



2016

WORLD PREMIERE!

A EUROPEAN REQUIEM AND BACH MAGNIFICAT



SATURDAY, JULY 2

7:30 PM

SILVA CONCERT HALL

HULT CENTER FOR
THE PERFORMING ARTS



This performance of Bach *Magnificat* is supported by a generous donation from Lewinter Law.

A European Requiem is commissioned by Oregon Bach Festival and supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Nils and Jewel Hult Endowment — Arts Foundation of Western Oregon Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation.

A European Requiem is supported by a generous contribution from Elfrieda and Vern Heinrichs in memory of Dr. John Evans.

MAGNIFICAT, BWV 243 30'

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

1. Chorus: *Magnificat*
2. Aria (Soprano II): *Et exultavit spiritus meus*
3. Aria (Soprano I): *Quia respexit humilitatem*
4. Chorus: *Omnnes generationes*
5. Aria (Bass): *Quia fecit mihi magna*
6. Duet (Alto and Tenor): *Et misericordia*
7. Chorus: *Fecit potentiam*
8. Aria (Tenor): *Deposuit potentes*
9. Aria (Alto): *Esurientes implevit bonis*
10. Trio: (Sopranos I and II and Alto): *Suscepit Israel*
11. Chorus: *Sicut locutus est*
12. Chorus: *Gloria patri*

INTERMISSION

A EUROPEAN REQUIEM 40'

Sir James MacMillan (b.1959)

Amanda Forsythe, *soprano*
Sherezade Panthaki, *soprano*
Christopher Ainslie, *countertenor*
Nicholas Phan, *tenor*
Morgan Smith, *baritone*

OBF Orchestra
Berwick Chorus of OBF
Matthew Halls, *conductor*

BACH MAGNIFICAT

Bach's *Magnificat* can be traced to Christmas of 1723, his first year in Leipzig, where it was customary to perform a Latin setting of the canticle at vespers on important holy days. One of his most concise vocal works, *Magnificat* was originally in E-flat and included four movements with German texts specifically for Christmas Day; Bach revised it around 1730, transposing it down a semitone and eliminating the Christmas pieces, thus making it usable on other major feasts.

The opening and closing choruses of *Magnificat* frame a thrice-repeated succession of two pieces for solo voice

or voices followed by a chorus. All but one of the choruses is in Bach's festive D Major style with the full orchestra of flutes, oboes, bassoon, trumpets, timpani, strings, and continuo, while the arias and ensembles show greater variety of mood and scoring. The quiet confidence of "Et exultavit" is supported by the full string section, while the plaintive "Quia respexit" is accompanied by the subdued oboe d'amore; the last words of this aria are supplied by the chorus, which breaks in with "Omnes generationes." In "Quia fecit" the idea of mightiness is conveyed by the solid bass motif that opens the

movement and recurs throughout. Flutes dominate the scoring of "Et misericordia" and "Esurientes," where the text speaks of comfort and nourishment, and an aggressive obbligato by all the violins portrays the downfall of the mighty in "Deposuit potentes." The final choruses begin with a trio for sopranos and alto—over which the oboes sound an old chant melody for the *Magnificat*—then continue through the concluding doxology, ending with a reprise of the first chorus to round off the work.

—James McQuillen and Peter Berquist

A EUROPEAN REQUIEM

The concert Requiem, as it developed from the 19th century, is a particularly European form that composers have turned to when they identify with a sense of loss, often as much within themselves as prompted by a specific death. That is the case with my work, which is not a memorial for a loved one but rather a general response to this vivid text, coloured by a realism and wistfulness at the passing of deep cultural resonances.

It attempts to fuse the Requiem with symphonic form in a single continuous

movement, moving between the sections of text via linking orchestral episodes. As the work is non-liturgical, I've largely avoided building the material from Gregorian plainsong, though allusions to chant inevitably surface as we approach the final "In Paradisum (Chorus Angelorum)."

Whereas Brahms stepped out of line to use German texts overtly in *Ein deutsches Requiem*, it may be somewhat ironic that the language I feel drawn back to is Latin, which represents for me the common European language that existed before

nationalist barriers were erected. It was the *lingua franca* used by the European founding fathers, whether in Roman times or in the Church, and provided a source of common identity for a millennium and a half in international relations, education, and the sharing of ideas. Setting texts in Latin may now seem countercultural to many, but for me it represents the ideal rediscovering of our common heritage.

—Sir James MacMillan

IN MEMORIAM

We were grieved to learn in March that former Oregon Bach Festival General Director John Evans passed away from an apparent heart attack. He was 62 years young.

John led OBF from 2007 to 2015. During his time with us, he navigated a seminal artistic transition from our founding Artistic Director Helmuth Rilling to our present Artistic Director Matthew Halls. With Maestro Halls, John oversaw the introduction of Historically Informed Performance and helped to nurture it through the establishment of the Berwick Academy. He expanded our reach into other cities in Oregon, most notably Portland.

With an education rooted in musical scholarship and possessing a fine ear for artistic excellence, John laid the groundwork for some major commissions, such as the Sandström *Messiah* and this season's *A European Requiem*, from Sir James MacMillan.



While John was only with us for about eight years, his mark on OBF is unmistakable. UO Senior Vice President and Provost Scott Coltrane writes, "John led Oregon Bach Festival during an important time of transition. His vast knowledge of the art form and expertise created new and exciting experiences for our audiences. As an administrator, he challenged his staff to find better ways to operate and enhance the festival's already esteemed standing."

We honor your memory, John, with the world premiere performance of MacMillan's *A European Requiem*. Because of your dedication to world-class artists and performance, we have this great masterpiece and share it with the community tonight.

Requiesce in pace.

Janelle McCoy, OBF Executive Director