

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

GAMUT BACH ENSEMBLE
Wednesday, December 12 – 7:30 PM
Church of the Holy Trinity

PROGRAM *(Selection of Program Notes)*

Komm, du süße Todesstunde, BWV 161

Johann Sebastian Bach

Born: March 31, 1685, in Eisenach, Germany

Died: July 28, 1750, Leipzig, Germany

Composed: 1716

Duration: 20 minutes

Bach composed the church cantata *Komm, du süße Todesstunde* ("Come, you sweet hour of death") BWV 161, in Weimar for the 16th Sunday after Trinity, probably first performed in September 1716. Bach had taken up regular cantata composition two years before when he was promoted to concertmaster at the Weimar court, writing one cantata per month to be performed in the Schlosskirche, the court chapel in the ducal Schloss. The text of *Komm, du süße Todesstunde*, and of most other cantatas written in Weimar, was provided by court poet Salomon Franck. He based it on the prescribed gospel reading about the young man from Nain. His text reflects on longing for death, seen as a transition to a life united with Jesus. The cantata in six movements opens with a sequence of alternating arias and recitatives leading to a chorus and a concluding chorale.

Ich steh mit einem Fuß im Grabe, BWV 156

Johann Sebastian Bach

Composed: 1729

Duration: 18 minutes

Cantata 156, *Ich steh mit einem Fuß im Grabe*, is a meditation on the Gospel reading in the Lutheran calendar, Matthew 8:1-13. The lesson describes Jesus healing a leper and his conversation with a centurion from Capernaum. Bach cantata BWV 156 is a relatively late work. It begins with a transcription for oboe and strings of the slow movement of the Harpsichord Concerto in F Minor. The wonderful tenor aria with its halting bass line is crowned with the marvelous soprano chorale. A recitative leads into the wonderful and detailed aria for violins, oboe, and alto. A simple chorale ends the cantata.

Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit, BWV 106

Johann Sebastian Bach

Composed: 1707

Duration: 20 minutes

Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit (Actus Tragicus) may have been written for the funeral of Bach's uncle. The work alludes to an older generation of compositions. Even the orchestration—two recorders, two violas da gamba, and continuo—gives the work a distinctly 'ancient' quality. The cantata is virtually through-composed, rather like a motet, with each line of text signaling a complete musical change of character. The chorale overlay (both instrumental and vocal) and interplay of scripture are of great sophistication throughout.