

Oregon Bach Festival Discovery Series
BWV 172 *Erschallet, ihr Lieder, erklinget, ihr Saiten!*
1999

Cantata 172, *Erschallet, ihr Lieder, erklinget, ihr Saiten!*, is one of the nearly 200 church cantatas composed by J.S. Bach. It is a cantata that he wrote at the beginning of his career, in 1714, when he was 29 years old. This cantata was composed for the Feast of Pentecost, so the theme of the cantata is the Holy Spirit. As you know, a church service in Bach's time started with liturgy, hymns sung by the congregation, and then at the central point of the service, just before the sermon, the cantata was performed.

The cantata begins with a brilliant opening by Bach's typical festival orchestra: strings, continuo, trumpets and timpani.

The image displays the first six measures of the instrumental introduction for Cantata BWV 172. The score is arranged in ten staves, each labeled with an instrument: Trumpet 1, Trumpet 2, Trumpet 3, Timpani, Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola 1, Viola 2, Bassoon, and Continuo. The music is in 3/8 time and begins with a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The trumpets play a melodic line, while the strings and continuo provide a rhythmic accompaniment. The timpani part features a series of rhythmic pulses. The woodwinds (bassoon) and strings (violin and viola) play a more complex melodic line. The continuo part provides a steady bass line.

But not only is the orchestration typical for a feast day, it is also related to the text. The chorus begins with the word *Erschallet* [resound] and immediately after this imperative the trumpets start playing. Then the chorus says *erklinget, ihr Saiten!* [play, you strings!], and the strings will play. There is a direct and obvious connection between the words and music.

The image displays a page of a musical score. At the top, there are three staves for Trumpets (1, 2, and 3) and one for Timpani. Below these are four staves for strings: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola 1, and Viola 2. A Bassoon staff follows. The bottom section of the score is for the Chorus, with four parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. Each vocal part has lyrics written below the notes. The lyrics are: "Er - schal - let ihr Lie - der er - klin - get, ihr Sai - ten." The Continuo part is at the very bottom, providing a rhythmic accompaniment. The score is written in a standard musical notation with various note values, rests, and dynamic markings.

The music continues with the chorus in fast coloratura while the trumpets and timpani exchange chords with the strings, before joining together at the cadence.

This musical score page features 14 staves. The top five staves are for the brass and percussion sections: Trumpet 1, Trumpet 2, Trumpet 3, Timpani, and Violin I. The next four staves are for the string section: Violin 2, Viola 1, Viola 2, and Bassoon. The bottom five staves are for the vocal ensemble: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Continuo. The vocal parts include German lyrics: 'er - schal - let, er - klin - get, er - schal - let, ihr - er - schal - let, er - klin - get, er - schal - let, ihr - er - scha - let, er - kling - get, er -'.

Tpt. 1
 Vln. 1
 Vln. 2
 Vla. 1
 Vla. 2
 Bsn.
 S
 Lie - der, er - klin - get, ihr Sai - ten!
 A
 schal - let, er - klin - get, ihr Sai - ten!
 T
 Lie - der, er - klin - get, ihr Sai - ten!
 B
 schal - let, er - klin - get, ihr Sai - ten!
 Cont.

Later there is a different text *O seligste Zeiten!* [O most blessed times], referring to the appearance of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The chorus has a long held chord, holding fast to the most *blessed times*, as the trumpets and strings resume their dialogue.

Trumpet 1

Trumpet 2

Trumpet 3

Timpani

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola 1

Viola 2

Bassoon

Soprano
O se - - - - - lig - ste Zei - ten, o se - lig - ste Zei - ten, o se - - - - -

Alto
O se - - - - - lig - ste Zei - ten, o se - lig - ste Zei - ten, o se - - - - -

Tenor
O se - - - - - lig - ste Zei - ten, o se - lig - ste Zei - ten, o se - - - - -

Bass
O se - - - - - lig - ste Zei - ten, o se - lig - ste Zei - ten, o se - - - - -

Continuo

Tpt. 1
 Tpt. 2
 Tpt. 3
 Timp.
 Vln. 1
 Vln. 2
 Vla. 1
 Vla. 2
 Bsn.
 S
 A
 T
 B
 Cont.

- - - - - lig - ste Zei - ten, o se - lig - ste Zei - ten!
 - - - - - lig - ste Zei - ten, o se - lig - ste Zei - ten!
 - - - - - lig - ste Zei - ten, o se - lig - ste Zei - ten!
 - - - - - lig - ste Zei - ten, or se - lig - ste Zei - ten!

It is clear that this is wonderful and celebratory music, but Bach will explore further the meaning of Pentecost. In the middle section of this opening movement at the text *Gott will sich die Seelen zu Tempeln bereiten* [God will prepare the soul as temples] Bach invents a new motive.

Bass
 Gott will sich die See - len zu Tem - peln be - rei - (ten).

It is short theme that will be taken up by all the sections of the chorus and orchestra. This will continue for some time, always with the same text. At the end of this section comes a special moment: the sopranos will sing the motive one last time, and after that the chorus has an extended section sung only on a vowel. I think that Bach is describing God's Spirit that blows through the souls and needs no words to be understood.

Viola 1

Viola 2

Bassoon

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Continuo

Gott will sich die

Gott will sich die See - len zu Tem - peln be -

Gott will sich die See - len zu Tem - peln be - rei - ten, zu

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Bsn.

S

A

T

B

Cont.

Gott will sich die See - len zu Tem - peln be - rei - ten, die See -

See - len zu Tem - peln be - rei - ten, die See -

rei - ten, Gott will sich die See - len zu Tem - peln be -

Tem - peln be - rei - ten, Gott will sich die See - len zu

The image displays a musical score for a section of a Bach cantata. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes parts for Violin I and II, Viola I and II, Bassoon, Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Continuo. The vocal parts have lyrics in German: "ten, zu Tem - peln be - rei - ten, Gott will sich die See - len zu Tem - peln be -", "len zu Tem - peln be - rei", "rei ten, be", "Tem - peln be - rei ten, die See - len zu Tem - peln be". The second system continues the instrumental and vocal parts, with the vocal parts ending on the word "ten,".

And after this middle section Bach will repeat the opening and we hear that beautiful music again.

The opening chorus is followed by a series of solo movements for the four soloists. The first is for the bass, and it is in the form of a recitative, a form that highlights the text, not the melody. The text *Wer mich liebet, der wird mein Wort halten* [He who loves me will

keep my commandments] are the words of Christ. All of you who have attended the Bach Festival for many years know that Bach always composes words of Christ for the bass voice. We also hear how Bach interprets the text. The continuo holds a long note—*keep my commandments*.

Bass
Wer mich lie-bet, der wird mein Wort hal-ten, und mein Va-ter wird ihn lie-ben.

Continuo

Then the text continues *und mein Vater wird ihn lieben, und wir werden zu ihm kommen* [and my Father will love him and we will come to him]. Obviously this is a cause for joy, and so we hear Bach’s joy motive, a special rhythmic figure that Bach will use throughout his works to depict joy.

Here is that rhythm manifested in the cellos.

Continuo

This motive is only the background to the bass, who also sings the joy motive. At the end of this short piece there appears a canon, with the bass taking the lead and the continuo following. This form is another example of Bach’s musical language that will be used consistently throughout his compositions. His use of the canon will always describe how man should follow Christ. At the end of the recitative there is something unusual. Bach rarely writes the voice in unison with the continuo instruments, but here he does it to show that if one follows Christ, he will at the end be united with Him.

Bass
und Woh-nung bei ihm ma-chen, und wir

Continuo

B
wer-den zu ihm kom-men und Woh-nung bei ihm ma-chen.

Cont.

The recitative is followed by a bass aria. The text is *Heiligste Dreieinigkeit, Großer Gott der Ehren*, [Most holy Trinity, great God of honor]. This is the opening melodic line.

Bass
Hei - lig - ste Drei - ei - nig - keit, groß - er Gott, groß - er Gott.

Continuo

The keyword is the Holy Trinity: God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christian theology believes that the Three Persons of the Trinity are One Being. Once again we find Bach creating a language that depicts and describes a point of faith: the three trumpets, while separate instruments, play the exact same pitches.

Trumpet 1

Trumpet 2

Trumpet 3

This is a simple symbolism for a difficult theological belief. But the setting goes on with the trumpets and continuo unfolding in a most virtuosic way. The first trumpet has an especially brilliant part.

Trumpet 1

Trumpet 2

Trumpet 3

Timpani

Continuo

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Tpt. 3

Timp.

Cont.

And of course during the aria the orchestra is combined with the voice. We see Bach's joy motive once again.



The text says *Komm doch in die Herzenshütten* [come then into the shelter of our hearts], certainly a cause for joy.

Trumpet 1

Trumpet 2

Trumpet 3

Bass

Continuo

komm - - - - - doch, komm doch in die Her - zens - Hüt - ten, sind sie gleich ge - rig und

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Tpt. 3

B

Cont.

kelin, komm - - - - - doch, komm und lass dich doch er - bit - ten, komm und keh - re bei uns - ein,

After the brilliant bass aria that was dominated by trumpets and timpani, there is a great contrast in the following tenor aria. Now Bach will use just the upper strings in unison, with the counterpart in the bass continuo instruments. They have a slow walking rhythm while the strings have a floating melodic line that never ceases.

Violin I, II
Viola I, II
unisono

Continuo

Vln. I

Cont.

Vln. I

Cont.

When the tenor enters with the text *O Seelenparadies* [O paradise of souls] Bach continues with the music established at the beginning, but with the added voice in the middle. Above him are the upper strings, below him are the bass instruments: he is encircled by the Spirit.

Violin I, II
Viola I, II
unisono

Tenor

Continuo

Vln. Vla.

T

Cont.

Vln. Vla.

T

Cont.

Vln. Vla.

T

Cont.

Vln. Vla.

T

Cont.

O See - len - Pa - ra - dies, o See - len - Pa - ra - dies, das Got - tes

Geist durch we - het, o See - len - Pa - ra - dies,

o See - len - Pa - ra - dies, das Got - tes Geist durch we -

het;

And this will continue throughout the aria. Only at one moment there is a change at the text *auf, auf, bereite dich, Der Tröster nahet sich* [up, up, prepare yourself, the comforter draws near].

Violin I, II
Viola I, II
unisono

Tenor

Continuo

Vln. Vla.

T

Cont.

auf, auf, be - rei - te dich, auf, auf, be - rei - te dich! der Trö - ster na - het sich.

The next aria is a duet for the soprano and alto. The soprano represents the soul *Komm, laß mich nicht länger warten, Komm, du sanfter Himmelswind* [Come, let me wait no longer, come, you gentle breeze of heaven].

Soprano

Komm, laß mich nicht länger warten, komm, du sanfter Himmelswind.

The Spirit, represented by the alto, answers *Ich erquickte dich, mein Kind* [I refresh you, my child].

Alto

Ich erquickte dich, mein Kind.

The two speak in dialogue with each other.

Soprano

Alto

S

A

Komm, laß mich nicht länger warten, komm, du sanfter Himmelswind, komm, laß mich nicht länger warten, komm, komm.

Ich erquickte dich, mein Kind.

S
A
Cont.
Org.

he durch den Herzensgarten!
Kind, ich erquicke dich, mein Kind, ich erquicke dich, mein Kind.

And now we come to the last movement of the cantata. The text is *Von Gott kömmt mir ein Freudenschein* [A joyful light comes to me from God]. It is a typical four part setting in the chorus, with the melody in the sopranos, and most of the instruments doubling the voices.

Soprano
Alto
Tenor
Bass

Von Gott kömmt mir ein Freudenschein, wenn du mit deinen Augenlein mich freundlich thust anblicken.
Von Gott kömmt mir ein Freudenschein, wenn du mit deinen Augenlein mich freundlich thust anblicken.
Von Gott kömmt mir ein Freudenschein, wenn du mit deinen Augenlein mich freundlich thust anblicken.
Von Gott kömmt mir ein Freudenschein, wenn du mit deinen Augenlein mich freundlich thust anblicken.

But the first violins have an independent part that lies higher than the sopranos of the chorus. One has to ask why Bach adds an *obligato* to the chorale. There is one word in the text that explains his intention, *Freudenschein* [joyful light]. Here is the independent melody.

Violin I

The chorale is straight-forward with a steady rhythm, but the violin *obligato* has many syncopations and counter rhythms. This joy from heaven is something that is alive; it does not conform to things on earth, but makes life richer, more beautiful. Here is the *obligato* with the chorale.

Violin I

Violin 2

Viola 1

Viola 2

Soprano
Von Gott kommt mir ein Freuden-schein, wenn du mit deinen Augen mich freundlich thust anblicken.

Alto
Von Gott kommt mir ein Freuden-schein, wenn du mit deinen Augen mich freundlich thust anblicken.

Tenor
Von Gott kommt mir ein Freuden-schein, wenn du mit deinen Augen mich freundlich thust anblicken.

Bass
Von Gott kommt mir ein Freuden-schein, wenn du mit deinen Augen mich freundlich thust anblicken.

Continuo

The second half of the chorale text says *Nimm mich in dein Arme, daß ich warme werd von Gnaden* [Take me in your arms, so that I may become warm with your grace]. Bach gives to the basses of the chorus a wonderful melody that starts in low range, goes high, and returns to the opening low range; a gesture of being grasped and blanketed in grace.

Violin I

Violin 2

Viola 1

Viola 2

Soprano
Nimm ich freundlich in dein Ar-me, dass ich war-me werd von Gna-den: Auf dein Wort komm ich ge-la-den.

Alto
Nimm mich freundlich in dein Ar-me, dass ich war-me wer von Gna-den: Auf dein Wort komm ich ge-la-den.

Tenor
Nimm mich freundlich in dein Ar-me, das ich war-me wer von Gna-den: Auf dein Wort komm ich ge-la-den.

Bass
Nimm mich freundlich in dein Ar-me, dass ich war-me werd von Gna-den: Auf dein Wort komm ich ge-la-den.

Continuo

This is the final movement in the score, but Bach instructs the bright opening chorus to be repeated, something that he rarely does in his cantatas.