The current controversy between Joshua Rifkin and Robert Marshall (and others) concerning the use of soloists, as Rifkin claims, for performance of the Mass in B Minor has given rise to a renewed interest in the performance practice of Bach's choral works. Rifkin's interesting arguments have not resulted in a rash of solo performances of the Mass or the Passions, and it is unlikely that he will convince a great number of people that his way is either historically the best or artistically the most satisfying. Still, his arguments are fascinating and to some extent convincing, and the discussions in High Fidelity and in Musical Times (Nov. 82, Jan. 83, Mar. 83) are worthy of our perusal.

For the conductor who has decided to perform the Mass in B Minor with a chorus, soloists, and a concert group, as Wilhelm Ehmann first suggested long ago, I would like to offer some practical suggestions concerning the deployment of concertists. This list of suggestions comes from some small depth of experience, after having sung, observed, and/or assisted with performances of the work: twice at Indiana University, where these performances were strongly influenced by the beliefs, experience, and wisdom of Dr. Julius Herford; under Fiora Contino at the Aspen Music Festival, also strongly influenced by Dr. Herford; under John Nelson with the Indianapolis Philharmonic; under Neville Marriner with the Buffalo Philharmonic; under Robert Shaw, with the Atlanta Symphony and his Symphony Chorus (a simply stunning performance); and finally under Helmert Rilling at the Oregon Bach Festival in Eugene, Oregon, last summer.

Interestingly, only Rilling and Marriner did not make use of a smaller concert group distinguished from the larger choral rperimentists (tutti). In Marriner's case, the chorus was not prepared with that idea in mind, and so it is not clear whether Marriner himself did not want a concertist group or simply did not change things when he arrived at the last minute. (Still, he could have sent instructions ahead if he really wanted a concertist group.) Rilling stated clearly to us that he didn't believe in the principle of the concertist group for the work, and he had perhaps the best situation I have personally experienced for using concertists.

The author is Director of Choral Music at the State University of New York at Albany. He is a candidate for the DM degree in Choral Conducting from Indiana University, where he studied with Dr. Julius Herford.

especially if he wanted to make use of his excellent soloists. John Nelson used and continues to use his soloists as a group of five concertists, while Fiora Contino used a group approximately one-third the size of the full chorus as the concertist group, keeping the ratio we assume equal to that available to Bach: one soloist on a part as compared with a section total of three on a part. Shaw used a small group as well, also approximately one-third the size of the full chorus; he has the advantage of already having identified a chamber choir within the Atlanta Symphony Chorus, and this group comprised the concertists.

Much of our decision-making, and that of these conductors, depends upon our particular circumstances. Contino was performing the work in Aspen's music tent, a space acoustically somewhat better than outdoors but not quite indoors. Still, she would use a small chorus rather than soloists even in a perfect hall. Nelson might choose to use a small chorus if he had complete control over the choral situation, but since he has choruses prepared for him, he might for that reason opt for using the professional soloists. Shaw has complete control over the choral situation and hand-picks the concertist group. Indeed, how do we decide whether to use soloists or a small choral group? In a practical way, the size and acoustical properties of the hall, the size and sound of the orchestra, the vocal abilities of the soloists, and the likelihood of choosing a small choral group from our larger forces are all considerations. These problems are not any less serious to our performance than the ultimate question: what did Bach want? Or perhaps it is better asked: how do we approach as closely as possible what represents Bach's wishes and what best expresses the Mass in B Minor?

Although the intent of this article is to offer some practical suggestions, I cannot resist offering an opinion about the use of a small group of concertists as opposed to the five professional soloists. I have found — and have been influenced by Contino's belief — that the group of five doesn't work that well. The contrast is certainly there between concertists and ripienists, but often the five soloists, usually having bigger voices than anyone in the chorus, tend to sing out when faced with the complex musical texture of, say, the opening exposition of the Kyrie or of the Et in terra pax. The result is not the clarity that one hopes for from a solo quintet but, rather, a sound that is more aggressive than one could get from a carefully screened and trained chamber group.

I must say, in passing, that I have avoided this problem or have added to it considerably by using, in my approaching performance of the work's first twelve movements (the original 1733 Missa), a three-tiered layering: five solo concertists for some sections, a small choral group of about fifteen singers for other concertist sections, and a tutti chorus of fifty for the remainder of the work. I won't be able to report for several months if this really worked in performance.

Here are some suggestions for using concertists of either kind throughout the Mass in B Minor. The ideas are a direct result, clearly, of Ehmann's advice that when the choral lines are not doubled by instruments, the concertists' group should be in use, and when the lines are doubled, the ripienists are to be used. The suggestions that follow also include possible use of solo strings or at least reduced strings at times, instead of a tutti section. (The common usage of fewer stands during solo numbers will be assumed.) Occasionally some brief justification for the decision will be given.

**Missa**

Movement 1, “Kyrie”:

1. M. 5, largo: may be solo/reduced strings (un poco piano) to balance the more important material of solo winds.
This gives a wonderful chamber-music effect.

2. Opening choral exposition by concertists. First tutti is bass entrance, m. 45\textsuperscript{3}, doubled by strings and bassoon.\textsuperscript{4} All string entrances tutti from this point.

3. Tutti SII joins m. 48 on “Kyrie”; tutti altos m. 48\textsuperscript{2}\textsuperscript{+}; T same spot as A or m. 49\textsuperscript{4}. [N.B.: Shaw added ripienists in m. 55\textsuperscript{3} (A) and m. 56\textsuperscript{1}\textsuperscript{+} (T), and it worked very well.] SI tutti m. 50\textsuperscript{3}.

4. Possible concertist use at mm. 58-61, where the instrumental texture thins; can reduce strings as well. Tutti returns either: B, m. 61\textsuperscript{1}\textsuperscript{+}; T, A, SSI, m. 61\textsuperscript{2}; SI, m. 61\textsuperscript{3}, adding the text “e-le” on g\textsuperscript{4} and f\textsuperscript{#1}; or tutti returns m. 62\textsuperscript{1}\textsuperscript{+}.

5. Mm. 74 ff. could be solo/reduced strings to balance winds. Tutti strings return in m. 81, cello and bass; m. 88, violas; m. 90\textsuperscript{3}, VI. I; m. 97, VI. II (or with VI. I). This choral exposition is tutti.

6. Mm. 112-115 could be concertists, as in \#4 above.

Movement 2, “Christe eleison”:

1. In this and in all solo movements, reduced forces can be used throughout, or the tutti strings can be used in ritornelli and a reduced or solo group used when the singers are singing. The marking piano, such as in m. 12, could well signify a soloist or smaller group. Forte signifies the return of the ripienists.

Movement 3, “Kyrie”: tutti throughout.

Movement 4, “Gloria”:

1. Concertists in mm. 25-28, 41-44. Tutti enters in m. 29: Tenors add text “Glo” on first note, Altos sing three eighth-note pitches on a\textsuperscript{1} on text “Gloria.” Tutti entrance in m. 45: SI add text “Glo” on first note, SI either sing three eighth-note pitches on e\textsuperscript{2} or, better, two sixteenths on c\textsuperscript{#2}-d\textsuperscript{2} and quarter-note on e\textsuperscript{2}, to match VI. I, on text “Gloria.”

2. Mm. 69-76 concertists; tutti enters m. 67: SI add text “Glo” on downbeat, T enter second note, B enter as is or change text to begin measure on “Glo,” sing “ri” on c\textsuperscript{#1} in m. 78, “a” in m. 79.

Movement 5, “Et in terra pax”:

1. Mm. 1-2 could be concertists. Tutti at mm. 4 ff.

2. Fugal exposition upbeat to m. 20 for concertists. Solo strings possible. Tutti chorus enters only at m. 37\textsuperscript{3}\textsuperscript{+} on “bonae voluntatis”; stays tutti through m. 60.

3. Concertists m. 62. Tutti sings from m. 63\textsuperscript{2}, on “pax,” to end.

Movement 7, “Gratias”: tutti throughout.

Movement 9, “Qui tollis”:

Ehmann, Herford, Contertists throughout. But, as Shaw says about this movement and “Et incarnatus est,” they are so beautiful done tutti. No. 9 could have solo/reduced strings with concertists. Note instrumental independence and need to balance two solo flutes.

Movement 12, “Cum sancto spiritu”:

1. Possible use of concertists in m. 1, m. 3, with tutti entering in m. 2, m. 4 (with trumpets) on “in gloria...” This does heighten the effect of the sudden instrumental tutti in m. 2 and allows solo oboe and flute to be heard in m. 1 and m. 3. The same is possible in m. 9, m. 11. Could be all tutti, however.

2. Possible concertists, mm. 18-21. Tutti enters m. 21\textsuperscript{1}\textsuperscript{+} on “in.”

3. Fugal exposition, mm. 37 ff. = concertists. This also balances well the dance-like figure of the winds in mm. 64 ff. Tutti in m. 68 to end.
Symbolum Nicenum

Movement 1, “Credo”:

Ehmann suggests concertists throughout. Contino, Nelson performed tutti. Shaw performed tutti but very light, quiet, pure. Lack of instrumental doublings would indicate the concertist group, however. Then the attack of the “Patrem” would be a dramatic change.

Movement 2, “Patrem omnipotentem”: tutti throughout.

Movement 4, Et incarnatus est:

Ehmann says this, possibly the last choral work Bach wrote, should be done by the concertists. Shaw, Contino, Nelson used tutti chorus (see “Qui tollis” above).

Movement 5, “Crucifixus”: same comments apply as for “Et incarnatus” above.

Movement 6, “Et resurrexit”:

1. If movements #4 and #5 are done by concertists, this heightens the excitement and dramatic contrast of the beginning of this movement, which is tutta la forza.

2. Concertists at mm. 9-14.1. Tutti enters m. 14.2+ on “Et resurrexit.” SI, A, T change first word to “Et.”

3. Medial ritornello at mm. 34-50 could use solo/reduced strings to balance solo winds.

4. Possible concertists, mm. 50-56 (Ehmann), tutti at mm. 58 ff. Tutti at mm. 50-56 certainly obscure the two solo flutes, solo oboes. However, tutti chorus could enter at m. 54, last three eighth-notes, “ad dextram patris,” with strings.

5. Concertists, mm. 74-86.1.

6. Concertists, mm. 92-97.2, as in #2 above. A, T change text in m. 97.2+ to “cujus,” in m. 98 to “regni,” matching other parts.

Movement 8, “Confiteor”:

Ehmann, Shaw, Contino use concertists. Both Shaw and Contino add tutti B and A on the chant melody at mm. 73 and 74, respectively, and then tutti T in m. 92. B and A return to concertists when chant melody is finished (m. 88). T return to concertists at m. 118.2.

Movement 9, “Et expecto”:

1. Tutti immediately on the text “Et” or allow SI concertists to finish m. 146 of previous movement and begin tutti only with SII, at vivace.

2. Concertists, mm. 17 ff. Choices of where tutti enters: B, m. 23.2 as celli double “resurrectionem” or in m. 25 with orchestral entrance. If in m. 25, B change text to “re-sur-rec-ti-o.” Tutti T in m. 26, tutti A in m. 27, tutti SI in m. 30, tutti SII in m. 32. [SI could enter with B at m. 25, also changing text.]

3. Concertists, mm. 40.2 (A), ff. Tutti enters: SI, m. 48.2; SII, m. 49.2; A, T, B, m. 50.2, all on text “resurrectionem.”

4. 70: SI and T, m. 72.1+; B, m. 74.1+; all on “venturi.” [A can change text in m. 69 to “venturi se-.”] Tutti to end.

Sanctus: tutti mm. 1-47 or:

1. Concertists on grouped triplets such as m. 13-4 and same place in m. 2, but especially when strings thin out, as in mm. 33-4.4, mm. 93-4.10.

2. Concertists, mm. 48 ff. Tutti enters m. 72, on “glo” in SI, SII, Al, on “pleni” in T, B; All enter m. 73.

3. Concertists possible at episode, m. 78, B; m. 79, SII, SII. Tutti Al, All, T at mm. 82-83. Concertist Al, All at m. 84. Tutti SI, SII, T in m. 87; tutti B, m. 88; tutti Al, All m. 88, last beat.

4. Concertists possible at episode 2, mm. 93 ff. Tutti Al, m. 96; All, m. 97; SI and T, m. 98; SII and B, m. 99.

5. Concertists, mm. 104.2. Tutti SI, T, B, m. 108. Concertists SI again in m.

110. Tutti SI, m. 113; SII, m. 114, on text “glo”; Al, All, m. 115. Tutti to end.

Osanna:

1. Possible concertists, mm. 103-124.2.

2. Concertists, mm. 143 ff., Chor I only. Tutti, m. 283.

3. Concertists, m. 363; also reduced strings at same point. String tutti, m. 47; Chor I, m. 50; Chor II remains concertists until m. 60.3.

4. Chor I concertists, mm. 62 ff. Chor II concertists, m. 70.3. Tutti at m. 80.3.

5. Concertists at piano markings, mm. 104.3 ff. Tutti enters at forte markings, mm. 108.3 ff. (All with TII). Same at mm. 112-116.

Dona nobis pacem: Tutti throughout. continued on page 16
Notes

1Ehmann, Wilhelm. Concertisten und Ri-

2The use of the soloists as concertists allows one the "luxury" of hiring a mezzo for the "Laudamus" who is not the contralto for the "Agnum Dei" and "Qui sedes." Although this may be added expense, it also allows more flexibility in assigning voice parts for the middle-range "Laudamus" and the low-range alto solos and the duets.

3Movement numbers and measure numbers are taken from the Neue Bach Ausgabe.

4Superscripts after measure numbers refer to the beat within that measure. Thus m. 45 with a superscript 3 means m. 45, third beat.

Select Bibliography


Reviews of Ehmann's book (see footnote 1):


Smend, Friedrich. Kräteber Brief - Messe in h-moll, Serie II, Bend I. Kassel and Basel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 1956. [The critical report to accompany the NBA edition of the Mass, plus a comprehensive discussion of the questions of chronology and of the final writing and collating of the movements of the Mass, which Smend contends are four separate pieces, is found in Arthur Corda's doctoral dissertation, available through Indiana University.]