

Press Release

Bach's Monument wrapped in a Romantic Gown

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's adaptation of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* made music history. On March 11th, 2020, exactly 191 years later, the Berlin Oratorien-Chor will be reconstructing the legendary event at the Berliner Konzerthaus.

Berlin. On March 11th, 1829, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's rediscovery of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* caused a Bach Revival.

After his death in the middle of the 18th century, Bach's significance as a composer was hardly recognized. One special concert would, however, cause an unprecedented wave of esteem for his work when Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy initiated a performance of his own adaptation of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* in Berlin. He had to lease the concert hall at the Singakademie (today's Maxim Gorki Theatre) at his own expense and was able to convince only a part of the choir singers of the Berliner Singakademie to participate in the project. The performance did, however, cause a renewed interest in Bach's creative work. In consequence, the role of this exceptional artist was realized for posterity. With a playing time of around three hours, the monumental oratory was considered too long to be sat through by contemporary audiences. Mendelssohn thus shortened the piece significantly by cutting repetitions and whole arias whose lyrics were then considered outdated. He also placed great importance on a continual dramaturgy resulting in a reduced playing time of roughly two hours.

Conductor Thomas Hennig already performed most of Mendelssohn's choral works while director of music at the Brandenburg Theater, including all a cappella pieces. As choir director of the Berliner Oratorien-Chor, Thomas Hennig has occupied himself intensely with works of Mendelssohn and Bach on several occasions. In 2015, a performance of the German-language adaptation of Händel's *Israel in Egypt* revived a concert from 1844. The upcoming concert in March is a continuation of this project. The choir will be accompanied by the Berliner Symphoniker (Berlin Symphony Orchestra) with Nathalie de Montmollin (Soprano), Gundula Hintz (Alto), Edward Mout (Tenor, Evangelist), Ralf Lukas (Baritone, Jesus) und Till Schulze (Bass) as solo voices.