



A Musical Meditation on Good Friday Themes  
Käthe Wright Kaufman, organ

April 7, 2023 at 6:30 PM  
Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church

Lacrimae (2015)

Andrew Carter (b. 1939)

O Gott, du frommer Gott, BWV 767

J. S. Bach (1685 – 1750)

Stabat Mater

Jeanne Demessieux (1921 – 1968)

O Mensch, beweine dein' Sünde groß, BWV 622

J. S. Bach

#### Program Notes

**Lacrimae**, meaning “tears” in Latin, is a relatively recent composition by the English composer Andrew Carter, who penned the piece when he heard of the sudden death of John Scott, the towering figure in the world of Anglican church music who worked at St. Paul’s Cathedral, London, and most recently as Director of Music at Saint Thomas Church, 5<sup>th</sup> Ave, NYC. In the composer’s words: “With its chromatically inflected melody and lilting accompaniment, the opening material of this piece establishes an atmosphere of prayerful yet haunting stillness. A contrasting section then explores the anguish of grief more overtly before once again subsiding into tranquil resignation for an ending that fades away into silence.”

**J. S. Bach** wrote several chorale partitas, or special forms of chorale arrangements where the chorale (hymn tune) serves as the starting point for a series of variations. This stems from the secular tradition, especially popular in the seventeenth century, of using a folk song as the theme for a set of variations. Bach’s chorale partita on **O Gott, du frommer Gott** is not dated, but it is thought to have been written in his teens and perhaps revisited later on. This piece contains nine short movements, and if one considers the first movement the theme, then the following eight can neatly align with the eight verses of text from the original hymn written by the theologian and poet Johann Heermann (1585-1647). As you follow along with the full text (on the final page of this program), see if you can hear any Bach’s word painting.

One of the most talented organists of her time, **Jeanne Demessieux** was known for her impeccable technique and artistic flair as a performer. Also a skilled composer, she wrote hugely difficult études that pushed organists to the absolute brink of their technique. Her most accessible collection is her *Twelve Chorale Preludes on Gregorian Chant Themes*, from which **Stabat Mater** is taken. The text of this details the sorrow and pain felt by Christ’s

mother after witnessing not only the death of the Savior of the World, but also her dearly beloved son. The Latin text associated with the chant begins:

*Stabat mater dolorosa  
juxta Crucem lacrimosa,  
dum pendebat Filius*

At the Cross her station keeping,  
Stood the mournful Mother weeping,  
Close to Jesus to the last:

With the tune heard in strident reeds, first in the tenor and then in the higher range, Demessieux's music perhaps aurally paints the fraught atmosphere of Golgotha, directly after Christ's crucifixion. Perhaps the offbeat interpolations of the accompaniment represent Mary's tears falling.

VI  
S Ta-bat Ma-ter do-lo- ró-sa Juxta cru-cem lacri-  
mó-sa, Dum pendé-bat Fí-li- us. 2. Cu-jus á-nimam gemén-  
tem, Con-tris-tá-tam et do-léntem Per-transí-vit glá-di- us.

The text of the solemn chorale upon which **J. S. Bach's O Mensch, bewein' dein' Sünde groß** is based is from a Lutheran Passion hymn written by Sebald Heyden in 1530. As in many of his chorale preludes, Bach uses musical techniques to paint the emotions of the text for his listeners. In this case, while austerity might be better fitting for the stern tone of the words, Bach instead indulges in a wealth of ornamentation. It is as if he wants to say: while it is true that we humans are worthless, we can't really help it. Listen for the chromatic twist and the "surprise" chord in the very last bar; in an already slow piece, Bach reduces the tempo to *adagissimo*, perhaps to show how terribly long Christ had to hang on the cross and just how painful it was.

Catherine Winkworth's translation of the first two stanzas is:

O man, thy grievous sin bemoan,  
For which Christ left His Father's throne,  
From highest heaven descending.  
Of Virgin pure and undefiled  
He here was born, our Saviour mild,  
For sin to make atonement.

The dead He raised to life again.  
The sick He freed from grief and pain.  
Until the time appointed  
That He for us should give His Blood,  
Should bear our sins' o'erwhelming load,  
The shameful Cross enduring.

### Full text of the chorale, O Gott, du frommer Gott

- 1 Oh God, you righteous god you source of good gifts, without whom nothing exists that does exist, from whom we have everything: give me a healthy body and grant that in such a body there may remain an inviolate soul and a pure conscience.
- 2 Grant that I may do diligently what it is my duty to do, as your command guides me in my position. Grant that I may do it promptly, at the time when I should, and when I do it, then grant that it may turn out well!
- 3 Help me, so that I may always say what I can stand by, let no useless word come from my mouth, and when in my office I should and must speak, then give my words force and weight without causing vexation.
- 4 If there is danger, then let me not despair, give me heroic courage, help me to bear my cross! Grant that I may overcome my enemies with gentleness. And if I need counsel may I find good counsel.
- 5 Let me with everyone live in peace and friendship, as far as is Christian. If you want to give me anything to do with wealth, property and money, then give this also, that nothing may be mixed up with any goods that are unjust.
- 6 If in this world I have to live my life longer, through many a bitter step press on to Old age, then give me patience. From sin And shame protect me, so that I may bear with honor my gray hair.
- 7 At my end let me depart relying on Christ's death, take my soul to you to your joys in heaven, bestow a little space on my body, a grave by my parents, so that it may have peace by their side.
- 8 On that day when you will awaken the dead, then stretch out your hand to my grave, let me hear your voice, and awaken my body and lead it beautiful and transformed to the multitude of your chosen people!