

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 172

Form: Chorus-Recit (B)-Aria (B)-ARIA (T)-Duet (S/A)-Chorale (S/A)-Chorale

Introduction & updates at [melvinunger.com](http://melvinunger.com).

Bach had become Konzertmeister 2 March 1714, with the duty of composing one cantata per month. Extant cantatas for Bach's new responsibilities as Konzertmeister include BWV 182 (25 March 1714), BWV 12 (22 April), and BWV 172 (20 May). Cantata 12 perhaps reflects that this may have still been a time of grieving for Bach—about a year earlier, he and his wife had lost twins: Johann Christoph at birth (23 February 1713) and Maria Sophia at 3 weeks (15 March 1713). In any case, Martin Petzoldt argues that the three cantatas are similar in a number of respects, including their structures, their focus on a primary metaphor (here the dwelling of the Spirit), and ending with chorales that function more as catechismal response than as a response by the congregation. See "Bach Kommentar," vol. 2, 822, 965. All of the movements relate in some way to the Trinity (a prominent theme of Pentecost). Regarding Bach's use of chiasmic form, see side note.

J.S. Bach

## Cantata No. 172

### Erschallet ihr Lieder, erklinget, ihr Saiten

#### Nº 1 Coro

#### (Allegro moderato)

172/1. **Resound ye songs! God prepares souls as his temples (172/1). A da capo festive chorus that is largely chordal or in free polyphony (the middle section is imitative); concerto structure (instruments in alternation).**

Instrumentation:  
Tromba I, II, III  
Timpani  
Flauto traverso (in D major version)  
Oboe (also Oboe d'amore in D major version)  
Vln I, II  
Vla I, II  
Fagotto  
SATB  
Violoncello  
Continuo  
(Loss of autograph score and many ms. parts make it difficult to know the exact instrumentation for various performances.)

Bach employs festive orchestration, reflecting text references to singing and strings, with antiphonal/echo effects (trumpets - winds & strings - choir) suggested by the word "erschallet" (resound). This close connection to the text may also be the reason that there is no opening sinfonia (unlike BWV 182 and BWV 12, his previous 2 cantatas). See Dürr/Jones, "Die Kantaten," 348, Petzoldt, "Bach Kommentar," 966. The triple meter suggests a joyful dance.

Divided violas suggest it's an early work (not yet Italian instrumentation).

Like the 2 previous cantatas composed in Bach's new position as "Konzertmeister" in Weimar (BWV 182 & 12), Cantata 172 begins with a spiritual metaphor, in this case, the Spirit's indwelling of the believer, which ushers in the "blessed time," a reference to such scriptures as 2 Cor. 6:2: "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." See Petzoldt, "Bach Kommentar," vol. 2, 967.

19.

schal - let, er - klin - get, er - schal let, ihr Lie - der, er -  
 er - schal - let, er - klin - get, er - schal - let, er -  
 schal - let, er - klin - get, er - schal - let, ihr Lie - der, er -  
 er - schal - let, er - klin - get, er - schal let, er -

G major

25.

klin - get, ihr Sai - ten! Er - schal let, ihr  
 klin - get, ihr Sai - ten! Er - schal let, ihr  
 klin - get, ihr Sai - ten! Er - schal let, ihr  
 klin - get, ihr Sai - ten! Er - schal let, ihr

G major

G major

G major

G major

C major

32.

Lie - der, er - klinget, ihr Sai - ten, er - schal let, ihr Lie - der, er - klin - get, ihr  
 Lie - der, er - klinget, ihr Sai - ten, er - schal let, ihr Lie - der, er - klin - get, ihr  
 Lie - der, er - klinget, ihr Sai - ten, er - schal let, ihr Lie - der, er - klinget, ihr  
 Lieder, er - klinget, ihr Sai - ten, er - schal let, ihr Lie - der, er - klin - get, ihr

A minor

A minor

D minor

C major

38.

Sai-ten, er - schal-let, ihr Lie-der, er - klin-get, ihr  
 Sai-ten, er - schal-let, ihr Lie-der, er - klin-get, ihr  
 Sai-ten, er - schal-let, ihr Lie-der, er - klin-get, ihr  
 Sai-ten, er - schal-let, ihr Lie-der, er - klin-get, ihr

44. C major C major C major

Saiten, er - schal - - let, er - klin - - get, er - schal-let, ihr Lieder, er -  
 Saiten, er - schal - - let, er - klin - - get, er - schal-let, ihr Lie-der, er -  
 Saiten, er - schal - - let, er - klin - - get, er - schal-let, er -  
 Saiten, er - schal - - let, er - klin - - get, er - schal-let, er -

51.

C Text painting: Sustained chord for "most blessed of times."

klinget, ihr Sai-ten! O se - - ligste Zeiten, o se - lig - ste  
 klinget, ihr Sai-ten! O se - - ligste Zeiten, o se - lig - ste  
 klinget, ihr Sai-ten! O se - - ligste Zeiten, o se - lig - ste  
 klinget, ihr Sai-ten! O se - - ligste Zeiten, o se - lig - ste

C7 F major C major

58.

Zeiten, o se - ligste Zeiten, o se - lig - ste Zeiten!

Zeiten, o se - ligste Zeiten, o se - ligste Zeiten!

Zeiten, o se - ligste Zeiten, o se - lig - ste Zeiten!

Zeiten, o se - ligste Zeiten, o se - ligste Zeiten!

G7 C major

65.

C major

71.

C major

76.

**D** This contrasting middle section is in (motet-like) imitative polyphony. The strings/winds double the voices, the trumpets are silent. The plurality of souls and temples mentioned in the text apparently prompted Bach to employ imitative texture, where the vocal lines accumulate, one upon the other. In the bass & alto, the theme comes to a cadence with a hemiola rhythm; in the tenor and soprano (and later in the bass and alto), the syncopations are extended. The rhythmic and harmonic complexity of the texture depict the "cleansing" preparation of souls for divine indwelling. The text is rooted in biblical passages such as 1 Cor. 6:9: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?"

Gott

Descending theme; ascending series of entries, followed by descending entries (m. 104ff.). See side note for a possible interpretation.

Gott will sich die See - len zu

Gott will sich die See - len zu Tem - peln be - rei

*mf* Trp tacet until da capo.

C major A minor A minor

hemiola





82.

Gott will sich die See-len zu Tempeln be-rei-ten, die Tempeln be-rei-ten, die Tempeln be-rei-ten, Gott will sich die See-len zu Tempeln be-rei-ten, Gott

88.

A7 D minor E7 A minor A minor

rei-ten, zu Tempeln be-rei-ten, Gott See-len zu Tempeln be-rei-ten, Gott will sich die See-len zu Tempeln be-rei-ten

94.

C major A minor E7 A minor

will sich die See-len zu Tempeln be-rei-ten, be-rei-ten, die See-len zu Tempeln be-rei-ten

harmonic clash

Text painting: Complex, interconnected melismas for "bereiten" ("preparing" souls for divine indwelling).

C major C major A minor C major E minor



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•Vox Christi: Promise of divine indwelling: Jn. 14:23 (172/2).

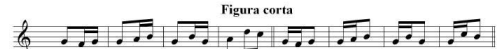


Figura corta

"...besteht aus drey geschwinden Noten, deren eine allein so lang ist, als die übrigen beyde"  
 Johann Gottfried Walther "Musicalisches Lexicon..." [Leipzig, 1732]  
 {"...consists of 3 fast notes, of which one has the same value as the other two taken together."}

## Nº 2 Recitativo

172/2.

1. Basso

Wer mich liebet, der wird mein Wort halten, und mein

This biblical verse is part of the Gospel reading for the day (Pentecost).

A minor Sustained continuo bass probably reflects the text's reference to holding or keeping Christ's word.

3.

Vater wird ihn lieben, und wir werden zu ihm kommen und Wohnung bei ihm

Recitativo adopts rhythmically fixed, arioso style for the promised coming of divine indwelling.

C major C major

6.

ma - chen, und wir

Descending sequence in the voice depicts the coming divine indwelling.

Extended figura corta ("joy") motive appears 3 times, each time a step lower, apparently depicting the coming indwelling of the triune God. Since the animating Spirit is also traditionally represented with energetic melismas, the figure may also represent the Holy Spirit.

C major

G7

C major

8.

wer - den zu ihm kom - men und Woh - nung bei ihm ma - chen.

Very low note for voice (to depict fulfillment Jesus promise in the Gospel reading that the Spirit would come.)

The voice descends an octave. The continuo responds by ascending an octave. Then voice and continuo end in unison. It is as if God and believer are in conversation. C major

Later, in his Leipzig cantatas, Bach tended to present biblical texts such as this at the beginning of the work, in large-scale choral settings.

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172/3. **No 3** **Aria** • Prayer to triune God for divine indwelling (172/3). Irregular da capo form. *Tempo giusto* figura corta

Bach's unusual choice of instrumentation (3 Trp, Timp & Continuo) was no doubt due its courtly associations, here symbolizing the sovereign power and glory of the triune God (the Trinity, a prominent theme of Pentecost, is explicitly mentioned). See Dürr/Jones, 348.

1. Triadic fanfare for Trinity

3. C major

5. Triadic figure = Trinity

Heiligste Dreifal - tig - keit, gro - sser Gott, gro - sser

tr

mf

NBA: "Dreieinigkeit"

Allusion to biblical passages such as Deuteronomy 10:17: "The Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God." The 32-note passages reinforce this picture of a frightening God.

7. tr

Gott, grosser Gott der Eh - ren,

f

G major G major G7 C major

9. tr

komm doch in der Gna - den -

mf

C major

In the B section of the aria, text repetitions suggest that Bach wanted to emphasize the pleading nature of the prayer ("please come"). Martin Petzoldt suggests that this aria has an eschatological air about it (as represented by the prayers for Jesus to come in Revelation 22:17, 20). See Petzoldt, vol. 2, 969, 970).



11.

zeit, **komm doch** in der Gna - den - zeit bei uns ein - zu - keh -

D major

13. **A**

Rhetorical emphasis with melismas on "come."

ren, **komm** doch, **komm doch** in die Her - zens -

G major G7 A7 D minor D minor A7 D minor

15.

Hütten, sind sie gleich gering und klein, **komm** doch, **komm** und -

C major F major C7

18.

lass dich doch er - bit - ten, **komm** und keh - re bei - uns -

F major G7 C major

19.

Short contrasting section.

ein, **komm** und lass dich doch er -

C major C7 D7 G minor

21.

Rhetorical emphasis with melismas on "komm" (come) and "einziehen" (enter).

**B**

bitten, **komm** und zie - - he bei uns ein!

G minor G major C major

Opening material returns in a quasi-da capo.

24.

The Trinity (an important emphasis of Pentecost) is mentioned explicitly.

Hei - lig - ste **Drei - ei - nig - keit**, gro - sser Gott, gro - sser

mf

26.

Gott, gro - - sser Gott der Eh - - ren!

Ritornello f

G7 C major

28.

30.

C major

•Soul, prepare thyself for the Spirit's entrance (172/4). Da capo aria (although the da capo marking is missing at the end). Complete change of mood. The tutti obbligato is restricted in range so that both violas and violins can play it, allowing the obbligato to swirl above, through, and below the vocal part, which is embedded in the ritornello material. The resulting texture symbolizes a soul infused by the Spirit of God.

172/4. **No. 4 Aria**

1 (Andante)

An obbligato of Vln I, II, Vla I, II in unison (plus flute in a later version) depicts the endless wafting of God's mysterious Spirit, which breathed at Creation, now wafting in the "soul's paradise." The triple meter and long-breathed lines reflect the heavenly joy experienced as a result. The overall effect is one of boundlessness. See Petzoldt, "Bach Kommentar," vol. 2, p. 970.

Ritornello

figura corta

A minor E7 A minor A7 D minor

Galant style: Triple meter with slow harmonic rhythm.

6.

B7 E major E7 A minor E7

11.

A minor E7

16. **A Tenore**

○ See - len - Pa - radies, o See - len - Pa - ra - dies, das - Got - tes

Obbligato tacet.

Vokaleinbau (the vocal line is embedded in the ritornello material, the obbligato (the Spirit) infuses the voice (the Soul)).

pp

A minor G# dim.7 A minor A7

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Text painting: Undulating melismas for "wafting."

22.

Geist durch we - - - - - het, o See - len - Pa - radies,

D minor B7 E major A minor E7

28.

o See - len - Pa - - - - - ra - dies, das Gottes Geist durch we - - - - -

A major A7

34.

Text painting: Long undulating melisma for "wehet" (waft).

D minor C# dim.7 A7 E7 A minor

40.

het;

A minor A7 D minor

46.

B7 E major E7 A minor



51.

56. **B** Contrasting Section.

der bei der Schöp-fung blies, der bei der Schöp fung blies, der

Obbligato tacet. Voice a bit more animated with figura corta figures. Vokaleinbau (the vocal line is embedded in the string ritornello material).

Obbligato resumes.

A minor D7 G major B7

61.

Geist, der nie ver-ge - het: auf, auf, be -

E minor B7 E7 A minor F#7

66.

"Nie vergehet" = never passes away, never ends.

rei - te dich! der Geist, der nie ver - ge -

B major B7 E minor

71.

het, der Geist, der nie ver-ge - het;

E minor E minor

77. **auf, auf, be - rei - te dich, auf, auf, be - rei - te dich! der Tröster na - het**

Obbligato tacet

C major C major

Martin Petzold suggests that the modulation to D major (mm. 77–99) reflects the new situation of the divinely indwelt believer. See "Bach Kommentar," vol. 2, 970.

82. **sich, auf, auf, be - rei - te dich! der Trö - ster na - het sich,**

Obbligato returns. Vokaleinbau (the vocal line is embedded in the string ritornello material).

C major

88. **der Tröster na - - - - - het sich, der Trö - ster na - - - - -**

D7 G major G7 C major

94. **- - - - - het - sich, - - - - - der Trö - ster na - het - sich.**

da capo (see NBA score)

C major (often used to represent Christ)

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 172 • Dialogue: Love duet between Soul & Holy Spirit (172/5). The structure consists of 3 strophes (a Trinitarian reference?), which also contains a truncated, rhythmically altered, and highly embellished instrumental citation of the chorale "Komm, heiliger Geist, Herre Gott" (Come Holy Ghost, Lord God), which also ends the motet "Der Geist hilft unsrer Schwachheit auf," BWV 226.

This is the 3rd consecutive aria without intervening recitative.

172/5. Alto Aria

This is an editorial realization.

*mf* Ritornello

F major

Top notes of cello obbligato (ostinato) line imply the chorale "Komm, heiliger Geist."

The continuo plays a "pleading/sighing" figure in descending sequence, presumably to express the yearning prayer of the Soul (Soprano), which is answered by the Alto. Martin Petzoldt notes that Bach often uses the alto voice to represent Mary's faith, the church, and also the Holy Spirit. See Petzoldt, "Bach Kommentar," vol. 1, p. 541; vol. 2, p. 824; vol. 3, pp. 101, 143.

Soprano

Stanza 1.

Soprano is voice of believing soul. Alto is voice of the Holy Spirit (see above). The language is taken from Song of Solomon 4.

Komm, lass mich nicht länger warten, komm, du

4-part texture:  
Soprano (soul)  
Alto (Holy Spirit)  
Oboe/Organ (chorale)  
Cello (Ostinato continuo line)

F major

5.

sanfter Him-mel-swind, komm, lass mich nicht länger warten, komm, —

Alto.

Ich er-quick-ke dich, mein Kind, —

Chorale Tune by Oboe or Obligato Organ Choral (Mel., "Komm, heiliger Geist")

The chorale tune is hardly recognizable, perhaps to signify that the indwelling of the Spirit is hidden.

Chorale Phrase 1: Komm

7.

komm, komm, du sanfter Him-mel-swind,

ich er-quick-ke, ich er-quick-ke dich, ich er-

F major

hei- - - - - li- ger - - - - - Geist,

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9.

we

quik ke dich, mein Kind, dich, mein Kind, ich er quik ke dich, mein

C7

D minor

E minor re

Chorale Phrase 2: Her-

Frequent deceptive cadences provide tension, perhaps to suggest longing.

11.

he durch den Herzensgar ten! Lieb ste

Kind, ich er quik ke dich, mein Kind.

Gott

G7

C major

A Stanza 2.

14.

Lie be, die so sü sse, lieb ste Lie be, die so sü sse, die so sü sse, al ler

F major

B-flat major

C7

D minor

C7

Chorale Phrase 3: Er- füll mit de ner



16.

Wol - lust Ü - ber - fluss, ich vergeh', wenn ich dich mis - se, - liebste -  
 Nimm von mir den Gna - denkuss, nimm von mir den

F major Gna-den Gut. F major B-flat major A7

19.

Lie - be, die so sü - sse, lieb - ste Lie - be, die so sü - sse, al - ler  
 Gna - denkuss, von - mir den Gna - denkuss, nimm von - mir den Gnaden.

D minor C7

Chorale Phrase 4: Dei- - - - - ner - - - - - Gläu- - - - -

21.

Wol - lust Ü - ber - fluss, lieb - ste Liebe, ich ver - geh', wenn ich dich  
 kuss, den Gna - den - kuss, den Gna - den - kuss,

F major F major Herz, Muth, - - - - -

23.

mis - se, ich ver - geh', ich vergeh, wenn ich dich mis - se,  
nimm von mir den Gna - den - kuss, nimm von

G7 F minor G7 und C minor

25.

Stanza 3.

sei im Glau - ben mir will kommen! Höchste Liebe,  
mir den Gna - den - kuss. Ich bin

C minor (F7) B-flat major C7

28.

komm her - ein, komm herein, komm herein, her - ein! Du hast mir das Herz ge -  
dein und du bist mein, ich bin dein und du bist mein!

F major B-flat major F major D minor F major

30.

nom-men, sei im Glau-ben mir will kommen! Höchste  
 Ich bin dein und du bist mein, ich bin dein und du bist mein, du bist  
 zu Lob ge-sun-

33.

Lie-be, komm her-ein, komm her-ein, komm her-ein, komm herein! Du  
 mein, ich bin dein und du bist mein, ich bin dein und

C7 D minor gen. C7 Chorale Phrase 10: Hal-

35. C

- hast mir das Herz ge-nommen, sei im Glau-ben mir will-kom-men!  
 du bist mein, ich bin-dein, ich bin dein und du bist

F7 B-flat 7

Cross relation

37.

Höchste Lie be, komm her ein! Du hast  
mein, du bist mein und ich bin dein, du bist mein und ich bin dein, und ich

ja, F minor (G7) C minor C major

40.

mir das Herz ge - nom - men, sei im Glau - ben mir willkommen, komm herein! Höchste  
bin dein, du bist mein und ich bin dein, und ich bin dein,

B-flat major C7 (F major) F major

42.

Lie - be, du hast mir das Herz ge - nommen,  
du bist mein und ich bin dein,

F major



44.

sei im Glauben mir willkommen! Höchste Liebe, komm herein!  
 du bist mein und ich bin dein, und ich, und ich bin dein!

Ritornello

F7 ja. B-flat major C7 F major

46.

F major

Martin Petzoldt suggests that this closing chorale stanza (the 4th stanza of "Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern") was chosen because of its Trinitarian structure: 1) God's ray of joy (depicted by a violin/flute descant), 2) the three-fold means of help: Christ's Word, baptism [Spirit], and Eucharist [body and blood], and 3) the work of the Spirit. See "Bach

**No. 6 Choral (Mel.: „Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern“)** •Mystic union with Christ (172/6).

172/6.

**Soprano** 1. The tune would probably have recalled the familiar Christmas "Morgenstern" lyrics for Bach's congregation.

Kommentar," vol. 2, p. 966. Weimar chorale harmonizations with embellished descants include BWV 12/7, 172/6, 31/9. See Wolff, "Bach the Learned Musician," 166.

Keyword that ties the chorale stanza to the rest of the cantata: "Come(s)," previously used in prayerful invitation, now used to describe present experience. The language is that of the mystical love of Jesus (some scholars would say it was the influence of Pietism).

Von Gott kommt mir ein Freuden-schein, wenn du mit deinen  
 O Herr Jesu, mein trautes Gut, dein Wort, dein Geist, dein

Alto.

Von Gott kommt mir ein Freuden-schein, wenn du mit deinen  
 O Herr Jesu, mein trautes Gut, dein Wort, dein Geist, dein

Tenore.

Von Gott kommt mir ein Freu-denschein, wenn du mit deinen  
 O Herr Jesu, mein trautes Gut, dein Wort, dein Geist, dein

Basso.

Von Gott kommt mir ein Freu-den-schein, wenn du mit deinen  
 O Herr Jesu, mein trautes Gut, dein Wort, dein Geist, dein

Vln I/Flute

F major F major

Text painting: God's "kind, joyful ray" of the text is depicted with a violin descant (plus flute in D major version, see NBA). The contour again suggests "wafting" of the Spirit. Ruolf Lutz suggests that the tradition of such a descant comes from Buxtehude. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBpsvymLPGI> at 42:00.

Text painting: "Joyful ray" is set as figura corta in tenor and with parallel thirds between bass and violin descant (suggesting sweetness).

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Text painting: "Friendly, sweet eyes" is set with playful violin descant.

4.

Au - ge - lein mich freund - lich thust an - blik - - ken.  
Leib und Blut mich in - ner - lich er - quik - - ken.

Au - ge - lein mich freund - lich thust an - blik - - ken.  
Leib und Blut mich in - ner - lich er - quik - - ken.

Au - ge - lein mich freundlich thust an - blik - - ken.  
Leib und Blut mich in - ner - lich er - quik - - ken.

Au - ge - lein mich freund - lich thust an - blik - - ken.  
Leib und Blut mich in - ner - lich er - quik - - ken.

Abgesang of bar form.

C major

F major

F major

Nimm mich freund - lich in dein' Ar - me, dass ich war - me  
Nimm mich freund - lich in dein' Ar - me, dass ich war - me  
Nimm mich freund - lich in dein' Ar - me, dass ich war - me  
Nimm mich freund - lich in dein' Ar - me, dass ich war - me

Playfulness of Vln descant intensifies against block chords in voices.

11.

F major

F major

F major

werd' von Gna - - den: Auf dein Wort komm' ich ge - la - den.  
werd' von Gna - - den: Auf dein Wort komm' ich ge - la - den.  
werd' von Gna - - den: Auf dein Wort komm' ich ge - la - den.  
werd' von Gna - - den: Auf dein Wort komm' ich ge - la - den.

F major

F major

In some performances, Bach apparently did not repeat the opening chorus. For Eric Chafe's analysis of the significance of the tonal scheme of this cantata, see side note.

**Chorus repetatur ab initio**