

Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society  
presents

# Bach B minor Mass

Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society  
and the Southbank Sinfonia

Conducted by Rebecca Miller

Miriam Allan - *Soprano* | Kate Symonds-Joy - *Mezzo Soprano*  
Ben Thapa - *Tenor* | James Cleverton - *Bass*

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# PROGRAMME

## I: Missa

1. Kyrie (Choir)
2. Christe (Soprano 1&2)
3. Kyrie (Choir)
4. a. Gloria (Choir)  
b. Et in terra pax (Choir)
5. Laudamus te (Soprano)
6. Gratias agimus tibi (Choir)
7. a. Domine Deus (Soprano & Tenor)  
b. Qui tollis (Choir)
8. Qui sedes (Mezzo)
9. a. Quoniam tu solus sanctus (Bass)  
b. Cum Sancto Spiritu (Choir)

## INTERVAL

## II. Symbolum Nicenum

10. Credo in unum Deum (Choir)
11. Patrem omnipotentem (Choir)
12. Et in unum Dominum (Soprano & Mezzo)
13. Et incarnates est (Choir)
14. Crucifixus (Choir)
15. Et resurrexit (Choir)
16. Et in Spiritum sanctum (Bass)
17. a. Confiteor (Choir)  
b. Et expect (Choir)

## III. Sanctus

18. a. Sanctus (Choir)  
b. Pleni sunt coeli (Choir)

## IV. Osanna, Benedictus, Agnus Dei et Dona nobis pacem

19. Osanna in excelsis (Choir)
20. Benedictus (Tenor)
21. Osanna repetatur (Choir)
22. Agnus Dei (Mezzo)
23. Dona nobis pacem (Choir)

## PROGRAMME NOTES



### **Johann Sebastian Bach: Mass in B Minor, BWV 232**

Bach's Mass in B minor stands at the very pinnacle of achievement in the composition of sacred choral music. It is a work of monumental scale, quite impractical in a liturgical context; yet its sheer vastness is surely a reflection of the depth of its spiritual devotion.

The B Minor Mass is such an established part of the choral repertoire that the listener may not always realise that it is also an enigmatic work. Its history is one of development rather than straightforward composition, and even the new chronology of Bach's musical output, established by Alfred Durr and other researchers, has failed to assign a complete series of precise dates to the various stages of its coming to birth. And at the heart of the enigma lie two questions: first, at what point did Bach, a Lutheran Protestant, plan to write a full Roman Catholic Mass and second, did he himself really

regard the resulting composition as a performable work? Musicologists continue to speculate on the answers.

In attempting a description of the mass and its origins, we take as our starting point the year 1733. Bach had been in the prosperous Saxon town of Leipzig for ten years, serving as Musical Director of the chief churches of St. Thomas and St. Nicholas and as cantor of St. Thomas's School. His creative genius had already produced many of the great works by which his fame has since been assured. That first decade at Leipzig alone had seen the composition of five complete cycles of church cantatas appropriate to all the feasts of the Christian year; his two great Passion settings, the St. John and St. Matthew; and many instrumental works and orchestral pieces. In 1729, he had added to a heavy workload of musical supervision, performance, recital work, and teaching by taking over direction of the Collegium Musicum, an orchestra of professional town musicians and university students that gave concerts at a local coffee house. But busy musician though he was, Bach was frequently at odds with his colleagues and employers at St. Thomas's School and with the elders of the town council. Often there were disputes concerning fees, which were so vital to Bach, with a large family to support. By 1733, there is some evidence to suggest that he was feeling unappreciated at Leipzig.

Early in 1733, there came a period of enforced inactivity. On 1 February Augustus II, King of Poland and Elector of Saxony, died. This event was followed by five months of mourning, during which all public music-making was temporarily suspended. Relieved of the composition and supervision of music for the Lenten services, Bach found himself with time to devote to personal projects. It is believed that he used the opportunity to work on the composition of a Missa, a portion of the liturgy sung in Latin and common to both the Lutheran and Roman Catholic rites. The Missa comprised settings of the Kyrie and Gloria from the ordinary of the Mass. Its ecumenical qualities undoubtedly stimulated Bach to make a musical setting that he, a Lutheran, could duly dedicate to his new sovereign Augustus III, a Catholic. In the early months of 1733, Bach's eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann, secured the post as organist at St Sophia's Church, Dresden, and began work there in June. In July, Johann Sebastian had a good excuse to visit Dresden: namely, to see how Friedemann was settling in. While there, he visited the new Elector's court and presented him with a copy of the parts of the Missa, together with a petition dated 27 July 1733. The petition was both a note of dedication, which referred to the Missa as "this insignificant example of the skill that I have acquired in Musique", and a request to be given a court title, which he hoped would improve his standing at Leipzig and

give him some measure of security from what he considered to be the insulting treatment meted out to him by the Leipzig authorities. The petition failed, although the Missa may well have received a performance in Dresden that year. Bach did, however, eventually get his title: he was made court composer to Augustus in 1736.

At exactly what point Bach decided to expand the Missa into a full-blown setting of the Catholic Mass is a matter of conjecture. Modern researchers in general believe that the "Symbolum Nicenum" (Bach's term for the Credo) was composed between 1742 and 1745, but there are those that think it predates the Missa and was first heard in 1732. The Sanctus, (a reworking of a setting of the same text that was already two decades old), the Benedictus, the Agnus Dei, and the Dona Nobis Pacem were all added in the late 1740s.

The B Minor Mass did not assume its final form until Bach's last years, perhaps by 1748. This was a period that found Bach preoccupied with musical projects that he obviously wished to be regarded as monuments of his skill, such as *The Art of Fugue* and *The Musical Offering*. It may be that the Mass also belongs to this category, for (as will be seen from the description that follows) it is a work based almost entirely upon earlier music, which Bach adapted and refined to meet a lofty sacred purpose. We may never know why he chose to marry his music to the

Roman liturgy. We do know that he admired the Italian masters of sacred music from Palestrina to Pergolesi. Perhaps he hoped, like them, to leave his own musical essay upon the subject of this timeless text. He certainly followed the Italian fashion by using a richly diverse mixture of styles, and in choosing to reuse earlier material he may have felt himself to be selecting his finest work, laying it out for our inspection, and putting it to the service of praising God. In the event, whether he intended it or not, Bach has produced a moving and, notwithstanding its disparate origins and styles, a highly unified work transcending religious denominations.

The magnificence of the work is signalled at the very outset with the mighty *adagio* five-part setting of the words "Kyrie eleison" succeeded by a fugal section of architectural grandeur and complexity. The *Christe eleison* is a delicious Italianate duet for sopranos with a charming *ritornello* for strings that would not be out of place in a Handel opera. The second *Kyrie*, for four-part choir and marked "alla breve", is in the old church style, firm and convincing. The first part of the *Gloria*, a joyous outpouring, was probably reworked from a now lost instrumental movement. The contrasting beatific and ultimately victorious setting of "et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis" was grafted on to it without a break. The *Laudamus te*, with its angelic soprano solo balanced by an equally angelic violin obbligato, has all the hallmarks

of having originally been a violin duet. The *Gratias* is a fairly straight copy of the opening chorus of *Cantata No. 29* (1731), whose words "Wir danken dir, Gott" ("We thank Thee, O God") represent a literal German translation of the Latin text set here with such solemn nobility and assurance. The *Domine Deus* is a lovely duet for tenor and soprano, whose accompaniment for flute and muted strings has a fair lightness. It leads directly into the *Qui tollis*, a revision of part of the opening chorus of *Cantata No. 46* (1723), "Schauet doch und sehet" ("Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow"). Note how the flutes weave their heavenly arabesques above long choral lines and heavy, throbbing, earthbound bass crotchets. In *Qui sedes*, the vocal alto solo is matched by the instrument of corresponding pitch, the oboe *d'amore*. The *Quoniam*, with its dark tones of horn obbligato and well-rounded bassoon duet figurations, provides an impressive vehicle for the baritone soloist, and leads straight into the gloriously jubilant *Cum sancto spiritu*, complete with agile choral fugue, marking the end of Bach's original *Missa*.

The *Credo* bursts forth with two vibrant fugal choruses. The first, in antique style, is based upon the plainchant associated with the words "Credo in unum deum" and symbolises strength of faith; the second is adapted from a chorus of praise from *Cantata No. 171* (1729) "Gott, wie dein Name, so ist auch dein Ruhm" ("God, Thy Fame is as

Thy name"). The duet Et in unum Dominum is set for soprano and alto with oboe and strings. Bach originally also incorporated the Et incarnatus est into this duet, but his subsequent version spun out the text by further repetitions so that it stops at "descendit de coelis". The chorus Et incarnatus est, added in this second version, depicts an intense awe, an emotion that is deepened into despair in the Crucifixus, reworked from a chorus in a youthful Weimar Cantata, No. 12 (1714) "Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen", a profoundly poignant chorus over the remorseless bass of a passacaglia. The Mass springs from the depths of hopelessness with the jubilant Et resurrexit, again apparently reworked from a last instrumental movement. The bass aria, Et in spiritum, recalls in tone the earlier duet, Et in unum Dominum. The fugal Confiteor, like the first movement of the Credo, harks back to the older church style and uses plainsong to underpin the firmness of the belief it represents. It is linked to the final joyous Et expecto by a passage of the strangest, most haunting quality - quite a contrast with the exuberant chorus that ends the Credo.

Bach's magnificent Sanctus, with its exultant fugue, was written originally for Christmas Day, 1724. The choir for this piece is divided into six parts. But a double (eight-part) chorus is required for the sprightly Osanna, based on the opening chorus of the secular Cantata No. 215 (1734) "Preise dein Glucke, Gesegnetes

Sachsen" ("Praised be your fortunes, ye most blessed Saxons"), a piece performed in honour of the coronation of Augustus III as King of Poland. As one critic has observed, "In a society which regards Kings as divinely appointed by God, he [Bach] would have seen no incongruity in using the same music to praise the King of Poland and the King of Heaven".

The Benedictus, apparently the vestige of a lost tenor aria, is unusual in that Bach wrote an obbligato part but left the instrument unspecified. The part suits best the flute or violin, and most performances opt for one or other of these instruments. With its slow, long, graceful vocal and instrumental lines, this movement is an evocation of serene love and longing. The Agnus Dei, which follows a straight reprise of the Osanna, is scored for alto solo matched to a low-lying ritornello for strings. It uses almost the same music as "Ach bleibe doch, mein liebstes Leben" ('Oh, stay with me, my dearest life'), from Cantata No. 11 (The Ascension Oratorio). The Dana nobis pacem reprises the Gratias, bringing the B Minor Mass to a triumphant close and linking majestically the concepts of peace, praise, and gratitude to the Almighty.

Choral Union at the Royal Festival Hall, London

*Programme notes provided by William Gould, 1990, courtesy of Making Music*

## THE PERFORMERS



### Rebecca Miller - *Conductor*

California-born conductor Rebecca Miller has earned an international reputation for her compelling, insightful, and energetic presence on the podium. Acclaimed for her sophisticated music making and evocative command of varied composers and styles and for her ability to communicate with audiences of all ages, she has guest-conducted the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, London Mozart Players, BBC Concert Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Salomon Orchestra, and at the 2014 BBC Proms.

Rebecca is currently an annual guest conductor for the Southbank Sinfonia, Music Director of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society, conductor at the junior department of the Royal Academy of Music, and Director of Orchestras at Royal Holloway University of London, where she has launched groundbreaking side-by-side projects with the London Mozart Players, instigated a new Orchestral Scholarship programme, and founded the new 'Music +' initiative which builds bridges through music. In her capacity at RHUL, she was Musical Director of Magna Carta 800 at Runnymede, where she conducted the RHUL symphony orchestra and Choir of Royal Holloway alongside the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Temple Church Choir for HRH Queen Elizabeth II and 4000 dignitaries and members of the public.

Rebecca recently made her debut with the Nashville Symphony as part of the League of American Orchestra's prestigious 'Bruno Walter National Conductors Preview', and other recent engagements include concerts with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales in 2016. Future engagements include the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra in 2018, and this season return engagements with the Salomon Orchestra, the Bishop's Stortford Sinfonia two returns to the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Rebecca's discography includes discs with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment CPE Bach/Signum/2015 Gramophone Award shortlist), BBC Concert Orchestra (Henry Hadley/Dutton Epoch) and two discs with the Royal Northern Sinfonia (Haydn Symphonies/Signum, Bristow/New World Records). Forthcoming releases for 2017 will include discs with the BBC Scottish Symphony (Amy Beach, Dorothy Howell, Cecil Chaminade/Hyperion Records), and with the Royal Northern Sinfonia (Aaron Jay Kernis with Joshua Roman and Paul Neubauer/Signum).

Rebecca has guest conducted in the US with the Reno Philharmonic, Bakersfield Symphony, Santa Cruz Symphony, Chicago College of the Performing Arts, Bard Music Festival, Huntsville Symphony, Williamsport Symphony, Musiqa Houston, and with the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra in Israel.

As a First-prize winner in the Eduardo Mata International Conducting Competition, Rebecca conducted throughout Mexico, including repeated engagements with the Orquesta

Sinfonica Nacional and Orquesta Filarmónica del UNAM, with the state orchestras of Yucatan, Aguascalientes, and Sinaloa, and with the Teresa Carreño Youth Orchestra in Caracas.

From 2007-2010 Rebecca was Resident Conductor of the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, where she directed her own series, the “Casual Classics”, and conducted subscription, pops, education, family, and community concerts. From 2005-2007, Rebecca was the LAO’s ‘American Conducting Fellow’ of The Houston Symphony, leading over 35 family, classical, and education concerts per year.

Rebecca holds a Bachelor’s degree in Piano from Oberlin Conservatory, a Master’s in Music in Conducting from Northwestern University and served for two years as the Paul Woodhouse Junior Fellow in Conducting at London’s Royal College of Music.

## **SOUTHBANK SINFONIA**

Southbank Sinfonia is an orchestra of young professionals described by The Independent as ‘a hugely talented young ensemble whose performances are always theatrical’. It is internationally recognised as a leading orchestral academy, each year bringing together 33 of the world’s most promising graduate musicians to provide a much-needed springboard into the profession.

Its annual fellowship provides unparalleled opportunities to gain crucial experience in orchestral repertoire, chamber music, opera, dance and theatre – often in partnership with leading performing arts organisations including the Royal Opera and Academy of St Martin in the Fields. From giving the first ever performance of Mozart’s Requiem at Notre-Dame to taking centre-stage in the National Theatre’s acclaimed new production of Amadeus, Southbank Sinfonia ensures new generations uphold a venerable tradition, but also asks anew what orchestras have the power to communicate in the modern world.

Alongside this, specialist development sessions that embrace leadership and communication provide each musician with the professional toolkit required to pioneer their own future musical ventures. To date, nearly 500 musicians have completed the programme, many going on to enjoy exciting careers with leading orchestras worldwide.

Founded in 2002 by Music Director Simon Over, the orchestra is proud to be based at St John’s Waterloo, in the heart of London, where its musicians bring their own exploratory impulse to bite-sized Free Rush Hour Concerts. By virtue of their youth, energy and excellence, Southbank Sinfonia players not only bring fresh resonance to the stage but are also ideally placed to act as role-models who inspire many younger musicians on London’s Southbank and beyond.

Enabling players to devote themselves fully to the experience, every place is free and every player receives a bursary. Making this possible is a family of supporters – trusts, organisations and individuals like you – who recognise the players’ potential and relish following their remarkable progress and the spirit they exude in performances. To find out how you can support the orchestra and discover more about its next performances, visit [southbanksinfonia.co.uk](http://southbanksinfonia.co.uk).

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**Timpani**

Louise Goodwin

**SOLOISTS****Miriam Allan – *Soprano***

Gramophone describes Miriam Allan's singing as "enchanting" and "impressive" with audiences around the world engaged by her honesty and "depictions of sublime hope" in places of darkness and sorrow. She has given performances from Edinburgh to Auckland- especially her native Australia and in Europe. She has been fortunate to work with many of the finest conductors, directors and accompanists including Sir John Eliot Gardiner, William Christie, Laurence Cummings, Lars Ulrik Mortensen, Nicholas Collon and Roy Goodman. Her engagements with the Monteverdi Choir, Les Violons du Roy, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, Concerto Copenhagen, Auckland Philharmonic, Gewandhaus Kammerchor, Israel Camerata and Melbourne Symphony Orchestra have seen her in concerts of Mozart, Monteverdi, Rameau, Bach, Handel and Haydn to mention but a few. She has graced the opera stage in productions for the Opéra Comique, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Pinchgut Opera and for Les Arts Florissants featuring Purcell, Cavalli, Handel, Vivaldi and Rameau.

Equally at home in contemporary repertoire, Miriam has enjoyed working with Sinfonia Australis and more recently with the outstanding Aurora Orchestra in London. She made her debut with the Academy of Ancient Music in a concert performance of Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* in Venice and has recently been seen performing with the

Dunedin Consort in concerts of Bach and Handel. Miriam's long association with Les Arts Florissants continues with performances of Monteverdi, including a staged production Orfeo in 2017. Forthcoming performances include more Monteverdi with Les Arts Florissants, Bach with John Eliot Gardiner in Leipzig and concerts across Australia in December of this year.



Kate Symonds-Joy -  
*Mezzo-soprano/Soprano 2*

KATE SYMONDS-JOY graduated with a First Class music degree from Cambridge University and a DipRAM from the Royal Academy Opera Course.

Concert highlights include Ravel's Chansons Madécasses at the Purcell Room, Rutter's Feel the Spirit at the Barbican, Mahler's Symphony no.2 at Cadogan Hall, Handel's Messiah with Bordeaux Opera and at Birmingham Symphony Hall, Mozart's Requiem with Sir John Eliot Gardiner, and Verdi's Requiem at the Royal Albert Hall.

Recitals include Wigmore Hall, Berio's Sequenza III and Berberian Stripsody for nonclassical, and Berio Folksongs with the Psappha Ensemble. Operatic roles include Mrs Herring for Aldeburgh, Bianca in Rape of Lucretia for British Youth Opera, Noye's Fludde in Westminster Cathedral, Wild Girl in A Village Romeo & Juliet for Wexford, Dorabella in Cosi fan tutti with Jane Glover, Carmen for Kentish and Regents Opera, and Ino in Semele with Charles Mackerras.

Kate appears as soloist on Giles Swayne's Stabat Mater (NAXOS), Strauss' Deutsche Motette (Delphian), Villa Lobos' Magnificat for Contraltino and Choir (Delphian) and Bach's B minor mass (Sir John Eliot Gardiner/SDG).

Future projects include Bach's St John Passion in the Aldeburgh Festival, a recital entitled DESIRE at the Peckham Asylum, Bach's Christmas Oratorio in Sydney Opera House, Elgar's Sea Pictures with Cheltenham Symphony Orchestra, and cycling to the most northerly inhabited part of the UK to sing Judith Weir's King Harald's Saga in the Shetland Islands' Muckleflugga lighthouse.



Ben Thapa – *Tenor*

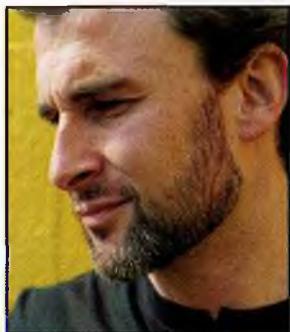
Ben Thapa first burst to prominence as one quarter of the classical crossover group G4, runners-up on the first series of the X Factor in 2004 and still touring and performing in the UK and beyond.

In his own right, Ben has enjoyed a varied and busy career on the concert and opera platform, with repertory ranging from

Monteverdi under John Eliot Gardiner (Vespers, 2010 Proms), to Wagner as Melot in Tristan and Isolde under Anthony Negus at Longborough.

In 2012 Ben premiered the role of the President in Stockhausen's *Mittwoch aus Licht* for Birmingham Opera Company directed by Graham Vick; a performance repeated in the 2013 BBC Proms. More recently, Ben sang the role of Siegfried in *The Quest for the Ring*: scenes from Siegfried and *Götterdämmerung* in association with Opera North at the Royal Festival Hall.

Ben's repertory is varied and spans most of the major concert material. Current and future plans include the role of Aufidio in *Lucio Silla* for Buxton Festival Opera, Mendelssohn *Elijah* in Derby Cathedral, and a tour of acoustic Christmas repertory around UK cathedrals with G4.



## James Cleverton – *Baritone*

British baritone James Cleverton trained at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and the Zürich International Opera Studio.

He has performed principal roles at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, English National Opera, Opernhaus Zürich, Salzburg Festival, Stadttheater St Gallen, Opéra de Rennes, Opera Holland Park, Grange Park Opera and Garsington Opera.

Recent performances include *The Protector Written on Skin* for the Royal Opera House, *Horemhab Akhnaten* for ENO, *Kyoto in Iris* (Mascagni) for Opera Holland Park, *Marcello La Bohème* and *Sharpless Madam Butterfly* at the Royal Albert Hall for Raymond Gubbay, *Dulcamara Elixir of Love* for Scottish Opera, the *Commercial Counsellor Intermezzo* for Garsington Opera and the *White Rabbit* in *Will Todd's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* for Opera Holland Park at the Royal Opera House Linbury Studio.

James recently recorded the role of *Arrostino* in Cellier's *The Mountebanks* with the BBC Concert Orchestra and appears on Jonathan Antoine's new CD *Believe* singing the duet 'Nostra Patria' and singing the leading role of Sir John Copeland in Rogers & Hart's *Dearest Enemy* (New World Records).

James is married to internationally acclaimed soprano Yvette Bonner and together they have two boys, Beau and Jasper. They also have a Boston terrier called Spike.

*Soloists appear by arrangement with Jill Davies of Davies Music: [www.daviesmusic.com](http://www.daviesmusic.com)*

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David Wright

## COME AND SING WITH THE RTWCS

We are always delighted to hear from anyone who is interested in singing with us, or in just enquiring about the Society. If you have ever thought about devoting one evening a week to making music as part of a choir, RTWCS could be just the thing for you. We normally rehearse in St John's Church Hall, Tunbridge Wells, each Monday in school term time between 7.30 and 9.30pm, and arrange three or four concerts a year.

For details of all these, and of other events, plus an enquiry form, please visit our website: [www.rtwcs.org.uk](http://www.rtwcs.org.uk)

**SOUTHBANK  
SINFONIA**

Music Director: Simon Over



**BENJAMIN  
GROSVENOR**

# RHAPSODY IN BLUE

**SOUTHBANK  
SINFONIA**

ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL  
WEDNESDAY 17 MAY 2017

**SOUTHBANK  
CENTRE**

STENWAY

SOUTH BANK  
SINFONIA

SOUTH BANK  
SINFONIA

**EFG**

Private bankers

# UPCOMING ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHORAL SOCIETY CONCERTS

## **Summer Concert**

**Sunday 2nd July 2017 6.30pm**

United Reformed Church, Tunbridge Wells, TN3 8AG

***Sprig of Thyme, John Rutter***

***Selected Choral Classics***

RTWCS, with Craig Hudson on piano/organ.

Conducted by Rebecca Miller

## **2017-18 Season**

**Sunday 12th November 2017 3pm**

Assembly Hall Theatre, Tunbridge Wells, TN1 2LU

Antonín Dvořák – Mass in D

***Brahms Piano Concerto No 2***

**RTWCS, and the Salomon Orchestra,**

**featuring soloist Danny Driver**



Conducted by Rebecca Miller

**Sunday 10th December 2017 6.30pm**

St. Mary's Church, Goudhurst

***A Christmas Concert***

RTWCS plus special guests present  
a seasonal concert of Christmas music and carols