

# Bach's Bells

*Mors certa, hora incerta*

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Numerous Bach experts beginning with Philipp Spitta until the present day have commented specifically on Bach's musical representation of bells in his figural sacred and even secular vocal compositions and have determined that Bach almost exclusively relates bells to the activities and rites surrounding death. The trigger is found in the sung text and is then musically illustrated by various methods and techniques which generally evoke symbolically or metaphorically the notion of bells, although in a few rare instances certain bells are naturalistically imitated.<sup>1</sup>

An etymological excursion or digression is necessary here in order to discover and relate apparently disparate elements in the discussion of particular interpretations given below. Specifically this amounts to connecting 'bells' with 'clocks', an association that is much closer than might be expected: According to various dictionaries which supply rather detailed etymologies, bells were introduced from North Africa into Europe (to Italy, specifically, where the Romance languages have based their term for 'bell' on the Latin word *campana*) in the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE and they [the bells] spread from there (Rome?) to the British Isles where the Celtic and Old Irish languages have the word *cloc* to indicate 'bell'. After the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century (the earliest documented use in 692 CE), it also begins to turn up in Medieval Latin as *clocca*, *cloca*, *glogga*, *glocus* (Bonifatius has *cloccum*, *glocum*). While this word was later adopted into English (into Anglo Saxon and Middle English with various forms and spellings of 'clock' – or, as the *OED* would have it, much later into Middle English via Old Dutch *clocke* in which instance the term traveled with Dutch chiming clocks that were imported to England), Irish missionaries

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<sup>1</sup> Philipp Spitta: *Joh. Seb. Bach*, (Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, 1874-1880) vol. 2, p. 263-265; Albert Schweitzer: *J. S. Bach*, English translation by Ernest Newman of the Breitkopf & Härtel original, 1911 (Dover/New York, 1966), Vol. 2, pp. 77, 189, 193, 206, 230, 249, 275, 368); Arnold Schering: *Über Kantaten Johann Sebastian Bachs*, (Leipzig, 1950); W. Gillies Whittaker: *The Cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach*, (Oxford University Press/London, 1959), Vols. 1 & 2; Martin Geck: "Der Glocken bebendes Getön: Das Totengeläut in Bachs Kantaten" in "Denn alles findet bei Bach statt" *Erforshtes und Erfahrenes*", (Stuttgart/Weimar, 2000); Martin Staehelin: "Klang der Glocken und Lauf der Zeit in den Kantaten Johann Sebastian Bachs" in *Vom Klang der Zeit: Besetzung, Bearbeitung und Aufführungspraxis bei Johann Sebastian Bach*, ed. Ulrich Bartels & Uwe Wolf (Breitkopf & Härtel, 2004).

traveling to the continent spread this word to continental Europe where it then soon entered the German and French languages as *glocke* (Old High German: *glocka*, *clocka*, *glogga*) and *cloche/cloque*. The origin of the English word 'bell' is in any case unclear and uncertain (possibly from the Low German *belle(n)* connected with the meaning: 'to make a loud noise, to roar'. In any case, its early existence in Old English seems to have prevented the root *cloc* = 'bell' from entering directly into English at a very early stage in its dissemination into other European languages.

Whatever the various origins of German *Glocke* (meaning 'bell') and English (*clock* meaning a device to tell time), both languages soon developed a secondary connection between bell and keeping time in that one important function of striking/sounding the bell (*Glocke*) generally indicated the beginning of a new hour of the day or night, the number of strikes revealing the specific hour involved. This was true whether a large bell in a church tower or a small chime in a ticking clock was involved in telling time; in each instance, they generally announced only the hours of the day. While creating a compounds like *clock-bell* in English or *Glockenuhr*<sup>2</sup> (documented only in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century) in German might seem to be a bit redundant on the surface, it does point out what is missing in each language due to the semantic changes that have occurred. And yet, in certain parts of Germany, the word *Glock* can mean *clock* as in "es ist glock sieben" = "it's 7 o'clock" because of the important function that the bell has in telling time. The *OED* lists an antiquated, now obsolete, use of *clock* meaning *bell*: "The clockes of Saynt Steuen...had a merueylous swetenes in theyr sowne" (a quote from 1483) or "The clockes of St. Steven...had a marvelous sweetness in their sound." From the above it should be clear that clocks and bells are inextricably linked, but it is important also to note that there are clocks without bells and that bells exist in many different sizes, shapes and materials and have served and still do serve many other functions other than announcing the time of day or night. To summarize the main points of the etymology of *Glocke/clock/cloche*: the German as well as the French language has retained the original meaning of this word root meaning *bell*, the sounding object that can be heard at some distance, while English over time has focused more narrowly upon one of the important functions it had: to tell time by announcing the hours. This change was aided

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<sup>2</sup> There is even a German compound *Uhr-glocke*, the German word *Uhr*, by the way, came from the Latin *hora* [= hour] or from the Late Latin form *ora* and was first documented along the Rhein during the 14<sup>th</sup> century CE (1348) after which the form vacillated between *ore* and *ure*.

by invention of various mechanical clocks which were able to chime the hours the same way that the bells in church steeples did.

Before, however, examining the existing evidence in Bach's compositions, an attempt should be made to ascertain what types of bells existed in Leipzig, particularly those that were rung for the dying, for the immediately deceased and at funeral rites and services. From Bach's musical 'descriptions' of these bells (this will be treated in greater detail below), it becomes evident that the auditory experience that the people of Leipzig were exposed to covered a very wide range from the very loud, slow 'booming' of the largest bells in the church towers to the smallest very shrill bells which were struck at a relatively fast rate. Unfortunately, no direct, physical evidence of the bells used in Bach's time is available for inspection today. The reason for this is that church bells often cracked and, although a few attempts at repairing them might have been considered acceptable, most of these bells would have been removed and recast or used for making cannons. Even the smaller bells no longer exist nor is there a detailed description of where, when and how they were struck. Only the following bits of information can hint at some possibilities that might be considered.

According to Arnold Schering [died in 1941]<sup>3</sup> there was a *Sterbegeläut der Stadtkirchen* [literally the 'dying-ringing' or 'ringing out for the dying'] of the city churches in Leipzig which consisted of five bells being sounded [not necessarily being rung simultaneously] when a death was imminent or had just taken place. The highest-pitched bell,<sup>4</sup> may have been sounded alone. This high-pitched bell rang out with a very rapid, regular repetition and was called *das Totenglöcklein* [the 'little bell for the dead']. It was described as a fast, shrill ringing, but with an even pulsation. This is directly the opposite of what a Death Knell implies in the English language: a slow, solemn ringing of a bell for a death or a funeral. This latter type of knell would then be found among the much larger, lower-pitched bells which would peal with a slow rhythm.

In contrast to this *Totenglöcklein* or *Sterbeglöckchen* [little bell for the dying], there were also the larger bells which could be called either *die Begräbnisglocken* [burial or funeral bells] or *das Begräbnisgeläute* [same notion]. In Bach's time these two types of bells or bell-ringing were associated with separate functions: to announce 1. the time

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<sup>3</sup> Schering, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, p. 127.

<sup>4</sup> There is a distinct possibility that there may have been two of these bells, perhaps one in each of the towers of the two main churches.

immediately preceding actual death as well as the moment of death (*das Sterbe- or Totenglöcklein*); and 2. the burial and funeral rites (*die Begräbnisglocken*).

If Bach's representations of these *Sterbe- or Totenglöcklein* can be trusted to be literally what they sounded like, then we have a possible conflict between a single high-pitched *flauto piccolo* playing 24<sup>5</sup> semiquavers (16<sup>th</sup> notes) in a row at the same pitch in the opening chorus/chorale of the early, original version of BWV 8 ("Liebster Gott, wenn werd ich sterben") and BWV 198 ("Laß, Fürstin, laß noch einen Strahl") mvt. 4, Recitativo: "Der Glocken bebendes Getön" which adds a *flauto traverso II* playing a third below the *flauto traverso I*, both of which are playing repeated semiquavers (16<sup>th</sup> notes) at the same pitch.

The former (BWV 8/1) would then imply a single, high-pitched bell, while the latter (BWV 198/4) could indicate that there were two high-pitched bells (possibly one in the tower of St. Thomas Church, the other at a slightly different high pitch at the St. Nicholas Church).<sup>6</sup>

However, numerous articles on this matter refer back to Arnold Schering's statement already alluded to above:

"Das Sterbegeläut der Stadtkirchen...bestand aus fünf Glocken, deren höchste, das Totenglöcklein, in schnellen, schrillen Pulsen bimmelte."

"The ringing of bells emanating from the city churches...consisted of five bells, the highest-pitched bell, the little 'funeral' bell [dedicated primarily for ringing when someone dies] has a shrill sound and rang at a fast regular rate."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The same note repeated for a total of 24 times appears to be a deliberate reference to the total number of hours in a single day. While it might have been extremely difficult to count each note as a member of the congregation, this could easily be considered an instance of *Augenmusik* ('music for the eyes') that might have been understood as another level of interpretation by the *flauto piccolo* player reading his part and the conductor/composer who was reading the score.

<sup>6</sup> Originally I had imagined a small, high-pitched bell was somehow carried as a hand-bell or attached to the vehicle transporting the corpse and rung by someone accompanying the corpse from the house to the burial site. The speed of repetitions of the semiquavers at a constantly fast rate would be practically impossible to execute on such hand-bells.

<sup>7</sup> Arnold Schering: *Über Kantaten Johann Sebastian Bachs*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, (Leipzig, 1950), p. 127.

This definitely, if we can assume the veracity and reliability of Schering's undocumented statement, places the *Sterbe-* or *Totenglöcklein* into the tower of the *Thomaskirche* where it appears to have fulfilled a very special function.<sup>8</sup>

Another possibility that has frequently been hinted at in scholarly discussions but without any evidence to back it up is that there may have been for the funereal purposes outlined above a very limited number of carillon bells, probably controlled somehow by the organist or one of the *calcants* (bellows-treaders). Following this line of thinking, I believe I have found some slight supporting evidence in the following quotation from Anton Weiß' book on Leipzig dated 1728:

Nusser dieser befindet sich bey iedweder von beyden Haupt-Kirchen, ein Organist, nebst 2. Calcanten, ein Küster, welcher seinen Famulum hält, ein Thürmer, der das Geläute in acht nimmt, und etliche Glockentreter unter sich hat, auch früh, zu Mittage und Abends, mit der Trommete ein geistlich Lied bläset, und Tag und Nacht nebst seinem Hauß-Gesinde, wegen Feuers- oder anderer Gefahr, auch was auf dem Lande paffiret, fleißig Wache hält.

Besides the aforementioned positions there are also in each of the two main churches [of Leipzig] an organist with his two *calcants* [bellows-treaders], a sacristan/sexton, each having his personal assistant, a tower-keeper who is in charge of the ringing of the bells (*Geläute* = a collective noun ambiguously indicating a collection of all bells being sounded simultaneously and possibly implying all the different types and variations of ringing the bells), supervises several bell-ringers [*Glockentreter*, a term first used in the 18th century], plays a chorale on the trumpet [*Trommete*], and he, along with his assistants, will be on watch diligently to detect fires or any other dangers and to observe what is happening in the countryside [outside the city walls].<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The belfry of the *Thomaskirche* was located in the highest church steeple in Leipzig.

<sup>9</sup> Anton Weiß: *Verbessertes Leipzig* (Leipzig 1728) pp. 8-9. The reader is also directed to the Appendix: Partial Translation of Anton Weiss: Chapter 2 (About the St. Nicholas and St. Thomas Churches) located at:

<http://www.bach-cantatas.com/Articles/Ordnung1733Translation.pdf>

This is from that translation:

Both churches are richly decorated inside with organs, pulpits, and altars along with splendid bells....In addition to the latter, each of the main churches has an organist along with two bellows assistants, a sexton with his assistant, a tower-keeper [one who keeps watch and warns the populace below with a trumpet or horn] who is responsible for the ringing of the bells and has several *Glockentreter* [bell-ringers: this term was first used in the 18th century] as his subordinates. His duties include (aside from his family duties {his subordinates were also called upon for watch duties}) playing a chorale on his trumpet every morning, noon and evening and watching very carefully for any possible dangers like fire and to observe what is happening in the countryside outside the city walls.

The word that needs to be examined more closely is *Glockentreter* which is a typical German compound noun consisting of two parts: die *Glocke* = ‘bell’ and *Treter* from *treten* – ‘to step’ with the ‘-er’ suffix meaning ‘the one who does the stepping’ (not pulling, although that might have been accomplished by attaching a rope to the end of the pedal). The first documented use of this word, according to the *DWB* (the equivalent to the full version of the *OED*), is in Johann Leonhard Frisch’s *Nouveau Dictionnaire des Passagers François-Allemand et Allemand-François ...* published by Joh. Friedrich Gleditschens<sup>10</sup> sel. Sohn, Leipzig, 1730. The 1737 edition has the following entry:

**Glockentreter**, m. carillonneur.<sup>11</sup>

The term *carillonneur* is variously translated today as ‘bell-ringer’, or, more specifically, ‘one who plays a carillon’.

What is remarkable here is the appearance of an entirely new term for bell-ringer in the German language which certainly had a long tradition of bell-ringers who were called variously *Glöckner* (the bell person), *Glockenläuter* (the one who rings the bell), *Glockenzieher* (the one who pulls the bell) and even later (1732) in Johann Gottfried Walther’s *Musicalisches Lexicon: Glockenist*. The latter term never caught on and was most likely intended for carillon players only.

The term *Glöckner* can be traced back to *Glogner*. Its first, documented use goes back to 1360 CE. Somehow the term *Glöckner* began to assume some negative connotations; for instance, that, except for short spurts of energy, bell-ringers were considered lazy

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<sup>10</sup> Some of the more astute readers will instantly recognize the family name Gleditsch and its relationship to J. S. Bach. In the 1730 *Entwurf*, Bach lists the city piper and principal oboist in the orchestra accompanying Bach’s sacred works as Mr. Gleditsch. This was Johann Caspar Gleditsch who had been a Leipzig city piper since 1719 and died there in 1747. A closer connection still is found in the baptismal church register for the *Thomaskirche* 1725-1730: at the baptism of Bach’s infant on January 1, 1730, among those godmothers and a godfather present was Ms. Catharina Louisa Gleditsch, wife of the book dealer and publisher Johann Gottlieb Gleditsch. This would be the Gleditsch referred to on the book’s title page as ‘the son of the late Johann Friedrich Gleditsch’. Bach’s child died only a few days later on January 4. It is very likely that the book seller and publisher was somehow related to Bach’s principal oboist Johann Caspar Gleditsch. Found in item 22 in the *Bach-Dokumente I* (Bärenreiter, 1963) and items 273 and 274 in the *Bach-Dokumente II*, (Bärenreiter, 1969).

<sup>11</sup> found in col. 285.

compared to most people and the question remained in the minds of some: “What are they really doing up there in the church tower when the bells are not being rung?”

Here is a typical, but very confusing definition from the 17<sup>th</sup> century:

Andreas Gryphius (1616-1664) from his *Lustspiele* (undated):

*Glockenspieler: Glockenzieher beim Glockenspiel: carillonneur*

Explanation/translation:

*Glockenspieler: Glocken* (bells) + *Spieler* (one who plays) *Glockenzieher: Glocken* + *Zieher* (one who pulls) *beim Glockenspiel: ('while playing the bells' or 'in using the Glockenspiel')* and *Glockenspiel: ('the mechanism used in playing the set of bells devoted to this purpose')*: *carillonneur*.

The emphasis in Gryphius' definition is upon the 'pulling' which is closely identified with the *Glockenspiel*. What type of *Glockenspiel* was he referring to? Certainly not to the regular ringing of the large, rope-drawn bells which swung back and forth not more than 180° and rarely, if ever, were struck at the same time. Most continental European bells were operated in this fashion in contrast to the English type of bells which rotated through all 360° and could be controlled by the ringers ('change ringing'). And just how does *Glockenspiel* relate to the term 'carillon'? The *OED* uses the *Grove Music Dictionary* to define 'carillon' as 'a set of bells so hung and arranged as to be capable of being played upon either by manual actions or by machinery' and *Glockenspiel* as 1. an organ stop composed of bells, comprising the upper half of the keyboard (earliest instance: 1825) and 2. a musical instrument consisting of a series of small bells or metal bars which are struck with a hammer, or by levers acted upon by a keyboard (earliest quote from 1833). What this means is that an English-speaking person will probably have difficulties in understanding the German term because of some of the preconceptions these words bring with them. Many have seen and heard a *Glockenspiel* used and played on in a marching band or have heard music emanating from a carillon tower and perhaps have even observed a *carillonneur* playing music on an odd-looking, organ-like instrument, but this conception of bell music may be a far cry from what was experienced in Germany up to the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The *MGGI* informs us of a tradition from the late Middle Ages when the hour was sounded on one of the large bells in a church tower. In order to turn the attention of those below toward the striking of the bell, the *Türmer* [tower-keeper], using a hammer would play a short melody shortly beforehand on 4 [Latin *quadrillionem*, French *carillon*] (later on 6 or 8) smaller bells to announce the beginning of the next full hour.<sup>12</sup>

In the monasteries of Europe in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the monks had already determined that, in making their *cymbala* bells, the relation of thickness to pitch had to be maintained. This meant that the thicker the bell, the higher the pitch would be. This might help to explain the use of the hammer by the tower-keeper while the bell remained stationary and that such a bell could clearly be heard by those below. Possibly this would later allow a *Glockentreter* to strike these small bells by stepping on a pedal with a rope attached to the bell clapper in the tower, thus moving the clapper easily to strike the bell which did not move at all, while, on the other hand, the large, swinging bells required great effort often by several people in pulling the rope to move it.

Johann Mattheson (1681-1764): *Grundlage einer Ehrenpforte* (1740) under Kirsten:

Abbildung der großen Orgel, welche in der Kaiserl. und Königl. Stadt Breslau, in der Kirche bey St. Maria Magdalena, durch Johann Röder, berühmten Orgelmacher, An. 1725. erbauet worden, und bestehet dieselbe aus 56. Klangbaren Stimmen: 4. Principalen, als eines a 32., eines a 16., und zwey a 8. Fuß; einem Glockenspiel, welches durch die in der Gloria sich bewegende Engel, mit ihren in Händen habenden Hämmern, mit Hülfe des Pedals tractirt wird; wie auch einem Paar kühferner sichtbarer Pauken, worauf gleichfalls zween Engel alles, was man auf natürlichen Pauken haben kann, mit ihren Schlägeln vollkommen prästiren, und mit dem Trompeten-Zuge so wohl Intraden, als Aufzüge, dazu gespielt werden können.

Im musikal. Lexico stehet, daß unser Kirsten nicht nur das Orgelwerck mit disponiren, und die Pauken vornehmlich mit angeben helfen; sondern auch im Manual das Glockenspiel selbst gemacht habe, welches wegen der Dämpfung zu bewundern sey.

An illustration of the great organ was constructed [and completed after 5 years of work] by the famous organ builder Johann Röder in St. Maria Magdalena Church in the Royal City of Breslau in 1725. It has 56 sounding stops including 4 Principal stops with one 32', another 16' and two 8' stops, a *Glockenspiel* which is played on the pedals and has angels that move in a 'Glory' circle and have hammers in their hands, as well as a pair of copper timpani also played by two angels that can play completely perfectly with the sticks anything that can be

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<sup>12</sup> *MGGI*. Vol. 5. P. 294, (Bärenreiter, 1985)



played on normal timpani, and with the trumpet stop you can even play *Intradas* and processions [along with the *Glockenspiel* and timpani].

In the *Music Lexicon* you can read that our Kirsten [Mattheson's article was about him] not only helped in determining the proper disposition of the organ, by suggesting the timpani, but also made the *Glockenspiel* for the manual himself, the latter to be admired on account of its muted effect.<sup>13</sup>

“Bells were first used in orchestral music in the cantata BWV 53 “Schlage doch, gewünschte Stunde” [*Trauermusik*] for alto, *campanella* in B and E, strings, basso continuo (formerly attributed to Bach, now tentatively attributed to Melchior Hoffmann †1715)<sup>14</sup> they were probably small and operated from the organ manual.”<sup>15</sup>

Another type of bell which was heard in many German churches in Bach's time was the *Zimbelstern* or *Cimbelstern* which was played by the organist and normally had eight or more bells at different pitches. These bells were rotated in a circular arrangement. There was no way to control when each bell might be struck. The *Zimbelstern* was used for festive occasions. There is no record of any *Zimbelstern* as part of any organ in Leipzig, although Bach would have experienced them in Lübeck (a *Cimbel-Stern* with two drums), Hamburg (*Cimbel mit Sternen*) and Lüneburg (*Cimbel-Glocken*) as well as in Mühlhausen and Weimar where he was personally involved in establishing the specifications for organs that included a ‘*Cymbelstern*’. The Mühlhausen organ almost had a *Glockenspiel*:

Das von denen Herrn Eingepfarten begehrte neue Glockenspiel ins *Pedal*, bestehend in 26 Glocken à 4 Fuß-ton; Welche Glocken die Herrn Eingepfarten auff ihre kosten schon anschaffen werden, und der Orgelmacher solche hernachmahls gangbahr machen wird.<sup>16</sup>

The new chimes [*Glockenspiel*] desired by the parishioners to be added to the *Pedal*, consisting of 26 bells of 4-foot tone; which bells the parishioners will acquire at their own expense, and the organ builder will then install them.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Johann Mattheson (1681-1764): *Grundlage einer Ehrenpforte* (1740) under the entry: ‘Kirsten’.

<sup>14</sup> see for further information on M. Hoffmann: <http://bach-cantatas.com/Lib/Hoffmann.htm>

<sup>15</sup> From an article “Bells” by James Blades, Charles Bodman Rae, Oxford University Press, 2007-2012.

<sup>16</sup> *Bach-Dokumente* I (Bärenreiter, 1963), item 83, pp. 152-155.

<sup>17</sup> *The New Bach Reader*, ed. Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, rev. and enlarged by Christoph Wolff (Norton, New York/London, 1999) p. 56.

Bach experts have suggested some of the musical techniques Bach employed in representing bells in his compositions. They include the following:

1. the fast, high-pitched repeated notes played on a recorder with the highest range of notes (*sopranino = flauto piccolo*) and the most piercing sound.
2. repeated, slow notes interrupted by rests played on the lowest instruments.
3. various intervals repeated many times or varied only slightly.
4. string instruments playing *pizzicato sempre*.
5. use of the muted sound, *col sordino*, on string instruments.
6. *staccato* for all instruments including even the voice.
7. exact repetition of certain two- or three-note patterns.
8. long, sustained notes at the same, usually low, pitch.
9. *bariolage* passages for solo violin.
10. repeated circular figures.

# List of Works Possibly Containing Representations of Bells

Mors certa, hora incerta<sup>18</sup>

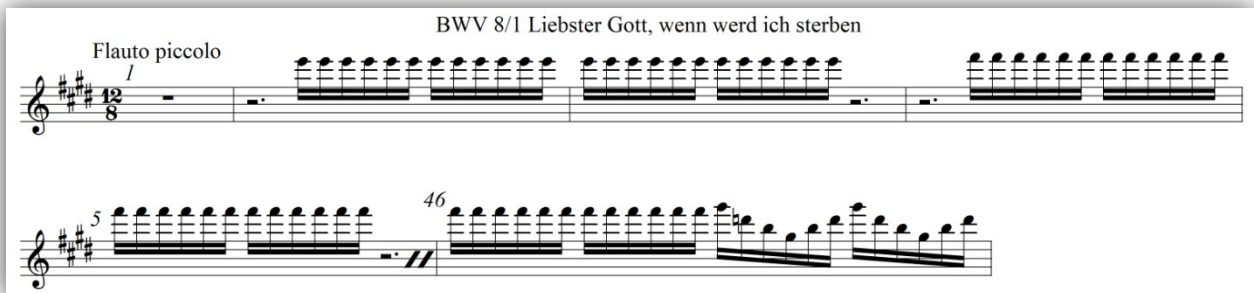
BWV 8/1,2 *Liebster Gott, wenn werd ich sterben* 1. Choral; 2. Aria “Was willst du dich, mein Geist, entsetzen” (Sep 24, 1724)

## 1. (Coro)

*Corno col Soprano, Flauto traverso, Oboe d'amore I/II, Violino I/II, Viola, Continuo*

Liebster Gott, wenn werd ich sterben?  
Meine Zeit läuft immer hin,  
Und des alten Adams Erben,  
Unter denen ich auch bin,  
Haben dies zum Väterteil,  
Dass sie eine kleine Weil  
Arm und elend sein auf Erden  
Und denn selber Erde werden.

Philipp Spitta describes this movement as follows: “Dieses Stück [der erste Chor] ist sehr merkwürdig: ein Tonbild wie aus Glockenklang und Blumenduft gewoben.” [“This composition {the first chorus} is very unusual: a tone poem woven as it were from the sound of bells and the aroma of flowers.”]<sup>19</sup>



Regarding the entrances of the flauto piccolo, Arnold Schering stated:

„Ein Zittern mag jedesmal durch Bachs Gemeinde gelaufen sein, wenn immer wieder unvermutet und nach sekundenlangem Stillschweigen dieses seelenlose Gebimmel sich hören ließ“

“Bach’s congregation must have felt a trembling every time when, unexpectedly and repeatedly after several seconds of silence, this soulless ting-a-linging could be heard.”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Der Tod ist gewiß, die Stunde ungewiß [Death is certain, the hour is uncertain].

<sup>19</sup> Spitta, vol. 2, p. 264.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.* A. Schering.

The repeated figures of the strings resemble the tolling of the church bells in the medium pitch range:

BWV 8/1

Violino 1

Violino 2

Viola

*col sordino e staccato sempre*

while the lowest bell tolls very slowly at the lowest pitch:

BWV 8/1

Continuo *1*

*pizzicato sempre*

this dropping interval figure foreshadows the motive used extensively in the following movement 2:

BWV 8/1

Continuo *12 & 31*

*pizzicato sempre*

## 2. Aria T

Oboe d'amore, Continuo

Was willst du dich, mein Geist, entsetzen,  
Wenn meine letzte Stunde schlägt?  
Mein Leib neigt täglich sich zur Erden,  
Und da muss seine Ruhstatt werden,  
Wohin man so viel tausend trägt.

This circulating figure emphasizing the same two notes repeatedly also appears to be a 'bell' imitation:

BWV 8/2


Oboe d'amore I



It is remarkable here that even the voice imitates the hard, striking sound of a church bell:

BWV 8/2

Tenore




“...there are repeated notes—the strokes of a single bell...”<sup>21</sup>

It is the repetition, not the size of the interval, that creates the bell-ringing effect that Bach seems to want to create here:

BWV 8/2

Continuo



Philipp Spitta comments as follows: “Der Glockenklang [in dem Eingangschor] hallt in den Bässen der empfindungsreichen Tenorarie weiter, dringt hier sogar einmal bis in die Singstimme hinein (Takt 29-31).” [“The sound of bells {in the introductory chorus} continues to find an echo in the continuo part of the intensely emotional tenor aria and even appears once in the vocal part {mm 29-31}”].<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Whittaker, vol 1, p. 491.

<sup>22</sup> Spitta, vol. 2, p. 265.

BWV 27/3,5 *Wer weiß, wie nahe mir mein Ende* 5. Aria "Gute Nacht, du Weltgetümmel" (Oct 6, 1726)

3. Aria A

*Oboe da caccia, Organo obligato, Continuo*

Willkommen! will ich sagen,  
Wenn der Tod ans Bette tritt.  
Fröhlich will ich folgen, wenn er ruft,  
In die Gruft,  
Alle meine Plagen  
Nehm ich mit.

Continuo

BWV 27/3



57 60

Detailed description: This image shows the Continuo part of the first aria (BWV 27/3) from the Notebook for Anna Bach. It consists of a single bass clef staff with a common time signature (C). The music is in G minor (one flat). The first measure is marked with the number 57. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots in the 60th measure.

5. Aria B

*Violino I/II, Viola, Continuo*

Gute Nacht, du Weltgetümmel!  
Jetzt mach ich mit dir Beschluss;  
Ich steh schon mit einem Fuß  
Bei dem lieben Gott im Himmel.

BWV 27/5



84

Violino 1

Violino 2

Viola

Detailed description: This image shows the instrumental parts for the second aria (BWV 27/5) from the Notebook for Anna Bach, starting at measure 84. It features three staves: Violino 1 (treble clef), Violino 2 (treble clef), and Viola (alto clef). The music is in G minor (one flat) and 3/4 time. The first measure is marked with the number 84. The Violino 1 part has a melodic line with grace notes. The Violino 2 and Viola parts provide harmonic support with rhythmic patterns.

## BWV 53 *Schlage doch, gewünschte Stunde* (Trauermusik) (not Bach, possibly by Melchior Hoffmann)

“Ein schwieriges Problem bietet für eine Aufführung die ‘Campanella’ (in h, c), die im **Baß**schlüssel verzeichnet ist. Mir ist unbekannt, ob eine Hypothese darüber vorliegt, was für ein Instrument der Komponist sich dabei gedacht haben mag. (Sollten zufällig zwei kleinere Kirchenglocken in dieser Stimmung vorhanden gewesen und mit einem leichten Hammer angeschlagen sein? Oder besaß eine in Betracht kommende Orgel ein Campanella-Register.” [“A difficult problem that needs to be resolved for a performance is that these bells are scored in a bass clef. I have no idea if anyone has a hypothesis about the type of instrument the composer may have had in mind. (Could it be there just happened to be two smaller church bells with these pitches which would have been struck with a light hammer? Or did the organ on which this was to be played have a campanella stop?)”]<sup>23</sup>

## BWV 73/4 *Herr, wie du willst, so schicks mit mir* 4. Aria “Herr, so du willst” (Jan 23, 1724)

### Aria B

*Violino I/II, Viola, Continuo*

Herr, so du willst,  
So presst, ihr Todesschmerzen,  
Die Seufzer aus dem Herzen,  
Wenn mein Gebet nur vor dir gilt.

Herr, so du willst,  
So lege meine Glieder  
In Staub und Asche nieder,  
Dies höchst verderbte Sündenbild,

Herr, so du willst,  
**So schlagt, ihr Leichenglocken,**  
Ich folge unerschrocken,  
Mein Jammer ist nunmehr gestillt.

BWV 73/4

Violino I  
pizzicato

Violino 2  
pizzicato

Viola  
pizzicato

Continuo  
pizzicato

<sup>23</sup> Woldemar Voigt: *Die Kirchenkantaten Johann Sebastian Bachs: Ein Führer bei ihrem Studium und ein Berater für ihre Aufführung* (Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, 1918), p. 60.

## BWV 83/1 *Erfreute Zeit im neuen Bunde* 1. Aria (Feb 2, 1724)

### 1. Aria A

*Corno I/II, Oboe I/II, Violino solo, Violino I/II, Viola, Continuo*

Erfreute Zeit im neuen Bunde,  
Da unser Glaube Jesum hält.  
Wie freudig wird **zur letzten Stunde**  
Die Ruhestatt, das Grab bestellt!

Violino concertato BWV 83/1

64



BWV 95/5 *Christus, der ist mein Leben* 5. Aria "Ach, schlage doch bald" (Sep 12, 1723)

5. Aria T

Oboe d'amore I/II, Violino I/II, Viola, Continuo

Ach, schlage doch bald, selge Stunde,  
Den allerletzten Glockenschlag!

Komm, komm, ich reiche dir die Hände,  
Komm, mache meiner Not ein Ende,  
Du längst ersetzter Sterbenstag!

The image shows a musical score for the 5th Aria of BWV 95/5. The score is written for Oboe d'amore I, II, Violino I, Violino II, Viola, and Continuo senza l'organo. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The Oboe d'amore I, II part features a melodic line with slurs and a dynamic marking of *p* at the end. The Violino I and Violino II parts are marked *pizzicato* and play a rhythmic accompaniment. The Viola part is also marked *pizzicato* and plays a similar rhythmic accompaniment. The Continuo senza l'organo part is marked *pizzicato* and plays a simple bass line.

"Many composers of modern times have tried to imitate the strange combinations of notes heard from bells, but Bach anticipated them by more than a hundred years."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Whittaker I, p. 544.

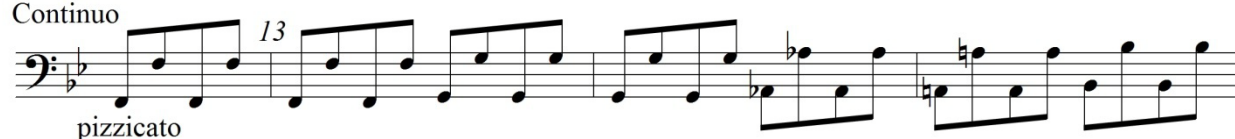
## BWV 105/4 *Herr, gehe nicht ins Gericht* (July 25, 1723)

### 4. Recitativo B

*Violino I/II, Viola, Continuo*

Wohl aber dem, der seinen Bürgen weiß,  
Der alle Schuld ersetzet,  
So wird die Handschrift ausgetan,  
Wenn Jesus sie mit Blute netzet.  
Er heftet sie ans Kreuze selber an,  
Er wird von deinen Gütern, Leib und Leben,  
Wenn deine Sterbestunde schlägt,  
Dem Vater selbst die Rechnung übergeben.  
**So mag man deinen Leib, den man zum Grabe trägt,**  
Mit Sand und Staub beschütten,  
Dein Heiland öffnet dir die ewgen Hütten.

BWV 105/4



Continuo

pizzicato

## BWV 114/5 *Ach, lieben Christen, seid getrost* 5. Aria "Du machst, o Tod, mir nun nicht bange" (Oct 1, 1724)

### 5. Aria A

*Oboe I, Violino I/II, Viola, Continuo*

**Du machst, o Tod, mir nun nicht ferner bange,**  
Wenn ich durch dich die Freiheit nur erlange,  
Es muss ja so einmal gestorben sein.  
Mit Simeon will ich in Friede fahren,  
Mein Heiland will mich in der Gruft bewahren  
Und ruft mich einst zu sich verklärt und rein.

BWV 114/5



Violino 1

Violino 2

Viola

Continuo

# BWV 127/3 Herr Jesu Christ, wahr' Mensch und Gott 3. Aria: "Die Seele ruht in Jesu Händen" (Feb 11, 1725)

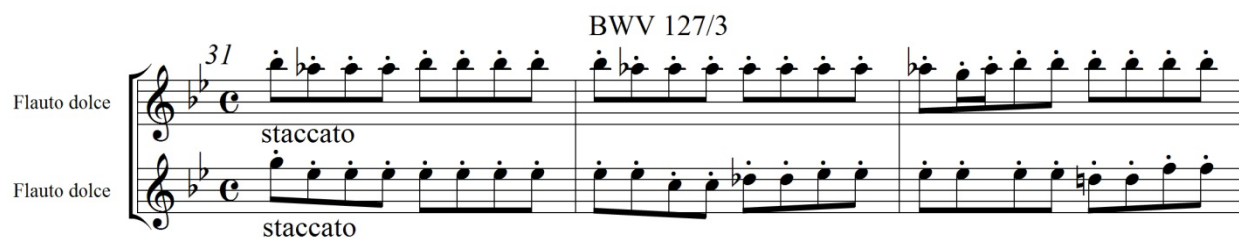
## Aria S

Flauto I/II, Oboe I, Violino I/II, Viola, Continuo

Die Seele ruht in Jesu Händen,  
Wenn Erde diesen Leib bedeckt.

Ach ruft mich bald, ihr Sterbeglocken,  
Ich bin zum Sterben unerschrocken,  
Weil mich mein Jesus wieder weckt.

BWV 127/3



BWV 127/3



"On '-glocken' the upper strings awaken from their long silence and enter with semiquaver pizzicato chords, continuing for four bars, below this ringing of small bells the bassi toll a heavier peal in octaves...."<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Whittaker II, p. 454.

BWV 133/4 *Ich freue mich in dir* 4. Aria: “Wie lieblich klingt es in den Ohren” (Dec 27, 1724)

4. Aria S

*Violino I/II, Viola, Continuo*

Wie lieblich klingt es in den Ohren,  
Dies Wort: mein Jesus ist geboren,  
Wie dringt es in das Herz hinein!  
Wer Jesu Namen nicht versteht  
Und wem es nicht durchs Herze geht,  
Der muss ein harter Felsen sein.

The image shows a page of a musical score for the 4th movement of BWV 133, 'Wie lieblich klingt es in den Ohren'. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features five staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Soprano, and Continuo. The Soprano part has the lyrics 'wie lieblich klingt es in den Ohren, wie lieblich klingt es in den'. The score includes a 'Tutti' marking and a measure number '18' at the beginning of the first system. The Continuo part has a measure number '6' at the beginning of the second system.

“...violin I realistically depicts ‘ringing’ by alternate open and stopped strings—a charming device...supported by repeated viola notes, the tolling of a small bell....The D string is now brought into action for the idea, and the bassi toll a larger bell.”<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Whittaker II, p. 339.

# BWV 161/4 *Komm, du süße Todesstunde* 4. Recit. "Der Schluß ist schon gemacht" (Sep 27, 1716)

## 4. Recitativo A

*Flauto dolce I/II, Violino I/II, Viola, Continuo*

Der Schluss ist schon gemacht:  
Welt, gute Nacht!  
Und kann ich nur den Trost erwerben,  
In Jesu Armen bald zu sterben:  
Er ist mein sanfter Schlaf!  
Das kühle Grab wird mich mit Rosen decken,  
Bis Jesus mich wird auferwecken,  
Bis er sein Schaf  
Führt auf die süße Himmelsweide,  
Dass mich der Tod von ihm nicht scheidet!  
So brich herein, du froher Todestag!  
**So schlage doch, du letzter Stundenschlag!**

BWV 161/4

Flauto dolce

Flauto dolce

BWV 161/4

Violino 1  
pizzicato

Violino 2  
pizzicato

Viola  
pizzicato

BWV 161/4

Continuo

pizzicato

# BWV 198/4 *Laß, Fürstin, laß noch einen Strahl (Trauerode)* 4. Recit. "Der Glocken bebendes Getön" (Oct 17, 1727)

## Recitativo A

*Flauto traverso I/II, Oboe d'amore I/II, Viola da gamba I/II, Liuto I/II, Violino I/II, Viola, Continuo*

### Der Glocken bebendes Getön

Soll unsrer trüben Seelen Schrecken  
Durch ihr geschwungnes Erze wecken  
Und uns durch Mark und Adern gehn.  
O, könnte nur dies bange Klingen,  
Davon das Ohr uns täglich gellt,  
Der ganzen Europäerwelt  
Ein Zeugnis unsres Jammers bringen!

This is perhaps the most remarkable example illustrating the manner and sequence according to which the bells begin tolling; the highest, smallest and easiest bells begin first with the middle-range bells entering later and the lowest, largest bells coming in last:

4. Recitativo

Flauto traverso I  
Flauto traverso II  
Oboe I  
Oboe II  
Violino I  
Violino II  
Viola  
Viola da gamba I  
Viola da gamba II  
Liuto I  
Liuto II  
Alto  
Continuo

Der Glock-ken be-ben-des Ge-tön soll uns-er  
trü-ben See-len Schrek-ken durch ihr ge-schwung-nes Er-ze wek-ken und uns durch Mark und A-der-n gehn.

(NBA I/38, S. 210)