

Tracklisting · English

1 cantatas vol.1

J.S.

bach


FRITZ WERNER

AGNES GIEBEL, HELMUT KREBS

HEINRICH SCHÜTZ CHOIR, HEILBRONN  
PFORZHEIM CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

REICHELT · SAILER · SCHERLER  
JELDEN · STÄMPFLI · MCDANIEL



 Warner Classics

2564 61401-2 Booklet 1

**Reinhold Barchet** violin · **Jacoba Muckel** cello · **Eva Hölderlin** organ

*Producer: Michel Garcin · Recording engineer: Peter Willemoës*

*Recording location: Ilsfeld, Germany, 1961*

**Darzu ist erschienen der Sohn Gottes, BWV 40**

*For this there was sent us Christ the Saviour · C'est pour cela que le fils de Dieu est apparu*

*Feria 2 Nativitatis Christi*

*Cantata for the Second Day of Christmas · Pour le 2<sup>ème</sup> jour de Noël · Am 2. Weihnachtstag*

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|----|---|------|
| 07 | 1. [Coro]: Darzu ist erschienen der Sohn Gottes<br><i>Corni, oboi, violini, viola, basso continuo</i>     | 4.40 |
| 08 | 2. Recitativo (Tenore): Das Wort ward Fleisch<br><i>Basso continuo</i>                                    | 1.28 |
| 09 | 3. Choral (Coro): Die Sünd macht Leid<br><i>Corno, oboi, violini, viola, basso continuo</i>               | 0.42 |
| 10 | 4. Aria (Basso): Höllische Schlange, wird dir nicht bange?<br><i>Oboi, violini, viola, basso continuo</i> | 2.46 |
| 11 | 5. Recitativo (Alto): Die Schlange, so im Paradies<br><i>Violini, viola, basso continuo</i>               | 1.08 |
| 12 | 6. Choral (Coro): Schüttele deinen Kopf und sprich<br><i>Corno, oboi, violini, viola, basso continuo</i>  | 0.55 |
| 13 | 7. Aria (Tenore): Christenkinder, freuet euch<br><i>Corni, oboi, basso continuo</i>                       | 4.29 |
| 14 | 8. Choral (Coro): Jesu, nimm dich deiner Glieder<br><i>Corno, oboi, violini, viola, basso continuo</i>    | 1.12 |

**Claudia Hellmann** alto · **Georg Jelden** tenor · **Jakob Stämpfli** bass

**Pierre Pierlot, Jacques Chambon** oboes · **Hermann Baumann, Willy Rütten** horns

**Jacoba Muckel** cello · **Eva Hölderlin** organ

*Producer: Michel Garcin · Recording engineer: Peter Willemoës*

*Recording location: Heilbronn, Germany, June 1964*

## Fritz Werner's Bach

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Renewed interest in Bach's cantatas and, to a lesser extent, his two great Passions and the Christmas Oratorio, was given sustained impetus in the early 1950s by the arrival of the LP. This led to a surge of recordings of Bach's vocal music, particularly his church cantatas, most of which were still unknown outside Germany, except by those who had access to the editions of the Bach-Gesellschaft, begun in 1851 and completed in 1899. *Thomaskantor* Günther Ramin was the first to embark upon a recorded series of Bach's cantatas, recording many of them for German Radio between 1950 and his death in 1956 with the choir of the Leipzig Thomaskirche and members of the Gewandhaus Orchestra. Some twenty-five or more of these were later issued on LP and more recently on CD. Other conductors who made significant contributions during the 1950s include Hermann Scherchen and Felix Prohaska in Vienna, Fritz Lehmann in Berlin and Kurt Thomas, Ramin's successor in Leipzig.

By the late 1950s the number of recordings of Bach's cantatas was increasing. Some of them, notably by a variety of German *Kantor*-conductors such as Wilhelm Ehmann, Wolfgang Gönnerwein, Hans Grischkat, Diethard Hellmann and Helmut Kahlhöfer, were loosely connected with the editorial work of the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* (New Bach Edition), begun in 1950. These were comparatively small in number, however, and were quickly overtaken by the two major recording projects of the Bach cantatas in the 1960s and 1970s: by Karl Richter in Munich and Fritz Werner in Heilbronn, near Stuttgart.

Fritz Werner was born in Berlin on 15 December 1898. At the end of the First World War he was taken prisoner by the British, and he only began to study music in 1920. In 1936, on the recommendation of Wilhelm Kempff, he was appointed organist and choirmaster of the Nikolaikirche in Potsdam, a Neo-classical church designed by the famous German architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel. Two years later, in 1938, Werner was appointed to Potsdam's Garrison Church, the Prussian "Holy of Holies" where the Prussian Kings were buried. At the outbreak of the Second World War he fought in the Polish campaign and in the battles around the Maginot Line in France.



The Nazis then gave him the job of *Musikbeauftragter* in Occupied France. In this position, part of which put him in charge of music for the radio, he came into close contact with the composer and director of the Paris Conservatoire, Claude Delvincourt (1888–1954), who, like Werner, possessed humanist qualities which were widely recognised. Another part of Werner's job was to send French musicians to Germany for *travail obligatoire* (forced labour), and his protection of many of them made him a much-loved figure in the musical life of Occupied France, which he upheld with conviction. An illustration<sup>1</sup> of Werner's compassion is contained in a charmingly mischievous anecdote concerning the twenty-year-old oboist Pierre Pierlot, whose playing features prominently in this Edition. Pierlot was told that he had to go to Königsberg in eastern Prussia for forced labour. He replied that his father would not let him go because it was too far. By the time the German official involved had found out who his father was, Pierlot had escaped his clutches. But not for long; a month later the German bumped into him again in the orchestra where he was principal oboe. Pierlot hid as best he could behind his desk until the leader called out "Pierlot, give us an A!". The German pretended he had heard nothing. He was Fritz Werner. After the war, when Erato needed a first-rate oboist to play in the Bach cantata recordings in Germany, Pierlot eagerly offered his services by way of thanking Werner, to whom he owed so much. The story has it that when Werner apologised to Pierlot for not at once recognising him because he looked so well, the oboist replied: "Since you Germans were driven out of France we can eat as much as we want, just as we used to. And, by the way, you look much better in a shirt than in a uniform". In August 1944 Werner again became a prisoner, this time of the Americans. He later returned to Germany, where he was interned in the Heilbronn-Böckingen camp, from which he was released in 1946.

Werner settled in Heilbronn and, over a period of thirty years, tirelessly promoted its musical life. He founded the Church Music Hours (a concert tradition which still flourishes), the Church Choral Days and, in 1947, the Heilbronn Heinrich Schütz Choir, which nowadays travels extensively and with which Werner made all his Bach choral recordings with the French company Erato. Werner, who, in addition to his many responsibilities as organist and choirmaster, was a prolific composer, was honoured both in Germany and in France where he was made a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. Fritz Werner died in Heidelberg on 22 December 1977.

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Mlle Danielle Loury and Mme Françoise Garcin for making this anecdote available to me. It is contained in *Le Miracle Erato*, a newly published history of the company by Thierry Merle.

Between 1957 and 1973 Werner recorded fifty-five of Bach's church cantatas as well as the St John and St Matthew Passions, the Christmas, Easter and Ascension Oratorios, the B minor Mass (his first recording for Erato) and the motets. His Heilbronn choir was a large one by the standards of today and could not always match the discipline and vocal unanimity achieved by Karl Richter's rival Munich Bach Choir. But any choral weakness that occasionally may be felt in Werner's performances is amply compensated for by his discerning choice of soloists and the almost unflinching excellence of his instrumentalists. The solo voices, almost invariably from German-speaking countries, include some of the finest oratorio and cantata singers of the twentieth century. From among them special mention might be made of sopranos Agnes Giebel, Ingeborg Reichelt and Friederike Sailer, tenor Helmut Krebs and basses Jakob Stämpfli and Barry McDaniel. Giebel was the leading soprano in Bach's music during the 1950s and 60s, when she sang not only for Werner, but also, among others, for Otto Klemperer, Eugen Jochum, Günther Ramin, Kurt Thomas, Helmut Winschermann, Gustav Leonhardt and Diethard Hellmann, who gave, with Giebel, the first performance in modern times of Bach's version for soprano of the cantata *Ich habe genug*, BWV 82. Ingeborg Reichelt was one of the most active Bach sopranos during the 1950s, 60s and 70s. One of Werner's "regulars", she sang in both his first and last cantata recordings for Erato. Friederike Sailer was greatly in demand for Baroque and Early Classical repertoire during the 1950s and 60s and her clear, youthful-sounding voice with its tautly controlled vibrato foreshadowed the singing techniques of the incipient Early Music movement. Krebs comfortably ranks among the very finest twentieth-century interpreters of the role of the Evangelist in Bach's Passions and oratorios. His clear diction, scrupulous attention to textual content and poetic responses to the contours of Bach's declamation have all the command and urgency of the most accomplished narrators. His cantata recordings are extensive and his contribution to the reawakening interest in Early Music during the 1950s is both historically important and musically satisfying. American baritone Barry McDaniel proved to be one of Werner's most sympathetic soloists, and his partnership with Giebel in BWV 57 may be considered among the highlights of Werner's recordings.

While his vocalists were drawn mainly from German-speaking countries, Werner's choice of instrumentalists revealed a Franco-German alliance which was as unusual in the 1950s and 60s as it

was highly successful. Among the most outstanding players from France were trumpeter Maurice André (for whom Werner wrote a *Suite concertante*) and oboist Pierre Pierlot (both of whom enjoyed an especially warm rapport with each other as well as with Werner) as well as organist Marie-Claire Alain. Other French stalwarts included Pierlot's almost constant partner Jacques Chambon, and bassoonist Paul Hongne. From a traditionally rich pool of German players, trumpeter Walter Gleissle, oboist Friedrich Milde, horn virtuoso Hermann Baumann, violinist Reinhold Barchet (whose premature death in 1962 was an early blow to the project) and viola da gambist August Wenzinger were notable for their stylish, sensitive and sometimes dazzling contributions. The Pforzheim Chamber Orchestra, or Southwest German Chamber Orchestra as it is alternatively known, which provided the orchestral support throughout the series, was founded in 1950 by Friedrich Tilegant, a student of Hindemith. Almost all the recordings were made in the Protestant churches at Illfeld and Schwaigern near Heilbronn in Baden-Württemberg.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, with the passing of almost fifty years since Werner began his Bach series, historical perspective has widened and old certainties are increasingly called into question. In the white heat of the Early Music debates of the 1970s and 1980s, his style, along with that of Karl Richter and most of the others who went before them, was all but consigned to oblivion, sometimes with petulant intolerance. As the period-instrument revival and the new values of historically informed performance took firm root, the performances of Werner and his generation seemed irretrievably, if unashamedly, old-fashioned. Yet the contrast with contemporary Bach performance is often thought-provoking and frequently satisfying. With the rapid development of recording techniques we have been able to witness, and retain as evidence, changes and developments in performance practice as never before. Werner's lyrical approach to Bach's vocal music, evident above all in the arias and smaller ensembles of the cantatas and Passions, is perhaps his great distinguishing feature. With the participation of many of the finest vocalists and instrumentalists from the two decades preceding the growth of period-instrument and historically informed performances, Werner achieved results that are refreshingly free from contrived or self-conscious expression. His natural, unlaboured feeling for dance rhythms (the tenor aria in BWV 87 springs to mind), his intuitive response to the poetic potential in a phrase (demonstrated with such

affecting sensibility in the opening chorus of BWV 104) and the infectiously spontaneous, highly charged energy with which he could enliven Bach's vivid responses to a colourful text (the bass aria of BWV 130 provides an unforgettable instance) are virtues which further enhance Werner's intimate understanding of this music.

## The Cantatas — A brief introduction

Bach's encounter with Italian music at the Weimar court, where he served first as *Hoforganist* and subsequently as *Konzertmeister*, caused a radical change in his style. In the late seventeenth century, Lutheran cantatas were characterised by their formal variety, albeit with a cohesive chorale element. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, the alternating pattern of recitative and aria, established above all by Alessandro Scarlatti, together with the late Baroque Italian predilection for vocal and instrumental virtuosity, was gradually finding favour with German composers of sacred and secular music alike. They were further encouraged in the pursuit of new trends by a cycle of devotional poetry by the Hamburg theologian Erdmann Neumeister. In the first of his poetic anthologies of *Geistliche Cantaten*, published in 1700, Neumeister described a cantata as resembling "a piece from an opera made up of recitative style and arias". Neumeister had given the Lutheran cantata a new definition, while at the same time implying a homogeneity of form sometimes lacking in the cantatas of Bach's predecessors. Neumeister's texts provided complete cycles of cantatas for the church year and were taken up, to a greater or lesser extent, by almost all northern and central German *Kantors*. They were attracted both by the dramatic qualities of recitative and the *da capo* aria, and by Neumeister's discerning blend of orthodox congregational faith and his Pietist emphasis on the individual soul. Among the first composers to embrace Neumeister's ideas were Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow (1663–1712) in Halle and Bach's predecessor in Leipzig, Johann Kuhnau (1660–1722). But it was composers of the next generation, such as Christoph Graupner (1683–1760) in Darmstadt, Telemann and Bach, who exploited them most thoroughly.

While Neumeister's standardised form of cantata texts did not find universal favour, most German composers of sacred music, including Bach, recognised that his reforms, along with



developing musical techniques, offered a new and vivid means of affectingly celebrating the faith. At the same time, the forms of the secular and sacred cantata in north and central Germany were brought more closely together, enabling Bach to “parody” music from his secular *drammi per musica* in his sacred works with complete propriety and consummate skill.

Although by far the greater number of Bach’s cantatas were composed during a four-year period of almost incredible creativity following his installation as *Thomaskantor* at Leipzig in 1723, a significant number belong to his earlier years at Weimar. His appointment there as *Konzertmeister* in 1714, which lasted until his departure for Cöthen in 1717, incurred duties which included the monthly provision of a cantata for performance in the Weimar court chapel, the Himmelsburg. In addition to these main periods of production Bach also composed sacred cantatas at Mühlhausen (1707–08) and at other times during his long tenure at Leipzig. Fritz Werner recorded cantatas from each of these periods.

Cantatas formed an integral part of the Lutheran liturgy in Leipzig. Their texts were usually related to the appointed Gospel, and they were sung after the Gospel reading, before the sermon. Sometimes a second cantata, or the second part of one, might follow the sermon. As *Thomaskantor* at Leipzig, Bach himself would almost invariably have directed the choir and instrumentalists, probably not from the organ (which would have been played by the regular organist) but perhaps, on occasion, from the harpsichord.

The intimacy of the passages of delicately shaded word-painting, which frequently occur in Bach’s earliest cantatas, are stylistically anchored to the late seventeenth century. This intimacy can be realised only intermittently in performances employing the large forces traditionally used during the 1950s and earlier. Werner’s decision, for whatever reason, to treat *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, BWV 4 chorally throughout is unlikely to please sensibilities attuned to the smaller, if not one-to-a-part, vocal ensembles of today. Yet his acute and personal insights into Bach’s music in all its various moods, his grasp of an overall design and his ability to sustain poetically an extended contour, are among the greatest enchantments of his performances, assuring us of a high and satisfying level of interest.

**Nicholas Anderson**

the cantata's last tonal centre (A minor was the key of the Luther hymn, C major that of the tenor-congregation's sphere; G major now becomes the key of the soul enlightened by Christ). The latter's concluding aria is in fact Protestant spiritual music, devoid of all extravagance, possessing the simplest and most sincere tunefulness. In the concluding chorale, this fervour becomes outward-looking and rises to Advent exultation, raising the violins to a very high G.

**Darzu ist erschienen der Sohn Gottes, BWV 40** combines in its text general thoughts of Christmas with a specific reference to the reading of the Gospel on the Feast of St Stephen (St Matthew 23: 34–39; compare verse 37 with section seven) which coincides with the Second Day of Christmas. The day for which this cantata was composed, 26 December 1723, appears to have been celebrated in the church service as a commemorative day of the first Christian martyr. Furthermore, the unknown author incorporated a comparatively large number of choral verses in his text, while Bach did not use the opportunity for varying compositional treatment. The generous arrangement of the introductory movement is worthy of special notice; it has an especially festive effect due to the addition of two horns. Both in the mainly chordal outer sections and in the fugal middle section the text is sung in full. In this connection the contrast of “Son of God – Devil” is also emphasised musically, particularly in the two themes of the choral fugue (combined with each other after the exposition of the first), in their graphically contradistinct design (song-like – declamatory; tranquil – animated). The text of sentences four and five is only comprehensible with reference to the word of God to the serpent (Genesis 3: 15) “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel”. Christian theology understood these words to be the first reference to Christ: he will bruise the head of the diabolical serpent. Rocking, uninterrupted semiquaver figures depict the serpent in both sentences; appropriately they descend into the bass of the continuo only on the words “Der dir den Kopf als ein Sieger zerknickt” (sentence four). Victory over Satan still has to be achieved (dotted rhythms in sentence four), but its certainty is indicated by the dance-like rhythm of the first aria and the horn signals of the second aria with which the joyful character of the introductory movement is re-established.