



# CALIFORNIA BACH SOCIETY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CALIFORNIA BACH SOCIETY,**  
under the direction of Paul Flight,

presents

## **J.S. BACH's PASSION ACCORDING TO SAINT JOHN**

With full baroque orchestra

&

Brian Staufenbiel, tenor (Evangelist & arias)

Scott Graff, bass (Jesus)

Rita Lilly, soprano

Paul Flight, countertenor

Marc Pantus, bass (Pilate & arias)

Friday, April 30, 2010, 8pm, at St. Mark's Lutheran Church,  
1111 O' Farrell Street (at Franklin), San Francisco

Saturday, May 1, 2010, 8pm, at St. Mark's Episcopal Church,  
600 Colorado (at Byron) Palo Alto

**please note different Palo Alto venue**

Sunday, May 2, 2010, 4pm, at First Congregational Church,  
2345 Channing Way (enter on Dana, near Durant), Berkeley

**please note different Berkeley venue**

Doors open 30 minutes prior to each performance

Advance purchase tickets until 5pm, April 29: General \$25 / Senior \$18 / Student \$10

Tickets at the door: General \$30 / Senior \$22 / Student \$10

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For the first time in a decade, the California Bach Society presents Bach's beloved *Passion According to Saint John*. Artistic Director and countertenor Paul Flight's connection with the Passion goes back 30 years. From singing the role of Jesus as a young baritone in a church choir performance in Hartford, Connecticut, to first performing the countertenor arias while in the Early Music program at Indiana University, he now realizes a conductor's dream: to bring this masterpiece to Bay Area audiences with a fine chamber choir and baroque orchestra.

California Bach Society performs the first, and most widely known, version of the Passion, written for Good Friday in 1724. This version includes the pleading opening chorus, "Herr, unser Herrscher," as well as the intimate bass arioso, "Betrachte meine Seel," and tenor aria "Erwäge, wie sein blutgefärbter Rücken," all of which are absent from the 1725 version. *The Passion According to Saint John* is a work full of dramatic excitement, spiritual introspection, and devotional fervor. Bach's choral writing is thrilling, with special turba choruses portraying the gathered crowds, and Lutheran hymns offering moments of reflection.

A full baroque orchestra, including special instruments such as viola d'amore, viola da gamba, oboe d'amore and oboe da caccia, will join the 30-voice chamber choir.

## Biographies

**The California Bach Society**, a 30-voice chamber chorus, has established a reputation for its interpretations of Renaissance and Baroque choral music. Specializing in historically informed performances since 1998, the choir has shared the stage with such Early Music luminaries as Magnificat and members of the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, and was a featured concert presenter at the 2000 Berkeley Early Music Festival. The appointment of artistic Director Dr. Paul Flight in 2006 has resulted in four highly successful concert seasons. A fine voice coach, Dr. Flight has attracted talented new singers, and his sensitive direction has brought new definition to the choir. A recent reviewer from San Francisco Classical Voice wrote "Flight has made of the choral group a professional ensemble capable of every expressive nuance and glorious ensemble sound." For the past three seasons, Dr. Flight has enthralled audiences and critics with his thoughtful and refreshing programming, eliciting reviews such as "one of the most delightful programs of Christmas music in my memory."

Artistic Director **Dr. Paul Flight**—a noted choral conductor, teacher, and singer—is in his fourth season with the California Bach Society. In addition, he is the artistic director of Schola Cantorum San Francisco, a professional chamber choir, and the founding director of Berkeley-based Chora Nova. A former member of such distinguished ensembles as the Waverly Consort, Theatre of Voices, Pomerium Musices, and the New York Collegium, he brings a wealth of expertise to CBS. For the last nine years Dr. Flight was principal conductor of the Madison Early Music Festival, where he directed masterworks by Bach, Handel, Telemann, Vivaldi, Purcell,

Dufay, and Guerrero. He has twice been a visiting professor of music at the University of California at Berkeley, directing the music department's top choral ensembles. As a visiting professor at Mills College, he has lectured on opera, and music history and form. He conducted an operatic double-bill production of Gustav Holst's *Savitri* and Darius Milhaud's *Les malheurs d'Orphée* for Mills College.

A renowned countertenor, Paul Flight has performed works by John Adams, Leonard Bernstein, and Unsuk Chin with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the Berkeley Symphony, and the Norwegian State Opera. In 2003 he sang the title role in Philip Glass's *Akhnaten* for Oakland Opera Theater. He made his debut at the Kennedy Center in 2008, singing the first countertenor role in Adams's *El Niño*, and this August he will make his debut at the Edinburgh Festival singing the third countertenor role. He received his doctorate from Indiana University, where he studied conducting with Robert Porco. His research focused on the Venetian composer Giovanni Croce (1557-1609). He has recorded a program featuring the music of Croce for *Harmonia*, a nationally syndicated radio show, and appeared as a guest on KALW radio's performing arts program, *My Favorite Things*.

Specializing in the performance of early music, soprano **Rita Lilly** was the renowned Waverly Consort's soprano soloist for nine years, performing over 70 concerts annually, and was heard on many live radio broadcasts. Since moving to the Bay Area, Ms. Lilly has sung with the American Bach Soloists, Magnificat, Bay Choral Guild, and was featured in concerts at MusicSources, and operas at Mills College and San Francisco Opera. She can be heard on numerous recordings with the Waverly Consort, American Boychoir, and the American Classical Orchestra. This fall, Ms Lilly sang the *Requiem* by Jean Gilles with Jesse Blumberg and San Francisco Renaissance Voices.

Tenor **Brian Staufenbiel** (Evangelist & tenor arias), is well known in the Bay Area for his dramatic interpretation of the Evangelist role in Bach's *Saint Matthew* and *Saint John Passions*. He is Artistic Director of the opera program at the University of California at Santa Cruz, where his 2006 production won him first prize in the National Opera Association's Opera Competition. Mr. Staufenbiel has recorded the music of Stradella, Schütz, Lou Harrison, and Paul Bowles for Musical Heritage Society, Koch International Classics, and Helicon Records. He holds a doctorate degree in vocal performance and literature from the Eastman School of Music.

Baritone **Scott Graff** (Jesus), who joins California Bach Society from Los Angeles, has performed throughout the United States as a soloist and with numerous ensembles including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Musica Angelica, Catacoustic Consort, the Los Angeles Master Chorale, the Carmel Bach Festival, and the Los Angeles Baroque Orchestra. Mr. Graff has appeared with Long Beach Opera in a number of productions, including *Semele* by Georg Frediric Handel. Mr. Graff is a member of the Concord Ensemble, is in his ninth season with the Los Angeles Master Chorale, and regularly sings with the Grammy Award winning Los Angeles Chamber Singers. ♦