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GREAT MUSIC AT ST. BART'S PRESENTS TWO VERSIONS OF THE PASSION ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN IN THE WEEKS BEFORE EASTER:

- **J.S. Bach's *St. John Passion* Performed by The Choir of New College, Oxford, and The English Concert Players on Tuesday, March 28**
- **Arvo Pärt's *Passio* Performed by the St. Bartholomew's Choir on Tuesday, April 4**



The Choir of New College, Oxford (download [photo](#)), St. Bartholomew's Choir (download [photo](#) by Tim Martin)

Great Music at St. Bart's presents two vastly different musical interpretations of the Passion according to St. John this Lenten season: Bach's *St. John Passion* performed by The Choir of New College, Oxford, and The English Concert Players directed by Robert Quinney on Tuesday, March 28, and Arvo Pärt's *Passio* performed by St. Bartholomew's Choir led by St. Bart's Music Director William Trafka on Tuesday, April 4.

Both performances will take place in the majestic 1,000-seat, Byzantine-style sanctuary of St. Bartholomew's Church.

Tuesday, March 28, 2017, at 7:30 pm in the Church (Pre-concert talk at 6:45 pm)

J. S. BACH: *ST. JOHN PASSION*

THE CHOIR OF NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD & THE ENGLISH CONCERT PLAYERS

Robert Quinney, conductor

Nick Pritchard, tenor (Evangelist)

The Choir of New College, Oxford, comes to the United States for the first time since the appointment of its new director, Robert Quinney, in 2014. With renowned period-instrument ensemble The English Concert Players, New College Choir performs J. S. Bach's setting of the *St. John Passion*, first heard in Leipzig in 1724, and now an established masterwork of the choral repertoire.

A pre-concert talk on Bach's *St. John Passion* and Pärt's *Passio* will be given by Michael Marissen, the Daniel Underhill Professor Emeritus of Music, Swarthmore College, and acclaimed author of *Bach and God*, at 6:45 pm in the Chapel.

In a review of the choir's 2003 recording of *St. John Passion*, The Daily Telegraph wrote, "This is a very special recording. Not only is it of outstanding quality both musically and dramatically, but, being sung entirely by male voices associated with a single institution...it probably comes as close as modern conditions allow to a sound that Bach would have recognised. ...an exceptionally distinguished performance that does justice both to the letter and to the spirit of Bach's music."

With 16 boy choristers and 14 adults, the Choir of New College, Oxford, is one the most acclaimed choral ensembles in the U.K. Established in 1379, when William of Wykeham set up a choral foundation within his "New" College, its singing is now heard the world over, through broadcasts (including regular webcasts of chapel services) and recordings. The Choir has also built up a discography numbering more than 100 CDs, presenting choral music from all corners of the repertoire. www.newcollegechoir.com

Robert Quinney joined New College, Oxford, after a year as the director of music at Peterborough Cathedral. Before moving to Peterborough, Robert was for almost nine years Sub-Organist of Westminster Abbey, following four years as Assistant Master of Music at Westminster Cathedral. He accompanied those famous choirs in daily choral liturgies and on many recordings, international tours and broadcasts, and special occasions, including the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge in 2011. He has a particular research interest in J. S. Bach, and has made a series of Bach recordings on the Coro label, of which Gramophone wrote, "Quinney's Bach gets to the heart of the music with refreshing clarity and a communication born of genuine understanding,"

The English Concert enjoys an unsurpassed reputation for inspiring performances of Baroque and Classical repertoire. The ensemble's work since 1973 in the concert hall, on tour, and in the recording studio, has been guided by founder Trevor Pinnock, his successor Andrew Manze, and current artistic director Harry Bicket. From Bach to Purcell and Handel to Mozart, their award-winning discography features well over 100 recordings with some of the most renowned artists in recent history. www.englishconcert.co.uk

Learn more:

Read more about and hear excerpts of the New College Choir's *St. John Passion* recording: <http://www.newcollegechoir.com/bach-st-john-passion-recordings.html>

Tickets: \$100 Angel Club Seating, \$40, \$25; Students and Seniors receive a \$10 discount

Combined tickets for March 28 and April 4 concerts: \$115 Angel Club Seating, \$55, \$35 for Students and Seniors

[Tuesday, April 4, 2017, at 7:30 pm in the Church](#)

ARVO PÄRT: PASSIO

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHOIR

William K. Trafka, conductor

Jeff Morrissey, Baritone (Jesus)

Ryland Angel, Tenor (Pilate)

Instrumentalists to be announced

The music of Estonian composer Arvo Pärt has been described as mystical, hypnotic and transcendent, earning him the label "modern mystic." In recent years, his music has been among the most performed of that of any living composer. William Trafka conducts St. Bartholomew's Choir in Pärt's *Passio* (1982), a setting of the Passion according to St. John in Latin, inspired by the austerity of medieval monophonic settings of the Passion but infused with Pärt's compelling harmonic style. *Passio* is written for men's solo voices (including countertenor), soprano, violin, oboe, cello, bassoon, organ, and small chorus.

"*Passio* is both ancient and modern," says William Trafka, "and its drama unfolds in an unconventional way. The ancient words themselves become an arresting force and a source of contemplation underpinned by Pärt's enchanting, bell-like harmonic progressions entitled 'tintinnabuli.' The result is captivating."

William Trafka has been the Director of Music and Organist of St. Bartholomew's Church since 1995. At St. Bart's, he has conducted the premieres of several works including David Conte's *September Sun* and *Missa Brevis*, James MacMillan's *Since it was the day of preparation* (New York premiere) and Herbert Howells' *Hymnus Paradisi* (New York premiere of the orchestral version) as well as works by Ēriks Ešenvalds and Neely Bruce.

Tickets: \$35, \$25 for Students and Seniors

Combined tickets for March 28 and April 4 concerts: \$115 Angel Club Seating, \$55, \$35 for Students and Seniors

Tickets may be purchased online at <http://mmpaf.org>, by phone by calling 212-378-0248, or in person at St. Bart's in Midtown Manhattan, 325 Park Avenue at 51st Street.

The 2016-17 season of *Great Music at St. Bart's* continues the new programmatic focus initiated last year by MMPAF Artistic Director William K. Trafka (Director of Music and Organist of St. Bart's): **to embrace a wider range of music in programs that shine in St. Bart's spaces.** The spring 2017 season also features programs of chamber music in the Chapel that showcase modern and new repertoire, including acclaimed ensemble **ECCO East Coast Chamber Orchestra** (*A Thousand Cranes* by Christopher Theofanidis, NY premiere, [April 20](#)). Among the programs presented in the magnificent sanctuary are Orff's *Carmina Burana* performed by the **Dalton Chorale** ([May 17](#)).

Great Music at St. Bart's, the concert series produced by the Mid-Manhattan Performing Arts Foundation (www.mmpaf.org), for the past six years has presented music in St. Bartholomew's Church, a parish of the Episcopal Diocese of New York located in the heart of midtown Manhattan. The magnificent 1918 Romanesque-style church features a portal designed by Stanford White and a grand Byzantine-style interior – and two of New York's unlikely but outstanding concert spaces: the 150-seat chapel, an intimate and acoustically brilliant space that is perfectly suited for contemporary chamber music, and the majestic 1,000-seat sanctuary – outfitted with comfortable chairs enabling flexible seating – whose Aeolian-Skinner pipe organ is the largest in New York City and one of the finest examples of the American Classic Organ in the U.S.

February 15, 2017