

ASO CHAMBER CHORUS ANNOUNCEMENTS – SECRETS OF BACH'S ST. JOHN PASSION – January 16, 2007

BACH BEGINNINGS

-Great beginning on the Bach SJP last Saturday. Keep up the good work; you should have ALL the markings in your score by now. We'll want to know this piece cold, due to the unique stage requirements of our "production." Also, if you want to practice your part, check out the CC Homepage of <http://www.asochorus.org/> for links to midi practice-files.

NEXT TIME

SATURDAY, January 27, 2007 at 10:00a.m.-1:00pm in REHEARSAL HALL

BACH ONSTAGE

Our Stage Director/Scenic Designer is Anne Patterson. Check out her bio and body of work at: <http://www.annepatterson.com/about/index.html>. Be sure to look at the photos in her Portfolio (we're in there).

ST. ANNE'S TRINITY?

Anne has divided the *Johannes-Passion* into three "Acts" with two Intermissions (from Bach's two "Parts" that were originally separated by a lengthy sermon!). The Three "Acts" may be given descriptive titles, something like:

#1-14 = Act I - "Arrest and Denial"

#15-26 = Act II - "Trial and Crucifixion"

#27-End = Act III - "Death and Burial"

CHORUS COSTUME REQUIREMENTS

Anne requests that the chorus wear THREE different "costumes" for the three "acts."

Act I – ALL BLACK. Men and Women in LONG BLACK pants, black shoes (and socks) and LONG-SLEEVED solid black shirts and blouses (could be a mock-turtle or a collared shirt/blouse, but NO plunging or visible necklines). We have a few mock-Tees leftover from Anne's last production with us in 2001 – I'll have them out for you to see at our next rehearsal.

Act II – RED Choir Robes. We'll be wearing the ASO-owned "Gospel Christmas" Robes (those currently stored in the Chorus Women's Dressing Room).

Act III – STREET CLOTHES. Your normal day-to-day attire, but in MUTED tones, like grey. This can be just about anything EXCEPT bright colors (no Hawaiian shirts, etc).

"CORO IN SCENA!" -OR "CHORUS ONSTAGE!"

To begin the Bach SJP, we'll make a solemn processional from four different directions to take our place on what looks like a very downstage mirror image of our Adams EL NIÑO setup from 2003: a chorus and orchestra slightly off-center, with the sopranos angled in a bit towards the conductor (we'll have chairs). Jesus will sit on a four-foot tall plexiglass box that is lit from within. Each "Act" will have a different set and lighting behind us.

PALIN-WHAT?

As crazy as all this sounds, Anne and Robert Spano [!] have taken great care to preserve Bach's overall structure, striving to illuminate it. Her "Act II" comprises a huge structural element that Bach superimposed on his narrative. You've undoubtedly noticed it, with the repeated music Bach uses for different texts: It is a palindrome, a large chiasmic or cross-like structure, book-ended and centered by chorales (in our scores it is #17-26, with Chorale #22 at the center). The movements each side of the central chorale fan out in mirror formation, clearly reflected in the type of movement (chorus, recitative, aria) and in the disposition of keys. The epicenter of Bach's "cross," Chorale #22 ("Durch dein Gefängnis," or as in Robert Shaw's eloquent singing translation below) suggests an intersection of divinity and humanity:

"'Tis from your bondage, Lord, alone
That now our freedom riseth.
Your dungeon is our mercy-throne,
And liberty abideth!
Did you not choose a slave to be
We all were slaves eternally."

-A story central to one faith, but a theme not exclusive to it.

-And perhaps an even more amazing miracle of 18th century "creation" – still so full of life after some 250 years – by the Leipzig cantor whose consistent inclusion of equal parts industry and artistry causes one to ponder the inverse of the "Word made Flesh..."

Enough for now? There's more to come... ☺
Bis später,

Jeff Baxter - *Choral Administrator* - Atlanta Symphony Orchestra