

A query from AR regarding BWV 118:

“I recently saw the autograph score for the 'brass and winds' version on a visit to the Scheide Library, where it now resides. Does anyone offer an explanation for the continuo figures that can be seen at one spot in the autograph?”

Based upon NBA III/1(pp. 161-178) and NBA III/1 KB (pp. 181-199):

There are two autograph scores for BWV 118 and no original parts.

1. This is the composing score referred to above as the ‘brass and winds’ version in the Scheide Library. The continuo figures are noted above the bass notes assigned to Trombone III in three places: ms. 55, 69f and 75. There is no separate continuo part; however, it is quite probable that Bach already had such a part in mind. It has been suggested that this is a ‘version’ intended for an outdoor performance. The instrumentation is changed in the second autograph to include separate parts for string instruments with oboes and bassoon doubling the vocal parts.

2. This is the final, clean copy which no longer has a Trombone III part. This part now becomes a separate bass part designated as Continuo but without any figures indicated at all. This is not unusual since Bach most often adds these figures on one or more of the continuo parts that are first copied by his scribes before he makes any additions or corrections.

“The scattered figures in the instrumental bass part (Trombone basso) of the first version appear to be aimed at providing chordal reinforcement by means of a continuo instrument.” (NBA KB III/1 p. 196)