

Zachary Carrettin a triumph with Boulder Bach Festival

By Kelly Dean Hansen For the Camera Boulder Daily Camera

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If you go

What: The Boulder Bach Festival concludes with its centerpiece choral concert.

When: 4 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 23

Where: Mountain View Methodist Church, 355 Ponca Place, Boulder

Tickets: \$30 at the door

More info: Visit boulderbachfestival.org or call 303-776-9666

After a brief, but impactful tenure as music director of the Boulder Bach Festival, Rick Erickson abruptly and unexpectedly resigned last summer. The festival, which was in desperate need of stability at the top — even after Erickson's interesting innovations — turned immediately to its virtuoso concertmaster. Zachary Carrettin, who arrived with Erickson in 2011, dazzling audiences immediately with his sensitive but exciting and daring baroque violin technique.

As music director, Carrettin is not only picking up where Erickson left off, but has already established his own aesthetic and artistic standards. His first festival week as director has been a sensational triumph. It closes Sunday afternoon at Mountain View Methodist Church in Boulder, a repetition of the centerpiece program first heard Friday at St. John's Episcopal Cathedral in Denver. If Mountain View, which doesn't have a huge capacity, is not packed this afternoon, it will be criminal.

On Friday at St. John's, the audience, by no means large, was enraptured by a program that encapsulated Carrettin's vision. Instead of hearing the fourth St. Matthew Passion in seven years, listeners were treated to three of Bach's highly individual and daring early cantatas, written years before he established a sort of standard in his later Leipzig time.

The festival chorus, prepared by Gregg Cannady, sang crisply and precisely, and with impeccable German diction, in two of the cantatas. But it was in the fourth vocal work, the later motet "Komm, Jesu, komm," where the chorus was at its best, sustaining interest throughout the almost painfully extended penultimate section and conveying the deep emotionality of the text.

The four vocal soloists are all veteran performers of baroque music in the area: soprano Amanda Balestrieri, alto Marjorie Bunday, tenor Daniel Hutchings and bass Adam Ewing. Ewing, an alumnus of the University of Colorado opera program, was given a huge amount of solo work, effortlessly negotiating it all. Bunday's low register is as resonant as any alto could be expected to produce. Balestrieri — who earlier this month performed with the Ars Nova Singers — has a

big voice that makes an impact in cavernous spaces. Hutchings is an obvious go-to tenor in Bach, having excelled in local performances of large works such as the Christmas Oratorio in 2011.

The four deftly handled all the vocal parts, without the chorus, in Cantata 150, perhaps Bach's earliest surviving extended vocal work.

Carrettin is even more adept at selecting incredible instrumental soloists. One of them, oboist Kristin Olson, who plays a visually and aurally striking period instrument, made a deep impression in Denver, playing not only a solo concerto but also the substantial solo oboe part in Cantata 196.

Other instrumentalists had their moments in the week's other concert, Tuesday's all-Vivaldi evening at Mountain View Methodist. An entire program of music not by Bach, but by one of his great contemporaries, is nearly unprecedented at the BBF, but Carrettin's soloists justified it before a huge audience that braved a miserable, windy day to come.

Six Vivaldi works, some familiar, some rather obscure, graced the program, and all were, as the program advertised, "visceral." Flutist Ysmael Reyes and violinist Paul Miller were impeccable, the latter giving another magnificent performance on the beautiful six-stringed viola d'amore. Carrettin himself played a solo concerto and took the lead in a thrilling four-violin concerto with Miller and two others. While his embellishments have always been on the elaborate side, and perhaps not to everyone's taste, in Bach as well as Vivaldi, there is no denying Carrettin's utter mastery of this repertoire.

But the evening's real highlight may have been Anna Marsh on bassoon. She made the instrument do acrobatics we rarely hear from it, on a baroque bassoon whose sound was truly unique. Marsh's concerto received a well-earned and warm ovation.

After this afternoon's repetition of the cantata concert in Boulder, Carrettin and the festival return in May to close the season with an artist recital featuring Bach on modern instruments.