

Humanities Seminars Program
Bach's St. John Passion: 300 Years Later

DATES AND TIMES:

February 7, 14, 21, 28 (four Thursdays)

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Optional: True Concord rehearsal, Wednesday, February 28, 7:00 pm

Catalina Foothills HS Auditorium

INSTRUCTOR:

Bruce Chamberlain

Professor Emeritus of Music

E-mail: bbc@arizona.edu

COARSE DESCRIPTION:

The two extant passion settings by J.S. Bach continue to move audiences of all faiths as profound artistic expressions and rank as some of the most poignant musical compositions ever written. Holy Week of 2024 celebrates the 300th anniversary of the first time that the Leipzig congregants heard the ST. JOHN PASSION, changing the scope and magnitude of Passion composition forever. This four-session course will examine the history and development of Passion genre from its earliest liturgical responsorial expressions to the monumental Oratorio- Passion structures of Bach's St. John and St. Matthew Passions in the early to mid-18th century.

Course participants will also get an inside and up close experience with the preparation and execution of the ST. JOHN PASSION as performed by True Concord Voices and Orchestra in late March, coinciding with this HSP course.

REQUIRED TEXT

Daniel R. Melamed, *Hearing Bach's Passions*, Oxford University Press, 2005

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

Basil Smallman, *The Background of Passion Music*, Dover Publication, 1970
Johann Sebastian Bach, *Johannes-Passion*, BWV 245, Barenreiter, Kassel, 1970
Johannes-Passion, Phillips Production, Compact Disc, Peter Schreier, conductor

SESSION ONE (FEBRUARY 7-14, 2024): OVERVIEW OF PASSION SETTINGS

Topics to be discussed:

- Medieval and Renaissance Background
- The Drama
- The dramatic personae
- The orchestra

SESSION TWO (FEBRUARY 14, 2024): HEARING PASSIONS IN BACH'S TIME AND OURS

Required reading: *Hear Bach's Passions*, pages 3-18

Topics to be discussed:

- Concept of authentic performance vs. historically informed performance
- Bach's text sources
- St. John Passion overall structure

SESSION THREE (February 21, 2024): ANALYSIS OF PART I

Required Reading: *Hearing Bach's Passions*, pages 19-48

Topics to be discussed:

- Vocal Forces
- The "Heartpiece"

SESSION FOUR (February 21, 2024): ANALYSIS OF PART II

Required Reading: *Hearing Bach's Passions*, pages 66-77, 131-134

Topics to be discussed:

- Stage arrangement
- Intermission - other options
- Things to listen for at this evening's rehearsal - insights from Eric Holtan

