

Royal Academy of Music /
Kohn Foundation
Bach Cantata Series



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Music

Bach.
The Cantatas
2014

The sixth year of a major series celebrating Bach's magnificent works in concert

'Don't miss the Royal Academy of Music's outstanding Sunday lunchtime series surveying all of Bach's cantatas'

The Times

'The Bach Cantata series at the Royal Academy of Music offers London audiences a marvellous opportunity to hear such masterpieces, many of them rarely heard. I know from my recent experience at the Academy that these talented singers and instrumentalists will produce outstanding results'

Sir John Eliot Gardiner

'A satisfying spiritual start to the day... The performance was a model of vitality, concentration and period authenticity'

The Sunday Times

'The Royal Academy of Music/Kohn Foundation Bach Cantata Series has become one of the highlights of the London concert calendar... [it] repeatedly affirms both the promise of young musicians, and the continually renewing inspiration of Bach's genius... performed with stunning virtuosity'

Musical Opinion

'The perfect Sunday lunch for any Bach lover'

The Times

'The Academy is internationally known and recognised as representing the highest values of music and musical society'

Daniel Barenboim

Shortlisted for the **Royal Philharmonic Society Awards**, 2011 and 2012

Royal Academy of Music / Kohn Foundation Bach Cantata Series presented through the generosity and vision of the Kohn Foundation



By not following a strict liturgical path, this is a concert series designed for the broadest church of belief. To these monthly concerts we welcome people from far and wide. Audiences range from musicians who have a profound knowledge of the cantatas to those hearing this music for the first time. We know that most listeners fall into this second category — which makes the whole project particularly thrilling as performer and audience experience the bulk of the music without preconceptions: especially unusual in our multi-media sated world. Therefore it seems especially appropriate to hold these events in an environment of discovery where young performers can explore the cantatas in such a fresh, spirited and communicative way.

The distinguished violinists Rachel Podger, Madeleine Easton and Margaret Faultless form the select roster of leaders in our 'period' band which has, with the choral group, developed a remarkably vibrant and dynamic 'house style', at one with the intimacy and warmth of the Duke's Hall and yet also relishing the lyrical and dramatic ambitions of our exceptional director Iain Ledingham. This year, we also perform in front of our superb new Kuhn organ, courtesy of Sir Elton John and Ray Cooper, no doubt to play a part in select cantatas over the next five years (initially in January, April and October).

Bach's music has perennial relevance to performers of many different traditions. We embrace this diversity by incorporating a couple of concerts played on modern instruments, as we have done for the past few years.

No other institution in the country is as steeped in Bach as the Royal Academy of Music, where we have been introducing his music to new audiences since our very early days in the 1820s. The tradition continues thanks to the remarkable commitment of the teachers, students and visiting artists of the Academy and — crucially central to its perpetuation — the close involvement, collaboration and generosity of Sir Ralph Kohn and the Kohn Foundation. All good schemes are a team effort but the Kohns (regular attenders from three generations of the family) are rare birds in the collective pride they feel in giving such unparalleled joy through their inspired support for this mighty project.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Freeman-Attwood".

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood
Principal

All performances start at midday in the Academy's Duke's Hall and last around one hour

Sunday 19th January

Sie werden aus Saba alle kommen, BWV 65
All they from Sheba shall come
Gott soll allein mein Herze haben, BWV 169
God alone shall have my heart

Sunday 16th February

Tritt auf die Glaubensbahn, BWV 152
Tread the path of faith
Wo gehest du hin?, BWV 166
Whither goest thou?
Herr, deine Augen sehen nach dem Glauben!,
BWV 102
Lord, are not Thine eyes upon the truth!

Sunday 16th March

Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan III, BWV 100
What God doth, is well done III
Ich lasse dich nicht, du segnest mich denn!, BWV 157
I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me!
Liebster Gott, wenn werd ich sterben?, BWV 8
Dearest God, when shall I die?

Sunday 6th April

Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit, BWV 106
God's own time is the very best time
Ich glaube, lieber Herr, hilf meinem Unglauben!,
BWV 109
Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief!

Sunday 18th May

Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!, BWV 214
Resound, ye drums! Ring out, ye trumpets!
Ich bin vergnügt mit meinem Glücke, BWV 84
I am content with my good fortune
Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen, BWV 56
Gladly shall I bear the cross

Book at www.ram.ac.uk/bach or telephone
020 7873 7300 (Monday–Friday, 10am–noon and 2–4pm)

Sunday 19th January 2014

Sie werden aus Saba alle kommen, BWV 65

All they from Sheba shall come

Gott soll allein mein Herze haben, BWV 169

God alone shall have my heart

Prelude and Fugue in D, BWV 532

Midday

Duke's Hall

*Tickets £13 (concessions £10),
season discounts available
Book online at www.ram.ac.uk/bach from
Monday 2nd September.
Book in person and by telephone 020 7873 7300
from Monday 7th October.*

Iain Ledingham director
Margaret Faultless leader

Performed on modern instruments

Peter Holder organ

'Sie werden aus Saba alle kommen' BWV 65 was written for the Feast of the Epiphany during the composer's first year in Leipzig, on 6th January 1724. It is a worthy companion to the remarkable array of liturgical music he had composed for the previous twelve-day Christmas period. Drawing on the Prophesy of Isaiah, St Matthew's Gospel, and the well-known hymn 'Puer natus in Bethlehem', it relates the Magi's gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to God's gifts of faith, prayer and patience. In return, God is asked to accept the gift of the believer's heart and service. From the stately pageant and kaleidoscopic instrumental colours of the opening chorus to the *galanteiren* of the closing tenor aria, Bach's music reflects the exotic elements of the Festival.

'Gott soll allein mein Herze haben' BWV 169 (20th October 1726) belongs to the tiny but distinguished subset of cantatas for alto solo. It takes as its theme the verses from Chapter 22 of St Matthew's Gospel that speak of God as Love. Like several other cantatas from 1726, it opens with an instrumental sinfonia rather than a chorus, drawing on the first movement of a lost work that has also survived in a later version as the E major Harpsichord Concerto. The opening words of the cantata reappear as a motto throughout the first two vocal numbers: the first combining arioso and recitative, the second a beautifully wrought aria in which the alto is accompanied by the organ alone. Its expressive highlight is its final aria, a consolatory siciliana based on the slow movement of the same lost concerto.



Tritt auf die Glaubensbahn, BWV 152

Tread the path of faith

Wo gehest du hin?, BWV 166

Whither goest thou?

Herr, deine Augen sehen nach dem Glauben!, BWV 102

Lord, are not Thine eyes upon the truth!

Midday Duke's Hall

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Iain Ledingham director
Madeleine Easton leader

Performed on historical instruments

'Tritt auf die Glaubensbahn' BWV 152 sets a libretto by Salomo Franck based on Chapter 2 of St Luke's Gospel. First performed on the Sunday after Christmas — 30th December 1714 — in the Himmelsburg Weimar, it has a chamber-like delicacy and musical finesse typical of Bach's cantatas of this period. Its exquisite instrumental complement of flute, oboe, viola d'amore, viola da gamba and continuo sets the musical agenda in a dazzling French-style *ouverture*. The 29-year-old composer put on a virtuoso display for his discerning court audience in the solo vocal numbers too. Most memorable of all is the soprano aria 'Stein, der über alle Schätze', a luxuriant, rapt outpouring of melody for the voice with obbligato flute and viola d'amore.

'Wo gehest du hin?' BWV 166 was first performed on the fourth Sunday after Easter, 7th May 1724, during Bach's first year in Leipzig. The text, which relates to Chapter 16 of St John's Gospel, looks forward to the forthcoming Feast of the Ascension. For a work of relatively modest dimensions, using only solo voices apart from the closing chorale, it contains an impressive variety of musical styles. For example, the final aria evokes the dance steps and solid bourgeois textures of the contemporary polonaise, while the central movement is a severe chorale prelude for soprano and violin. Pick of the bunch is the intense and chromatic tenor aria 'Ich will an den Himmel denken' that contemplates life after death to the accompaniment of intricate obbligato parts for oboe and violin.

'Herr, deine Augen sehen' BWV 102 was composed for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity, which fell on 25th August in 1726. It uses a text drawn from a cantata cycle earlier set by the composer's cousin Johann Ludwig Bach. The subject, God's justice for the unrepentant sinner, alludes to the day's scripture readings in the Book of Jeremiah and St Luke's Gospel. It drew forth an uncompromising response: the music is conceived on an epic scale, even for Bach. With his customary sound judgement, the composer especially valued this work and parodied several of its movements in his 'Lutheran' Masses, increasing its chance of a lasting posterity. The opening chorus became the Kyrie of the Mass in G minor, and the alto and tenor arias were adapted as the Qui tollis and Quoniam of the Mass in F.



Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan III, BWV 100

What God doth, is well done III

Ich lasse dich nicht, du segnest mich denn!, BWV 157

I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me!

Liebster Gott, wenn werd ich sterben?, BWV 8

Dearest God, when shall I die?

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Iain Ledingham director
Rachel Podger leader

Performed on historical instruments

We do not know the liturgical purpose or date of Bach's third setting of Samuel Rodigast's 1675 hymn 'Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan' BWV 100, but scholars have argued plausibly that this chorale cantata was made for a wedding in the early 1730s. Its outer choruses draw on his earlier settings of the text (from Cantatas nos 99 and 75 respectively), amplifying them with flute, horns and timpani. The four central verses are set as an imitative duet for alto and tenor, a soprano aria with virtuoso flute writing, a rather rustic bass aria, and a plaintive aria for alto and oboe d'amore. Despite the occasional origin of the cantata, its success is reflected in Bach's later performances of it around 1737 and 1742.

Bach set Picander's text 'Ich lasse dich nicht, du segnest mich denn' BWV 157 for a memorial service for the Saxon chamberlain, court counsellor and appeal judge Johann Christoph von Ponickau. The eminent jurist died at the age of 75 on 31st October 1726 and his commemoration took place on 6th February 1727 at the site of his family vault in Pomssen church. The music, which predominantly uses solo male voices, is on an intimate scale and progresses from a tone of wistful resignation in the opening duet to a mood of resigned optimism and hope in the final aria. Bach later performed the cantata at the Feast of Purification where its opening text 'I will not let you go unless you bless me' became associated with the Song of Simeon.



Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit, BWV 106

God's own time is the very best time

Ich glaube, lieber Herr, hilf meinem Unglauben!, BWV 109

BWV 109

Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief!

Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele, BWV 654

O mensch, bewein' dein Sünde gross, BWV 622

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Iain Ledingham director
Madeleine Easton leader

Performed on historical instruments

Alexander Binns organ

'Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit', BWV 106, known as the 'Actus Tragicus', is one of the earliest of Bach's cantatas and also one of the very greatest. It is likely that Bach composed it for a funeral in 1707, and some scholars have speculated that it was intended as a memorial for Bach's maternal uncle Tobias Lämmerhirt who died on 10th August that year. Whatever prompted the work, it is miraculous that the 22-year-old composer should have produced — as if out of nowhere — one of the Western tradition's finest pieces of funerary art. The piece has a conservative motet-like form, with a fluid succession of text-driven musical components, but Bach's invention has kept critics in raptures for over three centuries, not least its striking musical symbols and the depth and complexity of its allegorical meanings. At the heart of the work is a meditation on death under the law of the Old Testament and death under the hope of the Gospel, the 'musical sermon' pivoting on the central unforgettable collision between these two visions in the chorus 'Es ist der alte Bund'.

In many cantatas the stern message of the text undeniably prompted an equally stern musical response from Bach, but in 'Ich glaube, lieber Herr, hilf meinem Unglauben' BWV 109 the music has a Mozartian range of sympathy for the human predicament described in the text. Composed for the twenty-first Sunday after Trinity, and first performed as part of Bach's initial Leipzig cantata cycle on 17th October 1723, the text focuses on the challenges of belief. The extended opening chorus pits solo voices (both vocal and instrumental) against the collective cries of the orchestra and choir. The message of the text is reflected vividly in the music: an instrumental figure that fits the words 'Ich glaube, Herr' (though it never actually sets them) is constantly tested and buffeted by other motifs but survives the challenge. Equally striking is the closing chorale, a setting of the seventh verse of 'Durch Adams Fall', in which the hymn is surrounded by breezy, Venetian-style orchestral ritornellos.

'An epoch-making opportunity to hear some of Bach's greatest and least familiar music complete, as if you were part of a uniquely privileged congregation... prompt booking is recommended'
Country Life

Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!, BWV 214

Resound, ye drums! Ring out, ye trumpets!

Ich bin vergnügt mit meinem Glücke, BWV 84

I am content with my good fortune

Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen, BWV 56

Gladly shall I bear the cross

Midday

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Iain Ledingham director
Madeleine Easton leader

Performed on modern instruments

'Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!' is a secular cantata, composed to celebrate the birthday of Maria Josepha, Electress of Saxony and Queen of Poland, on 8 December 1733 and first performed by Bach with the Collegium Musicum in Leipzig. Although Bach called it a 'dramma per musica' it does not have a dramatic plot, consisting rather of tributes from four classical goddesses — Bellona, Pallas, Irene and Fana — each represented by a solo voice. As befits a royal celebration, the music is grand, splendid and extrovert. Clearly it was too good to be left to languish in the obscurity of an occasional work passed its sell-by date; Bach reworked four of the numbers in the Christmas Oratorio a year later.

'Ich bin vergnügt mit meinem Glücke' BWV 84 was written for Septuagesima Sunday, which fell on 9th February in 1727. Its text refers to the parable of the workers in the vineyard from the Gospel of the day. The work was conceived — like many of Bach's surviving cantatas from the later 1720s — for a small ensemble, in this case soprano, one oboe and strings. These limited textual means did not cramp Bach's invention: from the intertwining of the oboe and soprano in the highly expressive opening aria to the competitive oboe and violin obbligato in the closing aria, the cantata exemplifies the classical precept of *multum in parvo*.

'Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen' BWV 56 was first performed on 27th October 1726. The reputation of this famous work rests not only on the unusual intensity of Bach's music, but also on the density and subtlety of its text — one of the finest in the entire canon. The staff of the cross, the burden gladly carried by the Christian in the opening aria, becomes the mast of a ship — the symbol for the Christian's journey from Earthly life to eternal life — in the second movement. The safe arrival in harbour becomes a metaphor for a Christian death in the fourth movement, and in the final chorale Christ is seen as the pilot guiding the Christian soul home through the salvation of the cross, bringing the allegory full circle — itself a sign of the perfection of Christ's sacrifice.



Ach Gott, wie manches Herzeleid I, BWV 3

Ah God, what deep affliction I

Nimm, was dein ist, und gehe hin, BWV 144

Take that thine is, and go thy way

Siehe zu, dass deine Gottesfurcht nicht Heuchelei sei,

BWV 179

See to it that thy fear of God be not hypocrisy

Midday Duke's Hall

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Iain Ledingham director
Margaret Faultless leader

Performed on historical instruments

'Ach Gott, wie manches Herzeleid' BWV 3 was written for the Second Sunday after Epiphany on 14th January 1725. Part of Bach's chorale cantata cycle, it is based on Martin Moller's eighteen-verse hymn of 1587, itself a reworking of the ancient Latin hymn 'Jesu dulcis memoria'. In the expansive opening movement the chorale melody appears in the bass, forming a foundation for Bach's freely-composed, expressive elegy in the upper voices and the orchestra. The cantata's second movement is one of Bach's most elegant musical homilies: an arioso in which each line of the chorale is followed by a recitative commentary, as dramatic as it is erudite.

During February 1724 Bach must have been preparing the materials for the St John Passion in readiness for its first performance on Good Friday. Indirect evidence for this conjecture comes from the relative brevity of his cantatas from the period immediately before the start of Lent. 'Nimm, was dein ist, und gehe hin' BWV 144, written for Septuagesima on 6th February 1724, is in this respect typical — pithy and concentrated. The laconic statement of its opening text is set conservatively as a motet-like fugue, without independent instrumental lines, but with the rhetorical power of the turba choruses from the crucifixion narrative. The sprinkling of chorales throughout the cantata is another unusual feature that looks forward to the forthcoming Passion.

'Siehe zu, dass deine Gottesfurcht' BWV 179 is a terrifying musical sermon against hypocrisy. Composed for the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity, 8th August in 1723, just a couple of months into Bach's tenure at St Thomas's, its text graphically paints the everlasting punishment that awaits the hypocrite. The opening chorus is a remarkable compendium of contrapuntal devices, its focus on inversions and retrogrades presumably being symbolic of the perverted two-facedness characteristic of the sin of the day. The cantata's expressive highlight is a beautiful aria with imploring melodies illustrating the text 'Dearest God, have mercy'. Bach was evidently pleased with this cantata; he re-used three of its movements in his Lutheran masses.



Lass, Fürstin, lass noch einen Strahl, BWV 198

Let, Princess, just one more glance

Du Friedfürst, Herr Jesu Christ, BWV 116

Thou Prince of Peace, Lord Jesus Christ

Fantasia and Fugue in C minor, BWV 537

Midday Duke's Hall

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Iain Ledingham director
Margaret Faultless leader

Performed on historical instruments

Michael Papadopoulos organ

The second funerary masterpiece of this season is the Mourning Ode, 'Lass, Fürstin, lass noch einen Strahl' BWV 198. This work has a unique place in the canon: more than a cantata, less than a Passion, a work of the Enlightenment yet a sharp critique of Enlightenment thought, its singular characteristics stem from the occasional circumstances of its genesis. Following the death of Christiane Eberhardine, Electress of Saxony, on 5th September 1727, a Leipzig student Carl von Kirchbach asked permission to hold a mourning oration at the university church, with an ode by Gottsched set to music by Bach. The event took place on 17th October, two days after Bach had completed the work. He set Gottsched's strophic text 'against the grain', partitioning its nine strophes irregularly into ten musical numbers, and treating it like a cantata with choruses, arias and recitatives. The music is exceptionally rich in instrumental colour and in Baroque musical tropes of mourning, including Passion-like choruses and the soft sounds of viols and lutes.

'A wonderful sense of binding intimacy... surely a glimpse of heaven'
Evening Standard

'Du Friedfürst, Herr Jesu Christ' BWV 116 was written for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Trinity, 26th November 1724. Based on Jakob Egbert's seven-verse hymn from 1601, its text dwells on the help of God in times of trouble. The opening chorus, a vigorous chorale prelude, is followed by an expressive aria for oboe d'amore and alto in the special key of F sharp minor. The cantata also contains a rare vocal trio — for soprano, tenor and bass — that covers an exceptionally wide harmonic range in its illustration of the text 'Your merciful heart broke when the pain of the fallen drove you to us in the world'.



Mass in G minor, BWV 235

Mein Herze schwimmt im Blut, BWV 199

My heart is bathed in blood

Midday Duke's Hall

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Iain Ledingham director
Margaret Faultless leader

Performed on historical instruments

In common with his other 'Lutheran' masses, Bach's G minor Mass consists only of the Kyrie eleison and the Gloria in excelsis Deo and draws on the music of earlier cantatas. In this case Bach parodied movements from 'Herr, deine Augen sehen' (BWV 102) for the Kyrie, and movements from 'Alles nur nach Gottes Wille' (BWV 72) and 'Es wartet alles auf dich' (BWV 187) for the five sections of the Gloria. The seeming inevitability of the new setting of this music is testament not only to Bach's powers of selection, but also to his genius for adaptation. For example, the awe-inspiring scale and penitential tone of the opening chorus of BWV 102 is given a further intensification by the added agogic weight of the rhythmic tweaks necessary to set the words 'Kyrie eleison'.



Christmas Oratorio part III 'Herrscher des Himmels, erhöre das Lallen', BWV 248iii

Ruler of Heaven, hear our murmurings

Gott, wie dein Name, so ist auch dein Ruhm, BWV 171

According to Thy name, O God, so is Thy praise

Siehe, ich will viel Fischer aussenden, BWV 88

Behold I will send for many fishers

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Iain Ledingham director
Margaret Faultless leader

Performed on historical instruments

Part III of the Christmas Oratorio, 'Herrscher des Himmels, erhöre das Lallen', was first performed on the Third Day of Christmas in 1734. It incorporates the Gospel narrative of the shepherds visiting the manger within a series of arias, chorales, a 'tuba' chorus representing the shepherds, and the frame of an opening chorus repeated at the end.



This patterning gives it the dramatic drive of Bach's Passion settings from the 1720s. As in the rest of the oratorio, the concerted numbers in this part are largely parodies from earlier works, but the alto aria 'Schliesse, mein Herze, dies selige Wunder' was newly composed in 1734 for the Christmas anthology.

Bach's cantatas for New Year's Day all reflect the sumptuous celebrations of the Feast in central Germany in the early eighteenth century. The text of 'Gott, wie dein Name' BWV 171 is taken from Picander's 1728 cantata cycle, and refers to the Gospel story of the day about the naming of Jesus. Bach seems to have recycled earlier music in this cantata. The closing chorale comes from an earlier New Year cantata — 'Jesu, nun sei gepreiset' BWV 41 (from 1st January 1725) — and it is likely that its opening chorus and first aria were also adapted from earlier works which are now lost. The quality of the opening movement, perhaps together with its text about the power of God's name, inspired Bach to rework it for the 'Patrem omnipotentem' of the B minor Mass in the 1740s.

'Siehe, ich will viel Fischer aussenden' BWV 88 was written for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity (21st July 1726). The text, taken from the cycle of cantatas earlier set by Johann Ludwig Bach, concerns the Gospel story of the day, the calling of St Peter. It begins with a remarkable double 'aria' for the bass, representing the voice of God. In the first part the 'fisherman' text is reflected in the gentle lapping figures in the strings; the second part, referring to hunters, changes to a vigorous sporting style, complete with athletic horn calls. This vivid, motet-like approach to text setting also underpins the rest of the cantata, where expressive arioso predominates to an unusual degree.

Sundays in Marylebone

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Box Office telephone:
020 7873 7300

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Each cantata concert begins at midday and lasts around one hour. The Academy's restaurant will be open for light refreshments from 10.30am until the start of each concert.

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The Royal Academy of Music is where many leading musicians learn their trade. Our student community is truly international, representing more than fifty countries. The Academy's wide range of concerts and events includes jazz, opera, musical theatre, twenty-first-century music and 'period' performance.

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'Anybody who's been to these wonderful cantatas at the Royal Academy of Music knows they really are extraordinary'
Sean Rafferty on BBC Radio 3 'InTune'

'Preparing and performing the Bach Cantatas is one of the great privileges of being a musician. Doing so with the Academy's talented and passionate young musicians enriches the experience still further. This is an extraordinary project—a great gift to our cultural well-being'

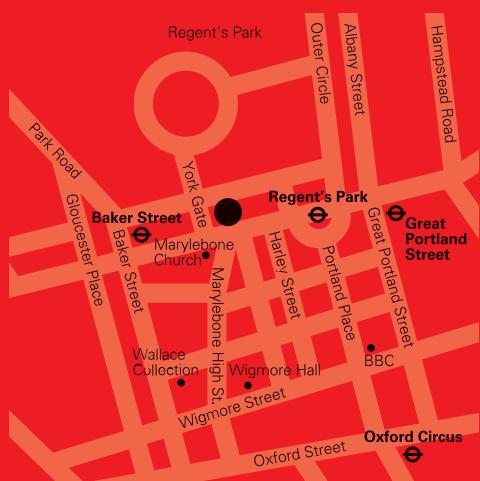
Margaret Faultless, Head of Historical Performance

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Programme notes by Nicholas Anderson
Photography by Hana Zushi

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