

## The Full Score



### *Bach's Christmas Oratorio* *An Operatic Expression of Faith*

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*Cuesta  
Master Chorale*  
Breathing vitality into the  
Music of the Masters

Don't Forget!

Spring Concert

Stravinsky's  
*Les Noces*

Walton's  
*Belshazzar's  
Feast*

May 21, 2005

by **Lydia Marzano**

Although music was the focal point of Johann Sebastian Bach's life, the church was a close second. Bach was deeply religious and well versed in the Bible.

Following the composition of his great Passions, as he was approaching 50, Bach decided to write oratorios for the major feast days of the church. The *Christmas Oratorio* was one of the most cheerful and beautiful of all his works. Bach "borrowed" a number of his previously written chorales; many of the movements are a re-working of his secular works set to a new text. Some scholars worried that the recycling of these works would somehow "taint" the sincerity



and authenticity of the *Christmas Oratorio*. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Rather than the works being recycled, one has a sense that perhaps the works were written simultaneously.

The *Christmas Oratorio*, or *Weihnachts-Oratorium*, was written as six cantatas, each to be performed in separate services during the period between Christmas and Epiphany. Each part depicts a different scene from the story of Christ's birth. Not being a piece about the Passion story, the *Christmas Oratorio* is full of bells, trumpets, tympani and joyful choruses. In Europe, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* is as much a holiday tradition as is Handel's *Messiah*.

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### Bach, By His Contemporaries

by **Larry Bolef**

We know that Bach's life was turbulent; he had many jobs and continuous quarrels with his employers. His compositional output was prodigious, but, after his death, went unplayed and forgotten until the 19th-century revival. What did

Bach's contemporaries think of him?

Let us start with a charming description of Bach's teaching technique, by his last pupil, J. C. Kittel. "...One always had to be prepared to have Bach's hands and fingers

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Music washes away from  
the soul the dust of everyday life.

~ Red Auerbach ~

## Bach Soloists by Mary Bishop



**Maura Janton Cock, soprano**, is an adjunct instructor of voice at Valparaiso University. She earned her bachelor of music degree at the University of Arizona, Tucson, and her master of arts degree at Minnesota State University, Moorhead. She has appeared as soloist with the Arizona Chamber Choir, the Concordia College Orchestra, the Moorhead State University Orchestra, as well as the Fargo-Moorhead Symphony and the Tucson Symphony.



**Susan Azaret Davies, mezzo-soprano**



**Christopher M. Cock, tenor**, is Director of Choral and Vocal Activities at Valparaiso University and a distinguished solo artist. Dr. Cock has forged

a unique career path, combining the roles of conductor and performer. As a solo artist, Dr. Cock's extensive range and communicative performances have established him as a premier lyric tenor. Appearances as a Bach evangelist are taking him to concert venues throughout the United States. In April of 2001 he appeared as evangelist in the *St. Matthew Passion* with The Los Angeles Philharmonic. The *LA Times* praised his performance for its "illuminating freshness." He has sung the role of the evangelist with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and 2002 saw his solo debut at Carnegie Hall and appearances with the Bach Choir of Berlin.



**Peter Van De Graaff, bass**, is a professional singer. Peter has performed with orchestras around the world, in-

cluding the Czech State Orchestra, as well as with opera companies in Rochester, Milwaukee, Chicago and Boise. He enjoys performing the early 18th-century chamber operas known as *intermezzi*. Peter Van de Graaff is known nationally as the host of National Public Radio's program "Night Music" broadcast every evening at 10:00 by KSUI. He has sung to great acclaim with opera companies and orchestras throughout the world.

In addition to being the host of "Night Music", Peter is an avid birdwatcher, tennis player and cross-country skier.

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Throughout this work, the evangelist (tenor soloist) tells the story using familiar text from the gospels of Luke and Matthew. The drama is further enhanced by soloists performing the roles of the angel (Part II) and Herod (Part VI). The chorus also contributes, singing the parts of the heavenly host in "Glory to God" (Part II), the shepherds in "Let us, even

now, go to Bethlehem" (Part III) and the Wise Men in "Where is this newborn child; the King of the Jews?" (Part V).

Perhaps the most important musical element in Bach's sacred choral music and certainly in the *Christmas Oratorio* was the chorale. The chorale was introduced into church services by Martin Luther to allow the congregation to take an ac-

tive part in the musical worship. The chorales have simple, hymn-like melodies that were harmonized by the choir or the organ. Bach's congregation would have known and sung the chorale melodies in the *Christmas Oratorio*. Most of them are not complex, with the sopranos leading the congregation in the melody.

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Music, the greatest good that mortals know,  
And all of heaven we have below.

~Joseph Addison ~

## Meet the Members by Margie Noble-England



### Terry and Terese Wahler

One of the most admirable aspects of Master Chorale is the broad diversity the group represents in a society often polarized by age, race, religion and politics.

Continuing the tradition of family participation are the subjects of our singer profiles:

tenor Terry Wahler and his daughter, Terese, an alto.

Terry, a graduate of UCSC in environmental planning, has been a resident of Morro Bay since 1989, raising his two daughters there with his wife, Sharon.

Terry is one of those fortunate people whose work appears to be one of his major passions. Land conservation to retain the ecosystem and beauty of our area complements the dedication he feels to his family.

Terry's mother is a violinist, an inclination that didn't 'take' with Terry. His choice was the clarinet, playing in the school band during the years when schools were fortunate to have musical ensembles for young

children. In high school Terry discovered his ability and affection for vocal music and joined the choir. He continued his participation in choral singing in various groups before coming to Master Chorale in 2001.

Terese, 19, is a student at Cuesta College with interests in international business and marketing. Her fascination with things international was heightened by her time as an exchange student in Germany. During that time she became fluent in German and sang in her school choir, traveling to Romania, where she was chosen to solo in a Romanian work.

Therese played trumpet in the Morro Bay High School band, continuing a family tradition originated by her maternal grandfather, a professional trumpet player with Jack Teagarden. Therese honed her vocal skills with Gary Lamprecht, singing in the stage choir at M. B.H.S. and touring with the group to Hawaii and New York City.

Terry and Terese feel privileged to share music with another amazing and admired family team: Tom and Susan Davies. The bond Terry and Terese share as father and daughter is deepened by the experience of studying and performing such magnificent classics as the Bach *Christmas Oratorio*.

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The *Christmas Oratorio* is certainly a testament to Bach's faith; the music evokes the same emotions that it would have elicited from those pre-

sent at the time of its first presentation in 1734.

We thank Bach for his Christmas present of this music to his time-and thus to our time and all time.

A contemporary of Bach, Johann Friedrich Reichardt said in 1782, *"There has never been a composer, not even the best and deepest of the Italians, who so exhausted all the possibilities of our harmony as did J. S. Bach."*

## Cuesta Master Chorale

Cuesta College Music Dept.  
Cuesta College  
P.O. Box 8106  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93403

### To order tickets

Call the PAC Ticket Office

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Or order online at [www.pacslo.org](http://www.pacslo.org)

Stravinsky's *Les Noces*  
Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*

— May 21, 2005

*Cuesta*  
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Season

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intervene among the hands and fingers of the player, and, without getting in the way of the latter, furnish the accompaniment with masses of harmonies which made an even greater impression than the unsuspected close proximity of the teacher."

In addition, Bach's ability as a performer seems to have been widely appreciated. In a 1732 concert at Cassel, he began by playing only on the foot pedals of a new organ. C. Bellermann wrote, "[Bach's] feet had wings, making the organ resound with such fullness, and so penetrate the ears of those present like a thunderbolt, that Friedrich, the legitimate hereditary Prince of Kassel, admired him with such astonishment that he drew a

ring with a precious stone from his finger and gave it to Bach as soon as the sound had died away." Another of his contemporaries, after making a difficult trip to Leipzig from Hirschberg commented, "This great artist [Bach] received me amiably and so enchanted me with his uncommon dexterity that I have never regretted the journey."

Though before his death Bach was criticized at times for repetitious and overly theatrical composition, he also had his admirers. When Bach was only 32, J. Mattheson, perhaps the first professional music critic, wrote, "I have seen things [compositions] by the famous organist of Weimar, Mr. Joh. Sebastian Bach, both for the

church [vocal] and for the fist [keyboard], that are certainly such as must make one esteem the man highly." Shortly after Bach's death, a former student said, "...Germany is likely to have had only one Bach, whom until now no one, whether in the art of writing or of playing on the organ and harpsichord, has equaled in all of Europe, and whom in the future no one will surpass."

Bach's life may have had its ups and downs, but he was well appreciated and loved in his time. His compositions have only grown more appreciated over time as audiences are presented with his masterpieces.