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PRESENTS

STARRY NIGHTS

COLIN CARR, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2026

PROGRAM

BACH Cantata BWV 199 "Mein Herze schwimmt im Blut"

Michaela Larsen, Soprano
James Austin Smith, Oboe
Arthur Haas, Harpsichord
Hanbo Wang, Violin
Chieh-An Yu, Violin
Rachel Haber, Viola
Gustavo Antoniacomi, Cello
Dante Tramontin De Paula, Bass

VARIOUS **Roxy Coss Quartet**
Featuring students from the Stony Brook University Jazz Program

Music will be announced from the stage

Roxy Coss, Saxophones
Alex Pastrana, Piano
Gili Lopes, Bass
Dennis Bulhoes, Drums

-INTERMISSION-

BRAHMS **Piano Quartet in A major op 26**

Allegro non troppo
Poco adagio
Scherzo: Poco allegro
Finale: Allegro

Shu Wen Tay, Piano
Jennifer Frautschi, Violin
Larry Dutton, Viola
Colin Carr, Cello

Starry Nights is underwritten in part through the generosity of
Drs. Rachel Bergeson and Brian Margolis.

STARRY NIGHTS

PROGRAM NOTES

Bach Cantata BWV 199 **"Mein Herze schwimmt im Blut"**

As a young man, Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) was ambitious and occasionally rebellious—once, having secured a four-week leave of absence from his employer, he undertook a four-month journey to Lübeck (280 miles to the south, which he allegedly traversed on foot) to study with the leading organist-composers in Germany. After completing his formal education in 1702, in the span of four years he moved from Weimar, to Arnstadt, and finally to Mühlhausen, securing better pay, lighter responsibilities, and more artistic freedom with each move. In 1708, he returned to Weimar, first as court organist to the son of his former employer. In 1714, the Duke promoted Bach to *Konzertmeister* (Director of Music), a prestigious post which placed a large ensemble of professional musicians under Bach's command. It was in August of this year that BWV 199 appeared, performed on the eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

The regular composition of new cantatas—musical works for one or more singers with instrumental accompaniment—for use in church services was a consistent demand of Bach's employers for most of his career. Over 200 such "church cantatas" survive from Bach's output, and more have been lost to time. These works unfold in multiple movements, with paired recitative and arias—a typical Baroque scheme—and often bookended by chorus movements. The instrumentation

of Bach's cantatas, being practical music for liturgical use, depended on the musical forces available to the composer, and sometimes wielded a full chorus and four soloists. BWV 199, however, employs only a soprano vocalist.

The texts for this Solokantate are poetic, mostly drawn from *Gottgefälliges Kirchen-Opffer* (*God-Pleasing Church Offering*) by Georg Christian Lehms, published in 1711. The eight movements chart a dramatic narrative arc from the hellish agony of sin to the ecstasy of God's redemption. The work opens in anguish, the gothic tone of the text ("my heart swims in blood"!) matched by lugubrious harmonies and a plaintive melody. This first recitative functions as an introduction, establishing a character tormented by her own sins. But this sinner is remorseful, and trusts in God's mercy. Her confession unfolds in three utterances: she acknowledges her sins, surrenders them to Christ, and finally rejoices in God's reconciliation. Her heart "soars in faith"—appropriately articulated with a melody reaching into the stratosphere of the soprano's range—and the work concludes with a joyful and virtuosic dance.

**Translation of Vocal Texts for
Bach Cantata BWV 199
"Mein Herze schwimmt im Blut"**

ORIGINAL

1. Rezitativ

Mein Herze schwimmt im Blut,
weil mich der Sünden Brut
in Gottes heiligen Augen
zum Ungeheuer macht.
Und mein Gewissen fühlet Pein,
weil mir die Sünden nichts
als Höllenhenger sein.
Verhasste Lasternacht!
Du, du allein
hast mich in solche Not gebracht;
und du, du böser Adamssamen,
raubst meiner Seele alle Ruh
und schliessest ihr den Himmel zu!
Ach! unerhörter Schmerz!
Mein ausgedorrrtes Herz
will ferner mehr kein Trost befeuchten,
und ich muss mich vor dem verstecken,
vor dem die Engel selbst
ihr Angesicht verdecken.

2. Arie und Rezitativ

Stumme Seufzer, stille Klagen,
ihr mögt meine Schmerzen sagen,
weil der Mund geschlossen ist.
Und ihr nassen Tränenquellen
könnt ein sichres Zeugnis stellen,
wie mein sündlich Herz gebüsst.

Mein Herz ist itzt ein Tränenbrunn,
die Augen heiße Quellen.
Ach Gott! wer wird dich doch
zufriedenstellen?

3. Rezitativ

Doch Gott muss mir genädig sein,
weil ich das Haupt mit Asche,
das Angesicht mit Tränen wasche,
mein Herz in Reu und Leid zerschlage
und voller Wehmut sage:
Gott sei mir Sünder gnädig!
Ach ja! sein Herze bricht,
und meine Seele spricht:

ENGLISH

1. Recitative

My heart is bathed in blood,
for the multitude of my sins
has made in God's holy eyes
a monster of me.
And my conscience feels the pain,
because my sins are naught
but hell's own hangmen.
O hated night of sin!
You, you alone
have caused me such distress;
and you, you wicked seed of Adam,
rob my soul of all its peace
and shut it off from heaven!
Ah! Unheard-of anguish!
No comfort shall henceforth
moisten my withered heart,
and I must hide myself before Him,
before whom the very angels
hide their faces.

2. Aria and Recitative

Silent sighs, quiet lamenting,
you may speak of my agony,
for my mouth is closed.
And your wet flood of tears
can provide certain witness
of my sinful heart's remorse

My heart is now a well of tears,
my eyes are boiling springs.
Ah God! Who can ever content Thee?

3. Recitative

But God must be merciful to me,
for I bathe my head with ashes
and my countenance with tears;
I beat my heart in remorse and pain,
and full of sadness, say:
God, have mercy on my sins!
Ah yes! His heart shall break
and my soul shall say:

ORIGINAL

4. Arie

Tief gebückt
und voller Reue
lieg ich, liebster Gott, vor dir.
Ich bekenne meine Schuld,
aber habe doch Geduld,
habe doch Geduld mit mir!

5. Rezitativ

Auf diese Schmerzensreu
fällt mir alsdenn dies Trostwort bei:

6. Chorale

Ich, dein betrübtes Kind,
werf alle meine Sünd,
so viel ihr in mir stecken
und mich so heftig schrecken,
in deine tiefen Wunden,
da ich stets Heil gefunden.

7. Rezitativ

Ich lege mich in diese Wunden
als in den rechten Felsenstein;
die sollen meine Ruhstatt sein.
In diese will ich mich im Glauben
schwingen und drauf vergnügt
und fröhlich singen:

8. Arie

Wie freudig ist mein Herz,
da Gott versöhnet ist
und mir auf Reu und Leid
nicht mehr die Seligkeit
noch auch sein Herz verschliesst.

ENGLISH

4. Aria

Deeply bowed
and filled with remorse
I lie, dearest God, before Thee.
I acknowledge my guilt,
but have patience,
have patience I beg, with me!

5. Recitative

After this painful remorse
come to me these words of comfort:

6. Chorale

I, Thy afflicted child,
cast all my sins,
as many as there are in me
and which terrify me so,
into Thy deep wounds,
where I have always found salvation.

7. Recitative

I lay myself down in these wounds,
as though upon a very crag;
they shall be my resting place.
In them shall I soar in faith,
and then, content
and happy, sing:

8. Aria

How joyful is my heart,
for God is reconciled with me,
and for my remorse and pain
no longer denies me His blessing
nor indeed His heart.

Brahms Piano Quartet in A major op 26

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897) grew up in Hamburg in a modest but musically active household, quickly gaining recognition as a formidable pianist. As he toured across Europe in his early twenties, he developed a compositional voice distinguished by dense, expressive harmonies and the subtle play of what scholars later called “rhythmic dissonance,” in which surface rhythms seem to tug against the underlying meter. A decisive turning point came in 1853 when Brahms met Robert and Clara Schumann, whose enthusiastic advocacy launched his reputation. The Schumanns’ support also drew him into their personal orbit during Robert’s final years of illness in Düsseldorf, forging a lifelong artistic and emotional bond with Clara. Throughout his career Brahms positioned himself as a defender of classical forms amid the aesthetic battles of the nineteenth century, resisting the programmatic ambitions of the “New German School” associated with Richard Wagner and Franz Liszt. Yet the drama and breadth of his own music reveal a composer who revitalized tradition from within—a stature captured by the conductor Hans von Bülow’s famous judgment that Brahms stood, after Bach and Beethoven, among the most sublime of composers.

Brahms completed his second piano quartet (for violin, viola, cello, and piano) in 1861, preceded by a first foray into the genre (G minor, Op. 25) which took him six years to complete and which Clara Schumann premiered earlier that year. Op. 26 premiered alongside the G minor quartet, presented by the Viennese Hellmesberger Quartet with the composer on piano. At 50 minutes, this is Brahms’s longest chamber work, truly symphonic in scope.

The first movement opens with a dialogue between piano and cello;

the remaining strings join in and the harmony blossoms to life. The thematic motive is vigorous and stately, gradually splintering into serpentine paths. The slow second movement bears witness to Brahms at his most Romantic, in turn yearning, stormy, hushed, and exuberant. The third movement, a scherzo-and-trio, is appropriately playful and spritely, but unusually grand in scope: the scherzo and trio each traverse the heroic journey of the sonata-allegro form. The finale movement is robust and folksy, hearkening back to the “alla Zingarese” (in a Romani style) of Brahms’s first piano quartet and anticipating his famed Hungarian Dances.

Program notes by Hannah Waterman.

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