

Mäkelä Conducts Bach's St Matthew Passion

Friday, March 27, 2026 · 19:00 · Concertgebouw

Klaus Mäkelä, conductor · Maximilian Schmitt, Evangelist · Matthew Brook, Christus · Julia Lezhneva, soprano · Tim Mead, countertenor · Laurence Kilsby, tenor · Krešimir Stražanac, bass · Netherlands Chamber Choir, choir · National Children's Choir, choir

approximately 165 minutes

Johann Sebastian Bach

1685–1750

165 minutes

St Matthew Passion, BWV 244

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The Passion opens with one of the most extraordinary movements Bach ever wrote: a vast lament in which the two choruses call to one another ('Come, ye daughters, help me lament') while, soaring above them, a choir of high voices (here the children's choir) intones the serene chorale 'O Lamb of God, unspotted': grief and consolation sounding simultaneously. Fix this overwhelming opening in your mind.

Then follow the threads. Listen for the **Evangelist's** flexible, vivid storytelling in recitative, driving the narrative forward; for the words of **Jesus**, always cradled in their glowing string 'halo' (and note how that halo vanishes at his final words on the cross); and for the sudden, violent interjections of the **crowd choruses** ('Let him be crucified!', 'Barabbas!'). Above all, listen for the great **arias**, islands of reflection of heartbreaking beauty. The most famous is the alto aria 'Erbarme dich' ('Have mercy'), sung after Peter's denial, with its sobbing solo violin, one of the most moving pieces of music ever composed. Listen, too, for the recurring **Passion Chorale**, its harmonies growing darker with each return, and for the tender final chorus, 'Wir setzen uns mit Tränen nieder' ('In tears we sit'), a gentle, rocking lullaby that lays Christ to rest and brings this immense work to its consoling close.



CONCERT PROGRAMS

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