Vox Luminis

Wednesday, October 24, 2018
Welcome to the Cleveland Museum of Art

In the season ahead, the museum’s performing arts series continues its exciting schedule with a range of artists from traditions far and wide, old and new. New this year is the establishment of a major commissioning program that will include six composers traveling to Cleveland from around the globe to create new works inspired by the museum’s collection. Co-sponsored by the Cleveland Foundation’s Creative Fusion program, these internationally respected artists will visit Cleveland throughout the fall, and we will begin a series of world premieres early in 2019 that will extend into 2020.

In the Galleries

Allen Ruppersberg: Then and Now
Through December 2

Marlon de Azambuja and Luisa Lambri
Through December 30

William Morris: Designing an Earthly Paradise
Through January, 13, 2019

Clarence H. White and His World: The Art and Craft of Photography, 1895–1925
Through January 21

Renaissance Splendor: Catherine de’ Medici’s Valois Tapestries
November 18–January 21

Georgia O’Keeffe: Living Modern
November 23–March 3

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Photography and audio/video recording in the performance hall are prohibited.

Vox Luminis
Lionel Meunier, artistic director

Wednesday, October 24, 2018, 7:30 p.m.
Gartner Auditorium, the Cleveland Museum of Art

ENSEMBLE

Sopranos
Zsuzsi Tóth
Stefanie True
Caroline Weynants
Victoria Cassano

Altos
Alexander Chance
Jan Kullmann

Tenors
Robert Buckland
Philippe Froeliger
Olivier Berten
David Lee

Basses
Sebastian Myrus
Lionel Meunier (artistic director)

Organ
Anthony Romaniuk

Viola da Gamba
Ricardo Rodriguez Miranda

PROGRAM

J. S. Bach – Motets

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750):
Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied, BWV 225
Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf, BWV 226
Komm, Jesu, komm, BWV 229

Ich lasse dich nicht, du segnest mich denn, BWV Anh. 159
Jesu, meine Freude, BWV 227
In June 1708, Johann Sebastian Bach resigned from his post in the Thuringian town of Mühlhausen. In an open letter addressed to his parishioners, Bach described how “God has brought it to pass that an unexpected change should offer itself to me, in which I see the possibility of a more adequate living and the achievement of my goal of a well-regulated church music.” Following spells at the courts of Weimar and Cöthen, in 1723 Bach was appointed Cantor and Director of Music at Leipzig’s prestigious Thomasschule, where he would work for the remaining twenty-seven years of his life.

In Leipzig, Bach was able to fulfil his goal. There, he produced both the Matthew and John Passions, three complete cantata cycles, and at least five authenticated motets—not to mention the organ and instrumental music. Though the motets may be small in number by comparison with his cantatas, they constitute some of the most daring and impressive music ever conceived for vocal ensemble. Scored from five to eight voices, each—in its own ways—demands the highest levels of virtuosity of their singers. Bach uses the voices to synthesize complex musical textures, going far beyond merely “expressing” the words. Rather, through Bach’s seemingly exhaustive musical invention, they present elucidating explorations of the texts, highlighting the underlying spiritual and metaphysical implications they carry.

Bach’s motets are among the relative few of his works that have remained in constant performance since their composition. However, they puzzled nineteenth-century musicologists, who saw them as somewhat separate from the rest of his output. In his monumental two-volume Bach biography, Philipp Spitta considered the motet only fleetingly. Spitta, one of the protagonists of the Bach revival, described how Spitta goes on to claim that by the beginning of the eighteenth century the motet’s “time was past”, and that “only Sebastian Bach could still have created anything really original and powerful in this branch of music.” However, as more recent musicological research has shown, Bach’s works were part of a long-established German Lutheran polyphonic motet tradition that extended back into the sixteenth century.

They were distinct from the contemporary German and Italian works for solo voices and instruments sometimes referred to by the same label. Bach’s own cousin J. G. Walther (1684–1748) provides a succinct definition of the motet in his Musicalisches Lexicon (1732). He describes the motet as “a musical composition on a biblical Spruch [i.e. text, or ‘saying’], to be sung without instruments (basso continuo excepted), and richly ornamented with Fugen and Imitationibus.” The emphasis placed on the text reflected one of the key tenets of Lutheran theology—that the word should be the central focus for Christian faith. From the sixteenth century, the setting of sacred texts to music formed a central part of the Lutheran liturgy, Luther himself extolling that “next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world.”

Another misconception attached to the motets was the notion that they had been intended as training works for Bach’s more junior singers. However, the motets require a significant amount of vocal athleticism across all of their parts, and would most likely have been excessively difficult for the less-experienced singers in Bach’s charge. It was only during the second decade of the twentieth century that Bernhard Friedrich Richter challenged this assertion, citing evidence that showed Bach’s motets were, in fact,
The effervescent sixteenth-notes of the opening section make a clear allusion to the work of the Holy Spirit, before giving way to a more subdued, prayerful central passage. As a means of conclusion, Bach brings the two choirs together as one, constructing a four-voice fugue based on a theme that audibly evokes the “incommunicable sighs” with which the Spirit intercedes. A set of instrumental parts survives for this motet, hinting that instrumental doubling could have also been employed in the performance of other motets in Leipzig, despite Walther’s definition in the *Musicalisches Lexicon*.

Unlike Bach’s other motets, *Komm, Jesu, komm* (BWV 229) contains neither any biblical text nor fugal writing. Instead, it sets the first and eleventh verses of a chorale written by Paul Thymich in 1684 for the funeral of Jacob Thomasius, a celebrated rector of the Thomasschule, calling on Jesus to comfort the believer in the advent of death. This work falls into two clear sections—the first a highly elaborate chorus with a significant amount of interaction between the two choirs, while the second—given the title “Aria” by Bach—is much more static. Source studies suggest that it was likely composed before or during 1732, and was probably intended for a funeral or memorial service.

In addition to the corpus of those motets than can be verified as Bach’s work, a handful of works exists that were previously attributed to the composer, but whose authenticity was called into question. Many of these have been shown to be either by Bach’s elder relatives or close contemporaries. *Ich lasse dich nicht* (BWV Anh. 159) is one such case, although its authorship remains uncertain. Indeed, having been considered the work of another composer by the editors of the *Neue Bach Ausgabe*—the authoritative critical edition of Bach’s works, begun in 1950 and completed in 2007—it has recently been reconsidered as potentially having come from Bach’s pen. It was included without attribution in the *Altbachisches Archiv*, an anthology of music by members of the Bach family, which Bach inherited sometime around 1739. This particular motet is transcribed...
in Bach's own hand. However, it is not obvious whether Bach was appending one of his own original compositions to the collection, or copying one by a relative. Stylistically, with its antiphonal exchanges and more restrained rhythmical patterns, *Ich lasse dich nicht* resembles the work of Johann Christoph Bach (1642–1703), who Sebastian lauded as “a profound composer”. However, whether this may be an example of the young Sebastian developing his own compositional voice, offering homage to his elderly relative, or attempting to preserve his family’s musical heritage remains unclear.

*Jesu, meine Freude* (BWV 227) is the longest and most formally complex of Bach's motets. While the earliest surviving source material we have is an early nineteenth-century manuscript, Spitta's suggestion that the work dates from Bach's time in Leipzig seems likely to be correct—even if, as some scholars have recently suggested, the piece is, in fact, a compilation and adaptation of previously composed works (in a similar manner to the Credo of Bach's Mass in B Minor, for example).

Made up of eleven discrete movements, it intersperses the six stanzas of Johann Franck's 1653 chorale with texts from Romans 8, as in *Der Geist hilft*. The movements are arranged to form a palindrome around the sixth movement, with the four-voiced harmonization of Johann Crüger's chorale melody heard in the first and the final movements. While Bach frequently illustrates the texts’ highly graphic imagery—particularly, for instance, at *Trotz dem alten Drachen* (“Defy the old dragon”)—the five-voice fugue which functions as the motet’s centre-point is more subtle. Bach’s use of this form, whereby each successive voice enters imitating its predecessors, renders an audible sense of egalitarianism. It articulates the motet’s principal theological message: *Ihr aber seid nicht fleischlich, sondern Geistlich* (“You are not the flesh, but the spirit”)—that faithful Christians are equals, as the living embodiment of God’s spirit.

David G. Lee

**SONG TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS**

*Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied – BWV 225*

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

[Psalm 149, vv. 1-3]

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**Aria (Chorus 1) & Choral (Chorus 2)**

**Choral**

Wie sich ein Vater erbarmet über seine junge Kinderlein, so tut der Herr uns armen, 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, so man vergehet, sein End, das ist ihm nah.

[Johann Gramann (1487-1541)]

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**Choral**

As a father shows mercy upon his little children, so does the Lord to us, when we fear him with pure and innocent hearts.

God knows his poor creations, he knows we are but dust.
Like the grass that is mowed, the flower and the falling leaf, the wind only blows them on, so that they are no longer there:
So man passes away, as his end draws nearer.
**Choral**

Du heilige Brunst, süßer Trost,
Nun hilft uns fröhlich und getrost
In dein’m Dienst beständig bleiben,
Die Trübsal uns nicht abtreiben!
O Herr, durch dein Kraft uns bereit
Und stärk des Fleisches Blödigkeit,
Dass wir hier
ritterlich ringen,
Durch Tod und Leben
die Welt zu durchdringen.
Halleluja, halleluja!

You holy fire, sweetest comfort,
Now help us joyfully and confidently
To remain constantly in your service,
Though trouble is never driven away!
O Lord, in your strength, prepare us
And sharpen the dullness of the flesh,
So that we might courageously
Press on towards you
Through death and life.
Hallelujah, hallelujah!

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**Aria**

Gott, nimm dich ferner an,
denn ohne dich
ist nichts getan
mit allen unsern Sachen.
Drum sei du unser Schirm und Licht,
und trügt uns unre Hoffnung nicht,
so wirst du’s ferner machen.
Wohl dem, der sich nur steif
und fest
auf dich und deine Huld verlässt.

[Anonymous]

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**Aria**

Gott, take us to you from here on!
For without you,
we can accomplish nothing—even with all of our possessions.
Be our protection and light,
and if our hope does not deceive us,
you will make it happen in the future.
Happy is the man who strictly
and tightly abandons himself
to you and your mercy!

[Anonymous]

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**Choral**

Kommt, Jesu, komm – BWV 229

Kommt, Jesu, komm,
mein Leib ist müde,
die Kraft verschwindet je
mehr und mehr,
ich sehne mich nach deinem Frieden;
der saure Weg wird mir zu schwer!
Kommt, komm,
ich will mich dir ergeben,
du bist der rechte Weg,
die Wahrheit und das Leben.

[Paul Thymich (1656-1694)]

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**Ärger**

God, take us to you from here on!
For without you,
we can accomplish nothing—even with all of our possessions.
Be our protection and light,
and if our hope does not deceive us,
you will make it happen in the future.
Happy is the man who strictly
and tightly abandons himself
to you and your mercy!

[Anonymous]

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**Ärger**

Come, Jesu, come,
my flesh is tired,
My strength fades
more and more.
I long for your peace;
the thorny path is too hard for me!
Come, come,
I will give myself to you.
You are the way,
the truth and the life.

[Anonymous]
Ich lasse dich nicht, du segnest mich denn – BWV Anh 159

Ich lasse dich nicht, du segnest mich denn, mein Jesu.
[Genesis 32:27]

Weil du mein Gott und Vater bist, Dein Kind wirst du verlassen nicht, Du väterliches Herz. Ich bin ein armer Erdenkloß, Auf Erden weiß ich keinen Trost
[Erasmus Alber 1557]

Jesu meine Freude – BWV 227

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. [Johann Franck 1653]

2. Es ist nun nichts Verdammliches an denen, die in Christo Jesu sind, die nicht nach dem Fleische wandeln, sondern nach dem Geist. [Romans 8:1]

[Johann Franck 1653]

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. [Johann Franck 1653]

4. Denn das Gesetz des Geistes, der da lebendig machet in Christo Jesu, hat mich frei gemacht von dem Gesetz der Sünde und des Todes. [Romans 8:2]

5. Trozt dem alten Drachen, Trozt des Todes Rachen, Trozt der Furcht darzu! Tobe, Welt, und springe, ich steh hire und singe in gar sicher Ruh. Gottes Macht hält mich in acht; Erd und Abgrund muß verstummen, ob sie noch so brummen. [Johann Franck 1653]

3. Under Your protection I am safe from the storms of all enemies.

Let Satan rage, let the enemy become embittered, Jesus stands with me. Whether it thunders and the lightning flashes, even if sin and hell tries to terrify me, Jesus will protect me.

4. For the law of the spirit, which gives life in Christ Jesus, has freed me from the law of sin and death.

5. Defiance to the old dragon, defiance to the abyss of death, defiance to fear as well! Rage, world, and attack; I stand here and sing entirely secure, in peace. God’s strength keeps watch over me; earth and abyss must fall silent, however much they would roar.

I will not let you go until you bless me, my Jesus.

For you are my God and Father, And you will not abandon your child, O paternal heart. I am but a lump of clay And know no comfort on this earth.

3. Under Your protection I am safe from the storms of all enemies.

Let Satan rage, let the enemy become embittered, Jesus stands with me. Whether it thunders and the lightning flashes, even if sin and hell tries to terrify me, Jesus will protect me.

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7. So nun der Geist des, der Jesum von den Toten auferwecket hat, in euch wohnet, so wird auch derselbige, der Christum von den Toten auferwecket hat, eure sterbliche Leiber lebendig machen um des willen, daß sein Geist in euch wohnet. [Romans 8:11]


9. But you are not of the flesh, but of the Spirit, since the Spirit of God lives in you. Yet he who does not have Christ’s Spirit, is not His.

10. Now since the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, that same who resurrected Christ from the dead will bring your mortal bodies back to life, for the sake of His spirit that dwells in you.

11. Hence, spirits of sadness, for the master of my joy, Jesus, comes. For those who love God, even their troubles will be pure sugar. Though I endure mockery and shame here below, nevertheless, You stay with me even in sorrow, Jesus, my joy.
ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**Vox Luminis**

Vox Luminis is a Belgian early music vocal ensemble created in 2004 by Artistic Director Lionel Meunier. The ensemble performs over 60 concerts a year, appearing on stages in Belgium, across Europe and around the world. Since its inception, the ensemble has been defined by its unique sound, appealing as much through the personality of each timbre as it does through the color and the uniformity of the voices. The size and composition of the group depends on the repertoire, with the core of soloists, mostly from the Royal Conservatory of the Hague, often joined by additional performers. The repertoire is essentially Italian, English and German and spans from the 16th to the 18th century.

Vox Luminis boasts 12 albums on the labels Alpha Classics, Ricercar, Ramée, and Musique en Wallonie. These recordings have enjoyed international critical acclaim, and have won numerous prizes including the prestigious Gramophone Recording of the Year in 2012 for the Musicalische Exequien by Heinrich Schütz.

Vox Luminis has performed extensively at festivals in Belgium, Europe and overseas, and has performed in prestigious venues such as Wigmore Hall in London, the Oratoire du Louvre in Paris, the Auditoria Nacional de Música in Madrid, the Concertgebouw in Brugge, the Muziekgebouw in Amsterdam, and the Tivoli Vredenburg in Utrecht. Residencies for the ensemble have been held at the Abbey of Sainte-Marie-des-Dames, the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels, the Concertgebouw in Brugge, the prestigious Festival of Early Music in Utrecht, and the “Musique et Mémoire Festival.” In 2017, the Aldeburgh Festival in England, founded by Benjamin Britten, hosted the ensemble for the first time.

Recent international highlights include performances at the Berlin and Cologne Philharmonics, Arnstadt’s Bachkirche, the Thüringer Bachwochen and the Bachfest Leipzig. 2017 marked the group’s debut in the grand Salle Henry Leboeuf in Brussels, to inaugurate the beginning of a five-year residency. In the coming years, Vox Luminis will also be “huisartiest” at the Concertgebouw in Brugge.

Most recently, the ensemble released recordings of Handel’s Dixit Dominus and J. S. Bach’s Magnificat. In addition to working with its own orchestra, Vox Luminis also frequently collaborates with other internationally renowned ensembles and orchestras. In 2017, such collaborations have included projects with the Franco-Canadian Ensemble Masques and with the Freiburger Barockorchester.

*One project, one objective, one path: introduce today’s audiences to early vocal music, passionately conveying its quintessence and touching the light through the voice. Vox Luminis.*

Vox Luminis receives support from Federation Wallonia-Brussels, the city of Namur and Namur Confluent Culture and is recognized by the Art and Life Tours.

For more information, visit [http://www.voxluminis.com/](http://www.voxluminis.com/)

Vox Luminis records exclusively for the Belgian Label Ricercar. Follow Vox Luminis on Facebook and Twitter.

Vox Luminis is represented exclusively in North America by: Alliance Artist Management 5030 Broadway Suite 812 New York, NY 10034

Vox Luminis is grateful for the support from Wallonie-Bruxelles International for their U.S. & Canada Tour.

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Wallonie - Bruxelles International.be
Lionel Meunier, director

Lionel Meunier is a singer and the founder/artistic director of the early music vocal ensemble Vox Luminis. Being passionate about music from a very young age, he started his musical education in the city of Clamecy (France) with the trumpet, recorder and solfège. Lionel then continued his studies at Institut Supérieur de Musique et de Pédagogie (the Superior Institute of Music and Pedagogy - IMEP) in Namur where he earned his degree in recorder with great distinction. He took classes from Tatiana Babut du Marès and Hugo Reyne, and masterclasses with Jean Tubéry.

Meunier then focused his attention on vocal studies with Rita Dams and Peter Kooij at the Royal Conservatory of the Hague (NL). At the same time, he started a career as a concert musician. He was soon in demand as a soloist, and he joined prestigious ensembles like Collegium Vocale Ghent (P. Herreweghe), World Youth Choir, Arsys Bourgogne (P. Cao), Amsterdam Baroque Choir (T. Koopmann), the Chamber Choir of Namur, the Favoriti de la Fenice (J. Tubéry), the Soloists of the Chamber Choir of Namur, Cappella Pratensis (S. Bull) and the soloists of the Dutch Bach Vereniging (J. Van Veldhoven).

Over the past two years, Lionel Meunier has been increasingly in demand from many ensembles throughout Europe as coach, conductor and artistic leader. His passionate yet thoughtful approach to the early music and a capella repertoire, combined with the understanding of and respect for the singers, has allowed him to achieve progressively ever-higher standards. Moreover, he is jury member for many international festivals and competitions.

In 2013, Lionel Meunier was given the title of Namur Person of the Year for Culture.

Just as mindful about education, Lionel and Vox Luminis regularly offer masterclasses, coaching sessions and conferences on the repertoire from the end of the Renaissance period and from the Baroque period.
Please **turn off all electronic devices** before entering the performance hall.

**Photography and audio/video recording** in the performance hall are prohibited.

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