



ROTTERDAMS
PHILHARMONISCH
ORKEST

Programme Notes

St Matthew Passion

Thu 6 April 2023 • 19.30

Fri 7 April 2023 • 19.30

Sat 8 April 2023 • 19.30

PROGRAMME

conductor **Peter Dijkstra**
soprano **Jeanine De Bique**
countertenor **Maarten Engeltjes**
tenor **Maximilian Schmitt** (Evangelist)
tenor **Fabio Trümpy** (arias)
baritone **Thomas Oliemans** (arias)
bass **Thomas Stimmel** (Vox Christi)
chorus **Laurens Collegium**
boys' choir **National Boys' Choir**

Johann Sebastian Bach 1685-1750
St Matthew Passion, BWV 244 [1727,
revised 1736 and 1742]
Passion unseres Herrn Jesu Christi
nach dem Evangelisten Matthäus
Text: Christian Friedrich Henrici,
named Picander

Intermission after Part I

Concert ends around 22.30

**Most recent performances by our
orchestra:**

*Apr 2022, conductor Jan Willem de
Vriend*

Cover: Ocotillo. Photo Mark A Paulda

*Descent from the Cross.
Altarpiece by Peter Paul
Rubens (1611) in the
Cathedral of Our Lady,
Antwerp.*





The Passion of isolation and consolation

Bach's St Matthew Passion describes the fearful isolation of human suffering through the Gospel of Matthew and a series of compelling arias, whilst offering the consolation of being together with others, expressed through the chorales.

Extraordinary. In 1837, Clara Schumann walked away bored after just the first part of a shortened version of the St Matthew Passion by Johann Sebastian Bach: 'Just one chorale per day would be quite enough for me.' But all of it in one go was just too much for her, given the slow tempo of the choruses. She was not alone in those days: visitors turned up to be entertained during Passiontide, but their attention faded before the end of the performance. Times have changed: in 2023 the popularity of the St Matthew Passion ensures that its performance is a required ritual of every Easter period. Admittedly, studies of the St Matthew Passion have resulted in a style of performance that has changed significantly, particularly over the last fifty or sixty years, so that within the devotion there is scope for quicker tempi.

A human story

This is not to say that the experts are agreed about everything. There are intense

debates surrounding the very first performance of the St Matthew Passion: for example, about the number of singers, and where precisely Bach had placed them within Leipzig's St Thomas Church. There is even some mystery concerning the date, albeit that there is general acceptance these days that the Passion was premiered in 1727 and underwent revisions until 1742. The purpose of the work was to encapsulate the religious experience of Passiontide. However, in Bach's day it was not permitted to revise or edit the text of the Bible for performance purposes, and for that reason the core of the St Matthew Passion is a direct rendering of the text of Chapters 26 and 27 of the Gospel of St Matthew, as translated by Luther. Through Bach's choice of these passages from the Gospel, his magnum opus is especially a human story. Non-believers will find it remarkably credible: no angels appear, God never speaks, and – significantly – remains silent at crucial moments, and no miracles are performed.

Towards the end, just after the death of Christ, the temple veil is torn in two, and the tombs of the saints open up, but the only testimony that this is God's doing comes from mouths of a frightened centurion and his troops. And whilst it is true that the miraculous resurrection of Christ is predicted, we do not hear it until the very last, comforting chord of Bach's work. Isolation, vulnerability, doubt, fear of death, weakness, betrayal, friendship, loyalty, disagreement, and mourning: these recognisable emotions dominate the verses of the Bible, expressed with great force through Bach's music.

Stations of the cross

The composer turned the two parts of the Gospel into a dramatic, sung narration by an Evangelist, with roles for Pilate, the disciples, and a number of others. Jesus stands out from the rest, because his words alone are accompanied by the strings, but in a simple yet inspired coup de théâtre the strings are gone as Christ utters his last words on the cross. The choir is divided into two groups, which almost invariably sing their roles in the Gospel over or after each other, suggesting a group of disciples deep in conversation, and high priests and other hostile persons compulsively parroting their false accusations. The conviction with which everyone all at once calls for the release of Barabbas creates enormous impact. The Bible story is interspersed with chorales and arias. In the chorales, the choir interprets the feelings of the idealised, faithful spectators: united in their grief, their doubts, and their

compassion. The opening chorus, and the choruses that close the two parts of the work, all seem to be a quest for that unity: the two parts in the opening chorus moan fervently about Christ's journey to the Cross, whilst seemingly deaf to the angelic choir of children's voices that tell of how the Messiah

Bach's magnum opus is especially a human story. Non-believers will find it remarkably credible

accepts the burden of all the sins of mankind. In the final chorus of the first part, the parties follow each other's trains of thought, finishing with a unifying sadness.

Denial

The arias are based on texts by Picander, a pseudonym of jurist Christian Friedrich Henrici (1700-1764): they provide commentaries on the events by people who appear to have been a part of these events, or who strongly identify with what happens to the characters in the Gospel. The spectator is given the space to assume that role themselves. For example, does the soprano who sings the aria 'Aus Liebe' answer directly Pilate's question as to what Jesus has done for his fellow man, or is she simply organising her own thoughts?

Picander allows for several interpretations, but allows no scope for controversy: St Peter's denial of Christ is entirely met with compassion in the beautiful aria 'Erbarme dich', but there is no mercy in the music for Judas, who in the Christian tradition is cursed. It is Judas's betrayal that leads to the arrest and imprisonment of Jesus, which represents a step on the road to the redemption of mankind. In the aria 'Blute nur', however, we do feel for Judas's mother, whose son has 'turned into a snake'. The harsh judgment of the Gospel – that it would have been better had the traitor not been born – is unquestioned.

The musical dramatic structure of Bach's St Matthew Passion, with its added arias and chorales, goes further than comparable oratorios such as Handel's Israel in Egypt, in which both the arias and choruses are direct renditions of parts of the Old Testament Book of Exodus. There are switches of perspective between inside and outside the story line; characters who narrate, share experiences and display compassion; and jumps in time and space, all of which lift the work many rungs higher above the baroque opera of the day. It may have escaped Clara Schumann two centuries ago, but how Bach succeeded in distilling so much emotion into such tightly-structured music remains a mystery to this day.

Hein van Eekert



Photo: Astrid Ackermann

Peter Dijkstra - conductor

Born: Roden, The Netherlands

Current position: chief conductor Netherlands Chamber Choir; Artistic Leader Bavarian Radio Choir; principal guest conductor Netherlands Radio Choir; Conductor Laureate Swedish Radio Choir

Education: choral conducting, orchestral conducting and solo voice at the conservatories of The Hague, Cologne and Stockholm

Awards: Kersjes-van de Groenekan scholarship for young orchestral conductors (2002); first prize Eric Ericson Award (2003); Golden Violin (2013); Eugen Jochum Award (2014)

Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic: 2023

Jeanine De Bique - soprano

Born: San Fernando, Trinidad and Tobago

Education: solo voice at the Manhattan School of Music

Awards: Arleen Auger Prize ('s-Hertogenbosch International Vocal Competition), Edison Klassiek, Diapason d'Or, Opus Klassik Award

Breakthrough: 2017, debut Salzburg Festival

Subsequently: solo appearances with Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Wiener Philharmoniker, Budapest Festival Orchestra

Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic: 2021



Photo: Gregor Hohenberg

Maarten Engeltjes - countertenor

Born: Zwolle, The Netherlands

Education: Royal Conservatory The Hague; lessons with Maria Acda, Manon Heijne, Andreas Scholl

Breakthrough: 2004, with countertenor Michael Chance and Gustav Leonhardt

Subsequently: projects with conductors such as Vladimir Jurowski, Reinbert de Leeuw, Emmanuelle Haïm, William Christie, Jordi Savall, in Berlin (Philharmonie), New York (Lincoln Centre), Paris (Théâtre des Champs Elysées), Vienna (Konzerthaus)

Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic: 2019



Photo: Hans van der Woerd



Photo: Christian Kargl

Maximilian Schmitt - tenor (Evangelist)

Born: Fulda, Germany

Education: Regensburger Domspatzen, solo voice with Roland Hermann and Anke Eggers in Berlin

Breakthrough: 2016: debut Wiener Staatsoper

Subsequently: Opera in Milan (Teatro alla Scala), Florence (Teatro del Maggio Musicale), solo appearances with Cleveland Orchestra, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, Concerto Köln

Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic: 2023

Fabio Trümpy tenor (arias)

Born: Lugano, Switzerland

Education: Zurich University of the Arts;
Amsterdam Conservatory

Awards: Prix des Amis du Festival d'Art Lyrique in Aix-en-Provence (2007)

Solo-appearances: Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Les Musiciens du Louvre, Tonhalle Orchester Zürich, Freiburger Barockorchester
Opera: Zadok/Solomon, Telemaco/Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria, Oronte/Alcina, Jaquino/Fidelio, Basilio/Le nozze di Figaro, Don Ottavio/Don Giovanni

Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic: 2008



Photo: Sarah Wijzenbeek

Thomas Oliemans - baritone (arias)

Born: Amsterdam, Nederland

Study: Amsterdam Conservatory with Margreet Honig; lessons with Robert Holl, Elio Battaglia, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau

Breakthrough: 2002, debut as Father in Henze's Pollicino with the Dutch Touring Opera

Subsequently: Opera in Amsterdam (Dutch National Opera), London (Royal Opera House Covent Garden), Salzburg (Festival), solo appearances with Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Freiburger Barockorchester

Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic: 2012



Photo: Marco Borggreve



Photo: Thomas Stimmel

Thomas Stimmel - bass (Vox Christi)

Born: Munich, Germany

Education: Tölzer Knabenchor, solo voice at the University of Music and Theatre, Munich with Marilyn Schmieg, and in Berlin with Thomas Quasthoff

Breakthrough: 2018, debut Styriarte

Subsequently: opera in Berlin (Staatsoper), Santiago de Chile (Teatro Municipal) and Toulouse (Théâtre du Capitole), concert appearances with conductors such as Jordi Savall, Andrew Manze and Helmuth Rilling

Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic: 2023

Laurens Collegium chorus

Founded: 2002 by Barend Schuurman

Present conductor: Wiecher Mandemaker

Chorus members: young professional singers

Repertoire: music for chamber choir from all period styles

Co-operations: Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century, Residentie Orkest with conductors such as Frans Brüggen, Stéphane Denève, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Lahav Shani, and Jaap van Zweden, projects with Natuurmonumenten and Ntjam Rosie

Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic: 2011



Photo: Patrycja Lassocinska



Photo: SWARD Photography

National Boys' Choir

Founded: 2006, belonging to the National Choirs of the Dutch Vocal Talent Foundation

Conductor: Irene Verburg

Singers: enthusiastic children from all over the Netherlands with a remarkable voice and musicality

Repertoire: classical choral music

Co-operations: Berlin Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Dutch National Opera, LUDWIG, Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra

Debut Rotterdam Philharmonic: 1999

Agenda

Thu 20 April 2023 • 20.15

Fri 21 April 2023 • 20.15

Sun 23 April 2023 • 14.15

conductor **Maxim Emelyanychev**
harpisichord **Jean Rondeau**

Debussy Prélude à l'après-midi
d'un faune

Poulenc Concert Champêtre

Rossini Overture 'Il barbiere di
Siviglia'

Mendelssohn Symphony No. 4
'Italian'

Sun 30 April 2023 • 10.30

Music for Breakfast No. 5

with **Marieke Blankestijn** (Violin),

Robert Franenberg (Double
Bass), and colleagues from the
orchestra

Chamber Music by **Corelli**,

Boccherini, and **Telemann**

Thu 11 May 2023 • 20.15

Fri 12 May 2023 • 20.15

Sun 14 May 2023 • 14.15

conductor **Lahav Shani**

soprano **Chen Reiss**

alto **Anna Larsson**

chorus **Laurens Symfonisch**

Mahler Symphony No. 2

'Resurrection'

Fri 26 May 2023 • 20.15

conductor **Manfred Honeck**

cello **Kian Soltani**

MacMillan Larghetto

Schumann Cello Concerto

Vali The Girl from Shiraz

Beethoven Symphony No. 5

Sun 4 June 2023 • 10.30

Music for Breakfast No. 6

with **Charlotte Potgieter** and

Letizia Sciarone (Violin), and

colleagues from the orchestra

Chamber Music by **Borodin**,

Dvořák, and **Martinů**

Musicians

Chief Conductor

Lahav Shani

Honorary Conductor

Yannick Nézet-Séguin

Principal Assistant Conductor

Bertie Baigent

First Violin

Igor Gruppman,

leader

Marieke Blankestijn,

leader

Quirine Scheffers

Hed Yaron Meyerson

Saskia Otto

Arno Bons

Mireille van der Wart

Cor van der Linden

Rachel Browne

Maria Dingjan

Marie-José Schrijner

Noëmi Bodden

Petra Visser

Sophia Torrenga

Hadewijch Hofland

Annerien Stuker

Alexandra van

Beveren

Koen Stapert

Second Violin

Charlotte Potgieter

Cecilia Ziano

Frank de Groot

Laurens van Vliet

Tomoko Hara

Elina Staphorsius

Jun Yi Dou

Bob Bruyn

Letizia Sciarone

Eefje Habraken

Maija Reinikainen

Wim Ruitenbeek

Babette van den Berg

Melanie Broers

Viola

Anne Huser

Roman Spitzer

Galahad Samson

Kerstin Bonk

Lex Prummel

Janine Baller

Francis Saunders

Veronika Lénártová

Rosalinde Kluck

León van den Berg

Olfje van der Klein

Cello

Emanuele Silvestri

Eugene Lifschitz

Joanna Pachucka

Daniel Petrovitsch

Mario Rio

Gé van Leeuwen

Eelco Beinema

Carla Schrijner

Pepijn Meeuws

Yi-Ting Fang

Double Bass

Matthew Midgley

Ying Lai Green

Jonathan Focquaert

Robert Franenberg

Harke Wiersma

Arjen Leendertz

Ricardo Neto

Flute

Juliette Hurel

Joséphine Olech

Désirée Woudenberg

Flute/Piccolo

Beatriz Da Baião

Oboe

Remco de Vries

Karel Schoofs

Anja van der Maten

Oboe/Cor Anglais

Ron Tijhuis

Clarinet

Julien Hervé

Bruno Bonansea

Clarinet/ Bass Clarinet

Romke-Jan Wijmenga

Bassoon

Pieter Nuytten

Lola Descours

Marianne Prommel

Bassoon/ Contrabassoon

Hans Wisse

Horn

David Fernández

Alonso

Wendy Leliveld

Richard Speetjens

Laurens Otto

Pierre Buizer

Trumpet

Alex Elia

Simon Wierenga

Jos Verspagen

Trombone

Pierre Volders

Alexander Verbeek

Remko de Jager

Bass Trombone

Rommert Groenhof

Tuba

Hendrik-Jan Renes

Timpani

Danny van de Wal

Percussion

Ronald Ent

Martijn Boom

Adriaan Feyaerts

Harp

Charlotte Sprenkels