

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 157

Form: Duet (T/B) - Aria (T) - Recit (T) - Aria/Recit (B) - Chorale.

Introduction & updates at melvinunger.com.

NBA I/34; BC A170, B20

Funeral Service (106, 157, 198) Apparently, it was later adapted for Mary's Purification (Candlemas), probably 6 February 1728 (St. Thomas in Leipzig).

Candlemas (BWV 83, 125, 82, 157, 158, [161], [200]):

*Malachi 3:1-4 (The Lord will suddenly come to his temple and purify his people)

*Luke 2:22-32 (Mary presents Jesus at the temple; Nunc Dimittis)

Librettist: Picander (Christian Friedrich Henrici)

FP: probably 6 February 1727 (Pomßen village church)

Concerning problems dealing with the cantata's source material, see note.

The cantata is in chiasmic form. Bach often used chiasmic (x-shaped/symmetrical) forms, in which center movements (where the mirror image begins) provide the crux of the matter. There antithetical elements meet or are paradoxically inverted (formal inversion reflects an aspect of reversal or turning in the text).

J.S. Bach

The commemorative program for the funeral included a long sermon (perhaps one hour in duration), odes, and the texts of the music.

Cantata No. 157

Ich lasse dich nicht, du segnest mich denn

For Alfred Dürr's summary of the background, see note.

(Larghetto $\text{♩} = 50$) •Clinging to Jesus till he blesses: Genesis 32:26 (157/1).

Instrumentation:

Flauto traverso

Ob d'amore

Vln I, II

Violetta (see note).

SATB

Continuo

Ritornello has the same motive as the closing chorus of the St. Matthew Passion.

Form
Rit (mm. 1-9) Bm
Gen. 32:26 3x (9-17) Bm-F#m
Rit (17-25) F#m
Gen. 32:26 2x (25-31) F#m
Rit (31-32) F#m
Gen. 32:26 4x (32-49) F#m-Bm
Rit. (1-9) Bm

The text quotes Jacob's statement to a mysterious figure (apparently, a theophany) with whom he wrestled (see note). The duet partners sing in canon, the lines tightly interlocked, like two figures clutching one another. It is noteworthy that, in subsequent movements, tenor and bass both represent the believer.

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11

seg - - - - nest mich denn, ich las - se dich nicht, du seg -

- nest mich denn, ich las - se dich nicht, du seg -

B minor

B minor

13^{II}

- nest mich denn, ich

- nest mich denn, ich las -

Instruments in concertante alternation.

B minor

16

las - se dich nicht, du segnest mich denn!

- se dich nicht, du seg - nest mich denn!

Ritornello

Ob d'am

mf

F# minor

F# minor

F# minor

F# minor

Ritornello & canon are repeated in the dominant; violin and flute parts switched; tenor & bass parts switched.

18^{II}

F# major

B minor

B minor

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Musical score for measures 21-22. The system consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a complex texture with many sixteenth notes. Chord labels are placed below the piano part: E7, A major, D major, A7, D major, C#7, and F# minor.

Musical score for measures 23-25. It includes a vocal line with the lyrics "Ich las - - se dich" and a piano accompaniment. A section of the piano part is marked with a *tr* (trill) and the instruction "Instruments in concertante alternation." The chord label F# minor is shown below the piano part.

Musical score for measures 26-27. It features a vocal line with the lyrics "nicht, du seg - - nest mich denn, ich las - - se dich" and a piano accompaniment. The chord label F# minor is shown below the piano part.

Musical score for measures 28-29. It includes a vocal line with the lyrics "nicht, du seg - - nest mich" and a piano accompaniment. The chord label F# minor is shown below the piano part.

Six-part texture

Musical score for measures 30-31. It features a vocal line with the lyrics "se dich nicht, du seg - - nest mich" and a piano accompaniment. The chord label F# minor is shown below the piano part.

31

denn! Ich las - se dich nicht,

denn! Ich las - se dich

Fl
Ob d'am

Ritornello

Vln

F# minor F# minor

Strict imitation is abandoned in favor of interpenetration of the two lines, so that the statement "du segnest mich denn" appears more like an affirmation ("you bless me then"), and give the interjection "ich lasse dich nicht" sound both like a promise and a petition. See Petzoldt, *Bach Kommentar* 3:534.

35

du seg -

Word painting: Long, extravagant melismas on "segnest" ("bless").

nicht, du seg -

Six-part texture

B minor B minor B7 E minor

36

- - - nest mich denn, ich - las - se dich

Instruments in concertante alternation.

E minor

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38

nicht, du seg - - - - -
- nest mich denn, ich lasse dich

E minor B minor A# dim. B minor

40

- nest mich denn, ich lasse dich nicht, du segnest mich

nicht, du seg

Pulsed notes suggest the words "dich nicht."

B minor E# dim.7 F# major B(7)

42

denn. du seg - - - - -
- nest mich denn, ich lasse dich nicht, du segnest mich denn, du segnest mich

E minor E minor A7 D major D7

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Imitation at the interval of one beat.

44

- nest mich denn, du seg -

denn, du seg -

Instruments in concertante alternation.

G major F#7 B minor

46

- nest mich denn, ich las -

- nest mich denn, ich las - se dich nicht, ich

B minor F#7 E minor E minor

48

- se dich nicht, du seg - nest mich denn!

las - se dich nicht, du segnest mich denn!

mf Ritornello Ob d'am

F#7 B minor B minor Dal Segno

Jacob's words in no. 1 are now appropriated by the believer. Using language reminiscent of Song of Solomon 3:4 ("I found him as though my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go," the text is also an allusion to the Gospel reading of the day, in which Simeon takes the baby Jesus into his arms (Nunc dimittis).

Aria

157/2. (Moderato $\text{♩} = 88$) • Clinging to Jesus for comfort; fixing faith on him (157/2).

1. "Ich halte" ("I hold") figure.

Ob d'amore
mf

F# minor F# minor

E major A major C#7 F# minor

12 "Ich halte" ("I hold") figure.

F# minor B7 E major E major

18 C#7 F# minor N6 A7 D major

23 E# dim.7 C#(7) F# minor

28 B minor F#7 B minor hemiola E# dim.7 F# minor

As in Song of Solomon 3:4, where the bride seeks the bridegroom, then clings to him (see above), so the believer seeks Jesus, the heavenly bridegroom.

32 **Tenore** Word painting: Long held note leading to a melisma for "halte" ("hold" [my Jesus]).

Ich hal - - - - - te

F# minor F# minor F# minor

38 Text painting: Rising line for "not letting Jesus go into eternity" ("ewiglich").

mei - nen Je - sum - - - fe - ste, ich lass' ihn nun und e - - - wig

E major A major (C#7) F# minor

44

nicht, ich hal - - - te mei - - - - nen

Clash

C#(7) F# minor E7 F# minor F# minor

50

Je - - - - sum fe - - - - ste, ich lass' ihn nun - und e - wig

E(7) C#7 F# minor B7 C#7 F# minor

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56

nicht, ich hal - te mei - nen Je - sum fe - ste, ich hal -

F# minor B7 E major E7

62

- te mei - nen Je - sum fe - ste, ich lass' ihn nun und e -

C#7 F# minor F# minor E# dim.7 F# minor

68

- wig nicht, ich lass' ihn nun und e -

G#(7) C# minor F# minor C#7 F# minor F# minor

73

- wig, nun und e - wig nicht.

Ritornello

B# dim.7 C# minor

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79

C# minor B major E major

Musical score for measures 79-84. The system shows a treble and bass clef with various chords and melodic lines. Chords are labeled in red below the staff.

85

G# major C# minor F#7 B major

Musical score for measures 85-90. The system shows a treble and bass clef with various chords and melodic lines. Chords are labeled in red below the staff.

91

B major (B7) G#7 C# minor C# minor N6

Musical score for measures 91-96. The system shows a treble and bass clef with various chords and melodic lines. Chords are labeled in red below the staff.

97

G#7 C# minor

Musical score for measures 97-102. The system shows a treble and bass clef with various chords and melodic lines. Chords are labeled in red below the staff.

103

C#7 F# minor (G#7) C# minor

hemiola

Musical score for measures 103-106. The system shows a treble and bass clef with various chords and melodic lines. Chords are labeled in red below the staff. A 'hemiola' annotation is present in measure 105.

107

Er ist ——— allein mein Auf.ent.halt, drum fasst ———

p

C# minor F#7 B minor

Musical score for measures 107-112. The system shows a treble and bass clef with various chords and melodic lines. Chords are labeled in red below the staff. The lyrics 'Er ist ——— allein mein Auf.ent.halt, drum fasst ———' are written under the treble staff. A piano (*p*) dynamic marking is present in measure 107.

113

meine Glaube mit Gewalt

E7 F# minor E7 A major A7 D major

117

sein segnen

E7 A major

121

reiches Angesicht; denn dieser Trost ist doch der

hemiola

A7 D major F#7 B minor

127

besteh halte meinen Jesus fe

B minor A7 B minor A(7) D major

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132

ste, denn die - ser Trost ist doch der be - ste: ich hal -

D(7) B7 E minor (A7)

137

te meinen Je - sum fe - ste!

hemiola Ritornello

A# dim.7 B minor B major B7

143

Er ist allein mein Auf - ent - halt,

E minor E# dim.7 C#7 F# minor A7 D major

149

drum fasst mein Glau -

D major F#7 B minor F#7 B minor

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154

be mit Ge - walt

Text painting: Energetic melismas for "drum faßt mein Glaube mit Gewalt" ("therefore my faith grasps mightily").

F#7 B minor E7 A major

158

sein se - gen - rei - ches An -

C#7 F# minor

162

- ge - sicht, denn die - - ser Trost ist doch der be - ste: ich

Ob d'amore: initial melody returns (sense of recapitulation).

F# minor

168

hal - - te mei - nen Je - sum fe - - - ste, denn

F# minor E major A7 F#7

Initial tenor entry returns (sense of recapitulation).

173

die - ser Trost ist doch der be - ste: ich hal -

B minor B minor F# minor F# minor

178

- te mei - nen Je - sum

F# minor A major

183

fe - ste, ich hal - te meinen Je - sum fe - ste!

hemiola Ob d'am

A major B7 E7 C#7 F# minor

Dal Segno

This is the central (pivot) movement in the cantata's chiastic form, where antithetical elements meet or are paradoxically inverted (formal inversion reflects an aspect of reversal or turning in the text). Here earthly trouble and heavenly comfort meet.

Recitativo

•Clinging to Jesus in trouble, who else is there? (157/3).

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 9 mm.

157/3. 1. Te E D C# B A G F# F


Mein lie - ber Je - su du, wenn ich Ver - druss und Kum - mer

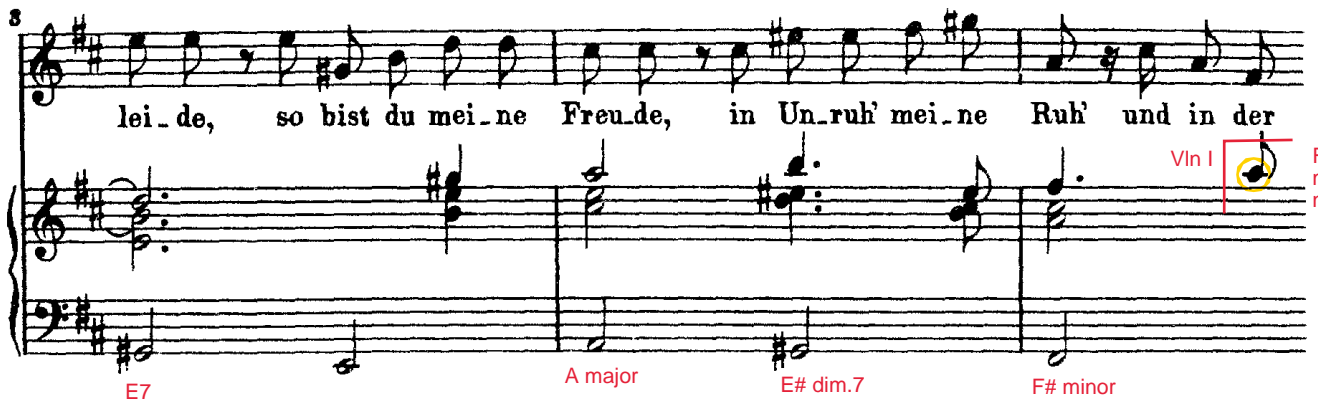
Opening phrase is reminiscent of the chorale "O Gott, du frommer Gott."

A "halo" of strings depicts the comfort in Jesus, as referenced in the text.


A major A7 D major G# dim.7

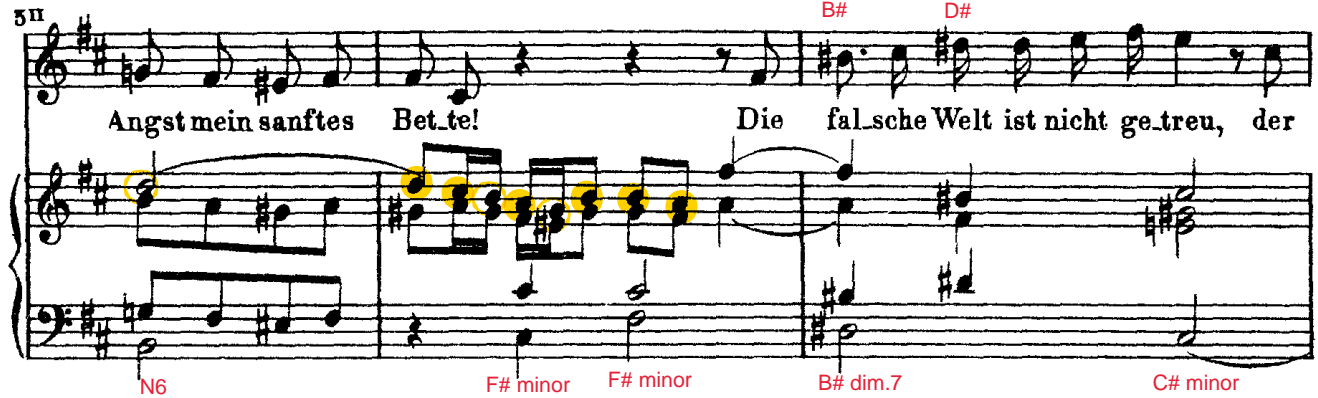
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8
 lei - de, so bist du mei - ne Freu - de, in Un - ruh' mei - ne Ruh' und in der
 Vln I  Figure from movement no. 1.



E7 A major E# dim.7 B# D# F# minor

5 II
 Angst mein sanftes Bet - te! Die fal - sche Welt ist nicht ge - treu, der




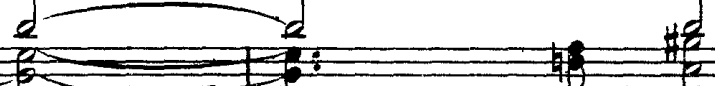
N6 F# minor F# minor B# dim.7 C# minor

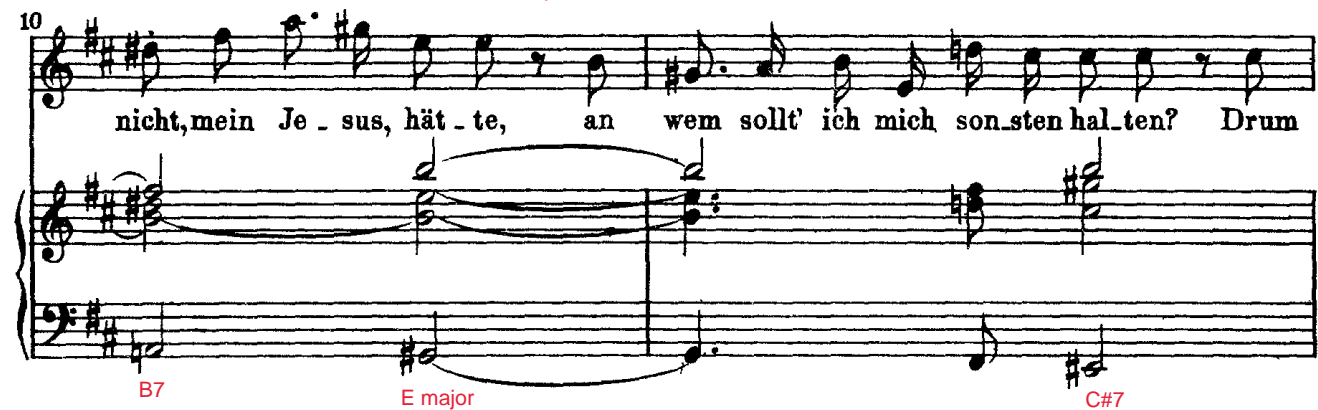
8
 Him - mel muss ver - al - ten, die Lust der Welt ver - geht wie Spreu; wenn ich dich




A7 F# major A# B minor

The text's reference to the earth growing old and the the lust of the world passing away suggests various biblical passages (see note).

10
 nicht, mein Je - sus, hät - te, an wem sollt' ich mich son - sten hal - ten? Drum




B7 E major C#7

12
 lass' ich nimmermehr von dir, dein Segen bleibe denn bei mir!
 Reminiscent singer's motive in movement no. 1.



F# minor B major E minor D major A7 D major

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.

In the second half of the movement the 3 couplets of the aria are interspersed with troping poetry.

Form:
 [Aria] Rit (mm. 1-13) DM
 Lines 1-2 (13-36) DM-AM)
 Rit (36-42) AM
 Lines 3-4 (36-50) AM-Bm
 Rit (50-54) Bm
 Lines 5-6 (54-62) Bm-GM
 Rit (62-66) GM-DM
 Lines 5-6 (66-71) DM
 Rit (71-73) DM
 [Recit trope] Lines 7-10 (74-78) D7
 [Arioso] Lines 1-2 (79-82) AM-F#7
 [Adagio trope] Lines 11-12 (83-85)
 F#7-F#m
 [Arioso] Lines 3-4 (86-89) A7-Bm
 [Recit trope] Lines 13-16 (89-94)
 D7-DM
 [Arioso] Lines 5-6 (94-102) DM-GM
 Rit (102-106) GM-DM
 Lines 5-6 (106-111) DM
 Rit (111-113) DM

Aria

157/4. (Tempo ordinario $\text{♩} = 72$)

• Clinging to Jesus affords entrance to heaven (157/4).

For Alfred Dürr's comments, see note.

1. Vln solo

Ritornello

D major D7 G major

The striding bass line becomes a unifying feature. The violin and flute interact in concertante fashion.

A major D major A7

The bubbling obbligato with walking bass depicts ascent to heaven, as referenced in the text.

5 Flute

D major D major

7 tr

C# minor F# minor B minor

9

A(7) D major B7 E minor A7

11

D major

Holding Jesus firm as one enters heaven is reminiscent of the Nunc dimittis, as well as Jacob's statement in no. 1.

13. **Basso**

Ja, ja, ich hal - te Je - - sum fe - ste,

D major D7 G major A major

Ritornello

B7 E minor A7 D major

18

ja, ja, ich hal - te Je - - sura

See full score for 8va.

D major D7 G major

21

fe - ste, so geh' ich auch zum Him - mel ein, so

B minor E minor A7 D major

23II

geh' ich auch zum Himmel ein, ja, ja, ich hal - te

E7 A major A major D major

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26

Je - sum fe - ste, so geh' ich auch zum Him - mel

F# minor A major E7

28II

ein, ja, ja, ich hal - te Je - sum fe -

Word painting: Melisma with syncopated long notes for "feste" ("firmly").

A major A7

31

- - - ste, ja, ja, ich hal - te Je -

D major B7 E7 F#7 B minor

39II

- - sum fe - - ste, so geh' ich auch zum Himmel

Ascending run for "ascending into heaven." Flute

E7 A major A major

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36.

ein,

Ritornello Vln (up. 8va)

A major See full score for 8va.

E7

A major

wo Gott und sei - nes Lam - mes

Allusion to Revelation 19 (description of the marriage feast of the Lamb (see note).



A major

A major

D major

See full score for 8va.

A7

Gä - ste in Kro - nen zu der Hochzeit sein, wo

Word painting: Swirling melismas for "crowns."

D major

F#7

Gott und sei - nes Lam - mes Gä - ste in Kro -

B minor

A(7)

D major

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49

- nen zu der Hochzeit sein.

F#7 B minor B minor

51II

B minor B minor

54

Da lass' ich nicht, mein Heil, von

See full score for 8va.

B minor B7 E minor D7

56

dir, da bleibt dein Se gen auch bei

G major

58

mir, da lass' ich nicht, mein Heil, von

G major E7 A minor D7

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60
dir, da bleibt dein Se - gen auch bei mir. Vln
Ritornello
G major

63
G major B minor E minor

65
Da lass' ich nicht, mein Heil, von
A7 D major D major

67 II
dir, da bleibt dein Se - gen auch bei mir, da
D7 G major

70
bleibt dein Se - gen auch bei mir. Ritornello
See full score for 8va. Vln
A major D major D major

72

D major D major

Recit.

Chromaticism for "Sterbekasten" ("deathbed").

74

Ei, wie vergnügt ist mir mein Sterbe-kasten, weil Je-sus mir in Armen liegt! So

D7 D# dim.7 E minor F#7

Arioso (♩ = 72)

77

kann mein Geist recht freu-dig rasten! Ja, ja, ich hal - te

B minor D major D7 G major

80

Je - - sum fe - ste, so - geh' ich auch zum Him - - mel

B minor E minor A7

See full score for 8va.

82

ein! O schö - - ner Ort! Komm, sanf - ter Tod, und

B minor E# dim.7

Adagio (♩ = 72)

Descending lines for "Come, sweet death."

(Arioso ♩ = 72)

85

führ' mich fort, wo Gott und sei - nes Lam - mes

F# minor A7 D major

87

Gä - ste in Kro - nen zu der Hochzeit sein. Ich bin er.

Word painting: Swirling melisma for "crowns."

Recit.

F#7 B minor B minor

90

freut, das Elend dieser Zeit noch von mir heute ab zu - legen, denn Jesus wartet

Shivering melisma for "erfreut" ("delighted").

Editorial realization of figured bass.

D7 G major D# dim.7 E minor (A7)

Arioso (♩ = 72)

93

mein im Himmel mit dem Segen. Da lass' ich nicht, mein Heil, von

Vln up 8va

D major D major D7 G major

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96



dir, da bleibt dein Se - gen auch bei

G major

98



mir, da lass' ich nicht, mein Heil, von

G major E7 A minor D7

100



dir, da bleibt dein Se - - gen auch bei

G major

102



mir.

Vln Fl

G major

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104

Da

G major D major

Detailed description: This system shows measures 104 and 105. The vocal line (bass clef) has a single note 'Da' in measure 105. The piano accompaniment (treble and bass clefs) features a complex texture with many sixteenth notes. The key signature is G major. Yellow circles highlight specific notes in the bass line of measure 105.

106

lass' ich nicht, mein Heil, — von dir, — da bleibt dein

See full score for 8va.

D major D major D7

Detailed description: This system shows measures 106 and 107. The vocal line (bass clef) contains the lyrics 'lass' ich nicht, mein Heil, — von dir, — da bleibt dein'. The piano accompaniment continues with sixteenth-note patterns. A red annotation 'See full score for 8va.' points to the upper register of the piano part. Yellow circles highlight notes in the bass line. The key signature is D major.

108II

Se - gen auch — bei mir, — da bleibt dein Se -

G major See full score for 8va. A(7)

Detailed description: This system shows measures 108 and 109. The vocal line (bass clef) contains the lyrics 'Se - gen auch — bei mir, — da bleibt dein Se -'. The piano accompaniment features sixteenth-note patterns. A red annotation 'See full score for 8va.' points to the upper register of the piano part. Yellow circles highlight notes in the bass line. The key signature is G major.

111

- gen auch bei mir.

Fl Vln

D major D major D major D major

Detailed description: This system shows measures 110 and 111. The vocal line (bass clef) contains the lyrics '- gen auch bei mir.'. The piano accompaniment includes a violin part (Vln) and a flute part (Fl). The piano part has sixteenth-note patterns. Yellow circles highlight notes in the bass line. The key signature is D major.

This is the 6th and final stanza of the 1622 chorale by Christian Keymer (1607–1662). While Picander's libretto followed the chorale's original text, "Jesusum lass ich nicht von mir," Bach changed it to match the closing line, disrupting the rhyme scheme but providing cyclical closure. He had done this already earlier in BWV 154/8.

157/5. **Choral** (Mel: „Meinen Jesum lass' ich nicht“) (See also 124/6, 154/8.)

•Clinging to Jesus; he leads me to streams of life (157/5).

+Fl in 8va,
Ob d'amore,
Vln I

+Vln II

+Violetta

Soprano 1.
Mei-nen Je-sum lass' ich nicht, geh' ihm e-wig an-der Sei-

Alto.
Mei-nen Je-sum lass' ich nicht, geh' ihm e-wig an-der Sei-

Tenore.
Mei-nen Je-sum lass' ich nicht, geh' ihm e-wig an-der Sei-

Basso.
Mei-nen Je-sum lass' ich nicht, geh' ihm e-wig an-der Sei-

The stanza's reference to the "water of life" is based on various biblical passages (see note). To depict the "Lebensbachlein" (stream of life) Bach writes flowing 8ths in the accompanying voices.

D major D major A major (E7) A major

5 ten; Chri-stus lässt mich für und für zu dem Le-bens-bäch-lein-

ten; Chri-stus lässt mich für und für zu dem Le-bens-bäch-lein

ten; Chri-stus lässt mich für und für zu dem Le-bens-bäch-lein

ten; Chri-stus lässt mich für und für zu dem Le-bens-bäch-lein

A major D major D major F# minor B7 E minor A7 D major

9 lei-ten; se-lig, wer mit mir so spricht: Mei-nen Je-sum lass' ich nicht!

lei-ten; se-lig, wer mit mir so spricht: Mei-nen Je-sum lass' ich nicht!

lei-ten; se-lig, wer mit mir so spricht: Mei-nen Je-sum lass' ich nicht!

lei-ten; se-lig, wer mit mir so spricht: Mei-nen Je-sum lass' ich nicht!

D major B minor C#7 F# minor F# minor B7 E minor A major D major