

Johann Schelle entered the Thomasschule in Leipzig when his voice broke in 1665, and later attended the university. After holding the post of Kantor in Eilenburg for seven years, Schelle succeeded his former teacher Sebastian Knüpfer upon his death in 1677 and held the post of Kantor in Leipzig until his death in 1701. During his tenure, Schelle replaced the Latin compositions written by Italian masters with music to German texts, much to the chagrin of the city's mayor. But the city council sided with Schelle, who began introducing into the Protestant liturgy in Leipzig not only the Gospel cantata to German texts, but later the chorale cantata. Almost all of Schelle's compositions are sacred works, most of them to German texts and in an older more traditional style, such as *Darzu ist erschienen der Sohn Gottes* for baritone, strings, and continuo featured in this concert.

Born in Giesing, Bohemia, Johann Kuhnau enrolled in the Kreuzschule at Dresden ca. 1669, where he became a Rathsdiscantist, and obtained regular instruction in music. In 1680 the plague sent him back to Giesing, but he soon left for Zittau and worked in the school, till the excellence of a motet which he wrote for the Rathswahl, or election of the town council, procured him the post of Kantor. In 1682 he made his final move to Leipzig, where his fame preceded him, and in 1684 he succeeded Kühnel as organist at the Thomaskirche. In 1688 he founded a Collegium Musicum and in 1700 he was made musical director of the University and of the two principal churches; he finally secured the post of Kantor upon the death of Johann Schelle in 1701. While all of Kuhnau's secular music is lost, he leaves us some excellent sacred cantatas that anticipate the style of J. S. Bach with lyrical vocal writing, powerful fugues, and dramatic contrasts of texture which stress the rhetorical sense. Two of these cantatas, *Und ob die Feinde Tag und Nacht* for soprano, violin, and continuo and *Laudate pueri Dominum* for tenor, strings, trombone, and continuo will be featured on this program.

Though Johann Sebastian Bach is widely regarded as one of the greatest composers of the Western musical tradition, a relatively small number of his church cantatas receive regular concert performances today. Two hundred sacred cantatas, or roughly three fifths of Bach's output in the genre, survive. The bulk of these date from 1723 to 1729, the first five years of the composer's tenure as Kantor of the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, during which he composed and performed cantatas at the rate of about one per week. Cantata 22 is one of the two cantatas written for his audition for the job of Kantor at Leipzig, and was performed under Bach's direction on February 7, 1723. The designated Sunday, Estomihi, is the last one before Lent, which is a period in which the congregation is to prepare itself for the time of Christ's suffering. Composed in Cöthen in 1723, Cantata 22 is modestly scored for SATB, strings, oboe, and continuo. In contrast to his other audition piece BWV 23, Bach tried to accommodate the listening public in Leipzig, which was more accustomed to a more cheerful operatic treatment and to Kuhnau's gentle melodies.