



ST. LUKE IN THE FIELDS

487 HUDSON ST. NYC 10014

The Choir of St. Luke in the Fields

Myron Lutzke, *cello*

Dongsok Shin, *organ*

David Shuler, *Director of Music*

Thursday, March 12, 2026 at 7:30 p.m.

Pre-Concert Lecture by Dr. George B. Stauffer at 6:30 pm

Motets of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Please silence cell phones and other electronic devices.

Please withhold applause until the end of each half.

Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf, BWV 226

Ich lasse dich nicht, du segnest mich denn, BWV 1165 (Anh. 159)

Jesu, meine Freude, BWV 227

1. Jesu, meine Freude
2. Es ist nun nichts Verdammliches an denen
3. Unter deinem Schirmen
4. Denn das Gesetz des Geistes
5. Trotz dem alten Drachen
6. Ihr aber seid nicht fleischlich
7. Weg mit allen Schätzen!
8. So aber Christus in euch ist
9. Gute Nacht, o Wesen
10. So nun der Geist
11. Weicht, ihr Trauergeister

Intermission

Komm, Jesu, komm, mein Leib ist müde, BWV 229

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied, BWV 225

1. Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied
2. Aria: Wie sich ein Vater erbarmet/Gott, nimm dich ferner unser an
3. Lobet den Herrn in seinen Taten

THE CHOIR OF ST. LUKE IN THE FIELDS

Soprano	Alto	Tenor	Bass
Amber Evans	Donna Breitzer	Chris Carter	Will Berman
Melissa Fogarty	Elizabeth Merrill	Christopher Preston Thompson	Phillip Cheah
Adrienne Lotto			
Ava Pine			

“One of the city’s finest classical choirs.” (*Time Out NY*), the Choir of St. Luke in the Fields is the professional vocal ensemble in residence at the Episcopal Church of St. Luke in the Fields in New York City. As part of the liturgy at St. Luke’s Church, the Choir regularly performs masses and motets that date from the fifteenth century to the present. The Choir has presented numerous NYC premieres, both of new works (Arvo Pärt’s *Berliner Messe* and *Missa Sillabica* and Dan Locklair’s *Brief Mass*) and older works (the North American premiere of Georg Philip Telemann’s *St. Matthew Passion* of 1746 and the New York premiere of C.P.E. Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* of 1769). The Choir is known for its historically informed performances of early music. *The New York Times* said in 2011, “Both as an ensemble and as individual soloists, the members of the Choir of St. Luke in the Fields were consistently admirable.” *Early Music America* wrote that the Choir “maintains a full schedule of early music services ... as well as concert performances known for their adventuresome programming and intimate scale.”

ABOUT THE LECTURER

George B. Stauffer is Distinguished Professor of Music History and Dean Emeritus of the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University. He is known internationally as a scholar, performer, and writer on the music and culture of the Baroque Era and the life and works of J.S. Bach, in particular.

Educated at Dartmouth College, Bryn Mawr College, and Columbia University, he has published nine books, including *Bach: The Mass in B Minor*, *The World of Baroque Music*, and *J.S. Bach: The Organ Works*. He has also contributed to *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, *Collier’s Encyclopedia*, *Early Music*, *Bach-Jahrbuch*, and many other American, European, and Asian publications. In addition, he has written for *The New York Times*, *The New York Review of Books*, and *The Weekly Standard*.

As a speaker, Stauffer has lectured at Harvard University, Yale University, Princeton University, University of Leipzig, National Sun Yat-sen University, and many other colleges and universities in the United States and abroad. He has also presented pre-concert talks at Carnegie Hall, David Geffen Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Merkin Hall, and many other performance venues.

Before coming to Rutgers, Stauffer taught at Yeshiva University, Hunter College and the Graduate Center of CUNY, and Columbia University, where he served as Chapel Music Director for 22 years. He has held Guggenheim, Fulbright, ACLS, and Bogliasco fellowships and is a past president and honorary lifetime member of the American Bach Society. He has recently completed a book on Bach’s Brandenburg Concertos, to be published by Oxford University Press this spring.

PROGRAM NOTES

No music by J. S. Bach is performed as often as his motets but leaves as many unanswered questions. Bach's motets evidently did not have a regular place in the liturgy but were rather for special occasions, but only in one instance do we know which one. Only three motets are preserved in Bach's hand or in manuscripts copied for his use, so we are denied source-critical clues that might help establish their date and function. The lack of original sources also limits our ability to trace the genesis of the pieces, several of which apparently had origins in older material that Bach reworked.

And the limited survival of original performing parts restricts our knowledge of Bach's performance practices in his motets. We have good musical texts for the handful of motets that survive, but have no idea how many might have been lost. Indeed, it is difficult even to be sure of the extent of the surviving repertory because there are problems of authenticity among the motets. One work long attributed to an older member of the family ("Ich lasse dich nicht" BWV 1165) is probably by the young J.S. Bach, and several attributed to him (none heard on this program) are almost certainly not his.

Despite the uncertainties there is a great deal we do know about Bach's motets and about the way this kind of composition was understood and performed in the early eighteenth century, and how Bach's works reflect the motet tradition even as they speak a more modern musical language.

To a German speaker in Bach's time, a motet was a sacred vocal composition using no independent instruments. Bach and his contemporaries understood the term "motet" to refer not only to modern compositions but also to vocal polyphony of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Motet style was thus seen as closely related to the *stile antico*, the musical language of those older pieces by Palestrina and succeeding generations.

German motets mainly used two types of text: pithy biblical passages known as *Sprüche* or *dicta*, and chorales (hymns), either individually or in combination. In motets with combined texts, the biblical words are typically presented first, then repeated as accompaniment to chorale melody usually heard in long notes in the uppermost voice, with the modern hymn presenting a commentary on ancient scriptural words. Motets of the early eighteenth century also sometimes incorporate settings of newly-written strophic poems called "arias." This word, which we tend to associate with opera and cantata solos, actually refers to the organization of the text as poetry.

Whatever the kind of text, the voices in a motet tend to move together in declaiming the words. Four- and five-voice pieces are common but so are eight-part works for double chorus. In fact this was the scoring of the majority of the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century motets sung liturgically in Bach's time. These older settings, together with a tradition of motet settings of chorales that went back to the first years of the Protestant Reformation, gave the motet strong historical associations—and eventually a reputation as old-fashioned and outdated, especially compared to modern concerted music that incorporated strings, woodwinds, and brass instruments.

Bach's motets owe their scoring, text selection, and predominant texture to the tradition of the German motet. Several of his surviving works call for eight voices in two choruses: "Ich lasse dich nicht" BWV 1165, "Komm, Jesu, komm" BWV 229, "Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied" BWV 225, and "Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf" BWV 226. They draw on biblical *Sprüche* ("Der Geist hilft") and combinations of *Sprüche* and chorales ("Ich lasse dich nicht" and "Jesu, meine Freude"). Settings of free poetry labeled "aria" appear in "Komm, Jesu komm" and in "Singet dem Herrn" (there in combination with a chorale).

Simultaneous declamation by the voices predominates or at least underlies the musical textures, most clearly in works thought to be older (“Ich lasse dich nicht”) but also in the later, most ambitious works (like “Singet dem Herrn”). But Bach’s motets also reflect the sophistication of his contrapuntal language, illustrated by his injection of fugal writing in early motets and the full-blown fugues in others, particularly “Singet dem Herrn”. They also show the influence of other musical types; for example, the multi-movement construction of “Jesu, meine Freude” suggests the structure of the vocal concerto (the kind of piece generally called a “cantata” today), and the fast-slow-fast organization of “Singet dem Herrn” has reminded some of the Italian instrumental concerto.

The musical organization of Bach’s motets also echoes the construction of the type going back to its origins. Just like their musical ancestors, they tend to work their way through long texts one phrase at a time, providing an appropriate setting before moving on to the next phrase. This is particularly audible in “Komm, Jesu komm”, a setting of a poem that ignores the text’s poetic construction and treats it phrase by phrase as though it were scriptural prose.

These musical elements are well understood, but there are also many gaps. The specific purposes for which Bach composed his motets, for example, are largely unknown. We do know that “Der Geist hilft” was performed in connection with the burial of an official of the Leipzig Thomasschule in 1729; the text of “Komm, Jesu, komm” suggests a funeral or memorial service as well. But the hypothetical assignments of Bach’s other motets to Leipzig funerals are not tenable, and despite extensive speculation—occasions from New Year’s Day to birthdays at the court of Weissenfels to Reformation Day have been proposed—we do not know when Bach performed most of his motets.

Problems—or at least questions—about authorship surround Bach’s motet repertory as well. “Ich lasse dich nicht” was long regarded as a motet by one of his ancestors, but there is good evidence that it is actually an old-fashioned work by the young J. S. Bach. And “Jesu, meine Freude” was evidently assembled from old and new material into its present imposing form.

We know something—but not everything—about the performing practice of Bach’s motets. Contemporary writings state explicitly that the use of basso continuo was the norm in motet performance. Among Bach’s materials, we have continuo parts for “Der Geist hilft” as well as for the motets Bach performed by his ancestor Johann Christoph Bach and Leipzig predecessor Sebastian Knüpfer. The manuscript that transmits BWV 228 (not in Bach’s hand) contains a few untexted notes in the vocal bass lines, suggesting that some older source included a basso continuo line. There is every reason to think that Bach’s motets were performed with basso continuo, probably consisting of a keyboard instrument and violone.

Eighteenth-century writings also make clear that motets could be performed with instruments. Indeed, Bach’s original performing parts for “Der Geist hilft” include strings with one choir and woodwinds with the other, and his performing materials for motets by Johann Christoph Bach and Knüpfer do the same. But both the early writers and Bach’s materials confirm that when instruments were used in motets they doubled the voices, playing *colla parte* with the singers. This was the fundamental distinction between motets and the modern vocal concerto (cantata), in which instruments had independent and even leading roles. The lack of concerted instruments marked eighteenth-century motets, including Bach’s, as fundamentally retrospective, however brilliant their musical language.

Daniel R. Melamed

TEXTS

Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf, denn wir wissen nicht, was wir beten sollen, wie sichs gebühret; sondern der Geist selbst vertritt uns aufs beste mit unaussprechlichem Seufzen. Der aber die Herzen forschet, der weiss, was des Geistes Sinn sei; denn er vertritt die Heiligen nach dem, das Gott gefällt.

Chorale:

**Du heilige Brunst, süßer Trost
Nun hilf uns, fröhlich und getrost
In deinem Dienst beständig bleiben,
Die Trübsal uns nicht
abtreiben.
O Herr, durch dein Kraft uns bereit
Und stärk des Fleisches
Blödigkeit,
Daß wir hie ritterlich ringen,
Durch Tod und Leben zu dir
dringen.
Halleluja, halleluja.**

The [Holy] Spirit helps brace up our weakness, for we do not know what we should pray [for], as it behooves [us to do]; rather, the Spirit himself intercedes for us, to the best [advantage], with inexpressible sighing. But [God] who searches our hearts, he knows what the mindset of the Spirit is; for he [the Spirit] intercedes for the saints according to that which pleases God.

*You holy ardor, sweet comfort [of the Holy Spirit],
now help us to steadfastly remain
Joyously and comfortably in your service;
[Help us, that] tribulations not drive us
away [from you].
O Lord, prepare us through your power,
and strengthen the [moral] weakness of the flesh,
So that we may valiantly wrestle here,
through death and life, to press on to [be
with] you [in heaven].
Hallelujah, hallelujah.*

(transl. Michael Marissen & Daniel R.
Melamed)

Ich lasse dich nicht, du segnest mich denn,
Mein Jesu, ich lasse dich nicht, du segnest
mich denn!

**Dir, Jesu, Gottes Sohn, sei Preis,
daß ich aus deinem Worte weiß,
was ewig selig macht!
Gib das ich nun auch fest und treu
in diesem meinem Glauben sei.**

*I will not let you go, until you bless me,
My Jesus, I will not let you go, until you
bless me!*

*To you Jesus, God's son, be praise,
that from your word I know
what makes blessed forever
grant also that I may be firm and faithful
in this faith of mine.*

after Genesis 23:36

**1. Jesu, meine Freude,
meines Herzens Weide,
Jesu, meine Zier,
ach wie lang, ach lange
ist dem Herzen bange,
und verlangt nach dir!
Gottes Lamm, mein Bräutigam,
außer dir soll mir auf Erden
nichts sonst Liebers werden.**

2. Es ist nun nichts Verdammliches an denen,
die in Christo Jesu sind, die nicht nach dem
Fleische wandeln, sondern nach dem Geist.

**3. Unter deinem Schirmen
bin ich vor den Stürmen
aller Feinde frei.
Laß den Satan wittern,
laß den Feind erbittern,
mir steht Jesus bei.
Ob es itzt gleich kracht und
blitzt,
ob gleich Sünd und Hölle schrecken:
Jesus will mich decken.**

4. Denn das Gesetz des Geistes, der da
lebendig macht in Christo Jesu, hat mich frei
gemacht von dem Gesetz der Sünde und des
Todes.

**5. Trotz dem alten Drachen,
Trotz des Todes Rachen,
Trotz der Furcht dazu!
Tobe, Welt, und springe
ich steh hier und singe
in gar sichrer Ruh.
Gottes Macht hält mich in
acht;
Erd und Abgrund muß verstummen,
ob sie noch so brummen.**

6. Ihr aber seid nicht fleischlich, sondern
geistlich, so anders Gottes Geist in euch
wohnet. Wer aber Christi Geist nicht hat, der
ist nicht sein.

*1. Jesus, my joy,
my heart's pasture,
Jesus, my adornment,
ah, how long, ah, long
My heart is anxious,
and longs for you.
Lamb of God, my bridegroom,
besides you, nothing else on earth
shall be more dear to me.*

*2. There is now [with the gospel of salvation]
nothing [eternally] condemnable against those who
are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the
flesh but according to the spirit.*

*3. Under your protection
I am free from the assaults
of all enemies.
Let Satan bluster,
Let the enemy provoke;
Jesus stands by me.
Should [thunder and lightning] right now
crack and flash,
Should sin and hell right now terrorize,
Jesus will cover me [with his protective wings].*

*4. For the law of the [Holy] Spirit who makes
[believers] alive in Christ Jesus has made me
free from the law of sin and of death.*

*5. Defy [Satan,] the ancient dragon;
defy Death's maw;
defy the fear of them.
Rant, world, and spring [into a rage];
I stand here and sing
in utterly secure peace.
God's power holds me in mind [by faith for
salvation];
Earth and abyss must fall silent,
however much they rumble.*

*6. You [believers in Christ], though, are not
fleshly-minded but spiritually-minded, if it be
that God's spirit dwells in you. Whoever,
though, does not have Christ's spirit, he [that
person] is not his [God's/Christ's].*

**7. Weg mit allen Schätzen!
Du bist mein Ergötzen,
Jesu, meine Lust!
Weg, ihr eitlen Ehren,
ich mag euch nicht hören,
bleibt mir unbewußt!
Elend, Not, Kreuz,
Schmach und Tod
soll mich, ob ich viel muß leiden,
nicht von Jesu scheiden.**

8. So aber Christus in euch ist, so ist der Leib zwar tot um der Sünde willen; der Geist aber ist das Leben um der Gerechtigkeit willen.

**9. Gute Nacht, o Wesen,
das die Welt erlesen,
mir gefälltst du nicht!
Gute Nacht, ihr Sünden,
bleibet weit dahinten,
kommt nicht mehr ans Licht!
Gute Nacht, du Stolz und Pracht!
Dir sei ganz, du Lasterleben,
gute Nacht gegeben.**

10. So nun der Geist des, der Jesum von den Toten auferwecket hat, in euch wohnt, so wird auch derselbige, der Christum von den Toten auferwecket hat, eure sterbliche Leiber lebendig machen um des willen, daß sein Geist in euch wohnt.

**11. Weicht, ihr Trauergeister,
denn mein Freudenmeister,
Jesus, tritt herein.
Denen, die Gott lieben,
muß auch ihr Betrübten
lauter Zucker sein.
Duld ich schon
hier Spott und Hohn,
dennoch bleibst du auch im
Leide,
Jesu, meine Freude.**

*7. Away with all treasures;
you are my delectation,
Jesus, my delight.
Away, you vain honors,
I do not want to listen to you;
remain unknown to me.
Misery, distress, cross-bearing,
humiliation, and death
shall not, however much I must suffer,
separate me from Jesus.*

8. If, though, Christ is in you, then the body is indeed dead on account of sin; the [believers'] spirit, though, is [imperishable] life on account of the righteousness [of Christ, imputed to believers].

9. Good night, oh [corrupted] essence that the world has chosen; you do not please me. Good night, you sins; remain far behind; come no more into the light. Good night, you pride and splendor; to you, you life of vice, be altogether bid good night.

10. If now the spirit of him [God] who has raised Jesus up from the dead dwells in you, then this same one who has raised Christ up from the dead will make your mortal bodies alive, on account of the fact that his spirit dwells in you.

11. Make way, you [evil] spirits [instigators] of mourning, Because my joymaster, Jesus, steps in [to our midst]. To those who love God, even their grieving has to be pure [healing/sweetening] sugar. If, yes, here [on earth] I endure scorn and derision, Nonetheless, even in [my] suffering you remain, Jesus, my joy.

(transl. Michael Marissen & Daniel R. Melamed)

Komm, Jesu, komm,
Mein Leib ist müde,
Die Kraft verschwindt je mehr und mehr,
Ich sehne mich nach deinem Friede;
Der saure Weg wird mir zu schwer!
Komm, ich will mich dir ergeben;
Du bist der rechte Weg,
die Wahrheit und das Leben.

Aria:

Drum schließ ich mich in deine Hände
Und sage, Welt, zu guter Nacht!
Eilt gleich mein Lebenslauf zu Ende,
Ist doch der Geist wohl angebracht.
Er soll bei seinem Schöpfer schweben,
Weil Jesus ist und bleibt
Der wahre Weg zum Leben.

*Come, Jesus, come,
my body is weary;
My strength is dwindling, ever more and more.
I long for your peace;
The arduous path [of earthly life] is becoming
too difficult for me.
Come; come, I wish to give myself over to you;
You are the right path, the truth, and the life.*

*Therefore I let myself be enfolded in your hands,
and say, "World, good night."
Should my life's course soon hasten to its end,
my spirit is, even so, well-fitted [for heaven];
It shall hover [in heaven above] with its creator,
because Jesus is and remains
the true path to [eternal] life.*

Paul Thymich, 1697
(transl. Michael Marissen & Daniel R. Melamed)

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied,
die Gemeinde der Heiligen sollen ihn loben.
Israel freue sich des, der ihn gemacht hat. Die
Kinder Zion sei'n fröhlich über ihren Könige,
sie sollen loben seinen Namen in Reihen; mit
Pauken und mit Harfen sollen sie ihm
spielen.

*Sing to the Lord a new song. The
congregations of saints shall praise him. Let
Israel rejoice in the one who has made him. Let
the children of Zion be joyful by way of their
king; they shall praise his name in ring
dancing; with drums and with harps they shall
play to him.*

2. Chorale (Choir 1):

**Wie sich ein Vater erbarmet
über seine junge Kinderlein,
so tut der Herr uns allen,
so wir ihn kindlich fürchten rein.
Er kennt das arm Gemächte,
Gott weiß, wir sind nur Staub,
gleichwie das Gras vom Rechen,
ein Blum und fallend Laub!
Der Wind nur drüber wehet,
so ist es nicht mehr da,
also der Mensch vergehet,
sein End das ist ihm nah.**

*Like a father has mercy
on his little young children:
The Lord acts in the same way toward us all
if we fear him innocently, childlike.
He knows the wretched creature;
we are, Lord knows, but dust.
Just like grass to the rake,
like a flower and falling foliage,
the wind merely wafts over it,
and it is there no more:
in the same way, the human being passes;
his end, it is near.*

Aria (Choir 2):

Gott, nimm dich ferner unser an,
denn ohne dich ist nichts getan
mit allen unsern Sachen,
Drum sei du unser Schirm und Licht,
und trägt uns unsre Hoffnung nicht,
so wirst du's
fernermachen.
Wohl dem, der sich nur steif und fest
auf dich und deine Huld verläßt.

*God, take further care of us,
For without you nothing in all our affairs
is accomplished.
Be therefore our shield and light;
and if our hope does not betray us,
then you will further carry it out [taking care
of us].
Well for him who just steadfastly
relies on you and your favor.*

**3. Lobet den Herrn in seinen Taten, lobet ihn in
seiner großen Herrlichkeit! Alles, was Odem
hat, lobe den Herrn. Halleluja!**

*3. Praise the Lord about his deeds; praise him
about his great glory. Let everything that has
breath praise the Lord, hallelujah!*

(transl. Michael Marissen & Daniel R. Melamed)

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**The Choir of St. Luke in the Fields,
under the direction of David Shuler
The Church of St. Luke in the Fields
487 Hudson Street**



**THURSDAY, MAY 7, 2026
7:30 PM (lecture at 6:30 PM)
George Frideric Handel: *Esther*
*The first English oratorio***

Choir of St. Luke in the Fields
with Baroque in the Fields period instrument orchestra
Lecturer: Dr. David Schulenberg



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