



BACH EDITION



CANTATAS/KANTATEN

Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott BWV 80

Ich habe genug BWV 82

Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland BWV 61



BRILLIANT
CLASSICS

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

CANTATAS BWV 80-82 & 61

Our picture of Bach is very much that of the Thomaskirche cantor in Leipzig. For no less than 27 years he was responsible for the church music on Sundays and feast-days in the four main Leipzig churches: the Thomaskirche, Nicolaikirche, Peterskirche and Neue Kirche. Here Bach composed his many cantatas, his now world-famous St John Passion and St Matthew Passion, and the motets. To perform them he selected the best choral singers from the pupils of the neighbouring Thomasschule and students of Leipzig University. Choir practices were held on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, and on Saturday choir, soloists and orchestra rehearsed for the cantata services on Sunday. Often, however, there was hardly time to rehearse, and much to Bach's annoyance performances often left much to be desired. Bach's enormous production of cantatas in Leipzig and previously in Weimar (an estimated 300), combined with their remarkable quality, forms one of the most astounding creative outbursts in music history.

Cantata 80 'Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott' is a rather large-scale work (8 movements totalling about 30 minutes) written around 1728-31 for Reformation Day. As far as we know the work is an extended version of Cantata 80a 'Alles was von Gott geboren' written in Weimar in 1715. Precisely when and for what purpose the cantata was written, we do not know. Bach appears to have added the opening chorus and central chorale (no. 5) later. Bach's eldest son Wilhelm Friedemann reinforced the already large and festive instrumentation by adding trumpets and timpani in nos. 1 and 5. The cantata opens with one of Bach's very finest choral movements and ends with a simple and sober chorale to the tune 'Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott', the Lutheran hymn par excellence.

Cantata 82 'Ich habe genug' (1727) is one of Bach's most moving and popular solo cantatas. With the cantata 'Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen' it belongs to the favourite repertoire of bass singers. The five-movement cantata 'Ich habe genug', however, exists in three different versions including one for soprano and one for mezzo-soprano. The sober instrumentation, comprising solo voice, oboe, strings and basso continuo, was probably prompted by the fact that the work was written for the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary on 2 February.

The six-movement Advent Cantata 61 'Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland' (1714) is one of about 20 cantatas which Bach wrote in Weimar. The work is embraced by two choral movements, both based on world-famous chorale tunes, the first on the Lutheran hymn 'Nun komm der Heiden Heiland' and the final chorus on 'Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern'. In the second recitative (no. 4) there is a very graphic moment when Christ (the bass soloist) knocks on the door, accompanied by plucked notes on the strings.

Clemens Romijn



BACH EDITION



CANTATAS/KANTATEN

Herr Gott, dich loben wir

BWV 16

Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust

BWV 170

Ich freue mich in dir

BWV 133

BRILLIANT


JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

CANTATAS BWV 16-170 & 133

The six-movement Cantata 16 'Herr Gott, dich loben wir' is a New Year cantata, written for the new year of 1726. It is based on the text and tune of Martin Luther's German Te Deum, 'Herr Gott, dich loben wir', written in 1529. The beginning of the Te Deum is heard in long notes in the soprano part of the elaborate opening chorus, and in the accompanying horn part. The jubilant mood of the New Year's feast is superbly expressed in the aria 'Lasst uns jauchzen' (no. 3), where Bach combines a bass aria with a choral section. The words 'jauchzen' (= rejoice) and 'krönt' (= crowns) are grasped by Bach to create wonderful moments of text expression.

Cantata 170 'Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust' was written for 28 July 1726, the 6th Sunday after Trinity. It is a solo cantata for alto, without choir and therefore even without a final chorale, but with an obbligato organ part in the two arias (nos. 3 and 5). Instead of drawing on the bible, the text of this cantata is a free poem by Georg Christian Lehms (1711), based on passages from the Sermon on the Mount dealing with man's malice, his miserable existence and his longing for peace in death. The greatest misery comes to those who do not believe, according to the text. In the aria 'Wie jammern mich doch die verkehrten Herzen' (no. 3) they have lost the very ground under their feet. Bach silences the ever-present continuo and bases the movement on a thin thread spun by the viola ('Bassettchen').

The six-movement chorale Cantata 133 'Ich freue mich in dir' was written for the 3rd day of Christmas in 1724. It is symmetrically constructed, with a choral movement at the beginning and end, and four movements in between consisting of aria-recitative and aria-recitative. Despite the festive occasion the instrumentation is relatively sober, comprising four soloists, four-part choir, two oboes d'amore, cornett, strings and basso continuo. The fact that singers and players were already under great pressure on the first two days of Christmas probably played a role. This may also explain the cornett part, which simply reinforces the sopranos in the opening and final choruses, giving extra colour to the chorale tune 'Ich freue mich in dir'.

Clemens Romijn



BACH EDITION



CANTATAS/KANTATEN

In allen meinen Taten

BWV 97

Bereitet die Wege, bereitet die Bahn

BWV 132

Alles nur nach Gottes Willen

BWV 72

BRILLIANT
S

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

CANTATAS BWV 97-132 & 72

The nine-movement Cantata 97 'In allen meinen Taten' is a relatively late cantata, dated 1734. Precisely for what purpose and which liturgical Sunday or feastday Bach wrote this work, we do not know. The church hymn 'In allen meinen Taten' is given only to the opening chorus and the final chorale movement. This cantata has an unusual number of solo pieces (five), among them four arias, and an even more strikingly small number of recitatives (two). The opening chorus is in the style of a French overture with characteristic dotted rhythm. The chorale melody is given as a *cantus firmus* to the soprano. The four arias are written for bass, tenor, alto and soprano-bass duet respectively. In two of them (nos. 4 and 6) the solo violin plays a striking role. Especially in the first one, 'Ich traue seiner Gnaden', it has a very expressive and virtuosic part full of scale-like passages and double stops.

Cantata 132 'Bereitet die Wege, bereitet die Bahn' is also based on a text by Salomon Franck; but it was written in Bach's Weimar period in 1715, about eleven years earlier than Cantata 72 and therefore at the time when Franck wrote his poem. Composed for the 4th Sunday in Advent, it is a rather soberly scored work for four soloists, oboe, solo violin, strings and basso continuo, almost a 'chamber' instrumentation like many Weimar cantatas. The work comprises three arias and two recitatives, without an opening or final chorus. The coloratura soprano and oboe parts present a colourful image of the opening text 'Bereitet die Wege, bereitet die Bahn'.

Cantata 72 'Alles nur nach Gottes Willen' was composed for 27 January 1726, the 3rd Sunday after Epiphany. The work includes music which Bach used later as the basis of the first Gloria chorus in the Mass in G Minor BWV 235. The text of the cantata is by Salomon Franck, Bach's favourite cantata poet in Weimar, to whom he often resorted again in his later Leipzig cantatas. The text is strongly reminiscent of that of Cantata 73 'Herr, wie du willst, so schicks mit mir', likewise for the 3rd Sunday after Epiphany. In the music too the cantatas seem to quote one another. The fragment 'Herr, so du willst' in the arioso of no. 2 in Cantata 72 is identical to a passage with exactly the same text in the bass aria no. 4 in Cantata 73. The work concludes with the chorale 'Was mein Gott will, das g'scheh allzeit'.

Clemens Romijn



BACH EDITION



CANTATAS/KANTATEN

Herr Jesu Christ, du höchstes Gut BWV 113

Am Abend aber desselbigen Sabbats BWV 42



JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

CANTATAS BWV 113 & 42

Bach composed Cantata 113 'Herr Jesu Christ, du höchstes Gut' for 20 August 1724, the 11th Sunday after Trinity. It is a typical chorale cantata, in which the chorale tune 'Herr Jesu Christ, du höchstes Gut' has left its mark on no less than four different movements. It is first introduced in the opening chorus, where it is sung line for line by the sopranos. In the following chorale (no. 2) the same tune is heard without ornamentation in the alto, frequently interrupted by instrumental refrains featuring descending scale motifs. Commentators have suggested that these motifs were inspired by the words 'wer sich selbst erniedrigt'. In the recitative 'Jedoch dein heilsam Wort' the chorale tune is sung by the bass, in combination with a most lively basso continuo. In the duet 'Ach Herr, mein Gott' (no. 7) Bach has again incorporated the chorale melody, though less conspicuously, less completely and with more embellishment. Finally, the chorale tune is heard once more in the final chorale.

In Leipzig the composition and performance of about 60 sacred cantatas each year for Sundays and feast-days was one of Bach's most important tasks as cantor of the Thomaskirche. Beside composing new cantatas for this purpose he adapted earlier works too (concerto and sonata movements and parts of secular cantatas), sometimes employing a new text to suit the specific occasion. By re-using his own work he was able to ensure that his best music was not forgotten.

An example is Cantata 42 'Am Abend aber desselbigen Sabbats', composed for Sunday 8 April 1725, the 1st Sunday after Easter, otherwise known as Quasimodogeniti. This name originates from the opening text for Mass on this Sunday, Quasimodo geniti infantes, meaning 'as new-born babes'. Bach commences the cantata with an instrumental Sinfonia somewhat reminiscent of the Brandenburg Concertos and probably based on a lost instrumental work. In this first movement the wind group (two oboes and bassoon) competes with a string group (two violins and viola). The cantata comprises seven movements: the opening sinfonia is followed by two recitatives, two arias and two chorales, firstly 'Verzage nicht, du Häuflein klein', and as final chorale 'Verleih' uns Frieden gnädiglich'.

Clemens Romijn



BACH EDITION



CANTATAS/KANTATEN

Allein zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ	BWV 33
Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen	BWV 56
Wer da gläubet und getauft wird	BWV 37

BRILLIANT
CLASSICS

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

CANTATAS BWV 33-56 & 37

Cantata 33 'Allein zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ' was intended for 3 September 1724, the 13th Sunday after Trinity. It belongs to the second annual cycle of cantatas written by Bach for performance in Leipzig and consisting largely of chorale cantatas. Konrad Hubert's chorale 'Allein zu dir, Herr Jesus Christ', written in 1540, is woven into the four-part texture of the canonic opening chorus, and returns again in the final chorale. Bach's first annual cycle of Leipzig cantatas includes Cantata 37 'Wer da gläubet und getauft wird', composed for Ascension Day, 18 May 1724. Here Bach employed the world-famous tune of 'Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern' in a duet for alto and tenor to the new text 'Herr Gott Vater, mein starker Held' (no. 3).

One of Bach's most beautiful works for solo voice and orchestra is Cantata 56 'Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen' (BWV 56). This intimate cantata for Sunday 27 October 1726, the 17th Sunday after Trinity, was originally written for Bach's second wife Anna Magdalena, who had a fine soprano voice and was often involved in performances of Bach's music. Later, in 1731-32, Bach adapted the cantata for alto and even bass; since then this work has moved countless churchgoers and concert audiences. The composition is based on the gospel for the 19th Sunday after Trinity (St Matthew 9: 1-8), which tells of the paralysed man who was healed by Christ and redeemed from his sins. In the first aria, with a wonderful feeling for text depiction, Bach symbolises the word 'Kreuzstab' (cross) with a # (C sharp) and illustrates 'tragen' (bearing) with expressive 'seufzer' (sighing) motifs in voice and instruments. At the text 'Da leg ich den Kummer auf einmal ins Grab' the bass sings in a sudden and conspicuous triplet rhythm, with a descending sixth at the word 'Grab' (grave). These fine phrases of resignation are reinforced by long bass notes, affective 'sighing' in the strings and oboes, and a combination of quavers and triplets. In the ensuing recitative we are again reminded of the same passage from St Matthew, where Christ crosses the water by boat and arrives in his city. At the text 'Mein Wandel auf der Welt ist einer Schifffahrt gleich' Bach suggests the movement of the waves with an undulating motif in the solo cello part. This accompaniment stops suddenly as the tired traveller reaches heaven, leaving the ship and finally finding peace after such sorrow: 'So tret' ich aus dem Schiff in meine Statt, die ist das Himmelreich, wohin ich mit den Frommen aus vieler Trübsal werde kommen'. Full of joy, the solo voice and oboe ring out to the text 'Endlich wird mein Joch wieder von mir weichen müssen' in the following da capo aria in B flat major. The cantata concludes with a simple chorale setting, 'Komm, o Tod'.

Clemens Romijn