

A Kalmus Classic Edition

Johann Sebastian

BACH

ST. MATTHEW PASSION

(BWV 244)

for Soli, Double Chorus
and Orchestra
with English text

VOCAL SCORE

K 06005



PREFACE

THE Passion according to S. Matthew," in its earliest form, was written by Johann Sebastian Bach in 1729, when he was forty-four years of age, and was first performed on the Good Friday of that year in St. Thomas's Church, Leipsic, where Bach held the office of "Cantor" from 1723 until his death in 1750. The altered and extended form in which we now possess it was probably not completed before 1740.

Up to the end of the eighteenth century the work was frequently performed in Leipsic, but did not begin to obtain the wider recognition it now enjoys until, in 1829, exactly one hundred years after its first production, it was performed in Berlin under the direction of Mendelssohn.

To Sir William Sterndale Bennett is due the introduction of the work into England. It was performed in that country for the first time by the Bach Society of London, in the Hanover Square Rooms, on April 6th, 1854, with Sterndale Bennett as conductor. The next performance took place in the same rooms on November 28th, 1854, after which it was not again heard until March 23rd, 1858, when it was given by the Bach Society of London, in St. Martin's Hall, Sterndale Bennett again conducting.

In 1862 the same Society brought out the first English edition of the work, the musical superintendence being entrusted to Sterndale Bennett, and the translation of the original words by Christian Friedrich Henrici (Picander), as well as the adaptation of the English text of S. Matthew xxvi. and xxvii., to Miss H. F. H. Johnston.

The issue of this edition in a cheap form, by Messrs. Novello, in 1871, brought the work within more immediate reach of the English public, and a serious effort was made to assure to this sublime religious work its rightful place and honor.

Between the years 1870 and 1875 it was given many times at Messrs. Novello's Oratorio Concerts, and on Maundy Thursday, 1871, in Westminster Abbey, at the suggestion, and under the direction, of Sir Joseph Barnby, and with the cordial approval of Dean Stanley. On that occasion the work was first heard in England in what may truly be called its natural and proper home. "This highly interesting event," to quote the "Short History of Cheap Music," "was the precursor, and, without doubt, the chief cause of the large number of musical services (with orchestra) which have since taken place in the Churches and Cathedrals of the Kingdom."

In the United States the oratorio was brought out for the first time by the Handel and Haydn Society at Boston, May 8th, 1874, Zerrahn conducting; in New York by the Oratorio Society, on March 18th, 1880.

In the Editor's Preface to the first English edition it is stated that that edition was, in the main, printed from the German Vocal Score, arranged and edited by A. B. Marks, and published at Berlin in 1830; but that the pianoforte accompaniment was altered, where it was thought wise to do so, under the authority of the Full Score, published by the Leipsic Bach Society in 1854.

Thirty-two years have elapsed since the publication of the first English edition, and faithful to its original as that edition may have been, it has been felt that closer adherence to the accepted standard text is attainable, and, as far as is at all practicable, should be attained. With this view the present edition is issued. The chorales, choruses, and solos have been newly and independently translated from the original German words, and the adaptation of the narrative of the Evangelist, a task rendered perhaps somewhat less difficult and hazardous by the aid of the Revised Version of the New Testament, has been carefully reconsidered, and rearranged so as to preserve unaltered, as far as may be, the musical text of the original.