



2010 Bach

THE COMPLETE CHORAL CANTATAS



CANTATAS II 20 March 2005

BWV 61, Nun komm, der heiden Heiland I
BWV 62, Nun komm, der heiden Heiland II
BWV 36, Schwingt freudig euch empor

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Nun komm, der heiden Heiland



Come Thou of man the Saviour,
Thou child of a Virgin born;
Mortals over all the earth
Marvel at Thy Holy birth.

Praise to God here, everyone,
God the Father, God the Son,
God the Holy Ghost adore,
Praise them now and evermore.



TRANSLATIONS



BWV 61: Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland I

1. Chorale (*Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*)

Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland,
Der Jungfrauen Kind erkannt,
Des sich wundert alle Welt,
Gott solch Geburt ihm bestellt

Now come, the nations' Savior,
As the Virgin's child revealed,
At whom marvels all the world,
That God him this birth ordained

2. Tenor Recitative

Der Heiland ist gekommen,
Hat unser armes Fleisch und Blut
An sich genommen
Und nimmet uns zu Blutsverwandten an.
O allerhöchstes Gut,
Was hast du nicht an uns getan?
Was tust du nicht
Noch täglich an den Deinen?
Du kommst und lässt dein Licht
Mit vollem Segen scheinen.

To us is come the Savior,
Who hath our feeble flesh and blood
Himself now taken
And taketh us as kinsmen of his blood.
O treasure unexcelled,
What hast thou not for us then done?
What dost thou not
Yet daily for thy people?
Thy coming makes thy light
Appear with richest blessing.

3. Tenor Aria

Komm, Jesu, komm zu deiner Kirche
Und gib ein selig neues Jahr!
Befördre deines Namens Ehre,
Erhalte die gesunde Lehre
Und segne Kanzel und Altar!

Come, Jesus, come to this thy church now
And fill with blessing the new year! Advance thy name in
rank and honor,
Uphold thou ev'ry wholesome doctrine,
The pulpit and the altar bless!

4. Bass Recitative

Siehe, ich stehe vor der Tür und klopfe an. So jemand meine
Stimme hören wird und die Tür auf tun, zu dem werde ich
eingehen und das Abendmahl mit ihm halten und er mit mir.

See now, I stand before the door and on it knock. If anyone
my voice will render heed and make wide the door, I will
come into his dwelling and take with him the evening
supper, and he with me.

5. Soprano Aria

Öffne dich, mein ganzes Herze,
Jesus kommt und ziehet ein.
Bin ich gleich nur Staub und Erde,
Will er mich doch nicht verschmähn,
Seine Lust an mir zu sehn,
Dass ich seine Wohnung werde.
O wie selig werd ich sein!

Open wide, my heart and spirit,
Jesus comes and draws within.

Though I soon be earth and ashes,
Me he will yet not disdain,
That his joy he find in me
And that I become his dwelling.
Oh, how blessed shall I be!

6. Chorale (*Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern*)

Amen, amen!
Komm, du schöne Freudenkrone, bleib nicht lange!
Deiner wart ich mit Verlangen

Amen, amen!
Come, thou lovely crown of gladness, do not tarry.
Here I wait for thee with longing.

BWV 62: Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland II

1. Chorale (Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland)

**Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland,
Der Jungfrauen Kind erkannt,
Des sich wundert alle Welt,
Gott solch Geburt ihm bestellt.**

**Now come, the nations' Savior,
As the Virgin's child revealed,
At whom marvels all the world,
That God him this birth ordained.**

2. Tenor Aria

Bewundert, o Menschen, dies große Geheimnis:
Der höchste Beherrscher erscheint der Welt.
Hier werden die Schätze des Himmels entdeckt,
Hier wird uns ein göttliches Manna bestellt,
O Wunder! die Keuschheit wird gar nicht beflecket.

Admire, all ye people, this mystery's grandeur:
The highest of rulers appears to the world.
Here are all the treasures of heaven discovered,
Here for us a manna divine is ordained,
O wonder! Virginitly bideth unblemished.

3. Bass Recitative

So geht aus Gottes Herrlichkeit und Thron
Sein eingeborner Sohn.
Der Held aus Juda bricht herein,
Den Weg mit Freudigkeit zu laufen
Und uns Gefallne zu erkaufen.
O heller Glanz, o wunderbarer Segensschein!

Now comes from God's great majesty and throne
His one begotten Son.
The man from Judah now appears
To run his course with gladness
And us the fallen bring redemption.
O splendid light,
O sign of grace most wonderful!

4. Bass Aria

Streite, siege, starker Held!
Sei vor uns im Fleische kräftig!
Sei geschäftig,
Das Vermögen in uns Schwachen
Stark zu machen!

Fight victorious, hero strong!
Show for us in flesh thy power!
Ever striving
Our own power, now so feeble,
Strong to temper.

5. Soprano-Alto Recitative

Wir ehren diese Herrlichkeit
Und nahen nun zu deiner Krippen
Und preisen mit erfreuten Lippen,
Was du uns zubereit';
Die Dunkelheit verstört' uns nicht
Und sahen dein unendlich Licht.

We honor this great majesty
And venture nigh now to thy cradle
And praise thee now with lips of gladness
For what thou us hast brought;
For darkness did not trouble us
When we beheld thy lasting light.

6. Chorale (Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland)

**Lob sei Gott, dem Vater, g'ton,
Lob sei Gott, sein'm eingen Sohn,
Lob sei Gott, dem Heiligen Geist,
Immer und in Ewigkeit!**

**Praise to God, the Father, be,
Praise to God, his only Son,
Praise to God, the Holy Ghost,
Always and eternally!**



BWV 36: Schwingt freudig euch empor

1. Chorus

Schwingt freudig euch empor zu den erhabnen Sternen,
Ihr Zungen, die ihr jetzt in Zion fröhlich seid!
Doch haltet ein! Der Schall darf sich nicht weit entfernen,
Es naht sich selbst zu euch der Herr der Herrlichkeit.

Soar joyfully upwards to the exalted stars,
you tongues that now are joyful in Sion!
Yet stop! The sound need not travel so far,
the Lord of Glory Himself approaches you.

2. Soprano-Alto Duet (Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland)

**Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland,
Der Jungfrauen Kind erkannt,
Des sich wundert alle Welt,
Gott solch Geburt ihm bestellt.**

**Now come, the nations' Savior,
As the Virgin's child revealed,
At whom marvels all the world,
That God him this birth ordained.**

3. Tenor Aria

Die Liebe zieht mit sanften Schritten
Sein Treugeliebtes allgemach.
Gleichwie es eine Braut entzückt,
Wenn sie den Bräutigam erblicket,
So folgt ein Herz auch Jesu nach.

Love approaches his beloved
with gentle and slow steps.
Just as a bride is delighted
when she beholds her bridegroom,
so a heart follows after Jesus.

4. Chorale (Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern)

Zwingt die Saiten in Cythara
Und laßt die süße Musica
Ganz freudenreich erschallen,
Daß ich möge mit Jesulein,
Dem wunderschönen Bräutigam mein,
In steter Liebe wallen!
Singet, Springet,
Jubilieret, triumphieret, dankt dem Herren!
Groß ist der König der Ehren.

Strike the strings of the Cythera
and let the sweet music
resound full of joy,
so that I might, with little Jesus,
my fairest bridegroom,
travel in constant love!
Sing, leap,
rejoice, triumph, thank the Lord!
Great is the King of honor.

5. Bass Aria

Willkommen, werter Schatz!
Die Lieb und Glaube machet Platz
Vor dich in meinem Herzen rein,
Zieh bei mir ein!

Welcome, worthy treasure!
Love and faith make room
for You in my purified heart,
draw near to me!

6. Tenor Chorale (Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland)

**Der du bist dem Vater gleich,
Führ hinaus den Sieg im Fleisch,
Daß dein ewig Gotts Gewalt
In uns das krank Fleisch enthalt.**

**You who are like the Father,
lead the victory forth in the flesh,
so that Your eternal Godly power
may sustain our weak flesh in us.**

7. Soprano Aria

Auch mit gedämpften, schwachen Stimmen
Wird Gottes Majestät verehrt.
Denn schallet nur der Geist darbei,
So ist ihm solches ein Geschrei,
Das er im Himmel selber hört.

Also with muted, weak voices
is God's majesty honored.
For if the Spirit only resounds with it,
it becomes such an outcry,
that is heard in heaven itself.

8. Chorale (Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland)

**Lob sei Gott, dem Vater, g'ton,
Lob sei Gott, sein'm eingen Sohn,
Lob sei Gott, dem Heiligen Geist,
Immer und in Ewigkeit!**

**Praise be to God, the Father,
praise be to God, His only Son,
praise be to God, the Holy Spirit,
for ever and in eternity!**

PROGRAMME NOTES

THE CHORALE:

Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland

All three of this afternoon's Advent cantatas have in common the same chorale, *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*. We have indicated the multiple use of this chorale in bold print in the translations, showing the focus that Bach places on this hymn. The archaic quality of the chorale, reflected in its small range, scalar movement and asymmetrical phrasing, reflects its origins in the Roman Catholic plainchant tradition. As part of his drive to translate many hymns from Latin into the vernacular German, Martin Luther turned to the hymn *Veni, Redemptor Genitum* in 1524. This ancient hymn dates from the end of the 4th century, written by the church's first great hymnodist, St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan.

In the six settings of the chorale that we will hear in this concert, we see Bach emphasising different elements of the text through the choice of musical form and the use of different musical language in each. Yet again, one is struck by the wealth of Bach's expression, as well as his masterful ability to transform what was originally a fairly dour, limited tune, into a wide palette of colours.



BWV 61: Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland I

Although Bach's cantatas are almost synonymous with his work in Leipzig, he actually wrote nearly thirty cantatas before moving to Leipzig in 1723. Twenty of these cantatas were written in Weimar, where Bach served two branches of the ducal family. He worked as a court musician from 1708-1717, but it was his promotion to *Konzertmeister* in 1714 that required him to compose a cantata each month for the court chapel.

The first setting of *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* dates from this period in Weimar, where it was first presented on 2 December 1714. This is the first known Bach setting of a libretto by the pastor Erdmann Neumeister, a collaboration that would transform the genre of the sacred cantata. Bach would reuse the cantata for his first Advent Sunday in Leipzig in 1723.

The use of the French *ouverture* in the opening of the cantata emphasises the coming of the saviour as King, while at the same time heralding the start of the new church year. In music redolent of Lully, the double-dotted rhythms in the strings accompany a straightforward setting of the first line of the chorale tune shared amongst the vocal parts, before launching into a lively fugue for the words "des sich wundert alle Welt"—a musical depiction of the world's wonderment and celebration.

The scale of this cantata is smaller than that of most of the Weimar cantatas, many of which require large forces. The

original orchestration is a standard "French quintet"—two violins, two violas and continuo. The Weimar court only

employed up to eight singers, so the vocal forces were also limited. The scope of the solo movements is also modest, with shorter arias than we find in later cantatas, accompanied either by a single instrumental line or by continuo. In many ways, this cantata occupies a crossroad between the north German cantatas, which consisted more of sections than of free movements, and the later largescale works that Bach composed.

There are a couple of wonderful examples of text-painting in this cantata. The bass recitative, a *vox Christi* quotation from Revelation 3:20, features pizzicato strings representing the knock on the door. And in the final chorale, a polyphonic setting of half of *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern*, we find the same use of high semi-quaver violin writing that we found in BWV1 in our first BACH 2010 concert, in which the violin represented the morningstar.



BWV 62: Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland II

This second setting of *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* dates from 1724, Bach's second annual cycle (*Jahrgang*) of sacred cantatas. If the first setting still shows influences from the north German school, then this version is an excellent example of the typical Leipzig cantata, with its opening chorale-prelude, middle recitatives and arias, and closing chorale in cantional (straight four-part harmony) style.

One of the themes that we find throughout Bach's musical language in his Advent cantatas is that of God meeting man. Man's prayers ascend to God in upward musical figures, while God descends to earth in downward musical figures. We find this in particular in the opening chorus of BWV 62, in which we find the joyful, running oboe figure reaching upwards, and the string parts (in the key of B minor, which Bach uses to symbolise Christ's humanity), coming down in arpeggios and appoggiaturas. Bach then presents the four phrases of the hymn in four distinct sections, lending each its own affect. As we will see in each setting this afternoon, he gives particular energy to the "des sich wundert alle Welt" phrase, with semi-quavers representing the world's wonderment this time. Bach's love of the ABA form, in which the initial material is repeated to close a movement, is present here in an organic way, since the chorale itself repeats the first phrase as the last phrase, with different words.

The coming Christmas season is foreshadowed in the tenor aria with the use of a lilting Siciliano rhythm, just as we saw in *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern*, BWV1, in the first BACH 2010 concert. The bass aria provides an enormous contrast; if the tenor aria represents the beauty and mystery of the Incarnation, then the bass aria reminds us that the baby becomes a conqueror when he grows up. Bach uses a unique sound here, with all of the strings (including cello and bass) playing the same line, stretching over three octaves.

The intimate accompanied duet recitative represents the congregation in the manger, contemplating the arrival of the light

in the darkness. The closing chorale is a very simple setting of the final verse of *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, essentially a trinitarian doxology.



BWV 36: Schwingt freudig euch empor

Bach must have thought very highly of the material in this cantata, because he reworked it no fewer than five times over a decade. It began life as a secular cantata in 1725, offering a birthday tribute to a Leipzig university professor. In the late 1720s, Bach re-set the music to a text by an unidentified librettist, transforming the cantata for Advent. The version we perform today, dating from 1731, expands the first sacred cantata parody from five to eight movements, most notably including the interpolation of several settings of the chorale *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, which explore several different Advent themes.

The opening chorus retains the joy and thrill of the original celebratory secular cantata, while at the same time taking on new meanings for Advent. We see the same mixture of upward and downward themes, with the filigree of the violin figuration rising like incense, while the descending oboe d'amore (an instrument which often represents God's love for man) represent God's descent in the Incarnation.

Bach added the three settings of *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* in this second version of the sacred cantata in order to place the text more squarely in the season of Advent. The soprano and alto sing the text of the first verse, forming a trio with the continuo, in our performance played by the double bass representing the descent of God to earth. Again, Bach takes great care in handling the text carefully, setting it phrase by phrase. Beautiful little touches abound, such as the rocking of the continuo cradle against the words "der Jungfrauen Kind" and the more active setting again for the words "des sich wundert alle Welt."

Just as we saw with the bass aria in BWV 62, Bach chooses to illustrate the character of *Christus Victor* in the tenor chorale with the oboe duet. The tenors sing the chorale tune in long notes against the oboes, who fight in counterpoint, reminiscent of a similar oboe duet representing chains in the alto aria *Von dem Stricken* from the *St John Passion*. And just as he did in BWV 62, Bach closes BWV 36 with a cantional setting of the final doxology from *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*.

The text of the other tenor and bass arias, which existed in the first version of this sacred cantata, reflect the preparation for the Incarnation, the core meaning of Advent. The image of the church as bride and Jesus as bridegroom was very popular during this period of Lutheran poetry. In this tenor aria, the steps of the bridegroom are represented by the scalar movement of the continuo. The gracious bass aria, in which the church's preparation becomes the individual's preparation, revisits the quick triplets of the violin part from the opening movement.

As he did in BWV 61, Bach uses a verse from Nicolai's hymn *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern* in this cantata, again placing it squarely in Advent. This chorale verse, full of music and dance imagery, features a particularly buoyant bass part.



CANTATAS II: PERFORMING FORCES

In keeping with the goal of this project to explore a wide range of performing options, we are using two different choirs in this afternoon's concert. Of all of the performers in BACH 2010, the **Sydney Grammar School Schola Cantorum** comes the closest to representing the sound of Bach's choir in Leipzig. Although his regular Sunday choir was probably only 16-20 voices, these were always boys from the Thomasschule, singing all four parts, often augmented by alumni from the school who were studying at Leipzig University. Boys' voices changed at a later age, so his trebles (often age 16 or 17) would undoubtedly have made a relatively large sound.

The **Sydneian Bach Chamber Choir**, only a dozen in number, comes closest to the number of singers that Bach would have used, but our young adult singers, many of whom are studying singing professionally, sing at a much higher calibre than Bach's pupils probably would have sung. But the clarity of texture from the smaller number of singers approximates the original, and it must be remembered that Bach worked with professional singers throughout his career. As for using women's voices, it is important not to confuse the rules of the Lutheran church with Bach's own preferences! His first wife, Maria Barbara, was a fine singer, and his second wife, Anna Magdalena, was such an accomplished singer that she was one of the highest paid musicians at the court of Cöthen.

The textures of the instrumental parts of these cantatas seem particularly well suited to playing by solo instrumentalists, albeit playing on modern instruments in this case. Although there is plenty of evidence to suggest that Bach used 2-3 players on each of the violin and viola parts, there is also a tradition, advocated by such performers as Joshua Rifkin and Andrew Parrott, supporting one player per part.

C.P. Shepard



SYDNEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

