750, this gifted teen made a more practical career move, becoming a musician at the court of Wilhelm, Graf zu Schaumburg-Lippe in Bückenburg. There, where Italian music was the vogue, J. C. F. developed a compositional style that attempted to integrate his Northern contrapuntal roots with the simpler textures and harmonies of the South. Later in his career, he was to visit his brother Johann Christian in London and ultimately was won over by the “new” music of Mozart and Gluck. The motet *Wachet auf* (HW XV/2) clearly demonstrates the hybrid of techniques and styles that distinguish this son’s music. The first verse, “*Wachet auf*,” is set in three sections. The opening triadic motif of Nicolai’s tune becomes the basis of an extended opening section, and is first treated homophonically, then polyphonically. In fleeting moments, the music bears a striking resemblance to his father’s motets. In the second section, the *cantus firmus*, given to sopranos, is presented with *concertato* responses, again alternating in homophonic and polyphonic textures. The final section is an abbreviated return of opening triadic material. The second verse, the beautiful setting of “*Zion hört*,” is predominantly inspired by the text: only hints of the chorale tune appear in this successful blend of Baroque and Pre-classical idioms. The expressive “*Hosianna*” – which does quote the chorale tune – and the word painting in “*Wir folgen all zum Freudensaal*” (“We follow all to the joyful hall”) are very effective and memorable. The shape of the lines, and the contour of the harmonic progression are “modern,” but the interlacing of voices and the focus on individual words harken back to his father’s art. Much like the first verse, the final verse, “*Gloria sei dir gesungen*,” is set in three sections. The verse begins with a lengthy anthem-like treatment, followed by a surprising tribute to the composer’s father: a full quotation of setting of J. S. Bach’s cantata movement (vii). Not wishing to merely end the work with this tribute, J. C. F. concludes with some fugal fun reiterating the Nicolai’s last four ecstatic lines.

Felix Mendelssohn, the musical genius who almost single-handedly sparked the nineteenth-century revival of J. S. Bach, placed his musical “godfather” alongside Goethe as his greatest spiritual and artistic influence. In Mendelssohn’s great oratorio *St. Paul*, he gives us a simple but grandiose setting of the first verse of Nicolai’s hymn. Strings and woodwinds double the plain four-part harmonization while horns and trumpets add fanfare filigree at the end of each phrase. Only in the last two bars does Mendelssohn tamper with tradition by adding a familiar plagal “amen” cadence.

The Berkshire Bach Society (BBS) performed J. S. Bach’s *Wachet auf* on May 14 and 15, 1994. The concert was conducted by Richard Westenburg, and BBS President and founder Simon Wainrib wrote program notes. In celebration of BBS’s coming twentieth anniversary, and as a gesture of thanks to Simon, we reproduce his inimitably enthusiastic text below.

© 2010, S. Lachterman

◇◇◇◇◇

Simon Wainrib’s Commentary on J. S. Bach’s *Wachet Auf*

CANTATA 140: “Sleepers, wake, a voice is calling.” This is one of the few Bach cantatas that have reached relative popularity, in part because of its fourth movement, the tenor chorale, imbedded in its extraordinary string setting. The cantata itself is a chorale cantata, meaning that the whole work is built on the various verses of a chorale or church anthem. *Wachet auf* was one of those anthems, the three verses of which the unknown librettist used verbatim as texts for the work’s opening chorus, its massive centerpiece (4th movement) and the final chorale. The intermediary movements are dramatic commentary on the anthem’s message. That message is love, the tender bond that ties God to the human soul. The image is developed right from the start of the opening chorus, in which the men on the watchtower announce to the daughters of Zion the arrival of their bridegroom. This image explains why a cantata which deals primarily and most tenderly with the subject of love, starts with the strongly accented strains of a rather martial instrumental theme into which the wake-up call of the chorale will imbed itself in a spectacular display of musical imagery. The tenor recitative then develops fully the theme of the love meeting between bride and groom, the first being the enraptured soul, the latter Jesus himself. All of the text is culled from biblical sources and, of course, primarily, the great love poem of the Bible, the Song of Songs. The soprano/bass duet that follows is one of the two love duets which constitute the two sustaining pillars of the work. Here, Jesus and the soul exchange words of not only great tenderness but actually flaming ardor (“I wait with burning incense”), which they intertwine with the joyful babble of a high-pitched violin. At this point, in the center of the cantata, framed by the pillars of the two love duets, resounds the tenor chorale, a piece of celebratory intensity unsurpassed in musical literature. In the following bass recitative, the voice is still that of Jesus, inviting the soul to come to him in words that are wash in tender sensuality (listen to the last two lines, quoted again from the Song of Songs). In the second soprano/bass duet, an oboe wraps itself around the voices for an expression of love and desire that is as much dance as music. If the text and the mingling therein of mine and yours are not quite logical, it is probably because Bach wanted to be faithful to the exact quotation from the Song of Songs on which this movement is built. Here again, love could not be expressed in loftier but also earthier terms. Bach’s mystical raptures are always very much of this world. And then, with appropriate grandeur in its simplicity, the last verse of the chorale resounds in a straight four-part vocal setting, with all instruments ablaze, giving the great chorale melody its last and supreme due.

– Simon Wainrib (1994)