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Review: St. John's Passion @ St. Paul's Cathedral

[Gursimran Hans](#)

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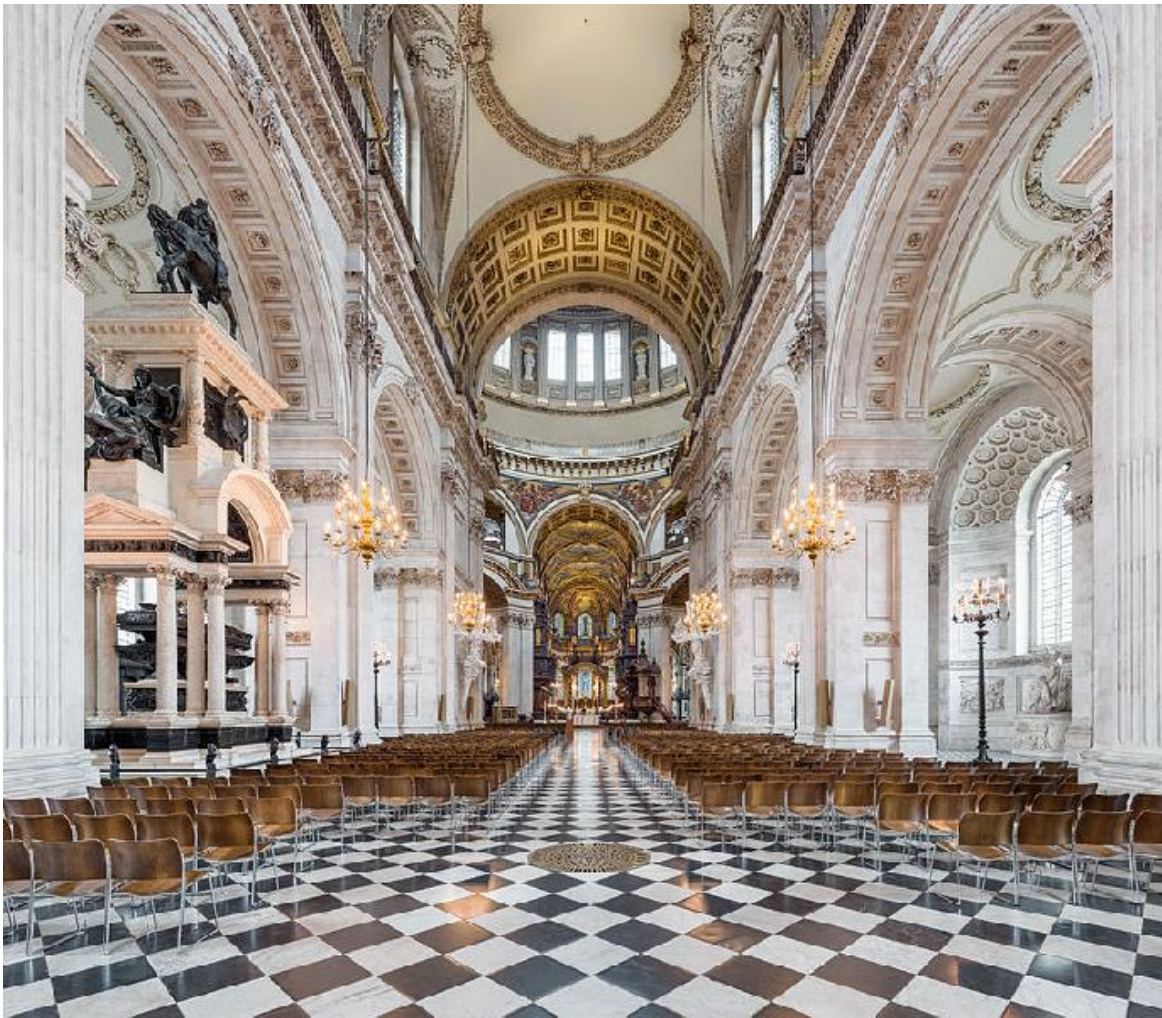
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To be totally honest with you, I'm not a major fan of classical music. I'm not even Christian. But classical music and religion have always interested me, so I went along to this production anyway.

The concert was put on by The Cathedral Choir, Chorus and Orchestra conducted by Andrew Carwood.





Sung in German, the masterpiece from Johann Sebastian Bach tells the story of the events leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. First performed in Leipzig on Good Friday in 1724, the narrative comes from Chapter 18 and 19 of St. John's Gospel and features some detail from the account of St. Matthew.

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The Evangelist (Adam Tunnicliffe) sings the narration in a tenor role. Tunnicliffe combines with the soloists portraying Christ (Stuart Young) and Pilate (Martin Oxenham). The three all have very powerful voices that complement each other and the music well.

Bach varied the rhythm to signify the more violent and emotional portions of the tale and Carwood's conductance allowed this to come across in the production.

Rating it as a musical production, it was superb. Particularly, the organ playing from Peter Holder. Despite plenty of shifts and transitions, the music was overall, able to stay fluid. This didn't not happen all the time, though that is to be expected with some rather complex shifts.

The lyrics themselves are full of symbolism and meaning, allowing the power of the music to help transcend the words onto a deep emotional level, particularly as Peter regrets his denial.

On the emotional level, with this type of music, I like to close my eyes and think about how it makes me feel.



Overall, the music was relaxing, even though it talked a lot about the betrayal of Jesus Christ. *Sleep Well*, the last piece of the performance, describes Christ being laid to rest. It sounds like a gentle lullaby; Jesus being put to rest. It ends with a more positive chorale, which signifies hope and redemption.

After all, The Bible teaches that Jesus died on the cross for our sins.

The soloists do of course, step out from the chorus during the title piece *St John Passion*, a member of the Chorus that condemns Christ in one scene, could be calling for forgiveness in the next. Bach thus shows us it is easy for us, in his view, to fall to the temptation of the crowd, but that there is always the chance for redemption in the end.

It must be heard, to be understood. Though the piece is over two and a half hours long it is worth it, even though the second half does seem to drag a bit. Waiting in the late afternoon April sun outside the St. Pauls' Courtyard was enjoyable too incidentally, a far cry from waiting out in the cold January evening outside The Forum.

The music is ultimately tranquil and uplifting, which is just what Bach was aiming for in a piece to tell the story of Easter; ultimately, hope and redemption is possible. Peter's denial is forgiven and so can any of your sins. Bach succeeds in his aim and composes a masterpiece while doing so.

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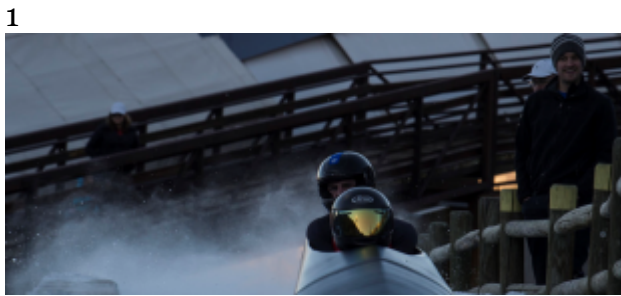
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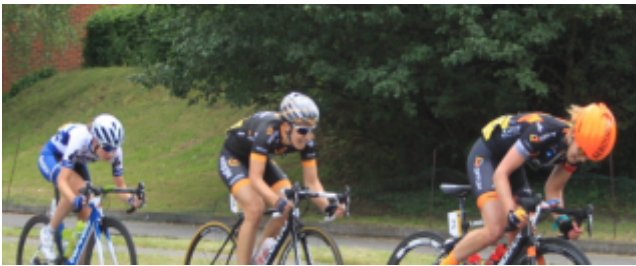
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