



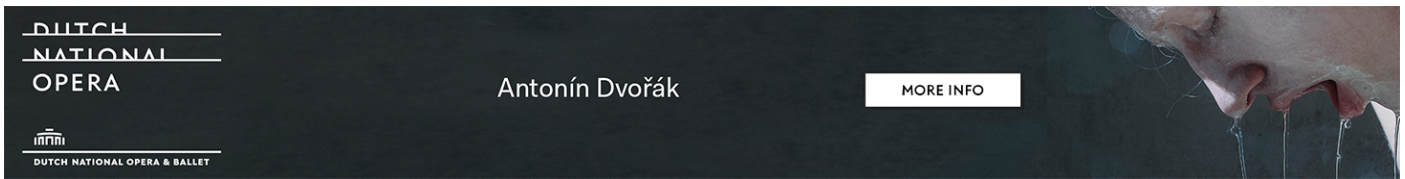
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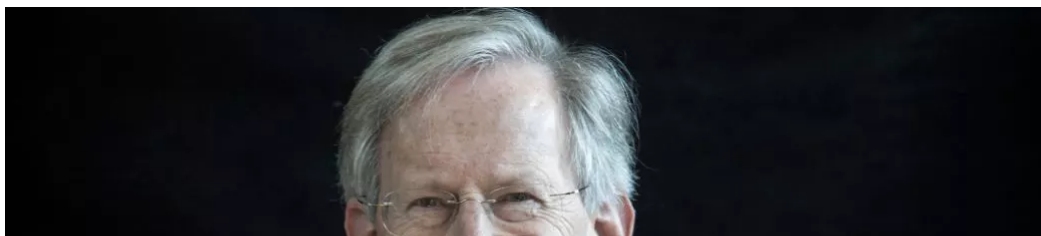
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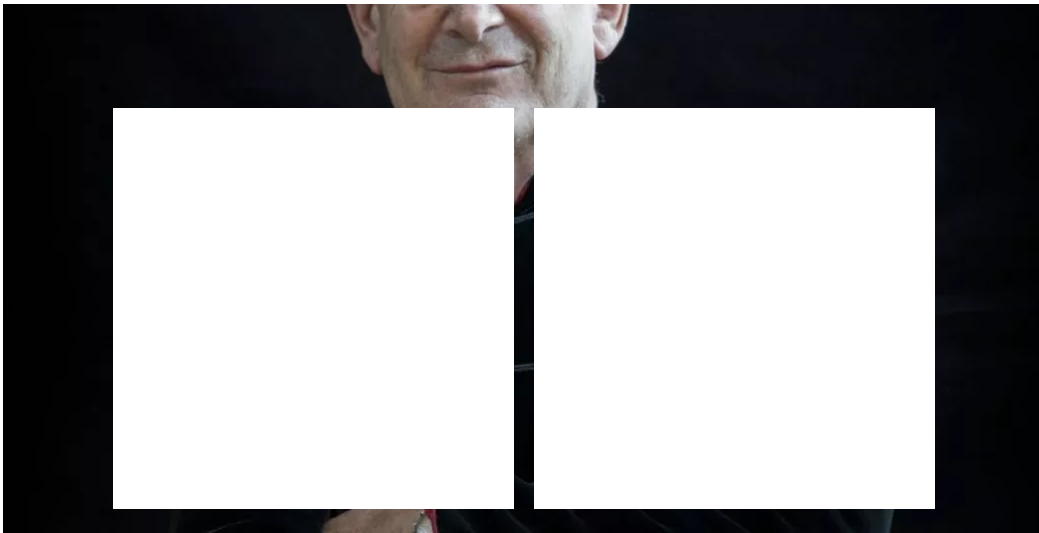
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Life with Bach: *B minor Mass* for Eternity for Sir John Eliot Gardiner's 80th birthday

By [Jens Klier](#), 17 April 2023

April 22 marks the 300th anniversary of Bach's election as Leipzig Thomaskantor. Almost to the day 220 years later, on April 20, 1943, [Sir John Eliot Gardiner](#) was born in Dorset. The vocation to deal with Bach and to shape the scene as an early music pioneer was innate in the Briton, as he walked past Bach every day as a child for quite a while. Haussmann's original Bach portrait from 1748, which also shows the face of the composer to each of us, hung in his home. For his 80th birthday, Gardiner naturally chose Bach as the ubiquitous accompaniment of his celebratory tour, more precisely the festival work par excellence, the *B minor Mass*, which the jubilee, whom I was actually able to experience live for the first time in 2010, made an unforgettable present for me, the best concert of my life.





Although the assessment of perfection is understandably frowned upon among musicians, I am left with this terminology, which even seems to me to be understated in descriptive terms, of my impression, which is still struggling for words and composition more than 24 hours after the end of the performance. Finally, Gardiner, sparkling with vitality and constant novelty and the most precise attention to detail (also in his nanosecond unity and rhythmic, articulatory accuracy of all supporting signs), shaped his faithful and exquisite voices of the Monteverdi Choir and the English Baroque Soloists in lines, dynamics, brilliance and dictions that were outstanding Expressing to a harmony of a golden ratio. Not only did he create art blessed with the most unmistakably effective gift for sensation,

In the Kyrie sequence, the call of honor began with the magnificent wall of sound of the dictum – like all the arias later performed by heart – and continued in balanced, springy and substantial urgency or with a somnambulist-stamped must-so-receptor address. After an openly emphasized, at the same time controlled phrasing, innocent and angelic, particularly warm, elegant Christe duet by Hilary Cronin and Sarah Denbee and a robust *Kyrie II*, overwhelmed choir and orchestra with the *Gloria*. In the eponymous opening movements, radiant power and hovering wings of the conjured dove alternated in an almost legendary way, while Cronin and the equally spotless concertmaster Kati Debretzeni, who turned to the audience, tew the laudamus with lovely flattery and ornamented fine motor skills, and together with Jonathan Hanley and Obilgat traverses *behind* the *gratias* as tuttient unfolding goosebumps source understandable creative quality and flexibility in the *Domine Deus*. Countertenor Reginald Mobley, together with Michael Niesemann's oboe d'amore, enchanted with his unmistakably enthroned light, technically talented and mildly filled timbre in the *Qui sedes* after the flood of offerings of the *Qui tollis* and before Dingle Yandell, the impressively clearest, most pleasant, sustaining bass in the *Quoniam* with Corno da caccia luminary Anneke Scott, double bassoons and continuo paved the way to the ultra-intoxicating *Cum sancto spiritu*.

With glowing – also always through the trumpets with frontman Neil Brough – and drumming vehemence, the Monteverdis burst with devotion in the *Credo* as the beginning of the Symbolum niceum sequence, in which Cronin and Bethany Horak-Hallett in wonderfully complementing colour, velvety attack and valuable allure when Siamese believing souls appeared, the choir in *Et incarnatus est* and *Crucifixus* moved to tears of sympathy, in *Et resurrexit* to those of the fantastically circulating joy of redemption. In addition, the more lyrically inclined Alex Ashworth proved to be a sovereign soloist in the *Et in spiritum sanctum*, *Confiteor* and *Et expecto* gripping testimonies of familiar purity and excellence. *The mainspring in the Sanctus* and *Osanna*, stretched from bursting sound to an elastic-eclastic, danceable praise, leads my digital quill to the transcription of a warm, delightful, gentle *Benedictus* by Nick Pritchard and flautist Rachel Beckett. *And an Agnus Dei* from another planet, caressing our cheeks through Mobley, allowing the Lord to let us in, whose extra and uniqueness sealed the *Dona nobis pacem*. A dimension of its own, which expressed itself in the whole body and mind with an expanding triad of amazement, compassion and enjoyment.

***** □

“the best concert of my life”

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Reviewed at **BOZAR: Main hall, Brussels on 15 April 2023**

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Bach, Mass in B minor, BWV232

PERFORMERS

English Baroque Soloists

Monteverdi Choir

Sir John Eliot Gardiner, *Conductor*



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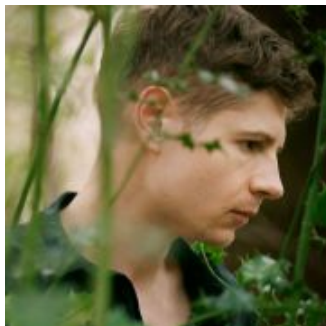
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Jens Klier

Vor seinem Rechtswissenschafts-Studium in Bayreuth und Bonn widmete sich Jens Klier seit frühester Kindheit musikalisch der Violine (Repertoire vom 17. bis 20. Jahrhundert). Während er zudem mit Gesang und dem Leben im Orchesterbetrieb groß wurde, entwickelte sich ein besonderes Interesse an der sogenannten 'Historischen Aufführungspraxis' und authentischen Instrumenten. Diese Leidenschaft hält sich hartnäckig, sodass er sie mit Vorliebe für das Barocke anstatt mit Finger und Bogen nun in Form der Musikkritik zu Gehör bringt. U.a. Telemann-Fan, Liebhaber J. S. Bachs Genies und Entdecker neuerer, seltenerer 'Alter Musik'.

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