

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas

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Form: Chorus/Fantasia - Aria (B) - Recit (S) - Trio/Chorale (SAT) - Recit (B) - Chorale.  
Cantus firmus: Soprano Recorder Alto Soprano

Symmetry

J.S.

Joyful Message of New Age in Christ

Grateful Reception of the Message

## Cantata No. 122 Das neugeborne Kindelein

Alfred Dürr writes, "We are struck by the predominance of the chorale cantus firmus and the subservient function of the instruments. Indeed, despite the brevity of the four-verse chorale, only two of the six movements are independent of it." See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, translated by Richard Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 141.

(Coro.) (Chorale Verse 1) Christ's birth brings a new year to Christendom (122/1).

122/1. (Moderato  $\text{♩} = 120$ )

Instrumentation:  
Recorders I, II, III (no. 3)  
Ob I, II  
Taille  
Vin I, II  
Via  
SATB  
Continuo

Ritornello *mf* Minuet-like with periodic phrases & echo effects; here a cradle song.

Swooping scalar figures point to the angels referenced in the following two movements (see especially the angels' melisma in no. 2, mm. 18-21). The 3 oboes (and later 3 recorders) give the cantata a pastoral air.

G minor

G minor hemiola

A (Mel: „Das neugebor'ne Kindelein“)

16. Soprano. Chorale text line 1.

Das neu - ge - bor' - ne Kin - de - lein, das  
Das neu - ge - bor' - ne Kin - de -  
Das neu - ge - bor' - ne Kin - de -  
Das neu - ge - bor' - ne

Chorale phrase opening in diminution (text given 2 times).

The ritornello proves to have the developmental possibility of absorbing the entire first chorale line. See Konrad Küster, ed., *Bach Handbuch* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1999), p. 280.

G minor

= m. 1 = approx. m. 2 = approx. m. 3 = approx. m. 4 = approx. m. 5

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22

ne Kin - de - lein,

neu - ge - bor' - ne Kin - de - lein,

lein, das neu ge - bor' - ne Kin - de - lein,

Kin - de - lein,

Ritornello

= approx. m. 6. = approx. m. 7. = approx. m. 8. = approx. m. 9. = approx. m. 10.

G minor

28

G minor

34

*p* *mf* *p*

G(7) C minor G minor G minor

B Chorale text line 2.

40

Konrad Küster notes that, although the ritornello does not fit subsequent chorale phrases as well as the first one, Bach treats its material flexibly, "varying the intervallic relationship between its building blocks—and so the music of the opening also permeates the rest of the movement." ("Doch Bach behandelt den Orchestersatz flexibel, er variiert die Intervallbeziehung zwischen dessen Bausteinen—und so durchzieht die Musik der Eröffnung auch den übrigen Satz." See Konrad Küster, ed., *Bach Handbuch* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1999), p. 280.)

das her -

das her - ze -

Chorale phrase opening in diminution (text given 2 times).

hemiola

*mf* *tr*

das her - ze - lie - be

G minor G minor

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46.

ze - lie - be Je - su -  
lie - be Je - su - lein, das her - ze - lie - be Je - su -  
das her - ze - lie - be Je - su - lein, das her - ze -  
Je su - lein, das her - ze - lie - be Je - su -

C7 F major C# dim.7

51.

lein,  
lein, das her - ze lie - be Je - su - lein,  
lie - be, her - ze - lie - be Je - su - lein,  
lein, das her - ze - lie - be Je - su - lein,

Ritornello

D major G minor D minor D minor

56.

*p*

62.

*mf* *p* *mf* hemiola

D minor

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68

C Chorale text line 3.

bringt a - ber - mal  
bringt a - ber - mal - ein neu - es Jahr, ein  
bringt a - ber - mal - ein neu - es, ein

Chorale phrase opening hinted in diminution (text given 3 times). "New Year" here suggests the new age in salvation history, as referenced in the Epistle reading: "When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son" (Galatians 4:4).

bringt a - ber - mal ein neu - es

tr C coll 8.....

D minor D7 G minor

74

ein neu - es Jahr  
neu - es Jahr, bringt a - ber - mal ein neu - es  
neu - es Jahr, bringt a - ber - mal ein neu - es  
Jahr, bringt a - ber - mal ein neu - es

79

Jahr, bringt a - ber - mal ein neu - es Jahr  
Jahr, bringt a - ber - mal ein neu - es Jahr  
Jahr, bringt a - ber - mal ein neu - es Jahr

E-flat major B-flat major B-flat major

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84. Ritornello

B-flat major

90.

D(7) G minor C major F major D minor D minor

96. Chorale text line 4.

der aus -

der aus er - wähl -

der aus er - wähl -

hemiola

D

N6 B-flat 7 E-flat major F(7) B-flat major B-flat major

Dürr notes that the accompanying vocal lines share less and less in the thematic material of the chorale until "in the fourth line it is no longer perceptible at all. At the same time, the motivic material of the instruments gradually detaches itself from its link with the ritornello, eventually blending in a temporary union with the lower voice parts." See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, translated by Richard Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 139.

The chorale phrase is no longer evident in the accompanying voices; the instrumental lines now are often colla parte. A rising motive introduced from lowest voice to highest suggests praise by the "chosen Christian throng" referenced in the text.

101.

er - wähl - ten

der aus - er - wähl - ten, der aus er -

wähl - ten Chri - sten - schar, der aus - er - wähl -

- ten Chri - sten - schar.

D(7) 5 G minor F7 B-flat major

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106.

Chri - sten - schar.  
wähl - ten Chri - sten - schar, der aus - er - wähl - ten  
ten Chri - sten - schar, der aus - er - wähl - ten

D(7) G major C minor

111.

Chri - sten - schar.  
Chri - sten - schar

Ritornello

C minor G minor G minor

117.

G minor

123.

hemiola

G minor G major

The tritone was historically associated with the devil. In the hexachordal system of solmization the way to sing B is as *mi* in the hard hexachord (the hexachord begun on G). B-F is a tritone, giving rise to the saying "Mi contra fa est diabolus in musica" ("mi against fa is the devil in music").

**Aria.**

122/2. (Tempo giusto ♩ = 80)

(Based on Chorale Verse 2)  
 • Christ's birth: Reconciling sinful mankind to God (122/2).

Continuo alone, right hand is editorial.

Ritornello (related to vocal theme).

For Konrad Küster's comments regarding Bach's development of the continuo aria, treating the bass line here as a melody, see note.

Note the similar opening to no. 3.

**Basso.**

Bass is often the voice of authority, e.g., the minister. Here the motto captures the essence of a penitential sermon.

O Menschen, die ihr täglich sündigt, die ihr täglich  
 O people, you who daily do-sin.

In a concertante duet between continuo and bass singer, chromatic lines characterized by tritones depict the sinfulness of human beings.

Alfred Dürr writes, "An impassioned, chromatically tormented ritornello melody for the bass instruments is broken up into its constituent motives and, in this form, pervades the entire movement; even the vocal melody is derived from it. The minor mode (c [minor]), maintained in the intermediate cadences (f and g), contributes to the impression of the text, 'O mortals, who sin daily, you shall be the angels' joy', as closer to a penitential sermon than a message of joy." See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, translated by Richard Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 140.

This type of aria is called a "Devisenarie" (a term coined by Hugo Riemann) or "motto aria." After the ritornello, the singer presents the first phrase of the aria as a kind of motto. This is followed by a short instrumental bridge before the aria proper begins. The motto sets the tone (and the literary perspective) for the movement.

14.

o Menschen, die — ihr

C minor C minor

17.

täg - - lich sün - - digt, ihr sollt der En - gel Freu - -

C major F# dim.7 D7 G major G7 C minor

The angels' melisma superimposes a 3/4 meter.

19.

Text painting: Long melisma for the angels rejoicing that sinners have been reconciled to God. The text alludes to Luke 15:10: "There is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

D7 G minor

22.

- - de - sein, o Men - schen, die — ihr

G minor G(7)



24.

tä - lich sün - digt, ihr sollt der

C# dim.7 D major B dim.7 C minor

26.

En - gel Freu - de sein, o Men - schen,

F major B-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major

28.

die ihr täg - lich sündigt, ihr

E dim.7 F minor B dim.7 C minor

30.

sollt der En - gel Freu - de sein, ihr

32. *so*llt der En - - - gel Freu-de sein, ihr sollt der En -

C minor C minor

*pp*

35. - gel Freu - - - de sein, **ihr sollt der** En -

you shall/should the angels'

C minor

37. - gel Freu - de sein.

joy be.

Ritornello

C minor C major F# dim.7

*f*

The rhetorical separation of "ihr sollt der" suggests that Bach may have wanted the phrase to be interpreted as "you *should* be the joy of the angels" instead of the presumed poetic meaning "you *shall* be the joy of the angels (because you have been reconciled to God)"—effectively underscoring the human failure referenced in the A section of the aria). Such blame is absent in the underlying chorale stanza.

40. *mf* *p*

G major E dim.7 F minor B dim.7 C minor

42. *crescendo sempre* *f*

C minor

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Middle Section of da capo aria

45.

Ihr ju - bi - li - ren - des Ge -

Text painting: Melisma for "jubilant shouting," an allusion to the angels' "Gloria in excelsis" when they appeared to the shepherds (Luke 2:13-14).

E-flat major

48.

schrei, dass Gott mit euch ver - söhnet sei, hat

E-flat major F minor

50.

euch den sü - ssen Trost, hat euch den - sü -

F minor

53.

- ssen Trost ver - kün - digt,

Ritornello

F minor F minor

The reference to being reconciled to God suggests biblical passages such as 2 Corinthians 5:18: All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself... (Also Romans 5:10, Colossians 1:21-22.)

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55.

ih̄ ju - hi - li - ren - des Ge -

A dim.7 B dim.7 C major F minor

*p*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 55, 56, and 57. The vocal line (bass clef) has lyrics 'ih̄ ju - hi - li - ren - des Ge -'. The piano accompaniment (treble and bass clefs) features a complex texture with many sixteenth notes. Chord changes are indicated below the bass line: A dim.7, B dim.7, C major, and F minor. A piano dynamic marking 'p' is present in measure 56.

58.

schrei, dass Gott mit euch ver - söh - net sei, hat

B-flat 7 E-flat major E-flat 7 A-flat major

Detailed description: This system contains measures 58 and 59. The vocal line (bass clef) has lyrics 'schrei, dass Gott mit euch ver - söh - net sei, hat'. The piano accompaniment continues with similar rhythmic patterns. Chord changes are indicated below the bass line: B-flat 7, E-flat major, E-flat 7, and A-flat major.

60.

euch den sü - ssen Trost ver - kün -

B-flat 7 E-flat major

Detailed description: This system contains measures 60, 61, and 62. The vocal line (bass clef) has lyrics 'euch den sü - ssen Trost ver - kün -'. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the bass. Chord changes are indicated below the bass line: B-flat 7 and E-flat major.

63.

diḡt, den sü - ssen Trost, hat

E-flat major F# dim.7 D7

Detailed description: This system contains measures 63, 64, and 65. The vocal line (bass clef) has lyrics 'diḡt, den sü - ssen Trost, hat'. The piano accompaniment continues with the eighth-note accompaniment. Chord changes are indicated below the bass line: E-flat major, F# dim.7, and D7.

65.

euch den sü - ssen Trost ver - kün - digt.

G minor

G minor

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 9 mm.

**Secco Recitativo.** (Based on Chorale Verse 2) • Christ's birth restores our relations with heaven (122/3). **Da Capo.**

122/3. **Soprano.**

1. Die En - gel, wel - che sich zu - vor vor euch, als

Note the similar opening to no. 2.

D A B-flat C F#

The recitative (like no. 2, based on the chorale's second stanza) continues with the subject of the angels. Three recorders play the chorale, allowing the listener to infer the words. The recorder parts were inserted into the oboe parts and would have been played by those players.

3. vor Verfluchten, scheuen, er - füllen nun die Luft im höhern Chor, um ü - ber eu - er

(Choral-Mel.: „Das neugeborne Kindelein.“)

3 recorders play harmonized chorale.

E-flat B G D7

The recitative text alludes to the angels' "Gloria in excelsis" at Jesus' birth (see note).

Note: In Bach's score the recorder parts are notated an octave lower; apparently Bach originally intended them to be played by strings.

Des freu - en sich die En - ge -

Text painting: 3 recorders represent the angel chorus.

Text painting: The recorders (angels) "fill the air" as noted in the text.

G7 C minor D(7) G minor

6. Heil sich zu er - freu - en. Gott, so euch aus dem Pa - ra - dies - aus eng - li -

lein, Die ger - ne um, und bei uns

F7 B-flat major 9. G# (C7) F major G minor C# dim.

scher Gemeinschaft stieß, lässt euch nun wie - derum auf Er - den durch sei - ne Gegen -

sein; sie sin - gen

D minor (E7) A major C# dim.7 D7 # F# dim.7

The recitative text alludes to the angels' role in barring Adam and Eve from the Garden after the fall (see note).

11. wart vollkom men se.lig werden. So danket nun mit vol - lem

in den Lüf - ten frei, daß

G minor F7 B-flat major B-flat 7

14. vor

Munde für die gewünschte Zeit im neu-en Bunde.

Gott mit uns ver - söh - net sei.

E-flat major D(7) G minor G7 C minor G major

**Aria. (Terzetto.)**

122/4. (Andante con moto  $\text{♩} = 69$ )

(Verse 3) Reconciled with God: now Satan can not harm us (122/4).

1. *mf* Quasi-ostinato bass (see note).

C7 F major

For the significance of D minor, see note.

D minor While Alfred Dürr calls this a siciliano, Little and Jenne call it French gigue-like. See Meredith Little and Natalie Jenne, "Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach," expanded ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 251.

6. **Soprano.**

Stanza 3 is troped with an aria text.

O wohl uns die wir

**Alto.**

(Choral-Mel.: „Das neugehorne Kindelein.“  
Vln I, II, Via double the chorale.

**Tenore.**

Stanza 3: Ist Gott ver - söhnt und

Text painting: Outer voices begin with sweet parallel 3rds for "O wohl uns" ("O how well it is for us").

O wohl uns, die wir an ihn

A7 D minor

11.

an ihn glau - - - - - ben, die wir an ihn  
un - ser Freund,  
glau - - - - - ben, die wir

D minor

16.

glau - - - - - ben,  
was kann uns thun der  
an ihn glau - - - - - ben, an - ihn glauben, sein Grimm kann

C7

F major

A major

D minor

(G7)

A minor

21.

sein Grimm kann un - sern Trost nicht rau - - - - -  
ar - ge Feind?  
un - sern Trost nicht rau - - - - -

Word painting: Energetic melisma for "rob."

A minor

E7

A minor

A minor

25. 
 Musical score for measures 25-28. The vocal line contains the lyrics "ben, nicht rau - ben;". The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. Chords indicated below the piano part are G7, C major, A minor, E7, and A minor.

29. 
 Musical score for measures 29-32. The vocal line contains the lyrics "ihr Wü - then wird sie we - nig nützen we - nig, wird sie we - nig Teu - fel und der Höl - len ihr Wü - then wird sie we - nig nützen, ihr Wü -". The piano accompaniment continues with a similar rhythmic pattern. Chords indicated below the piano part are A major, D minor, D minor, C major, and F major.

33. 
 Musical score for measures 33-36. The vocal line contains the lyrics "nützen, ihr Wü" and "Pfort,". A red annotation reads "Word painting: Energetic melisma for "[their] raging." above the melisma. The piano accompaniment is more active, with sixteenth-note patterns. Chords indicated below the piano part are F major and F7.



37.

then wird sie we-nig nüt-zen:  
das  
nig, wird sie we-nig, we-nig, we-nig nüt-zen:

B-flat major

F major

F major

41.

Gott ist mit uns und will uns schüt-  
Je su-lein ist un-ser  
Gott ist mit uns' und will uns schüt-zen, Gott ist mit

A7

D minor

A7

45.

-zen, Gott ist mit uns und will uns schüt-zen, Gott ist mit  
Hort.  
uns und will uns schüt-zen, Gott ist mit uns und will uns

D7

G minor

D minor

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49.

uns und will uns schüt - - - zen, Gott ist mit uns und will uns  
 -doubling strings  
 Gott ist mit uns und will uns schüt - zen, Gott ist mit  
 Having concluded the chorale, the alto (without doubling strings) joins the imitative texture and the text of the soprano and tenor.  
 schüt - - - zen, Gott ist mit uns und will uns schüt.  
 The phrase "God with us" alludes to Matthew 1:22-23: All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). (See Isaiah 7:14.)

D minor

53.

schüt - - - zen, und will uns schüt zen.  
 Word painting: Melisma for "protect."  
 uns und will uns schüt - - - zen, und will uns schüt zen.  
 - - - - - zen, und will uns schüt zen.  
 - - - - - zen, und will uns schüt zen.

C7 F major D minor A7 D minor

57.

zen, und will uns schüt zen.

C7 F major D minor A7 D minor

The text alludes to Psalm 118:24: "When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son." (i.e., the new age in salvation history has dawned).  
 reading, Galatians 4:4: "When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son." (i.e., the new age in salvation history has dawned).

122/5. **Recitativo.** (Related to Chorale Verse 4) • Christ's birth: the long-awaited day has come! (122/5).

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 11 mm.

Alfred Dürr writes, "The bass recitativo, no. 5, accompanied by strings, contains no real arioso writing throughout its fourteen bars, but it is constantly brought close to arioso by its vocal melismas and by the liveliness of its string accompaniment: it is a type of setting suggested of its own accord by the strongly emotional text with its frequent exclamations." See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, translated by Richard Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 140.

1. **Ba F 10. D** A B-flat C E-flat

Dies ist ein Tag, den selbst der Herr gemacht, der  
 This is a day, which himself the Lord has-made, who

Strings

B-flat major B-flat major

3. **G E F#**

seinen Sohn in die-se Welt ge-bracht. O sel' - ge - Zeit, die nun erfüllt! o  
 his son into this world has-brought. O blessed time, which now is-fulfilled! O

C7 F major F# dim.7 D7 G minor

5 exclamations regarding the "awaited day," each beginning with "O."

6. **A-flat C7 F major F# dim.7 D7 G minor**

gläu - big War - ten, das nunmehr ge - stillt! o Glau - be, der sein En - de  
 faith-filled waiting, which henceforth is-stilled! O faith, which its goal

B-flat 7 D-flat B dim.7 G7 C minor C7

9. **B-flat 7 D-flat B dim.7 G7 C minor C7 B**

sieht! o Lie - be, die Gott zu sich zieht! o Freu - digkeit, so durch die Trübsal  
 sees! O love, which God to himself draws! O joyousness, which through - tribulation

F minor E dim.7 C7 F minor D7 B dim.7

Chromatic inflection for "tribulation."

Text painting: Movement in the strings illustrates the "love that God draws to himself."

12. **F minor E dim.7 C7 F minor D7 B dim.7**

dringt und Gott der Lip - pen Opfer bringt!  
 presses and God (its) lips offering brings!

C minor F# dim.7 D7 G major

Extended continuo note.

The final line suggests biblical passages such as Hebrews 13:15: Through him [Christ], let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. (Also Psalm 50:14, 23; 51:15-17.)

This is the last stanza of four in the 1597 chorale by Cyriacus Schneegaß (1546–1597); tune by Melchior Vulpius (1609). The "new year" of salvation history is here seen as a fulfillment of the Hebrew Year of Jubilee, serving as a catechismal summary of the cantata's contents in high coded brevity (see note for biblical reference; see also Petzoldt, *Bach Kommentar* 2:267).

122/6. **Choral. (Mel.: „Das neugebor'ne Kindelein.“)** • Christ's birth begins true year of Jubilee, rejoice! (122/6).



1. **Soprano.**  
 +Ob I Vln I  
 Es bringt das rech - te Jubel - jahr, was trauern wir denn im - mer - dar?

**Alto.**  
 +Ob II Vln II  
 Es bringt das rech.te Ju - bel - jahr, was trauern wir denn im - mer - dar?

**Tenore.**  
 +Taille Vla  
 Es bringt das rech.te Ju - bel - jahr, was trauern wir denn im - mer - dar?

**Basso.**  
 Es bringt das rech.te Ju - bel - jahr, was trauern wir denn im - mer - dar?

G minor D major G minor D minor C# dim.7 D major

9.  
 Frisch auf! itzt ist — es Singens - zeit. das Je - su - lein — wend't al - les Leid.

Frisch auf! itzt ist — es Sin - gens - zeit, das Je - su - lein wend't al - les Leid.

Frisch auf! itzt ist — es Sin - gens - zeit, das Je - su - lein wend't al - les Leid.

Frisch auf! itzt ist — es Singens - zeit, das Je - su - lein wend't al - les Leid.

G minor B-flat major B-flat major B-flat major D major G minor G major