

SAN FRANCISCO
BACH CHOIR 
MAGEN SOLOMON, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

90th Season
2025—2026

Johann Sebastian Bach
MASS IN B MINOR

Saturday, May 9, 2026, 4:00 PM
First Church, Berkeley

Sunday, May 10, 2026, 4:00 PM
Calvary Presbyterian Church, San Francisco

NOTES FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Dear friends, old and new, of the SF Bach Choir,

Welcome to the final concert of our celebratory 90th season. We all feel so lucky to be making music when the world is in such pain. Although the text of the mass is unquestionably Christian, to me the spirit of the music, and the unabashed grandness of the work, moves it from the sphere of Christianity into something more universal. And I am not alone. One of the odd signs of this work's preeminent place in the classical music world is that it is unique in often being referred to not by title, opus number, or nickname, but only by its **key**! It's known as the *B-minor*. Even adding "*Mass*" seems unnecessary.

As some of you know, this work has always had a special place in my heart -- maybe even in my body! I have written about this before (forgive me if it's a tedious repetition): my mother sang several performances of this work (with the famous Robert Shaw Chorale) just days before I was born. I have had a close relationship with the work ever since.

I first really "got" what music could do when, as a teenager, I heard the Gächinger Kantorei perform the *B-minor* under Helmuth Rilling. There was a vitality and directness to the music and performance, which found me and my best friend quite literally sitting on the edge of our seats (no doubt, to the annoyance of the patrons behind us...). Oh, and by the way, that chorus sang the entire piece (their portion takes 90 minutes) for memory.

Years later I had the amazing good fortune to study conducting with Rilling, to prepare this work for him, and to sing under him numerous times. Not only was he a brilliant, compelling conductor (who conducted every concert by memory), but he was also a staggeringly insightful teacher, unerringly recognizing each of our unique challenges and pointing the way forward. For all these reasons, I've considered him one of my three life-changing teachers and mentors. When Rilling died in February of this year, I realized that my **personal** dedication of these performances had to be in his memory.

Turning from the personal, many of you know that the *B-minor* also represents the epitome of the tradition and commitment that the Bach Choir has upheld for 90 years. I still find it moving and astonishing that in 1935, in the midst of the Great Depression and the lead up to the Second World War, citizens of the Bay Area founded a new organization to experience and share Bach's music. Though the circumstances are different, we are, alas, again in the midst of a war. I believe I speak for many of us that being able to submerge ourselves for three hours every week in this sublime music has provided some needed solace and escape.

I am so very grateful to the Board and singers for the extraordinary time, effort, thought, care, and love that they have lavished on the Bach Choir over the decades, and especially this milestone season. A big welcome to the talented Cara Keller, our new Chorus Manager; and my deep appreciation to Rachel Hurwitz, Derek Tam, our five talented soloists, and the amazing players of The Jubilate Orchestra for joining us in sharing Bach's brilliant masterpiece with you.

Let us all cling tenaciously to its final words: "Dona nobis Pacem." Grant us peace.



Magen

🌀 **Mass in B Minor** 🌀
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750)

SAN FRANCISCO BACH CHOIR

Magen Solomon, *Artistic Director*

Christopher Wemp, *Assistant Conductor*

Clarissa Lyons, *soprano* · Morgan Balfour, *soprano* · Heidi Waterman, *alto*

Sam Faustine, *tenor* · Curtis Streetman, *bass*

Jubilate Orchestra: *a program of the San Francisco Early Music Society*

KYRIE

Kyrie eleison
Christe eleison (soprano, alto duet)
Kyrie eleison

GLORIA

Gloria in excelsis Deo
Et in terra pax
Laudamus te (soprano aria)
Gratias agimus
Domine Deus (soprano, tenor duet)
Qui tollis peccata
Qui sedes ad dextram (alto aria)
Quoniam tu solus (bass aria)
Cum Sancto Spiritu

INTERMISSION

CREDO

Credo in unum Deum
Patrem omnipotentem
Et in unum Dominum (soprano, alto duet)
Et incarnatus est
Crucifixus
Et resurrexit tertia die
Et in Spiritum Sanctum (bass aria)
Confiteor unum baptisma
Et expecto resurrectionem

SANCTUS & BENEDICTUS

Sanctus
Pleni sunt coeli
Osanna
Benedictus (tenor aria)
Osanna (repetatur)

AGNUS DEI

Agnus Dei (alto aria)
Dona nobis pacem



THE JUBILATE BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

A program of the San Francisco Early Music Society

Violin 1: Laura Jeannin, *Concertmaster*, Pauline Kempf, Maxine Nemerovski

Violin 2: Anna Washburn, Aaron Westman, Dominic Glynn

Viola: Alisa Rata Stutzbach, Maria Caswell; **Cello:** David Morris, Paul Hale; **Violone:** Farley Pearce

Flute: Vicki Melin, Alissa Roedig; **Oboe:** Kristin Olson, Emily Ostrom

Bassoon: Daniel Deitch, Yueh Chou; **Trumpet:** Dominic Favia, Leonard Ott, Charles Ryan

Horn: Nathanael Udell; **Timpani:** Kent Reed; **Organ:** Arthur Omura

BIOGRAPHIES

The **San Francisco Bach Choir** is an auditioned choir offering dedicated singers the opportunity to study and perform both Early Music and the diverse repertoire of great works from other eras and genres. Founded in 1936, it is one of the oldest continuously performing community choirs in the western United States. The Choir uses historically informed performance practice, and performs with world-class professional instrumentalists and soloists, both period and modern.

Now in her twelfth season with the SF Bach Choir, Artistic Director **Magen Solomon** has been active in early music as a conductor, singer, scholar, and editor for over four decades. She has been the Artistic Director of the San Francisco Choral Artists since 1995; together, they have premiered over 300 choral works, performed at major choral conferences, released three CDs, and have twice won the Chorus America/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming. She has served as Artistic Director of the Oakland Symphony Chorus, Stockton Chorale, and California Bach Society, and has taught and conducted at the University of Southern California, UC Berkeley, Santa Clara University, and Smith and Mount Holyoke colleges. Active across the US and abroad as a clinician, teacher, and guest conductor, Dr. Solomon has directed Pro Coro Canada, the UC Santa Cruz Chamber Singers, and other ensembles, and has collaborated on performances of major choral works with Michael Morgan, Michael Tilson Thomas, Nicolas McGegan, Helmuth Rilling, Kent Nagano, and Christoph von Dohnányi, among others. For 14 years she edited the “New Voices in Research” column in the ACDA Choral Journal and has published an edition of Johannes Eccard’s *Neue deutsche Lieder* (1578) with A-R Editions.

Christopher Wemp, Assistant Conductor, strives to create inclusive and empowering singing environments that explore how choral music across history can inspire us to live even more fully. His work in choral conducting and composing extends internationally to include collaborations in El Salvador, Peru, India, and Kenya. This exposure to different cultures and backgrounds has shaped him into an artist who strives to learn from and incorporate multicultural influences into his work and to promote diverse works on his publishing website adscensio.org. Locally, he has led musicianship and composition workshop weeks for youth and regularly works with church ensembles and schools. He earned his Bachelor’s Degree in music and his Master’s Degrees in Education Leadership and Theology at Santa Clara University. He studied under SCU Choral Arts Director Dr. Scot Hanna-Weir and SF Conservatory professor Ragnar Bohlin. An avid composer, his most recent work is *Signs of the Kingdom*, a musical about ending homelessness amidst bitter community conflict, intended as a teaching tool that supports dignified and human-centered solutions to one of the most urgent issues of our time.

The **Jubilate Orchestra** has been a fixture of the Bay Area early music scene for over 35 years. Originally known as Magnificat Baroque Orchestra, Jubilate was formed in 1989 to provide period instrument accompaniment for Bay Area choirs and other arts organizations. In that capacity, Jubilate has given hundreds of performances with dozens of professional and community choirs, churches, and opera companies. In Spring 2023, Jubilate became a program of the San Francisco Early Music Society, allowing it to continue serving the community for many years to come.

Clarissa Lyons is a proud graduate of UC Berkeley, The Manhattan School of Music, Bard College Conservatory, and The Metropolitan Opera’s Lindemann Program. Clarissa Lyons has appeared with The Metropolitan Opera, The Cleveland Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, and Wolf Trap Opera. Also a passionate recitalist, she has performed at Carnegie Hall’s Weill Hall, the Park Avenue Armory, Lincoln Center’s Bruno Walter Auditorium, the Frick Collection, and Carmel’s Sunset Center. She lives in the East Bay with her two children, husband, and basset-hound mix.

Morgan Balfour, praised for her "pure liquid soprano" (The Daily Telegraph), has performed as a soloist with organizations such as the San Francisco Symphony, American Bach Soloists, Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, Sydney Philharmonia, Cantata Collective, California Bach Society, Madison Bach Musicians and Canberra Symphony Orchestra. Alongside her concert work, Ms. Balfour performed extensively in operas from Purcell to Britten. She has appeared twice with Pinchgut Opera, most recently in their production of Purcell's *The Fairy Queen*. You can see Morgan perform next with Cantata Collective and Berkeley Community Chorus and Orchestra.

Heidi L. Waterman With a voice praised for its "rich, lustrous tone and gorgeous legato" (SF Classical Voice), Heidi L. Waterman has enjoyed a wide-ranging career encompassing everything from film scores to early Renaissance chant to cutting-edge modern oratorio. She has been a soloist with San Francisco Symphony, San Francisco Opera, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Chorale, and the San Francisco Choral Society, among many others. She is thrilled to return once again to sing the *B Minor Mass* with the San Francisco Bach Choir.

Sam Faustine is an award-winning actor/singer/musician who performs genres from Baroque Opera to Broadway to Rock 'n' Roll. He has appeared across Europe, China, and the U.S. in roles including Tony in *West Side Story*, Anthony in *Sweeney Todd*, and Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi*, and was featured in the first National Tour of Broadway's *A Christmas Carol*. A member of the internationally touring Byrd Ensemble, and a traveling QUEEN Tribute Band, he is also a sought-after oratorio soloist—appearing with ensembles such as the San Francisco Symphony and California Bach Soloists. He lives in NYC and works in theatre. www.samfaustine.com @samfaustinesf.

Curtis Streetman, performs a rich and excitingly varied repertoire. Mr. Streetman's artistry has been presented in some of the world's major concert halls and opera houses and he has performed lead roles in Verdi, Handel, and Rossini operas, among others. Operatic performances include appearances at The Salzburg Festival, as well as opera houses in Vienna, Bilbao, Dortmund, Halle, and Victoria. Mr. Streetman was recently appointed Director of Voice and Opera at the University of the Bahamas in Nassau, where he makes his home. Live recordings of Mr. Streetman's artistry are available at: <https://soundcloud.com/user-26394210>.



SAN FRANCISCO
BACH CHOIR 

OUR
2026–2027
SEASON

October 18: A Night at the Opera

December 5-6: Ringing in the Holidays
with Velocity Handbell Choir

May 15-16: A Viennese Afternoon:
Choral & Orchestral music of Haydn, Mendelssohn,
and Fanny Hensel

Sing with us – auditions this month!

Rehearsals Tuesdays 7–10 PM (beginning September 8) at Calvary Presbyterian, SF

Audition info and sign-up: sfbach.org/join



TEXT AND TRANSLATIONS

J. S. Bach: *Mass in B Minor* (SFBC translation)

KYRIE

Chorus

Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison.

Lord, have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy.

Duet (Soprano 1, Soprano 2)

Christe eleison, Christe eleison, Christe eleison.

Christ, have mercy, Christ have mercy, Christ have mercy.

Chorus

Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison.

Lord, have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy.

GLORIA

Chorus

Gloria in excelsis Deo

Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

Aria (Soprano 2)

Laudamus te, benedicimus te,
adoramus te, glorificamus te.

We praise you, we bless you
we worship you, we glorify you.

Chorus

Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.

We give thanks to you because of your great glory.

Duet (Soprano 1, Tenor)

Domine Deus, Rex coelestis Deus Pater omnipotens,
Domine Fili unigenite Jesu Christe altissime,

Lord God, heavenly king, God the Father almighty,
O Lord, the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ most
high,

Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris,

Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,

Chorus

Qui tollis peccata mundi miserere nobis,

You who take away the sins of the world, have
mercy on us;

qui tollis peccata mundi suscipe deprecationem nostram

you who take away the sins of the world, receive our
prayer;

Aria (Alto)

Qui sedes ad dextram Patris miserere nobis.

You who sit at the right hand of the Father, have
mercy on us;

Aria (Bass)

Quoniam tu solus sanctus, tu solus Dominus,
tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe,

For you alone are holy, you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the most high, O Jesus Christ,

Chorus

Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

With the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

CREDO

Chorus

Credo in unum Deum,

I believe in one God,

Chorus

Patrem omnipotentem factorem coeli et terrae,
visibilium omnium et invisibilium;

The Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth,
and of all things visible and invisible;

Duet (Soprano 1, Alto)

Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum,
Filium Dei unigenitum,
et ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula;
Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine Deum verum de Deo
vero,
Genitum non factum consubstantialem Patri
per quem omnia facta sunt qui propter nos homines

et propter nostram salutem descendit de coelis,

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages;
God from God, light from light, true God from true
God,
begotten not made, of one being with the Father,
by whom all things were made; who for us
humankind
and for our salvation descended from heaven,

Chorus

Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto,
ex Maria Virgine, et homo factus est;

And became flesh by the Holy Spirit,
of the Virgin Mary, and was made a human;

Chorus

Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato
passus et sepultus est;

And was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate,
suffered death, and was buried;

Chorus

Et resurrexit tertia die secundum scripturas
et ascendit in coelum sedet ad dextram Dei Patris

et iterum venturus est cum gloria judicare vivos et
mortuos
cujus regni non erit finis;

And rose on the third day according to Scripture,
and ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of
God the Father,
and shall come again with glory to judge the living
and the dead,
(he) whose kingdom shall have no end;

Aria (Bass)

Et in Spiritum Sanctum Dominum et vivificantem,
qui ex Patre Filioque procedit,
qui cum Patre et Filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur,

qui locutus est per prophetas,
et unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam;

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who together with the Father and Son is worshipped
and glorified,
who spoke through the prophets;
and in one holy catholic and apostolic church;

Chorus

Confiteor unum baptismum in remissionem peccatorum

I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of
sins;

Chorus

Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum
et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.

And I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the age to come. Amen.

SANCTUS

Chorus

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria ejus

Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of his glory.

OSANNA

Chorus

Osanna in excelsis

Hosanna in the highest.

BENEDICTUS

Aria (Tenor)

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Chorus

Osanna in excelsis

Hosanna in the highest.

AGNUS DEI

Aria (Alto)

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi miserere nobis.

Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

DONA NOBIS PACEM

Chorus

Dona nobis pacem.

Give us peace.



PROGRAM NOTES

J.S. Bach (Eisenach 1685–Leipzig 1750) never wrote a mass in B minor. Though this statement may surprise you, it is, strictly speaking, correct. The piece you will hear today is in fact not what was intended by the word *missa* (“mass”) in Lutheran Germany; it is not a complete composition that Bach wrote to be performed *in toto*, and it is not in B minor. Although the piece does start in that key, a rare and difficult key at the time, the main key is D major. The *Mass in B Minor* is actually a compilation that Bach made late in his life of separate parts of the Latin mass (technically called a *missa tota*) that he had mostly composed previously over a period of decades. In the autograph manuscript he simply names each part, that is: “No. 1, Missa,” “No. 2, Symbolum Nicenum” [the Credo], No. 3, “Sanctus,” No. 4, “Osanna, Benedictus, Agnus Dei et Dona nobis pacem.” The name by which it is known, *Mass in B Minor*, was attached to the composition in 1845 by its first publisher, Hermann Nägeli, undoubtedly making a connection, he hoped lucrative, with Beethoven’s *Missa solemnis*.

Toward the end of his life, Bach apparently felt an urge towards completeness, toward writing pieces that explored and exhausted all the possibilities of a certain compositional technique or style. He produced some of the greatest compositions of all time: the unfinished *Art of the Fugue* (an exploration of all possible contrapuntal uses of a single theme or subject, first started in 1740 and restarted in 1747); the *Clavier-Übung IV*, known since the 19th century as the “Goldberg Variations” (a compendium of all possible ways of varying a single theme, 1747); the *Musical Offering* (also from 1747, an exhaustive exploration of all that could be done with a single musical idea, the “royal” theme written by Frederick the Great of Prussia and used in two *ricercars* (a type of improvisational, contrapuntal composition) for keyboard in three and six parts; a trio sonata for flute, violin, and continuo; and various canons for flute, violin, and continuo with harpsichord obbligato); and the variations on “Vom Himmel hoch” (1747); in addition to the *Mass in B Minor* (1748–49).

In 1954, the eminent Bach scholar Friedrich Smend edited the mass for the *Neue Bach Ausgabe* (New Bach Editions) and showed that it had originated from different parts of Bach's life. However, Smend believed that the autograph manuscript contained independent compositions collated at different times, that almost by accident make a whole. In fact, thanks to handwriting analysis, we know that Bach completed the compilation in 1748-49, the final years of his life. Bach's motivation and intent remain unknown, though many have advanced different hypotheses. Music scholar Helmuth Osthoff suggested that Bach may have compiled the mass for the dedication of the Dresden court chapel (for which the Kyrie and Gloria—the *Missa*—had been composed in 1733), scheduled to be completed in 1748 but not completed until 1751, one year after Bach's death, but there is no proof. There is no evidence that the mass was ever performed during Bach's lifetime, and its length would have prevented the performance during a typical worship service.

Recent evidence indicates that Bach was working on this piece, not on the *Art of the Fugue* as previously assumed, just before his death. His son C.P.E. Bach used J.S. Bach's score and performed at least the *Symbolum Nicenum* (Credo) in Hamburg, annotating the autograph manuscript and changing notes, entire bars, dynamics, and embellishments. X-ray fluorescence analysis applied to the various inks (those of father and son, whose hands were indistinguishable), enabled scholars to distinguish interventions by the son, and thus finally to reconstruct the original reading of the father (except for those parts that the son had erased with a sharp object). Today's performance is from the new score, published in 2010.

In 1724, the second year of his tenure in Leipzig, Bach composed a six-voice Sanctus (SSSATB) for the Christmas service (because the Sanctus, without Benedictus or Osanna, is sung only on high feasts in the Lutheran church). Then, in 1733, he wrote a *Missa* for the Dresden court, which was Catholic, as part of his application for the post of court composer, which he was offered only in 1736. It was probably around 1747 that he composed the most magnificent, majestic, and architecturally and stylistically perfect section—the Credo, or *Symbolum Nicenum* (Nicene Creed), though it also contains a few sections composed earlier. Finally, when he compiled all of the music into a full score, he added the last movements (Osanna, Benedictus, Agnus Dei, and Dona nobis pacem), adapting music he had previously written in a widespread baroque technique known as parody, whereby a composer adapts and partially rewrites existing music to a new text.

In fact, most of the mass is a “parody.” According to present knowledge, only eight out of the mass's 25 movements are considered with certainty to be original compositions, although the models for only seven of the remaining 17 movements have been identified. Based on a study of both the manuscript sources and Bach's compositional techniques and style, scholars have postulated that those movements without identifiable models were probably based on pieces that have been lost. While in modern times this would be considered a lesser artistic practice, it was commonly accepted during Bach's time. To Bach, the *Mass in B Minor* represented a compendium and apotheosis of his art. Perhaps he chose models that he felt were his best work—pieces that showed the diversity of his compositional style, while also perfectly expressing the affect of the text.

The table on the following page lists all the movements, the performing forces, both instrumental and vocal, and the models from which the mass movements were “parodied,” or the indication that the model is unknown, as well as which movements served as models for future pieces. Notice the great variety in instrumentation, both within the orchestra and as obbligato (solo instruments that usually accompany vocal soloists).

MASS IN B MINOR: INSTRUMENTATION, SOLO AND CHORAL VOICES, PARODY MODELS FOR EACH MOVEMENT

MOVEMENT	Trumpet	Corno da caccia	Timpani	Flute	Oboe	Bassoon	Violin	Viola	Cello & dbl. Bass	Solo parts	Chorus parts	PARODY MODEL
I. Missa												
1. Kyrie eleison				2	2	1	2	1	1		SSATB	(None, original work)
2. Christe eleison							2		1	SS		Unknown model
3. Kyrie eleison				2	2	1	2	1	1		SATB	(None, original work)
4a. Gloria in excelsis Deo	3		1	2	2	1	2	1	1		SSATB	Unknown model (model for Gloria 191/1)
4b. Et in terra pax	3		1	2	2	1	2	1	1		SSATB	(None, original work)
5. Laudamus te							3	1	1	S		Unknown model
6. Gratias agimus	3		1	2	2	1	2	1	1		SATB	Cantata 29/2
7a. Domine Deus				2			2	1	1	ST		Maybe cantata 193a/5 (model for Gloria 191/2)
7b. Qui tollis peccata				2			2	1	2		SATB	Cantata 46/1a
8. Qui sedes ad dexteram					1		2	1	1	A		Unknown model
9a. Quoniam tu solus		1				2			1	B		Unknown model
9b. Cum sancto spiritu	3		1	2	2	2	2	1	1		SSATB	(None, original work; model for Gloria 191/3)
II. Symbolum Nicenum												
10. Credo in unum Deum							2		1		SSATB	(None, original work)
11. Patrem omnipotentem	3		1		2		2	1	1		SATB	Cantata 171/1
12. Et in unum Dominum					2		2	1	1	SA		Lost duet
13. Et incarnatus est							2		1		SSATB	(None, original work)
14. Crucifixus				2			2	1	1		SATB	Cantata 12/2
15. Et resurrexit tertia die	3		1	2	2		2	1	1		SSATB	(Lost concerto BWV Anh 9/1?)
16. Et in spiritum sanctum					2				1	B		Unknown model
17a. Confiteor unum baptisma									1		SSATB	(None, original work)
17b. Et expecto resurrectionem	3		1	2	2		2	1	1		SSATB	Cantata 120/2
III. Sanctus												
18a. Sanctus	3		1		3		2	1	1		SSAATB	(None, original work in its original SSSATB version)
18b. Pleni sunt coeli												
IV. Osanna, Benedictus, Agnus Dei et Dona nobis pacem												
19/21. Osanna	3		1	2	2		2	1	1		SATB SATB	Lost cantata 215/1 and BWV Anh. 11/1
20. Benedictus				1					1	T		Unknown model
22. Agnus Dei							2		1	A		Lost serenata "Entfernet euch"/3, cantata 11/4
23. Dona nobis pacem	3		1	2	2	1	2	1	1		SATB	Same as Gratias agimus

Kyrie: The first part of the mass, the Kyrie, is divided into three sections—Kyrie I, Christe, and Kyrie II. Traditionally, the Kyrie was a ninefold invocation, the text of each of the three sections being repeated three times. Bach respects this tradition in his three movements, of which the outer two are choral and the central is an enchanting duet for two sopranos with violin accompaniment.

The first Kyrie is a grandiose concertato piece (using both voices and instruments) with the first of many fugues to be found in the whole score. After a four-measure invocation, the fugue begins, first with instruments and then with the voices joining in. Although it takes discipline and a discerning ear to count the entrances of the subject (the main fugue melody), if one were to count, one would find that Bach includes exactly 21 statements of the fugue subject among voices and instruments. The number 21 (three times seven) is not a random number. Three is the sacred number: the Trinity, the perfect circle. Seven is associated with the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, constructed over seven years, dedicated in the seventh month with a service that required “seven days and seven days” (I Kings 8:65), and supported by the Seven Pillars of Wisdom, symbolizing the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Seven is also a number associated with the Virgin, presented in much Renaissance iconography as the “Temple of Christ,” with her seven sorrows and seven joys. Thus three times seven is an appropriate number of entrances for a movement praying to Christ for mercy.

The second Kyrie is a four-part chorus in an ancient style, with no independent instrumental parts: flutes, oboes, bassoon, and strings all double the vocal parts. The second Kyrie is one of the movements that shows Bach’s love of the style of the late Renaissance masters’ Latin motet. This older a capella style is referred to as *stile antico* and contrasts with the modern concertato styles.

Gloria: The second part of the *missa* is the Gloria, the section that glorifies the Lord. Bach subdivided this section into nine movements of different character. The opening movement is a happy, glorious concertato movement, the first that features brass and percussion together with woodwinds and strings. The second movement, “Et in terra pax,” is not separated from the first, though it differs in flavor. It is a pastoral movement in D major, but not as peaceful a movement as Catholics would have expected—there is an element of Lutheran “passion” in it. The third movement is an aria for solo soprano accompanied by strings and a solo violin (violin “concertato”). The fourth movement, “Gratias agimus,” is again a grand choral movement in D major with the same instruments as the “Gloria” but with an archaic feel, slow, and with all instruments except the trumpets playing the same notes as sung by the voices. The “Domine Deus” that follows is a lovely duet for soprano and tenor accompanied by flute and strings. Movement six of the Gloria, “Qui tollis peccata mundi,” follows without break. The four choral voices engage in a dark fugue in B minor, as befits the plea of the faithful for mercy. Two solo movements follow. The alto sings the gorgeous “Qui sedes ad dextram Patris,” accompanied by an oboe d’amore (an oboe with a warmer sound, larger than the regular oboe and pitched a third below). The alto aria is followed by the bass’s lovely aria, accompanied by two bassoons and a corno da caccia (hunting horn). The Gloria concludes with the greatest concertato movement of the *missa*—the choral “Cum Sancto Spiritu,” which includes a fugue.

Symbolum Nicenum (Credo): To better understand Bach’s concern with symmetry and balance, and to catch a glimpse of his compositional techniques and ability, let us take a closer look at the largest section of the mass—the *Symbolum Nicenum*, or Credo. If the latest scholarship is correct, the Credo of the mass was Bach’s last significant composition, perhaps his very last altogether. In the Credo, Bach deliberately combines archaic with modern style, in a striking succession that blends effortlessly. Conspicuously missing, however, is the operatic style: there are no *da capo* arias (i.e., ABA arias). Bach’s Credo is symmetrically arranged: at the upper and lower end are a pair of choral movements, one in ancient style and one in the newer concertato style; in third and third-to-last

position are two solo movements; and the three central movements, all choral, have in the middle the “Crucifixus.”

In more ceremonial pieces like this one, composers would subdivide the long text of the Credo into quite a number of movements. Initially, Bach subdivided the text into eight sections, later adding as a separate movement, “Et incarnatus,” (after originally including this text as the final words of the preceding duet). The resulting structure was perfectly symmetrical, consisting of the double perfect number of nine movements: three times three, following a three-movement Kyrie and a nine-movement Gloria! Of the nine movements in the Credo, only two, “Et in unum Dominum” and “Et in Spiritum Sanctum Dominum,” are solos, and they are in the third and third to last positions. Both the first and last pair of movements have text overlap between them, and both are a pair of renaissance-like *stile antico* movements followed by festive baroque-concertato movements. The central movement, “Crucifixus,” with its excruciating dissonances and chromatic *passacaglia* bass, is the oldest part of the whole mass, since it is adapted from the opening chorus of Cantata 12, that Bach composed more than 30 years earlier in Weimar in 1714, in turn adapted from a piece by Vivaldi—“Piango, gemo, sospiro e peno” (“I weep, moan, sigh, and suffer”). This chart shows this symmetry and provides some additional information.

Movement	Singing	Comments
Credo in unum Deum	Chorus	Stile antico, two violin parts used as voices 6 and 7 (7-part motet), walking bass, cantus firmus
Patrem omnipotentem	Chorus	Modern concertato style (in original score SAT don't say “Credo in unum deum” but “Patrem omnipotentem”). Bass figures entered by CPE Bach
Et in unum Dominum	Duet SA	This duet in the 1950 edition was in appendix as variant, but it's the original.
Et incarnatus est	Chorus	The 2 violin parts are delicate accompaniment, bass line regular pulse, like heartbeat (incarnation)
Crucifixus	Chorus	Oldest music (Cantata 12 of 1714). Passacaglia (ostinato in bass). Very chromatic.
Et resurrexit tertia die	Chorus	Modern concertato style, possibly from lost concerto (says scholar Marshall), with instrumental ritornelli.
Et in spiritum sanctum	Bass aria	With two oboi d'amore, extensively marked by CPE Bach
Confiteor unum baptisma	Chorus	Stile antico, no instruments, cantus firmus
Et expecto resurrectionem	Chorus	Modern concertato style

Fugues are found in most movements. Both the “Credo” and the “Confiteor” include a Gregorian melody as a *cantus firmus* (the “fixed melody”—a pre-existing melody on which a composition is based). The latter movement, where the *cantus firmus* is first heard in canon between alto and bass, and then in longer notes in the tenor, is another testimony to Bach’s unsurpassable art: while some voices declaim the Gregorian (*cantus firmus*) melody, the others engage in a double fugue against it, thus making *three* independent melodies fit harmonically, melodically, and contrapuntally with each other.

Sanctus: Of the four traditional sections of the Sanctus— Sanctus, Osanna, Benedictus, Osanna— only the first was composed in 1724, while the others were added during the final compilation. The Sanctus is the only section for six voices (with the addition of one alto part), and it is among the most majestic and festive, requiring three trumpets, kettledrums, three oboes, strings, bassoon, and organ. After the opening section on the first line of text (“Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth”), there follows a lilting second section (“Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria ejus”) with a fugal theme and a plethora of quick runs. The following three parts of the “Sanctus” belong compositionally with the Agnus Dei and the Dona nobis pacem, both temporally and stylistically (they are all parodies). The Osanna is the only movement for two four-voice choirs and the whole orchestra. It is a glorious movement of exultation, which includes antiphonal treatment of the choirs and a fugue. This is followed by the sweetest movement for tenor solo, the “Benedictus,” accompanied by a single instrument. The original source has no instrument indication: it could be either a violin (the instrument traditionally used) or a flute, though the flute is more likely since the obbligato part does not make use of the G string, an occurrence found nowhere else in Bach’s output. The Osanna is repeated after the Benedictus.

Agnus Dei: The Agnus Dei is similar to the opening Kyrie in that it is threefold: it includes three invocations. (In the Kyrie, each of the three is repeated three times, but not in the Agnus Dei.) The three invocations of the Agnus Dei are almost identical, except for the last three words of the third (“Dona nobis pacem”), which Bach chose to set separately. The first two invocations are heard in a solo movement for alto and two violins in unison. The choir then concludes the piece with the “Dona nobis pacem,” which features the same music as “Gratias agimus” in the Gloria section, but with new words.

The *Mass in B Minor*, with its broad palette of styles and sonorities, offers new discoveries, surprises and endless riches to the dedicated student or attentive listener, even after years of performance or study. In all choral literature, there is no work that can be at once as satisfying, encyclopedic, pleasing, challenging, complex, and rewarding as the *Mass in B Minor*, for both performers and listeners alike—a masterpiece indeed, that may be enjoyed by all, time and again.

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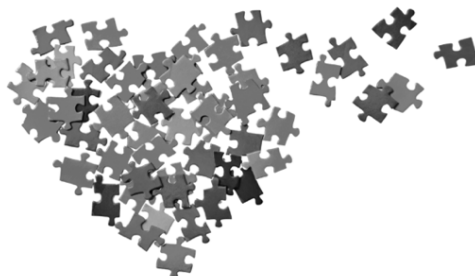
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