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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

ALTO SOLO CANTATAS OF JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH, AND THEIR APPROPRIATE APPLICATION TO CONTRALTO OR MEZZO-SOPRANO VOICE TYPES

A DOCUMENT

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

By

Cheryl A. Bubar

Norman, Oklahoma

2003

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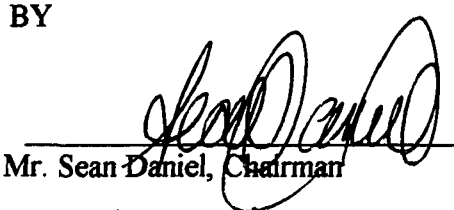

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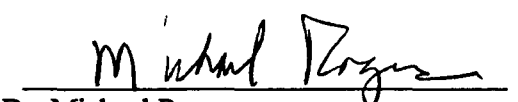

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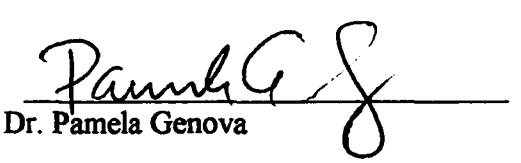

Dr. Pamela Genova

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ABSTRACT

The music of Johann Sebastian Bach has long been recognized as an excellent tool in the training of musicians. His cantatas represent some of his most masterful compositions, and many of the choral cantatas are frequently performed. Although many of the solo arias contained in the cantatas and oratorios are considered desirable repertoire for singers, the complete solo cantatas as repertoire are frequently overlooked. While it is true that the solo cantatas are not generally considered appropriate for beginners, much may be gleaned from the use of these works as teaching tools and as performance repertoire for the intermediate or advanced student. Yet the study of these works from a pedagogical perspective has been neglected, either because of unfamiliarity or their perceived difficulty.

The study of the alto solo cantatas is of particular importance, since today the word "alto" is often applied without distinction to both the contralto and mezzo-soprano classifications. Therefore, not only must the distinct problems for the singer inherent in the works of Bach be considered, but one must also address the question of whether the alto work is appropriate for the particular singer with regard to classification. It is for this reason that I have undertaken this study of the alto solo cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach.

The study deals primarily with historical and pedagogical information for each of the alto solo cantatas which will ensure singers and teachers of singers access to information necessary when deciding whether to explore these works as repertoire or

as teaching tools. An appendix at the conclusion of the study also provides abbreviated information on all additional solo arias found in Bach's cantata repertoire with recommendations as to their appropriateness for either the contralto or mezzo-soprano singer, as well as their level of difficulty.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

According to the official obituary penned by Carl Phillipp Emmanuel Bach and Johann Friedrich Agricola, Johann Sebastian Bach composed five complete cycles of cantatas for each Sunday and Feast day of the church calendar year. His total output of this type of vocal work (when added to earlier sacred and secular cantatas) is generally placed at about 300 works, of which approximately 200 are extant.[1]

Bach himself did not call his works "cantatas," preferring to title them *Stücke* (pieces), *Dialogus* (for two voices), *Concerti* (emphasizing the importance of the supporting instrumentation), or *Motetti.*[2] Secular works of this type, composed for a variety of non-liturgical occasions, were usually referred to as *dramma per musica.*[3] However, today a cantata is defined as a multi-sectional vocal work, sacred or secular, written for one or more voices with instrumental accompaniment.[4]

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[1] J. A. Westrup, *BBC Music Guide: Bach Cantatas*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), 17.

[2] W. Murray Young, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach: An Analytical Guide,* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1989), xiii.

[3] Donald J. Grout and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music,* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988), 516.

[4] Laurette Goldberg, *Rediscovered Bach: Vocal Chamber Music in the Bach Cantatas*, (Berkeley, California: MusicSources, Center for Historically Informed Performances, Inc., and Albany, California: PRB Productions, 1999), 1.

The cantatas are frequently categorized according to Bach's employment situation at the time they were (presumably) written. A very small number were commissioned during his years in Mühlhausen (and perhaps Arnstadt, although this has not been authenticated). These works were composed for specific occasions, and do not seem to follow the church calendar in any organized way.[5] Early sacred cantatas (1707-1708)[6] demonstrate characteristics unique to Bach during this part of the Baroque: (1) text structures that had their basis in the Bible or in chorale texts; (2) musical treatment of text to stress its meaning; and (3) a symmetrical sequence of movements, alternating combinations of voice groups (such as solo alternating with duet or chorus).[7]

Bach's earliest secular cantatas were composed during his service to the Duke of Weimar, with the first completed in 1713.[8] Upon his appointment as *Konzertmeister* in March, 1714, Bach began to produce sacred works for performance in the chapel of the Duke. The total output for the Weimar years was only twenty cantatas; however, these pieces are vital to the study of the evolution of Bach's style. Characteristics that first appear in this period include the addition of recitative (often with arioso), da capo aria

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[5] Stanley Sadie, editor, and John Tyrell, executive editor, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2nd edition, vol. 2,* (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001) S. v. "Bach §II: (7) Johann Sebastian Bach" by Walter Emery, 331.

[6] Christoph Wolff, editor. *The World of Bach Cantatas* [includes essay by Martin Petzoldt, "Liturgical and Theological Aspects"], (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995), 6.

[7] Christoph Wolff, *The World of Bach Cantatas* , 115.

[8] Sadie, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2nd edition,* 331.

form, use of "color" instruments, and the employment of four-part string ensembles as a standard part of the accompaniment (rather than the five-part string ensemble used previously).[9] These characteristics would continue to be used and developed in the cantatas throughout Bach's compositional career.

The church cantata comprised a fairly insignificant part of Bach's output in Cöthen. Several secular cantatas were produced, written primarily for New Year celebrations and birthdays of the prince or of his family members. Little of this original music survives except in text form, but some of these secular works were later transformed in Leipzig for use in the church, preserving at least some of the music. [10]

Bach's years as Cantor of St. Thomas Church in Leipzig represent the most prolific period of his cantata output. Although the majority of these works were sacred, we know that several secular cantatas were composed, particularly in his later years (after 1730). These *dramma per musica* featured a simple story suited to the particular occasion for which they were written. Approximately forty secular cantatas were written during this era, though few remain extant.[11]

Sacred cantatas of the Leipzig period are divided into the five cycles of the church year. The first cycle consists of those cantatas dated for the church year 1723 -

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[9] Sadie, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2nd edition,* 332.

[10] Karl Geiringer [in collaboration with Irene Geiringer], *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Culmination of an Era.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 153.

[11] Sadie, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2nd edition,* 332.

1724. These include a large number of new works, along with several parodies (revised music and addition of sacred text) of earlier cantatas, especially the secular ones.[12] The second cycle (1724 - 1725) is smaller than the first cycle, but includes very few arrangements of earlier works. The majority may be described as "chorale cantatas," since each is based on a specific Lutheran chorale. The first hymn stanza is realized in full in the chorale; other stanzas in the hymn are broken or paraphrased within the libretto.[13]

The production of cantatas is fairly continuous through the first two cycles, but becomes less so beginning with the third cycle (1725-1727). Many of the works of the third cycle have been lost; what is extant is authenticated by scores and a few parts preserved by Philipp Emanuel Bach. Furthermore, it is known that during these years Bach began to perform more works of other composers.[14] One unique characteristic is the addition of organ obbligato parts in the arias of the later cantatas of this cycle; others include the composition of more solo and dialogue cantatas than before.[15]

The distinguishing characteristic of cantatas of the fourth cycle (1728-1729) is Bach's use of the texts of Picander. Many of these works have also been lost, but those that survive show certain innovations, such as novel approaches in the use of the chorus,

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[12] Sadie, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2nd edition,* 332.

[13] Geiringer, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Culmination of an Era,* 161.

[14] Geiringer, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Culmination of an Era,* 169.

[15] Sadie, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2nd edition,* 334.

polyphonic settings for the final chorale, and development of the accompanied recitative.[16] Little can be said about the fifth cycle of cantatas, since much of this repertoire has not survived. It is thought the works included in this cycle were written over a substantially longer period of time (1730 - 1742).[17] The use of compositions of other composers, or the use of instrumental ensembles rather than voices (possibly due to the insufficiency of capable singers) are some reasons given for the decline in Bach's production of new cantatas. It may also be true that Bach simply turned to new compositional challenges, since he had already produced hundreds of cantatas, and could use earlier works when needed.[18]

It is generally believed that Bach's cantatas are primarily choral in nature, since those cantatas are more frequently performed. In fact, about a third of this output was composed for one or more solo voices.[19] Of these works, nineteen are for one solo voice. Thirteen are surviving sacred cantatas; the other six are secular and exist as text

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[16] Sadie, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2nd edition,* 334.

[17] Malcolm Boyd, editor and John Butt, consultant editor, *Oxford Composer's Companion: J. S. Bach.* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 1999), 87. S.v. "Cantatas" by Robin A. Leaver.

[18] Buelow, George J., editor, *Music Society and the Late Baroque Era.* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1993), 280.

[19] James Carroll McKinney, *The Solo Bass Voice in the Cantatas of J. S. Bach,* D.M.A. diss. (University of Southern California, 1969; Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1970), 57.

only, or are lost.[20] Forty-four additional cantatas for two, three or four solo voices are counted among Bach's works.[21]

In Bach's time the soprano and alto solo and choral parts were sung by young men or boys;[22] however, today these arias are more commonly sung by women. Female sopranos have replaced boy sopranos, and mezzo-sopranos and contraltos sing alto parts. Naturally, one may conclude that this change may present unique problems to the modern performer; not a young boy, but an adult female singer. Bach's alto solo material presents a further difficulty, since that repertoire is now sung by both mezzo-sopranos and contraltos, which are distinctly different voice types.

This study is intended to be an examination of the alto solo cantatas of Bach. Basic information such as a brief history, text translation, biblical basis, and the name of the librettist will be included, but the primary focus of this study will concern the pedagogical aspects of these solo cantatas, with special attention reserved for appropriate voice classification. Range, tessitura, breath management and phrase length, rhythmic complexity, negotiation of intervals, and other relevant topics will be discussed as needed, as they pertain to particular cantata movements. In addition, a determination of the degree of difficulty will be made for each. An abbreviated table of alto arias from

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[20] Richard Dale Sjoerdsma, "The Solo Liturgical Cantatas of J. S. Bach (Part I)", *The NATS Journal* 42, no. 2 (November/December, 1985), 5.

[21] Numbers of types of solo cantatas from perusal of Bach's *Neue Ausgabe Sämtliche Werke*.

[22] Young, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, xvi.

other cantatas of Bach will also be provided, with information necessary to make informed decisions as to their appropriateness for each of these voice classifications.

Intended for the mezzo-soprano and the contralto singer, as well as for teachers of voice, it is hoped that this study will provide a basis for the exploration of Bach's cantatas as solo recital literature and also as tools for the development of vocal technique.

> *When one considers the contemporary accounts of historians and the vocal literature itself, it is obvious that singers cultivated great range, flexibility and control to sing this music. If for no other reason, this gives baroque literature tremendous pedagogical potential for singers today.*[23]

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to provide a guide to the solo alto cantatas and arias of Bach for the mezzo-soprano and contralto singer, as well as for teachers of these voice types. The goal is to promote awareness of these works, both as performance repertoire and as pedagogical tools, allowing singers and teachers to make intelligent and informed decisions in selecting these works for themselves or their students. Information on the unique qualities of the very rare contralto voice, and how it differs from the mezzo-soprano voice, is also addressed.

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[23] Michael C. Hawn, "Baroque Corner: Coaching Voice Through Baroque Song," *The NATS Journal* 42, no. 1 (September/October, 1985), 35.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Though much has been written on the life and works of Johann Sebastian Bach (including his cantatas), the information tends to address the historical or theoretical study of the works, the problems of the conductor, or the poetic and interpretive aspects of these works. There is virtually no information available on the pedagogical applications of the alto solo cantatas, and nothing has been published that would assist the singer or teacher in determining whether alto cantatas and arias are best suited for contralto or mezzo-soprano singers. Because of the demands of Baroque vocal music, and Bach's works specifically, it is imperative that literature appropriate to particular voices be undertaken, since they are sufficiently challenging without the handicap of singing outside of one's fach [voice classification].

SURVEY OF LITERATURE

A computer search of *Dissertation Abstracts* was undertaken to determine what information was available on the Bach cantatas, with special attention given to the solo cantatas. This yielded a few works, though there were none dealing specifically with the pedagogical aspects of the alto solo works.

The dissertations located include *Two Cantatas for Solo Alto by J. S. Bach on Texts by G. C. Lehms* by Carol Ann Kreuscher; *The Solo Bass Voice in the Cantatas of J. S. Bach* by James Carroll McKinney; and *The Use of the Soprano Voice by J. S. Bach as Exemplified by the Nine Solo Soprano Cantatas* by Mary Lois Summers.

Kreus*cher's* dissertation is a poetic study of the texts of two of the alto cantatas included in this study *(Widerstehe doch der Sünde,* BWV 54 and *Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust,* BWV 170). However, perusal of her work revealed that she does not address the pedagogical aspects of those cantatas; rather, she chose to discuss Bach's librettists, with special attention given to Georg Christian Lehms. While informative, Kreuscher's dissertation does not discuss the issues addressed in this study. McKinney's dissertation is an excellent overview of the use of the bass voice in the cantatas of Bach, and does list those two-, three-, and four-part solo cantatas that include solo bass voice. But again, it does not address particular issues in the alto solo cantatas, nor does it speak to the particulars of the alto solo arias in the two-, three-, and four-part works it does mention.

The dissertation by Mary Lois Summers was unavailable (the library in which it is housed would not loan it). The abstract indicates that some pedagogical discussion with reference to the soprano voice is contained in the dissertation, but it does not appear to include any information on repertoire for the alto voice.

A further survey of literature in the WorldCat database revealed a vast amount of general literature on the life and works of J. S. Bach, including several books on the cantatas. There was, however, very little material specific to solo cantatas (and no individual volumes solely addressing the use of the Bach cantatas as teaching tools, or their application to the alto voice). Most literature seemed to fall into predictable categories: (1) lists of the cantatas, either by "Bach Period" (Mühlhausen, Weimar, Cöthen, and Leipzig) ; (2) lists according to voice and instrumentation (with little other

specific information); (3) discussion of Biblical references or placement in the church calendar (or occasion for which they were composed, as in the secular cantatas); (4) discussion of librettists used, often as interpretive studies; and (5) instances where cantata melodies appear in other Bach works, especially instrumental works. In any case, there appears to be no comprehensive research on the appropriate application of the solo alto repertoire to the contralto or mezzo-soprano, except to state that in Bach's time these works were not sung by women.

A secondary survey of literature was undertaken regarding the classification of the contralto and mezzo-soprano voice types. This survey was necessary to support the thesis that the alto solo cantatas and arias were indeed not necessarily applicable to both the contralto and mezzo-soprano voice types. Works of many of the most prominent pedagogues and technicians of voice were searched for references to the differences between the contralto and mezzo-soprano voice types, and how one might ascertain those differences for the purpose of selecting repertoire. The search revealed that much more has been written on the differences between the soprano and mezzo-soprano than the mezzo-soprano and contralto voices, possibly due to the rarity of the true contralto singer. Furthermore, even when the differences in classification are noted, few authors make specific recommendations about selecting specific literature. For this reason, a portion of this study is dedicated to the compilation of available classification information, in order to set a standard upon which to judge the solo cantatas and arias and their appropriate application to the contralto or mezzo-soprano singer. The personal experience of the writer (a contralto) will also play a part in this portion of the study.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter presents a general introduction to the cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach, with brief historical information and stylistic traits of each of Bach's compositional periods. The need for the study is also discussed, along with the research parameters undertaken by the author.

Research findings on Bach's solo cantatas for all voice types are presented in the second chapter. Such findings include the distribution of the solo cantatas throughout Bach's compositional periods, the number of solo cantatas for each voice classification, and voice type combinations in the two-, three-, and four-voice solo cantatas. Since much has already been written on his life, such discussion is limited to information directly related to the compositional elements of these works.

The differences between the contralto and mezzo-soprano voice classifications are discussed in the third chapter. Since teachers rarely encounter true contraltos, some guidelines for distinguishing between contralto and mezzo-soprano singers are needed, especially with regard to range and tessitura. Furthermore, this chapter will set forth the parameters for determining the appropriate voice classification for each cantata and aria included in this study.

The fourth chapter contains a detailed discussion of each of the solo alto cantatas in turn, including brief information on the history, translation, and biblical text upon which it is based. It also includes pedagogical analysis, providing information on range and tessitura as well as potential problems related to breath management and phrase length, agility, rhythmic complexity, and other topics as required. This information

provides the basis for a consensus statement as to each work's appropriateness for either the contralto or mezzo-soprano singer, as well as its level of difficulty (intermediate or advanced).

The fifth chapter contains the conclusions reached by the author as a result of the study, and enumerates topics of possible future research, including potential studies related to Bach's music as well as to the training of the contralto singer. Finally, an appendix cataloging brief yet pertinent information on additional alto arias within Bach's cantata literature is included as a guide for teachers and singers. A bibliography is provided to complete the study.

Chapter Two

THE SOLO CANTATAS OF JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Approximately one third of Bach's cantatas are for solo voices. Though less well known than the choral cantatas and oratorios, they comprise a significant part of Bach's vocal literature nonetheless. The full repertoire of solo cantatas are dated between 1713 and c.1748, however, the majority were composed over a sixteen year period (1714-1730). A great proportion of the surviving works are liturgical, but several secular solo cantatas remain extant, although the majority of Bach's secular output is lost or exists only in text form.

Solo cantatas may be broadly defined as cantatas for one or more solo voices without chorus, but may have a closing chorale (which could be performed by a soloist or solo quartet).[24] A perusal of *Johann Sebastian Bach: Werke*, (1947)[25] revealed 63 cantatas that fall within this definition, 50 sacred and thirteen secular.[26] Forty-one of the sacred cantatas do have a concluding chorale, and two of these cantatas (BWV 153 and

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[24] Young, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach,* xiv.

[25] Johann Sebastian Bach, *Werke.* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1851). [Solo cantatas are contained in volumes 2, 7, 10, 11, 12, 20, 28, 29, 32, 33, 35, and 37].

[26] This number does not include those cantatas contained in *Johann Sebastian Bach's Werke* that have since been proven to be the works of others (BWV nos.15, 53, 160 and 189), or are highly unlikely to be works of Bach (BWV 143). The one potentially questionable work included in the total is BWV 208, whose authenticity seems to be both accepted and questioned equally among the sources consulted.

BWV 154) also include an additional four-part chorale as an interior movement. Originally intended for choir or congregational singing,[27] the chorales may be performed by the soloists in the absence of a choir.

The forty-one cantatas that conclude with a chorale may be subdivided according to the number of solo voices each employs. There are six cantatas for a single solo voice, including two for soprano (BWV nos. 52 and 84), one for alto (BWV 169), one for tenor (BWV 55) and two for bass (BWV nos. 56 and 158). Of the seven cantatas for two solo voices, three are for soprano and bass (BWV nos. 32, 57, and 59), two are for alto and tenor (BWV nos.134 and 161), and one each for tenor and bass (BWV 157) and alto and bass (BWV 197a, partially lost[28]). The ten cantatas with concluding chorales for three solo voices are all written for alto, tenor and bass soloists (BWV nos. 60, 81, 83, 87, 90, 153, 154, 159, 174 and 175). As previously stated, BWV nos. 153 and 154 each have a chorale as both an internal movement and concluding movement. Finally, there are eighteen cantatas of this type for a quartet of solo voices (soprano, alto, tenor and bass) who could obviously perform the closing chorale themselves (BWV nos. 13, 42, 44, 86, 88, 151, 155, 156, 162, 163[29], 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 183, 185 and 188).

The remaining twenty-two solo cantatas do not end with a chorale. Most of the

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[27] McKinney, *The Solo Bass Voice in the Cantatas of J. S. Bach,* 56.

[28] Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, vol. 2,* 355.

[29] The final chorale of BWV 163 exists only as a continuo part; there are no voice parts and no lyrics extant.

sacred works that fall into this category are for a single solo voice; two for soprano (BWV nos. 51 and 199), four for alto (BWV nos. 35, 54, 170 and BWV 200[30]), as well as BWV 82 for bass. Sacred works for two voices include BWV 58 and BWV 152, both for soprano and bass. There are no three voice solo cantatas without a concluding chorale, and but a single four voice solo work (BWV 132) that falls into this category.

Obviously, all of the secular solo cantatas fall into the "without chorale" category, since chorales are, by definition, sacred (based on church hymns). Several solo cantatas for soprano solo alone (BWV nos. 202, 204, 209, 210 and 210a) and one for bass (BWV 203) are counted among those for one solo voice. Three secular cantatas for a pair of solo voices (BWV nos. 173a and 212 for soprano and bass, and BWV 216 for soprano and alto, partially lost). The well-known "Coffee Cantata" (BWV 211) is the only cantata of this type for three solo voices; soprano, tenor and bass. Two secular solo works for four voices survive, including BWV 249a for soprano, alto, tenor and bass (whose music survives within Bach's *Easter Oratorio*, BWV 249[31]), and BWV 208 for two sopranos, tenor and bass (which appears in multiple versions, with and without a chorus[32]).

The composition of the solo cantatas took place over a slightly shorter span than

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[30] The extant portion of BWV 200 consists of a single aria thought to be part of a cantata.

[31] Norman Carroll. *Bach the Borrower*. (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1980), 183. Five pieces for four solo characters from BWV 249a were transferred to the *Easter Oratorio* in their original form.

[32] Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, vol. 2*, 357.

that of all cantatas. No solo vocal works of this type are attributed to Bach's year's in Arnstadt and Mühlhausen, and less than a dozen come from his Weimar years. It appears that only one solo cantata was composed in Cöthen. Therefore, the majority of solo cantatas (in fact, the majority of all cantatas) were composed during Bach's career in Leipzig. The distribution of solo cantatas for Bach's pre-Leipzig employment periods are as follows:

Arnstadt/Mühlhausen:	None
Weimar:	BWV 199, 208 (1713)
	BWV 154 (1714)
	BWV 54, 132, 163, 165, 185 (1715)
	BWV 155, 161, 162 (1716)
Cöthen:	BWV 173a (1722)

Although apparently no solo cantatas were composed in Arnstadt or Mühlhausen, there were other types of cantatas composed there which may be used as a basis for gauging Bach's evolution toward the style of solo works produced in Weimar. Bach's earliest cantatas clearly reveal the influence of the writing style of north and central German composers of the middle Baroque. The musical form and text content seems to be influenced by the vocal works of Pachelbel, Böhm, Buxtehude, and members of his extended family (in particular, his uncles Johann Christian and Johann Michael).[33] Common characteristics observed in these early cantatas include a brief opening sinfonia

[33] Christoph Wolff, *The World of Bach Cantatas,* 6.

followed by a series of equally short sections with contrasting tempi, time signatures, and number of voices, following one after another with little or no pause (reminiscent of concertato style). Repeating figures (ostinati) accompany arias, and accompanied arioso had not yet been replaced by recitative forms.[34]

Bach probably had very little occasion to compose vocal music in Arnstadt, Mühlhausen, or even in Weimar until February, 1714. At that time he was charged with performing new works monthly for services at the court church.[35] As a result, Bach's output of cantatas, especially sacred ones, increased substantially (although nowhere near the numbers of vocal works that would be produced in Leipzig). The Weimar cantatas show the evolution of Bach's style, incorporating elements associated with Italian compositional style (use of secco recitative, modified da capo aria form, and attempts at combined forms, such as aria with fugue).[36] Bach began to embrace the trend of using free poetry as the basis of libretti, with a marked preference for the works of Erdmann Neumeister, G. C. Lehms, and Salomo Franck. For the solo cantatas of this period Bach used texts written by Franck except for BWV 54 and BWV 199, which feature texts by Lehms. Mühlhausen texts had been drawn exclusively from Bible readings and chorale verses, a common practice in Bach's early years, but decidedly "old

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[34] Geiringer, *Johann Sebastian Bach,* 145-146.

[35] Christoph Wolff, *The World of Bach Cantatas,* 118.

[36] Christoph Wolff, *The World of Bach Cantatas,* 178, 181-182.

fashioned" by the time of his employment in the Weimar court.[37]

Bach's duties in Cöthen did not include composition for religious services; new vocal compositions were limited to secular cantatas for specific occasions. The only solo cantata of this period is BWV 173a, composed for the birthday of Prince Leopold of Anhalt. This work, like so many other secular works of the pre-Leipzig period, would eventually be reworked by Bach, given a sacred text, and thus be reincarnated as a sacred cantata during his career in Leipzig.[38]

The majority of Bach's sacred cantatas, along with about forty secular works, are attributed to his years in the service of St. Thomas' Church in Leipzig. Sacred cantatas of this period are subdivided into five cycles covering all Sundays and Holy Days (feast days) of the church year. The cycles have been dated as follows:

First cycle:	February 7, 1723 (date of hire) - June 4, 1724
Second cycle:	June 11, 1724 - May 27, 1725
Third cycle:	December 25, 1725 - February 9, 1727
Fourth cycle:	June, 1728-1729
Fifth cycle:	c.1730-c.1742.

Bach's first liturgical cycle, composed during the first year of employment at St. Thomas Church, represents his most prolific period of cantata composition. It begins with the works performed by Bach as his audition for employment, and includes those of his first full year in Leipzig. A multitude of new cantatas, as well as several refurbished Weimar

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[37] Christoph Wolff, *The World of Bach Cantatas,* 12-14.

[38] Christoph Wolff, *The World of Bach Cantatas,* 15-17.

cantatas (changing text, adding movements, or changing orchestration) make up this collection. Cantata texts began with a Bible quotation that functioned as an overall theme for the work. This theme would be presented as an aria (in solo cantatas) or as a mighty chorus. Several sections in free verse supporting the lesson would then follow, and a chorale would close the piece.[39] A few cantatas also utilized a chorale stanza as an internal movement (solo works BWV nos. 153 and 154 in this collection). Solo cantatas included in this first cycle include BWV nos. 59 and 134 (for two solo voices); nos. 60, 81, 83, 90,153 and 154 (for three solo voices); nos. 44, 86, 166 and 167 (for four solo voices). There are no solo cantatas for a single solo voice, and all end with a chorale.

The second cycle corresponds with Bach's second year at St. Thomas Church. There are somewhat fewer cantatas attributed to this cycle than the first, but there are very few "parody" cantatas (new versions of earlier works) in this collection. Virtually all of the new cantatas are chorale cantatas based on a specific hymn texts, with certain verses strictly quoted (at the beginning and end of the work) and others paraphrased. Thirty-eight cantatas of this type are assigned to the second cycle,[40] including the four solo cantatas in the second collection. The few solo cantatas composed during this period utilize multiple solo voices (BWV nos. 42 and 183 are for four voices; nos. 87 and 175 for three soloists) and conclude with a chorale. It should be noted that for the

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[39] Geiringer, *Johann Sebastian Bach,* 154.

[40] Geiringer, *Johann Sebastian Bach,* 161.

last nine or ten cantatas of the second cycle, Bach returned to the text configuration used in the first cycle; that is, opening with a chorus based on biblical text (or a solo, often in arioso form), followed by movements with text in free poetry[41], and concluding with a chorale.

It is within the third cycle that the majority of the sacred solo cantatas can be found. This collection appears to have been composed over a slightly greater period of time than the previous two (about fourteen months). Although these works demonstrate no great changes in compositional style, a look at Bach's music practices does reveal a few surprises. First, Bach began to perform works of other composers, including at least eighteen by his cousin, Johann Ludwig Bach. This has on occasion created confusion in authentication, since Bach would copy the music of Johann Ludwig in his own hand, and at least one solo cantata (BWV 15), formerly attributed to Johann Sebastian Bach, was actually the work of his cousin.[42]

A second surprise is Bach's use of earlier instrumental music in new cantatas of the third collection. Not only are movements from old instrumental works resurrected and used as opening movements in new works, but such movements were also adapted

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[41] Geiringer, *Johann Sebastian Bach,* 162. Librettists of works in the first part of the second cycle are generally unknown. The last ten cantatas are known to have been penned by librettist Mariane von Ziegler.

[42] Sadie, ed. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, vol. 2,* 356.

for voice (especially choral movements).[43] Another important innovation was the composition of organ obbligato parts in the cantatas, especially the later solo works.

Finally, the sheer number of solo cantatas, especially those for one or two solo voices without a concluding chorale, is unique to the third collection. Several sources suggest that difficulties with the quality of performing resources were, at least in part, responsible for the trend toward solo works.[44] One source speculates that Bach was attempting to create a complete cycle of solo cantatas for the church year, and either a third of the works were lost, or he simply failed to complete it.[45] In any case, no less than seventeen solo cantatas were completed and performed between Christmas, 1725 and February, 1727. Solo cantatas of the third collection without a concluding chorale include BWV nos. 35, 82, 170 (for one solo voice) and no. 58 (for two soloists). Those cantatas retaining the concluding chorale are BWV nos. 52, 55, 56, 84, 169 (for one soloist); nos. 32, 57, 157 (for two solo voices); and nos. 13, 88, 151, 164 and 168 (for four solo voices).

Only five solo cantatas are found in the fourth cycle (1728-1729), a collection largely set to texts of Christian Friedrich Henrici, also known as Picander. Many Picander libretti are extant (in Picander's collected works), but only nine or ten of Bach's

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[43] Sadie, ed. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, vol. 2,* 334.

[44] Buelow, *Music Society and the Late Baroque Era,* 278; and Boyd and Butt, *Oxford Composers Companion: J. S. Bach,* 86.

[45] McKinney, *The Solo Bass Voice in the Cantatas of J. S. Bach,* 140.

settings of his works survive.[46] All five solo cantatas of this cycle utilize Picander texts. These include BWV nos. 156 and 188 (for soprano, alto, tenor and bass soloists), nos. 159 and 174 (for alto, tenor and bass), and no. 197a (for alto and bass soloists; partially lost). All have a concluding chorale. It is possible that many more solo cantatas were composed during this period, since it is generally known that a vast amount of the literature of the fourth and fifth cycles has been lost.

Only three solo sacred cantatas may be attributed to the fifth cantata cycle, all for single solo voices. BWV 51 calls for solo soprano only; BWV 158 was composed for solo bass voice and has a closing chorale. Finally, BWV 200 for alto soloist (consisting exclusively of an aria believed to be from a lost cantata) completes the list of sacred cantatas from Bach's Leipzig career, however it should be noted that there is some disagreement as to whether BWV 200 was part of a liturgical cycle, or composed for a special service or occasion.[47] Two factors contribute to the sparseness of the fourth and fifth sets, and one (loss of literature) has already been mentioned. The second factor is Bach's interest in other musical genres. He produced many secular cantatas and instrumental works during the final two decades of his life, and continued to transform earlier works.[48]

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[46] Buelow, *Music Society and the Late Baroque Era,* 278.

[47] Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician,* 285.

[48] Geiringer, *Johann Sebastian Bach,* 174. Two of Bach's best known works, the *Christmas Oratorio* (BWV 248, 1734) and *Ascension Oratorio* (BWV 11, 1735), are the result of combining and transforming several earlier secular cantatas.

The majority of secular cantatas that survive were composed in Leipzig, particularly during Bach's later years. Approximately forty secular cantatas were composed during these years, seven of which were for solo voice combinations. Compositions for public events were part of Bach's duties as general music director of Leipzig. In addition, Bach was commissioned to write music for weddings, birthdays, and other celebrations by local nobles and wealthy citizens. Perhaps the most important vehicle for the production of secular works was Leipzig's collegium musicum, and the most famous solo cantata for that group was *Schweigt stille, plaudert nicht* (BWV 211), better known as the *Coffee Cantata.*[49] Additional secular solo cantatas from this period include BWV 202, 210 and 210a for soprano, BWV 216 for soprano and alto (partially lost), BWV 212 *(Peasant Cantata)* for soprano and bass, and BWV 249a for soprano, alto, tenor and bass (lost; its music survives as the famous *Easter Oratorio*, BWV 249).[50] Many of those composed for special occasions did not survive intact, but their music is known because of Bach's practice of resetting secular works with sacred texts for use in church. The resetting of the music from BWV 249a in the *Easter Oratorio* is one excellent example of Bach's apparent intuition that survival of such secular works was better assured when used in parody.

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[49] Buelow, *Music Society and the Late Baroque Era,* 285, 287.

[50] Sadie, ed. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, vol. 2,* 334.

Chapter Three

THE IMPORTANCE OF VOICE CLASSIFICATION IN THE PERFORMANCE OF BACH'S SOLO REPERTOIRE

Musicologists agree that soloists in the days of Bach, as well as his entire choral body, were exclusively male. Exceptionally talented boy sopranos and altos sang the soprano and alto parts that are now routinely assigned to women. Naturally, the unchanged male voice (or that of the adult countertenor) countertenor is very different in quality from that of an adult female. However, since it is the practice today to have mature women sing these parts, it is necessary to determine which type of female voice is best suited to undertake this repertoire, and why.

The "alto" solo voice (or part) in contemporary performing ensembles is generally sung by a contralto or a mezzo-soprano. Both of these voice types possess unique qualities, even though they are often treated as interchangeable. Although there is as much difference between a contralto and mezzo-soprano as there is between a mezzo-soprano and soprano, singers of "alto" parts are frequently asked to perform this literature without regard to their classification, a practice that can result in a mediocre performance in the short term, and may seriously compromise the health of the voice over time.

For this reason, it is necessary to devote attention to recognition of the similarities and differences between the rare contralto voice type, and the more abundant mezzo-soprano singer. Much of the discussion will focus on a comparison of

the classifications with regard to range, tessitura, and timbre, both in general terms and as these differences might be applied to Bach's solo works for the alto voice.

The variety in range and color of the human voice has led to the use of standard classifications in voice, traditionally called the *fach system*. A large portion of literature is expressly written for (or directed to) a specific fach (voice type) However, it should first be stated that there is an inherent danger in attempting to classify a young singer before the foundations of good vocal technique have been laid. This near-universal belief is reflected in the statements of several renowned vocal technicians and teachers:

Luisa Tetrazzini, 1923:

> *The important task of discovering whether a voice is bass, baritone, tenor, contralto, mezzo-soprano, or soprano, and the exact character of the general ranges of these voices is a matter of great delicacy, and cannot be decided at one hearing.*[51]

William Vennard, 1967:

> *I never feel any urgency about classifying a beginning student. So many premature diagnoses have been proven wrong, and it can be harmful to the student and embarrassing to the teacher to keep striving for an ill-chosen goal. It is best to begin in the middle part of the voice and work upward and downward gradually until the voice classifies itself.*[52]

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[51] Enrico Caruso and Luisa Tetrazzini, *Caruso and Tetrazzini on the Art of Singing*. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1975 [an unabridged and unaltered republication of the work by The Metropolitan Company, Publishers, 1909]), 20-21.

[52] William Vennard, *Singing: The Mechanism and the Technic*, Revised Edition. (New York: Carl Fischer, 1967), 78

Marilee David, 1995:

> *Many teachers and students are overly eager to classify voices. The student is told he or she is such-and-such a voice and proceeds to sing literature for and to attempt to sound like that voice without regard for comfort or for the health of the instrument. Certainly voice classification can be helpful, but it must not be so rigid as to preclude making exceptions for the singer's well-being.*[53]

Clifton Ware, 1998:

> *A misdiagnosis [of classification] at an early age is likely to pre-determine a student's vocal music development by limiting technical exploration, confining her to singing inappropriate repertoire and creating a false vocal identity.*[54]

Most singers and teachers would concede that the music of Bach's cantatas is inappropriate for a beginning female vocalist. But the preceding comments are representative of the belief among prominent pedagogues that it is unwise for any singer, even those whose voices are mature and carefully trained, to regularly perform literature outside of her classification. A great deal has been written about the various physical and vocal characteristics which must be considered in determining a singer's classification, with certain characteristics appearing consistently within the literature. These characteristics include physicality, vocal quality, range, and tessitura (based on placement of vocal registers).

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[53] Marilee David, *The New Vocal Pedagogy.* (Lanham, MD: the Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1995), 69-70.

[54] Clifton Ware, *Basics of Vocal Pedagogy: The Foundations and Process of Singing.* (Boston: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1998), 193.

Certain physical characteristics have been observed in singers possessing lower voices (such as mezzo-sopranos and contraltos) that differ from those with higher voices (sopranos). Physical traits relating to size of the larynx, length and breadth of the vocal folds (active and resting), size of the vocal tract, lung capacity, and general body type may provide indications of potential classification. Clifton Ware states, "in general, tall large-framed persons are normally lower and heavier voice types, while short small-boned persons are normally higher and lighter voice types."[55] J. B. Van Diense suggests that a broad, flat palate is an indicator of a dramatic voice, whereas a more rounded palate is more often found in the lyric singer. He further states that deeper, more dramatic voices tend to have longer and wider vocal tracts.[56] Thus, it stands to reason that in many cases, mezzo-sopranos and contraltos would have larger bone and laryngeal structures than sopranos.

These observations tend to be supported by medical findings. Dr. Friedrich S. Brodnitz writes:

> *As a rule, high voices are found in persons with round faces, short necks, round or quadratic chests, high palates with delicate soft palates. Long faces, long and narrow necks, long and flat chests, broad palates with massive soft palates, are frequent in singers with deep voices.*[57]

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[55] Ware, *Basics of Vocal Pedagogy,* 189.

[56] Phyllis Ann Brenner, *The Emergence of the English Contralto,* Ed. D. diss. Columbia University Teacher's College, 1989. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1989), 173. [originally published in "Problems of the Singing Voice", *Folia Phoniatrica,* 26 (1974), 433].

[57] Friedrich S. Brodnitz, *Vocal Rehabilitation.* (Rochester, MN: American Academy of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology, 1961), 23.

Brodnitz also observed that the vocal folds of persons with low voices are longer than those of persons with higher voices. This finding is supported by Dr. Victor Ewings Negus, who further states that "baritones and contraltos usually have heavier and more rounded vocal folds than tenors and sopranos, with an associated mellowness in quality."[58]

Although it is generally accepted that the dimensions of the laryngeal mechanism (especially the vocal cords) and pharyngeal cavity definitely have an impact on the range, timbre and resonating ability of the voice, other physical traits are less reliable in determining one's *fach.* As Ware points out, a large-framed woman might well be classified ultimately as a mezzo-soprano or alto; but she may also be the owner of a light coloratura voice.[59]

In 1886, Sir Morell Mackenzie wrote:

> *Before everything, it is essential that the true quality of the voice should be once and for all determined. This is the keystone . . . .*[60]

The timbre (tone quality) of the voice is frequently cited as one of the most important factors in voice classification. A good summary of timbre as it applies to classification is

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[58] Victor Ewings Negus, *The Comparative Anatomy of the Larynx.* (New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1962), 145.

[59] Ware, *Basics of Vocal Pedagogy,* 189.

[60] Morell Mackenzie, *The Hygiene of the Vocal Organs: A Practical Handbook for Singers and Speakers.* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1886), 160.

provided by Dr. Barbara Doscher in *The Functional Unity of the Singing Voice*, wherein she states:

> *Timbre is undoubtedly a better estimator of classification than range. Since timbre is so closely related to formant frequencies, it should give some indication of the size and dimensions of the vocal tract. At the same time, timbre is determined to a greater extent by the particular method of voice training. A young baritone who sings with a very dark color, i.e. emphasis on the lower harmonics, may very well have the first formant frequencies of a bass, regardless of what his natural vocal timbre may be.*[61]

True contraltos generally possess the heaviest and darkest tone qualities; sopranos have lighter timbres, and mezzo-sopranos tend to fall somewhere between.

However, these designations can be deceptive. A young soprano may be misclassified as a mezzo-soprano, or a baritone as a bass, if the singer possesses an unusually large voice with a darker timbre. Dr. Doscher speaks to this situation, saying that misclassification of voices, especially the rarer types, will at best result in an unrealized potential; at worst, permanent vocal damage can result.[62] Just as there are differences in soprano types (such as coloratura, lyric-spinto, lyric, and dramatic), there are differences in individual low voice types as well. Mezzo-sopranos may also classified into similar subtypes (lyric and dramatic most often), with comparisons drawn showing

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[61] Barbara M. Doscher, *The Functional Unity of the Singing Voice, 2nd edition.* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1994), 196.

[62] Doscher, *The Functional Unity of the Singing Voice,* 197.

the similarity in timbre and range of the dramatic types of mezzo-soprano and soprano, as well as the lyric mezzo-soprano and lyric or lyric-spinto soprano.[63]

Most sources do not subdivide the contralto classification, but it makes sense that contraltos, too, could be of similar subtypes. A lighter contralto voice might easily be confused with a darker mezzo-soprano voice, if timbre alone were used to determine classification. Furthermore, it is not unusual for young singers (or older ones, for that matter) to artificially produce a heavier tone in order to sound more mature. While "coloring" the voice in this manner may be used by the mature singer for dramatic effect, it is not recommended for the singer whose technique is still being formed, and may be harmful in the long run.[64] For this reason, the majority of pedagogues agree that timbre must be considered in combination with the singer's range and tessitura, which are determined by the voice's natural registers.

There are several theories surrounding the number of registers inherent in the human singing voice, from the concept of a single register to the idea that each sung pitch has its own register. Registers are defined as "a series of consecutive, homogeneous tones going from high to low, produced by the development of the same mechanical principle. All the tones belonging to the same register are consequently of the same nature, whatever may be the modification of timbre or of force to which one

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[63] Ware, *Basics of Vocal Pedagogy,* 192.

[64] Viktor Fuchs, *The Art of Singing and Voice Technique, 2nd edition.* (New York: Riverrun Press, Inc., 1985), 130.

subjects them."[65] The prevailing theory until the invention of the laryngoscope in 1865 was that there were two registers, the *voce plena* (chest voice) and *voce finta* (head voice).[66] However, Manuel Garcia II, inventor of the laryngoscope, became one of the first to advocate the concept of three vocal registers rather than two: the chest voice, head voice, and middle voice (which he termed "falsetto," containing characteristics of both head and chest registers).[67] Since that time most researchers have come to embrace the idea of either two vocal registers with an area of overlap encompassing the middle third of the range, or three distinct registers: chest, middle (mixed) and head. The following quotes represent majority thought on the subject.

Viktor Fuchs, 1985:

> *Most teachers and singers now believe that both men's and women's voices consist of three registers--chest (lowest), middle, and head (highest). . . . When a singer changes from one register to another, he is like a driver changing gear. Obviously some singers will insist that they are not changing: such happy creatures are like drivers with automatic gear-shift. That does not mean there are no gears anymore than that there are no registers. A singer who neglects them or is unaware of their existence will run into trouble sooner or later.*[68]

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[65] Manuel Garcia II, *A Complete Treatise on the Art of Singing: Part One.* [The editions of 1841 and 1872 collated, edited, and translated by Donald V. Paschke.] (New York: Da Capo Press, 1982), xii.

[66] Fuchs, *The Art of Singing and Voice Technique, 2nd edition,* 64. [The terms *voce plena* and *voce finta*, describing the two registers, were first used by Giulio Caccini (1546-1618) in his *Nuove Musiche*, and literally mean "full voice" and "disguised voice".]

[67] Garcia, *A Complete Treatise on the Art of Singing,* xli.

[68] Fuchs, *The Art of Singing and Voice Technique,* 64.

D. Ralph Appelman, 1967:

> *The average singer conceives of the vocal scale as one long extended register. His artistic goal is to pass from one register to another diatonically or intervallically without a noticeable change in quality, but the single register is more often an objective in teaching rather than a reality in the student voice. Many teachers believe that the head and chest are the only registers. However, just as many believe that three registers exist (the head, middle and chest).*[69]

Dr. Friedrich Brodnitz, 1961:

> *We can speak of chest register, a middle or mixed register, and a head register. Above the head register lies, in male voices, the falsetto. The whistle register with flute-like sounds that are not produced by vibration of the cords but by the escape of air is exhibited above the head register by high female voices.*[70]

William Vennard, 1967:

> *The realistic philosophy, however, is that of "three registers." If one goes by the facts of vocal experience, be they ideal or not, one recognizes distinct qualities of tone, produced by distinct adjustments of the larynx, without recourse to which the full potential of the voice cannot be sung.*[71]

Barbara M. Doscher, 1994:

> *The three main female registers are chest, middle, and head. The whistle or flute is considered an auxiliary register. Some authorities feel that the middle register is not a separate register, but an overlapping of the chest*

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[69] D. Ralph Appelman, *The Science of Vocal Pedagogy: Theory and Application.* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1967), 86.

[70] Brodnitz, *Vocal Rehabilitation,* 23.

[71] Vennard, *Singing: The Mechanism and the Technic,* 69.

(heavy) and head (light). Subjective as it may be, however, the actual vocal experience reveals three registers, each of which exhibits distinct differences in tone quality.[72]

Clifton Ware, 1998:

The three-registers theory incorporates the chest and head registers plus an additional one called the mixed or middle register (the middle range of the voice). The mixed register is the result of blending the qualities of chest and head registers (heavy and light mechanisms) in the middle range of the voice, approximately the middle one-third of the entire singable range.[73]

There are those who still advocate or actively explore alternate theories of vocal registration, but they represent a minority in the field of vocal pedagogy. For this reason, the following examination of the vocal registers of contraltos and mezzo-sopranos is based on the prevailing current opinion, wherein the voice is composed of three pharyngeal registers, with the middle register consisting of a head-chest mixture.

Garcia's description of vocal register has been periodically refined since the nineteenth century as advances in medical research permit researchers to better understand the workings of the vocal mechanism. Modern vocal technicians differentiate between laryngeal registration, where slight changes in the configuration of the cartilage and muscle of the vocal mechanism occur, or actual differences in the vibration of the vocal folds may be seen, and pharyngeal registration, which relies on the physical sensations of the singer with regard to resonance. In the first case, the registers are

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[72] Doscher, *The Functional Unity of the Singing Voice,* 178.

[73] Ware, *Basics of Vocal Pedagogy,* 116.

identified as (1) the glottal fry (lowest), (2) modal (the normal register for speaking and singing), (3) falsetto (used in singing, rarely in speech), and (4) whistle (found only in women and children). The glottal fry (also known as *strohbass* or *growl*), is accomplished when using a loose glottal closure which permits air to bubble through with a growling sound in a very low frequency. The pitch produces is lower than that which would be usually used for singing.[74] At the other end of the spectrum, the whistle register (also known as *flute* or *flageolet*) is a very high register found only in children and most women.[75]

The two remaining laryngeal registers, the modal and falsetto, are the ones believed to be used in most singing and speaking. The modal register is the lower of the two; it is where most singing and speaking occurs. The falsetto register is used mostly for singing, and is deemed to be higher and lighter than the modal register.[76] In the heavier modal register, the thyroarytenoids of the vocal mechanism predominate; the cricothyroids predominate in the falsetto.[77] It is within these two laryngeal registers

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[74] James C. McKinney, *The Diagnosis and Correction of Vocal Faults*. (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1982), 98.

[75] Doscher, *The Functional Unity of the Singing Voice*, 173. [It should be noted that contraltos do not usually possess a whistle register, and it is weak in many mezzo-sopranos.]

[76] Doscher, *The Functional Unity of the Singing Voice*, 173.

[77] Miller, *The Structure of Singing*, (New York: Schirmer Books, a Division of Macmillan, Inc., 1986), 133.

that the divisions of pharyngeal resonance occur, so further discussion of laryngeal registration will be limited to these designations.

Chest, middle (mixed) and *head* voice are the common designations used in describing pharyngeal registration in women. They may be equated to laryngeal registers in women as follows: the chest voice to the modal register, the head voice to the falsetto, and the middle as a mixture or overlap of the two (though many professionals maintain that the middle is a distinct register). Pharyngeal registration terms do not reflect the origin of the sound; rather, they reflect the parts of the naso-pharyngeal mechanism where resonance is primarily felt by the singer when vocalizing in the different registers.

Garcia described the female chest voice as "penetrating, full of brilliance."[78] He states range extremes that extend from e-flat (below middle c, henceforth to be called c^1) to $c\#^2$, depending on the voice classification and flexibility of the singer.[79] It is known that singing in the chest register requires more air than head voice, and higher glottal air pressure in order to produce sounds equal to the intensity of tones generated in the head register. The chest register, as stated previously, is so named because the backward resonance when singing in that register can be felt at the breastbone.[80] All professionals

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[78] Garcia, *A Complete Treatise on the Art of Singing,* xliv.

[79] Garcia, *A Complete Treatise on the Art of Singing,* xlv.

[80] Friedrich S. Brodnitz, *Keep Your Voice Healthy: A Guide to the Intelligent Use and Care of the Speaking and Singing Voice.* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1953), 82.

warn against regular use of the chest voice in the upper extreme for all voices (above f^1, or better yet, d^1) and in the lower extreme (below a) for all but contraltos.

The middle register is considered the foundation of the voice, regardless of classification. For this reason, teachers agree that training must begin with the middle voice, working outward. Dr. Brodnitz states that "ideal singing is done in a mixture of register characteristics in a *voix mixte*. Each tone of the compass receives a little of the color of the opposing registers in a mixture that varies from equal parts in the middle of the range to heavier coloring at the extreme ends."[81] It is almost universally maintained that many of the problems associated with the chest and head registers can be traced back to an underdeveloped or damaged middle voice. Furthermore, it is the development of the middle voice that enables the seamless transition from one register to another that is so important to great singing. Garcia (and others) note a range of b-flat to $c\#^2$ for the middle voice in women,[82] with d^1 to $c\#^2$ being optimal.

The pure head voice is described as a light, soaring sound rich in upper partials. It is the highest of the three registers and is generated by the action of the cricothyroid and reinforced by lifting of the soft palate. In phonation in the head voice, only the upper border of the folds make contact, whereas more of the length of the vocal folds come in contact upon vibration in chest and middle register phonation.[83]

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[81] Brodnitz, *Keep Your Voice Healthy*, 82.

[82] Garcia, *A Complete Treatise on the Art of Singing*, xlvi.

[83] Ware, *Basics of Vocal Pedagogy*, 119.

The points where one register moves into another is generally called a "break," "lift" or "passaggio" (point of passage). Vennard describes the phenomenon in this way:

> *In a woman's voice they are "chest", "middle," and "head." Teachers who use this vocabulary set about "blending the registers," or helping students through the "passage" or "bridge" from one register to another.*[84]

D. Ralph Appelman further explains:

> *A register within the human vocal scale is a series of sounds of equal quality. The musical ear distinguishes them from another series of sound also of equal quality. The limits of each series are marked by "points" of passage sometimes called "lifts"... To the female the primary register change at the lower end of the scale gives a certain vibratory sensation to the chest. Each area of identical quality depends upon the adjustment of the resonating cavities... All pitch skips that involve moving from one register to another demand a conscious adjustment of the coupled resonating system and the phonatory mechanism in one synchronous act.... At the moment of passing (transition between registers), the position of the larynx in the phonatory tube changes [as a result of] trained singer's attempt to enlarge the pharyngeal resonators by yawning and simultaneously stabilizing and tilting the thyroid cartilage forward, thereby tensing the vocal folds.*[85]

The importance of the placement of the lifts within a singer's range is vital to determining classification. In *The Structure of Singing* (1986), Richard Miller says:

> *As with male voices, location of pivotal points of register demarcation provides indications of female vocal categories. Such pivotal points may vary somewhat within the individual voice, depending on how lyric or how dramatic the voice.... The soprano category embraces voices of wide diversity, from coloratura to dramatic. The dramatic*

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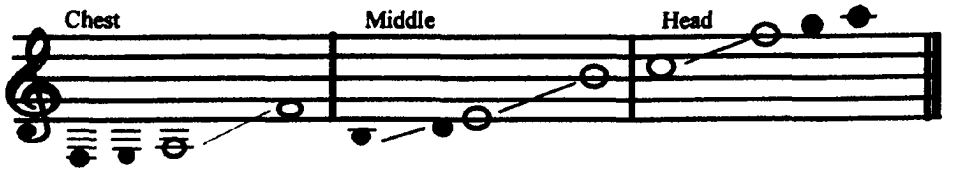
[84] Vennard, *Singing: The Mechanism and the Technic*, 73.

[85] Appelman, *The Science of Vocal Pedagogy: Theory and Application*, 86-88.

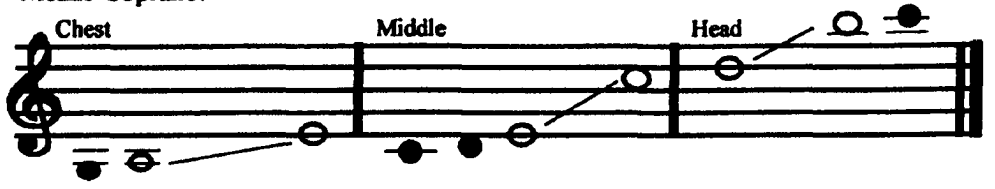
soprano is closer in character to the dramatic mezzo than to the light soprano; registration events reflect these relationships. Vocal classification must take into account the location of pivotal points, without, however, relying solely on them.[86]

The importance of understanding registration becomes clear when the average vocal range of the contralto and mezzo-soprano is divided according to the usual registration breaks. A comparison of the average range of each of these voice types and the placement of passaggio points by various authorities (including Garcia, Miller, Ware and McKinney) demonstrates a general agreement on average. Only some disagreement as to range extremes was noted. The average range and registrations for each voice classification are illustrated below.

Contralto:



Mezzo-Soprano:



Generally speaking, the average contralto has a range, with accompanying passaggio points, that lays approximately a major second to a minor third lower than that

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[86] Richard Miller, *The Structure of Singing,* 134.

of the mezzo-soprano. This finding speaks directly to the final aspect in determining the appropriateness of literature for the mezzo-soprano or contralto, tessitura. Vennard defines tessitura as "the part of the range in which the voice performs best, both as to sound and as to ease."[87] He further states that basses and contraltos sing largely in chest voice, but tenors and sopranos use the head voice as well as the chest. In other words, it is the part of the range where the singer's production is most comfortable, and includes the middle or mixed register, plus parts of the others, predominantly middle and head in higher voices; middle and chest in lower ones. Combined with knowledge of where registration breaks occur, it is the most reliable means of determining vocal classification.

To summarize the criteria most useful in differentiating between the contralto and mezzo-soprano voices, the following is offered. Physically, there may be little outward difference, although the laryngeal and pharyngeal mechanisms may be slightly larger in the contralto. The timbre of the contralto voice may well be heavier and/or darker than her mezzo-soprano counterpart, although there are exceptions. The range of the contralto will also be similar, however, the contralto will maneuver more easily in the chest register, may be able to take the chest tones higher without undue tension, and will be able to take the middle voice lower (without loss of sonority) than the mezzo-soprano. Finally, the most comfortable tessitura for the contralto will sit lower than that of the mezzo-soprano, and will incorporate more of the timbre associated with chest register production. In short, the contralto tends to sing most comfortably in a tessitura

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[87] Vennard, *Singing: The Mechanism and the Technic,* 79.

that lies in the chest and middle register ranges; the mezzo-soprano in the middle and head register ranges.

Determining the appropriate voice classification for any vocal work is vital to the success and healthy production of the singer. Singing continuously at range extremes, outside of a comfortable tessitura, can irreparably damage a voice. This is stressed by virtually every vocal technician of any reputation, and was the center of a 1987 study published by Dr. Robert F. Coleman of the Center for Communication Disorders in Norfolk Virginia. The purpose of Coleman's study was to compare the demands of singing roles to a singer's vocal capabilities, using a phonetogram to create a profile.[88] His subject was a trained baritone who performed both classical (oratorio) and popular music regularly.

First, a profile of the subject's vocal range at maximum and minimum intensity was charted. Three songs were then performed: the first a classical piece well within the most comfortable part of his range; the second a somewhat higher popular ballad, but still within his comfortable singing range. The third song contained hard rock vocals, laying primarily in the upper part of his comfortable range, with several high notes exceeding that pitch level. Coleman found that in the third selection, the subject was having to sing outside of his normal tessitura, and that he was sometimes very close to his maximum vocal limits using any form of phonation, musical or otherwise.

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[88] Robert F. Coleman, "Performance Demands and the Performer's Vocal Capabilities," *Journal of Voice,* vol. 1, no. 3. (September, 1987), 209-216.

As a result of this analysis, Coleman advised the subject that the third piece and others like it were hazardous for him to sing. In his words:

> *One of the essentials of becoming a professional singer or actor is knowing what can be done without risk to the vocal mechanism. There is a general consensus that singing or speaking outside a given pitch or intensity is potentially risky.*[89]

Thus, it can be concluded from Coleman's study, and the advice of the foremost vocal technicians, that continuous performance of vocal works that are predominantly near to or exceed the comfortable tessitura of a performer are potentially dangerous, but that those works whose demands fit within the performer's vocal profile could be presumed nonhazardous.

To determine which voice type is most appropriate for each of the Bach cantatas (and the cantata arias listed in Appendix A), the above criteria will be applied All works sit within the ranges designated for both contraltos and mezzo-sopranos, therefore an analysis of the tessitura of each piece will be used to determine which voice is better suited to the particular work. Other factors, such as breath management, agility (necessary for fioratura passages), rhythmic complexity and negotiation of intervals will be examined as factors for whether a piece is better suited for the intermediate or advanced singer. Additional issues which have an impact on classification will be addressed as they apply to individual works.

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[89] Robert F. Coleman, "Performance Demands and the Performer's Vocal Capabilities," *Journal of Voice,* 209.

Chapter Four

BACH'S SOLO CANTATAS FOR THE ALTO VOICE

The focus of this study will be on J. S. Bach's five extant solo cantatas for the alto voice. Each cantata will be presented in [BWV] numerical order, beginning with a brief historical perspective. Liturgical references demonstrating placement of the cantata in the church year will follow, along with a translation of the cantata text. The instrumentation of the work, and current publication information will also be provided.

An examination of each cantata movement will provide the basis for the determination as to whether the cantata is more appropriate for the contralto or mezzo-soprano voice, or equally appropriate for both. The vocal range of each cantata movement will be provided, but it will not play a role in these determinations, since all ranges fall within the parameters generally accepted for both voice types. Instead, the tessitura of each cantata movement will be used as the dominant characteristic in determining which vocal classification is likely to have the best success with a particular cantata. This determination will be based on which pitches of the total range of the piece appear most often, and how they are configured in individual phrases. An easy tessitura is one which lies within the most comfortable part of the singer's range. Conversely, a difficult tessitura is one that lies at the high or low ends of the range, which would be difficult for the singer to sustain.

The analysis will also provide evidence necessary to determine whether an intermediate or advanced student is better suited to study and perform the work.

Consideration will be given to rhythmic difficulty, phrase length and breath management, melodic difficulty (emphasizing negotiation of intervals and melismatic work), along with other inherent difficulties within particular works as they occur. All musical excerpts included as examples in this study are used with the kind permission of Breitkopf & Haertel of Wiesbaden, Germany.

BWV 35: *Geist und Seele wird verwirret*

Geist und Seele wird verwirret is part of Bach's third Leipzig sacred cycle. It was composed for the twelfth Sunday after Trinity, receiving its first performance on September 8, 1726.[90] It is one of Bach's longer cantatas and is divided into two sections. Several sources speculate that the two sections were originally performed as bookends to the sermon. Each section begins with an instrumental *sinfonia*, followed by a combination of solo recitative and aria.

It is interesting to note that much of this cantata is a parody of an instrumental work previously written during Bach's tenure in Cöthen. Sources point to an early concerto for violin or oboe (lost), whose music survives in a later harpsichord concerto, BWV 1059 (of which only nine measures of the score are extant). Musicologist Karl Geiringer's research led him to speculate that the sinfonia of the first section came from the first movement of the earlier concerto, and the second section sinfonia is derived

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[90] Melvin P. Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts: An Interlinear Translation with Reference Guide to Biblical Quotations and Allusions.* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1996), 764.

from the final movement of BWV 1059. He further states that the first aria in BWV 35 is probably from the concerto's middle movement, and the other two cantata arias derived from sections of that or other works.[91] Therefore, it is quite possible that only the recitatives were newly composed for the cantata's premier in 1726.

Along with alto solo voice, the cantata is scored for oboe da caccia, english horn, organ, violins I and II, viola, and basso continuo. Bach's use of the organ as an obbligato instrument (one of the important innovations in works of the third liturgical cycle) is evident in this cantata, particularly in the sinfonias and as a counterpart to the voice in the arias. In the recitatives, the organ resumes its traditional function as a continuo (support) instrument.

The cantata text is believed by a majority of musicologists to be the work of librettist Georg Christian Lehms. It is based on the biblical reference found in the Gospel of St. Mark, wherein Jesus heals the man who is deaf and dumb, to the amazement of the surrounding crowd (Mark 7:32-37).[92] A text translation will be provided with each movement as it is discussed.

Part One

First Movement: *Sinfonia*

The first movement of this section is an instrumental sinfonia, or overture; therefore discussion will begin with the second movement, an aria.

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[91] Geiringer, *Johann Sebastian Bach,* 171.

[92] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*, 125.

Second Movement: *Aria*

Translation:

Geist und Seele wird verwirret,	*Spirit and soul become bewildered,*
Wenn sie dich, mein Gott, betracht'.	*When it thee, my God, considers.*
Denn die Wunder, so sie kennet	*For the wonders, which it experienced*
Und das Volk mit Jachzen nennet,	*And (which) the people with exultation tell,*
Hat sie taub und stumm gemacht.	*Has made it deaf and dumb.*[93]

The vocal range of this movement is b below middle C (hereafter referred to as c^1) to e^2 (a tenth above middle c), however the majority of the vocal part sits in the range from d^1 to d^2. This is a fairly easy tessitura overall for a mezzo-soprano to negotiate, but could be somewhat problematic for the contralto depending on how much of the melody is actually written in the top part of that tessitura. For instance, in the first two measures of the vocal part, the melodic line sits almost entirely in the upper half of the aria's tessitura:

[93] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts,* 125. [The translations provided by Unger are word for word, however, some word rearrangement is made to account for differences in German and English grammar].

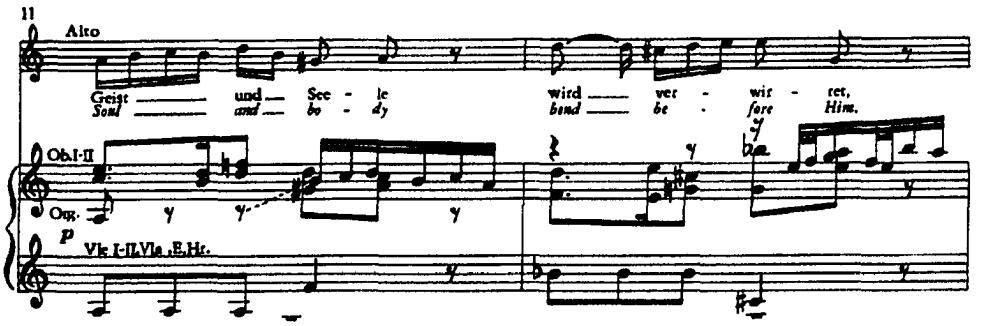

Figure 1. Copyright by Breitkopf & Haertel, Wiesbaden.
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It is advisable for the mezzo-soprano to approach this opening in head voice, but it is crucial for the contralto, since she is approaching her highest available notes. The second measure shown in particular may be difficult if the contralto brings too much weight (color) to it. This two-measure combination occurs twice in the first section of the aria, then two more times when the section is repeated (as part of the da capo form). This would probably not be a concern for the mezzo-soprano, but the contralto will have to pace herself so she doesn't tire before the final repetition, making the tessitura of the phrases that much more difficult to maneuver through successfully.

Along with the tessitura of the melody, its configuration must be considered. It has been said that Bach writes for voice as though it were a violin, with difficult leaps and articulations (and no place to breathe!). This aria does demonstrate some of these things, although not to the extent seen in other Bach vocal works. Much of the melodic motion is actually stepwise (ascending and descending), but does contain leaps (often of a minor seventh) used as connectors between stepwise patterns. These connecting leaps always cross at least one registration break (the upper) and sometimes both. The

descending leaps should not be particularly problematic for the trained singer, although appropriate frontal (or chest) resonance will have to be added to the lower note of the leap so it will be equally sonorous to the upper head (or mixed) tone. In negotiating the ascending leaps the singer, regardless of classification, must take care in approaching the lower pitch before the leap with a minimum of weight, and as much "head mix" as possible (but without loss of sonority) , so the production of the upper note will be as effortless as possible. Naturally, the amount of manipulation of color depends on which pitches are involved, and where they occur in relation to the singer's natural registration breaks.

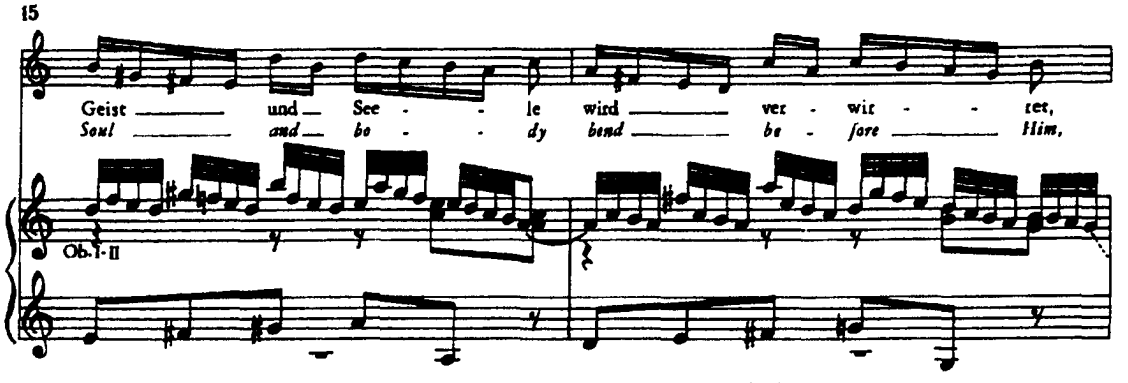

Figure 2. Copyright by Breitkopf & Haertel, Wiesbaden.
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The example shown above demonstrates the configuration of some of the more difficult ascending leaps. The leaps in question appears between beats two and three of each measure; each is a leap of an interval of a minor seventh. Furthermore, the lower note is at or near the point of the first registration break; the upper pitch is at a point where a singer would normally employ her head voice (above the second register break). This sequence can be very dangerous to both the mezzo-soprano and contralto because of the

tendency to add weight upon descending in the lower middle or chest voice (as in the first beat of each of these measures); to do so here will make it extremely difficult to make a seamless leap into the head voice. The singer could negotiate the interval with the extra color if she only had to jump up to the pitch, then came right back down to a more comfortable part of her range, but the melody doesn't immediately descend. It remains in the higher tessitura to the end of the measure, and the melisma continues through the next measure (with another minor seventh leap).

For the most part, the melismatic passages do not present many major difficulties. The tempo is not very fast , so despite the "blackness" of the pitches on the page, the melismas aren't very particularly rapid, and follow fairly repetitious patterns. Even so, the singer must be careful to use a light and focused production for maximum flexibility. Often breath management can be a problem in Bach's melismas, but in this movement Bach himself has provided the singer with ample places to breathe, composing short melismatic phrases and breaking longer passages with rests. There is one place where the singer may have to decide whether to break a melisma to breathe (see Figure 3). Many singers will be able to handle the sequence in measures 30-32 on a single breath, despite the tempo. But many will not. In particular, the contralto may need more breathe because of the high tessitura at the melisma's end and the ascending leaps over registration breaks. Usually the best place to breath in this situation is at the end of a longer note (in this case, tied), or between the pitches of a leap. Both of these conditions exist in this sequence (at beat three of the second measure or beat one of the third).

The singer should select and practice the placement of the extra breath so it becomes as comfortable and unobtrusive as possible.

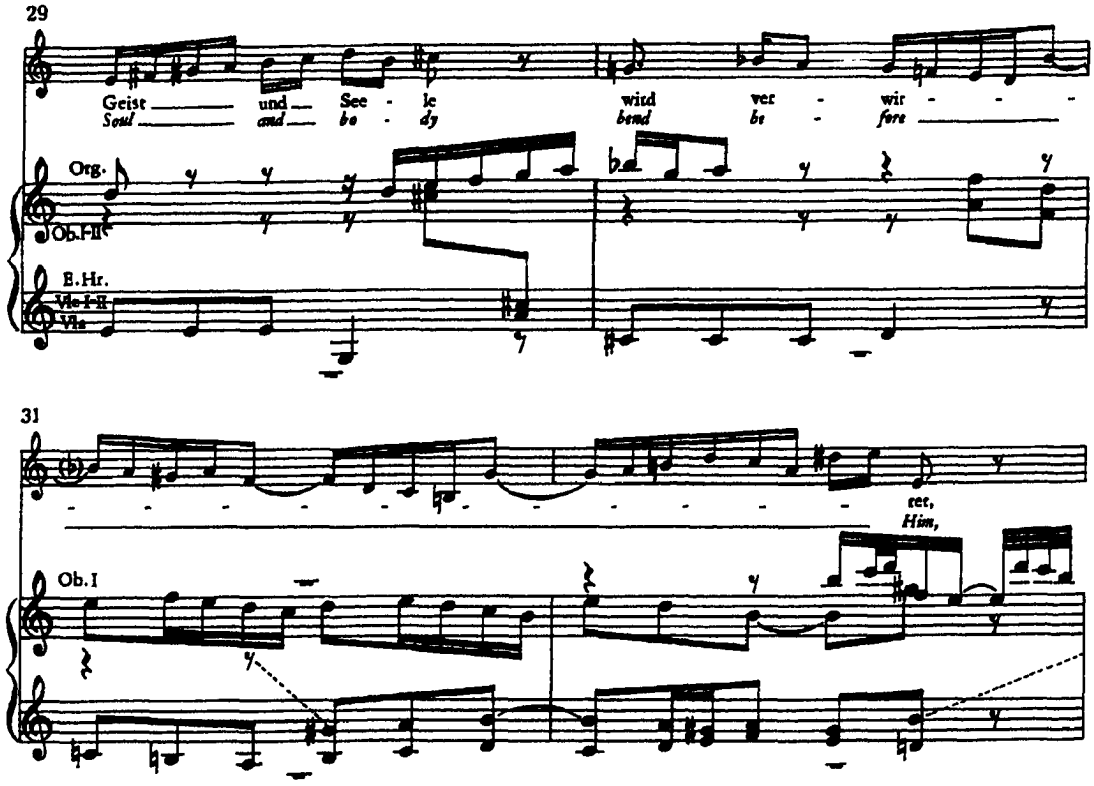

Figure 3. Copyright by Breitkopf & Haertel, Wiesbaden.
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With the exception of this one melismatic sequence, there should be no special problems of breath management in this aria movement for most singers. As long as the singer's technique is established with regard to the seamless negotiation of the breaks between registers and the problem of the "leaping connectors" has been solved, the melismas themselves should present no problems.

In summary, I find the tessitura of this movement to be acceptable for both the mezzo-soprano and contralto if prepared and practiced carefully. However, I do believe

that it would be more difficult for the contralto singer due to the majority of the melody falling in the upper half of the movement's tessitura. Furthermore, the contralto tends to use a heavier chest and middle registration, making certain leaps into the head register a bit more difficult, though certainly not out of the question for a trained singer.

There are a few points of difficulty with regard to melody, especially in the negotiation of intervallic leaps, but in comparison to other Bach arias, this one would probably be considered moderately difficult.

Third Movement: *Recitativo*

The third movement of the work is a recitative for voice and organ continuo only. It's range for the singer is d^1 to e^2, with a primary tessitura of f^1 to c^2. Since Baroque recitative is commonly used to communicate the action (rather than comment on it), the text tends to be lengthier and less repetitious than that of the arias.

Translation:

Ich wundre mich;	*I wonder;*
Denn alles, was man sieht,	*For everything that we see*
Muß uns Verwundrung geben.	*Astonishes us.*
Betracht ich dich,	*(If) I consider you,*
Du teurer Gottessohn,	*You precious Son of God,*
So flieht	*Then flies*
Vernunft und auch Verstand davon.	*Reason and also understanding away.*
Du machst es eben, daß sonst ein Wunderwerk	*You make is thus, that [what] otherwise is a miracle*
Vor dir was Schlechtes ist.	*Next to you is something inferior.*
Du bist dem Namen, Tun, und Amte nach erst wunderreich,	*You are in name, deed, and ministry - foremostly wonderful,*
Dir ist kein Wunderding auf dieser Erde gleich.	*To you there is no marvel equal on this earth.*
Den Tauben gibst du das Gehör,	*The deaf give you their hearing,*

Den Stummen ihre Sprache wieder,	*The dumb their speech again,*
Ja, was noch mehr,	*Yes, what [is] even more,*
Du offnest auf ein Wort	*You open with one word*
die blinden Augenlider.	*blind eyelids.*
Dies, dies sind Wunderwerke,	*These, these are miracles,*
Und ihre Stärke	*And their power*
Ist auch der Engel Chor nicht	*Not even the angel choir*
mächtig auszusprechen.	*is mighty enough to express.*[94]

Some of the same difficulties seen with the previous aria may be encountered in this recitative. Although the tessitura is within acceptable limits for both the mezzo-soprano and contralto, it does tend to stay within the high end of that tessitura. It must be sung in middle and head voice, which is less comfortable for the contralto, whose most comfortable vocal range is the lower middle and bottom (chest). For either voice type, there needs to be a smooth transition from middle to head register, since the melodic line crosses that break time and again. There are also a few ascending leaps at the interval of a sixth that cross the upper passaggio, much like the leaps described in the preceding aria. These leaps must be approached and negotiated in the same manner as those described in the first aria.

A special feature of Bach's music, and his recitatives especially, is the use of the appoggiatura. The word literally means "leaning," and is defined as "a note of varying length, alien to the harmony against which it is sounded but subsequently resolving to a harmony note."[95] Although a common form of ornamentation even before Bach, the

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[94] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts,* 125-126.

[95] J. A. Westrup and F. Li. Harrison. *The New College Encyclopedia of Music.* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1960), 27.

practice of including appoggiaturas in the written score became the standard after his time. In most instances, and certainly as used in recitative, it was apparently assumed that the skilled singer would know where they should be applied and would insert them. Today, singers (or their teachers and coaches) must also be able to recognize where appoggiaturas should occur and how they should be performed. The example in Figure 4 shows the same pitch on the word "geben" (beat three); performance practice dictates that the pitch written for the first syllable should be raised a major second.

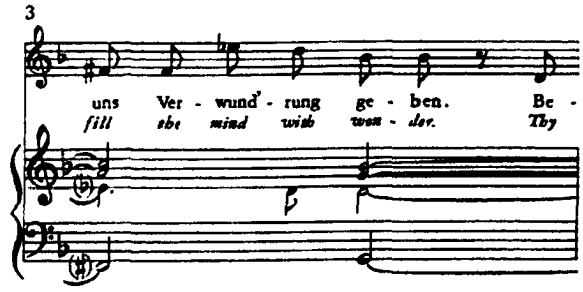

Figure 4. Copyright by Breitkopf & Haertel, Wiesbaden. Excerpts used by kind permission for research purposes.

Rather than leap down to the harmonic cadence pitch, the passing tone is added. The passing tone is unprepared; that is, it is not part of the previous chord or the (implied) chord where it occurs. The passing tone is of equal length to those tones that precede and follow it.

Another type of appoggiatura should be used on beat three of Figure 5:

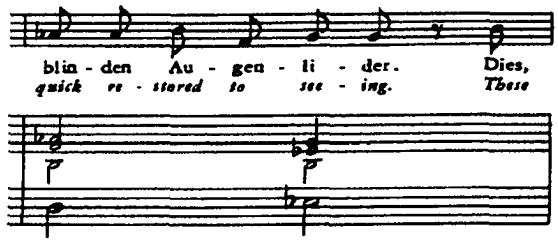

Figure 5. Copyright by Breitkopf & Haertel, Wiesbaden.
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This example differs from Figure 4 in that the appoggiatura should consist, not of a passing tone, but of an "upper neighbor" to the cadence tone. This would be accomplished by singing the pitch on beat three a whole step higher (a^1 instead of g^1). It is a non-harmonic tone when it occurs, but resolves to the underlying harmony. It also differs from the previous example in that this appoggiatura is better prepared, since the altered tone is found in the previous chord.

While appoggiaturas are not a particular problem for the singer, proper performance practice dictates that they be added in all of the recitatives. Furthermore, there are places in certain arias where appoggiaturas are appropriate but don't appear in the score.

Fourth Movement: *Aria*

The fourth movement is again an aria which closes the first part of the cantata. The text represents the reaction of those who observed the miracle of healing described in the previous recitative.

Translation:

Gott hat alles wohl gemacht,	*God has done all things well,*
Seine Liebe, seine Treu	*His love, his faithfulness*
Wird uns alle Tage neu.	*Is new for us all every day.*

Wenn uns Angst und Kummer drücket,	*If fear and anxiousness oppresses,*
Hat er reichen Trost geschicket,	*He has sent us rich comfort,*
Weil er täglisch für uns wacht:	*For he daily watches us:*
Gott hat alles wohl gemacht.	*God has done all things well.*[96]

The range of this aria is somewhat lower than the first (a to e^{b2}), as is the tessitura (f^1 to c^2). Because of the lower range and tessitura, this aria is relatively easy to negotiate for either voice classification. A well-developed middle register is a necessity for success, since the performer only occasionally sings outside of the boundaries of that register. At the low end, it is only necessary for most singers to move into the chest register for one pitch (an a below middle c), and that pitch is approached via leap from a fifth above. Smooth movement from middle to head register is also essential for the few instances where the middle voice must move into the head register. The approach to the head voice is almost always stepwise (in melismatic passages), as found in the scales singers frequently use to warm up.

Although the tempo of this aria is quite rapid, the rhythm is not especially intricate. The difficulties that might face the singer in this aria revolve around the melismatic work, and in particular, the breath management needed to accomplish the melismas. None of the melismas are particular long; most may be performed on a single breath providing the singer does not try to take too much weight to them, and providing that too much air is not expended early in the melisma. The singer should also guard against trying to articulate each pitch in the melisma (preceding each pitch with an "h"),

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[96] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts,* 126-127.

since this practice may also deplete the air supply. A more legato line, with a bit of an accent on each beat (in this aria, each group of four pitches) will provide the necessary clarity without compromising airflow.

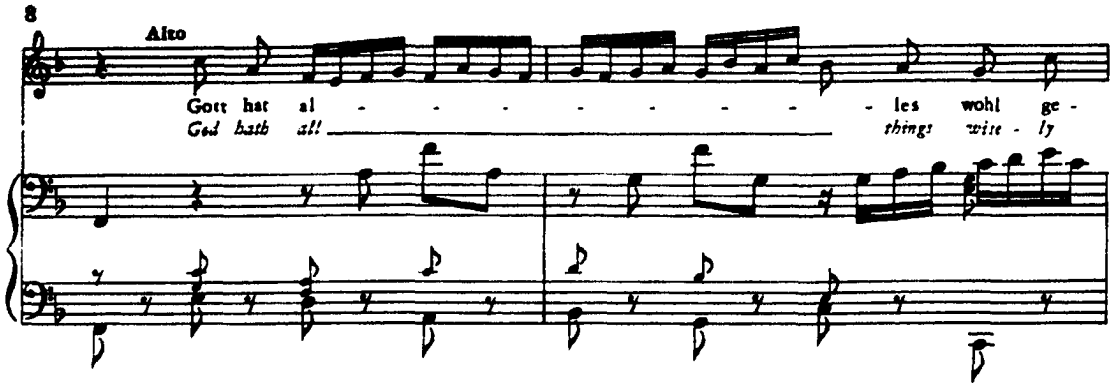

Figure 6. Copyright by Breitkopf & Haertel, Wiesbaden.
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The lengthier melismas in this aria can be divided in the same manner as directed in the discussion of the first aria. These longer passages utilize ties, and the singer can break to take a discreet breath at the end of a tied pitch in the sequence. However, I do not believe there are any melismatic phrases in this aria that cannot be sung on a single breath.

Of all of the arias and recitatives in this cantata, *Gott hat alles wohl gemacht* is the best example of one that can be sung by a mezzo-soprano or contralto with equal success, providing the singer has developed the necessary vocal agility for the melismas, along with the support and breath management vital to all singing.

Part Two

Fifth Movement: *Sinfonia*

Sixth Movement: *Recitativo*

The second half of the cantata, like the first, opens with an instrumental sinfonia, and is very similar to the first half in form. The only difference in overall structure of the two parts of the cantata is that the second half omits the use of an aria immediately after the sinfonia, and moves directly to a recitative in the words of the one who was healed.

Translation:

Ach, starker Gott, laß mich	*Ah, mighty God, let me*
Doch dieses stets bedenken,	*Indeed constantly consider this,*
So kann ich dich	*So I can*
Vergnügt in meine Seele senken.	*Satisfied, implant you in my soul.*
Laß mir dein süßes Hephata	*Let your sweet Ephphatha*
Das ganz verstockte Herz erweichen;	*[My] completely hardened heart soften;*
Ach! lege nur den Gnadenfinger in die Ohren,	*Ah! lay your finger of grace in my ears,*
Sonst bin ich gleich verloren.	*Otherwise I am definitely lost.*
Rühr auch das Zungenband	*Touch also [my] tongue's band*
Mit deiner starken Hand,	*With your mighty hand,*
Damit ich diese Wnderzeichen	*So that I these miracles*
In heilger Andacht preise	*In holy worship praise*
Und mich als Kind und Erb erweise.	*And show myself as a child and heir.*[97]

The range of this recitative is the same as that seen in Part I, although the tessitura appears be a bit lower (f^1 to c^2). The same performance problems and practices apply to this recitative as to the earlier one. In addition to those comments it should be noted that in both recitatives clear diction is needed, since a greater amount of text is

[97] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts,* 127-128.

compressed into less music, and because the action of the story is being communicated within them. The German language presents certain challenges to the singer; it is a more glottal language than the Romance languages (a trait it shares with English), utilizes sometimes tricky consonant combinations, along with sounds that are unique to that language and sometimes difficult for other speakers (such as the hard and soft "ch" sounds). Singers often need to practice lightly singing or speaking such phrases in order to identify the points where it might be difficult to maintain an unbroken vocal line. Once identified, small modifications at problematic points can be made to allow the meaning of the text to be conveyed without compromising the beauty of the melodic line.

Seventh Movement: *Aria*

The final movement of the cantata is the aria *Ich wünsche nur bei Gott zu leben.* A joyous prayer, it is without a doubt the most difficult movement in the cantata. Translation:

Ich wünsche nur bei Gott zu leben,	*I desire only with God to live,*
Ach! wäre doch die Zeit schon da,	*Ah! were the time already at hand,*
Ein fröhliches Halleluja	*A joyous hallelujah*
Mit allen Engeln anzuheben!	*With all the angels to commence!*
Mein liebster Jesu, löse doch	*My dearest Jesus, loosen*
Das jammerreiche Schmerzensjoch	*This misery-laden yolk of pain*
Und laß mich bald in deinen Händen	*And let me soon in your hands*
Mein martervolles Leben enden.	*My torment-laden life end.*[98]

The range of the aria is c^1 to d^2, and its tessitura encompasses much of that range (f^1 to d^2). Less linear than the preceding arias, this one features writing more

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[98] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts,* 128.

commonly associated with instrumental composition. Leaps of up to the interval of a ninth (octave leaps are quite common in the movement) require singers to gracefully jump from a tone in the chest or lower middle register to a head tone of more extended duration, a delicate maneuver among those with even the best technique.

A unique feature of this movement is the melismatic work composed in a triplet configuration. The triplets are introduced by the organ, then taken up later in the aria by various instruments, including the voice. The range and pattern of these melismas is not especially challenging, but other aspects of them may be problematic. First, these passages are quite lengthy with no place for an unobtrusive breath. The text consists of a single phrase, so there is no punctuation breaking up the line, and often there are no rests, ties, or other indicators that help the singer discern where the melodic line might be broken in a way that makes musical sense.

An example of such a place can be seen in Figure 7. This eleven-measure sequence is set to a single, uninterrupted phrase whose melody moves relentlessly. The triplet figure mentioned is apparent (actually two conjoined triplet sequences), as is the lack of apparent places where a much needed breath might be taken.

Obviously it would be nearly impossible to sing these eleven measures on a single breath. A few cues could be taken from the language even though there are no punctuation marks, such as breathing before the preposition:

"ein fröhliches Halleluja **(breath)** *mit allen Engeln anzuheben."*

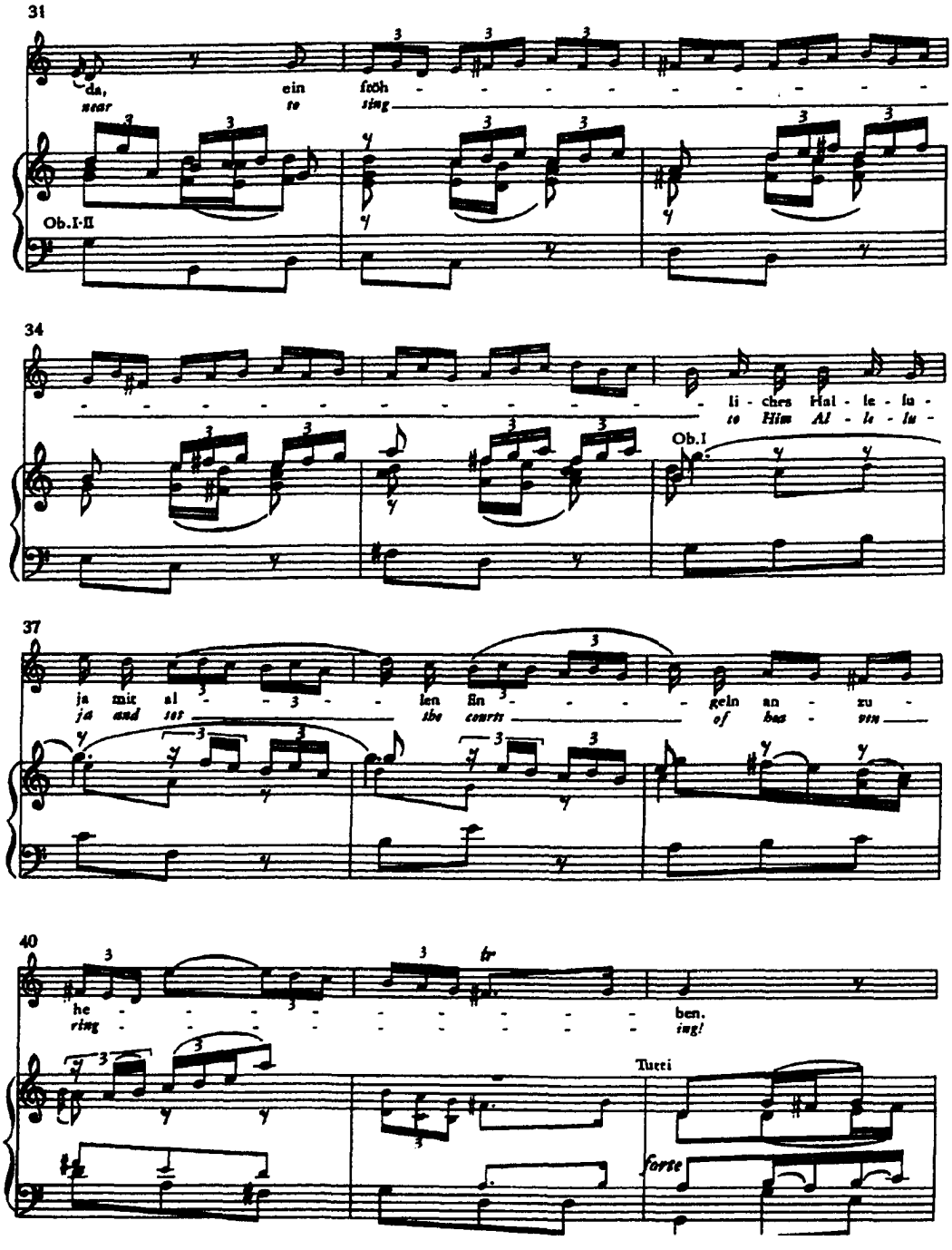

Figure 7. Copyright by Breitkopf & Haertel, Wiesbaden.
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This would probably be the best way to break the text phrase, however a breath at this point in the music could be somewhat awkward. As shown above, it would come in the middle of a descending line at a difficult place in the vocal range of either the contralto or mezzo-soprano. Furthermore, one breath may not be sufficient to sustain most singers through the entire text phrase. Contraltos may especially require additional air in order to maintain the tessitura (especially in the second half of the text phrase). In this case, additional breaks for breath can be taken at additional points between words that are not grammatically inseparable:

"ein fröhliches Halleluja **(breath)** *mit allen Engeln* **(breath)** *anzuheben."*

In addition, breaths can be inserted within the actual melismas between repetitions of the melodic patterns upon which they are based.

The issue of support and breath management is especially important in the above sequence for reasons that go beyond beauty of production. In much of the sequence the voice is joined by an obbligato instrument playing a third below or above the vocal melody. It would be virtually impossible to keep these rapidly moving thirds in tune if the singer is struggling to breathe.

There are other aspects of the movement that demand relatively high level of proficiency from the vocalist. The movement is more intricate rhythmically, beyond the demands of moving easily from triple to duple divisions within the melodic line. In several instances, the metric division of the melody is in opposition to the accompaniment; that is, the singer's part is in duple divisions set against triplets in the instrumental part. Phrases generally tend to be longer than those of previous arias, given

the moderate tempo of the movement. For these reasons, as well as the higher tessitura demanded at the end of many of the longer, melismatic phrases, this aria appears to be best suited to the technically advanced singer.

Summary

The first part of *Geist und Seele wird verwirret* could be successfully performed by either the contralto or mezzo-soprano, although the tessitura in certain sections could present problems to the contralto. Certainly a contralto with advanced technique would be able to handle it, and a mezzo-soprano of intermediate skill should also be able to sing it well. Likewise, the first recitative of the second part would be within the capabilities of either voice classification. However, I cannot recommend this cantata as a complete work to the intermediate singer of either classification, due to the virtuosic elements found in the cantata's final aria. Taking all pedagogical elements into consideration, the complete work is probably best suited for the advanced mezzo-soprano, although an advanced contralto with a secure upper range could also handle it adequately. Individual arias other than the last can and should be assigned to intermediate students, especially mezzo-sopranos. Because of tessitura demands, the opening aria should probably be reserved for the advanced contralto, however the fourth movement aria, *Gott hat alles wohl gemacht*, is excellent for developing flexibility and breath control of the intermediate contralto.

BWV 54: *Widerstehe doch der Sünde*

Widerstehe doch der Sünde is markedly different from the other cantatas covered in this study. First, it is the only one of the five alto solo cantatas to be composed prior to Bach's arrival in Leipzig. It is believed to be one of Bach's Weimar works, probably composed in 1713.[99] The work is usually attributed to the third Sunday of Lent (Oculi) in the church calendar, and based on that belief, it is speculated that the first performance of the work took place on March 4, 1714.[100] The cantata is quite brief, consisting of only three movements, leading some scholars to the conclusion that it is actually only half of a two-part work (similar to *Geist und Seele wird verwirret*), with only this part extant,[101] however there is no independent support for that conjecture.

An important similarity to the previously discussed BWV 35 is Bach's use of a Lehms' libretto for this cantata.[102] Obviously, this libretto represents an early collaboration between the poet and the composer; a relationship that continued well into Bach's tenure in Leipzig. In fact, many of the Leipzig cantatas, including three of the five solo alto cantatas, are set to texts by Lehms (the other two are works of unknown poets, and possibly Bach himself).

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[99] Young, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach,* 140.

[100] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*, 765. [Unger further states that musicologist Alfred Dürr, in *Die Kantaten,* pp. 292-293, suggests that this cantata is also suited to the 7th Sunday after Trinity, which might imply an alternative first performance date].

[101] Young, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach,* 140.

[102] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts,* 763.

Innovations in this cantata are consistent with those attributed to other Weimar cantatas. Most often mentioned is Bach's experimentation with Italian compositional techniques of the period. Sources making this assertion frequently quote musicologist Karl Geiringer, stating:

> *Bach was clearly trying out new devices, and his study of Italian forms, especially those of Vivaldi's concertos, is reflected both in the melodic character and in the structure of his arias.*[103]

Several examples of Italianate innovations associated with Bach's Weimar works are demonstrated in *Widerstehe doch der Sünde,* including his use of da capo aria structure and of secco recitative. The Italian practices of employing a four-voice string ensemble and use of "color" instruments to create effects are found in many of Bach's works of this period, but this cantata does not contain those characteristics. It is scored for a string ensemble (two violins and two violas) and continuo (cello and organ).

Interestingly enough, the cantata text has nothing to do with the Gospel reading for the third Sunday of Lent, which is about the miracle of the feeding of the four thousand (Mark 8:1-9). Instead it follows other bible readings for that day, including Ephesians 5:1-9 (the need to resist temptation) and Romans 6:19-23 (the wage of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life). It is unusual for the cantata libretto to completely ignore the Gospel reading of the day. I can only speculate that, since this is an early cantata, the structure associated with the Leipzig works was not yet solidified. It is also possible, as Geiringer suggests, that a "lost" portion contains the Gospel lesson.

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[103] Geiringer, *Johann Sebastian Bach,* 149.

Widerstehe doch der Sünde also has this important distinction: it is one of the remaining works containing music thought to have been used in Bach's *St. Mark Passion* (BWV 247). First performed on Good Friday, 1931, the *St. Mark Passion* now exists primarily as a Picander libretto, with notations of biblical quotations and chorale texts to be used. Although the score was lost, a reconstruction of portions of the work using other Bach works (as indicated by the libretto notes) was undertaken. The aria *Falsche Welt,* movement no. 53 of the *St. Mark Passion*, is preserved musically as the opening aria of this cantata.[104]

First Movement: *Aria*

This first movement bears the cantata's name, and is set to the aforementioned reading from Ephesians. The point of the aria is to convey the consequences of failing to resist temptation and sin.

Translation:

Widerstehe doch der Sünde,	*Resist indeed sin,*
Sonst ergreifet dich ihr Gift.	*Otherwise its poison will seize you.*
Laß dich nicht den Satan blenden;	*Let yourself not be blinded by Satan;*
Denn die Gottes Ehre schänden,	*For those who profane God's glory,*
Trifft ein Fluch, der tödlich ist.	*Strikes a curse, that is deadly.*[105]

The range and tessitura of this movement, and in fact of the entire cantata, make it unique among the solo alto cantatas. The range of this first movement extends from

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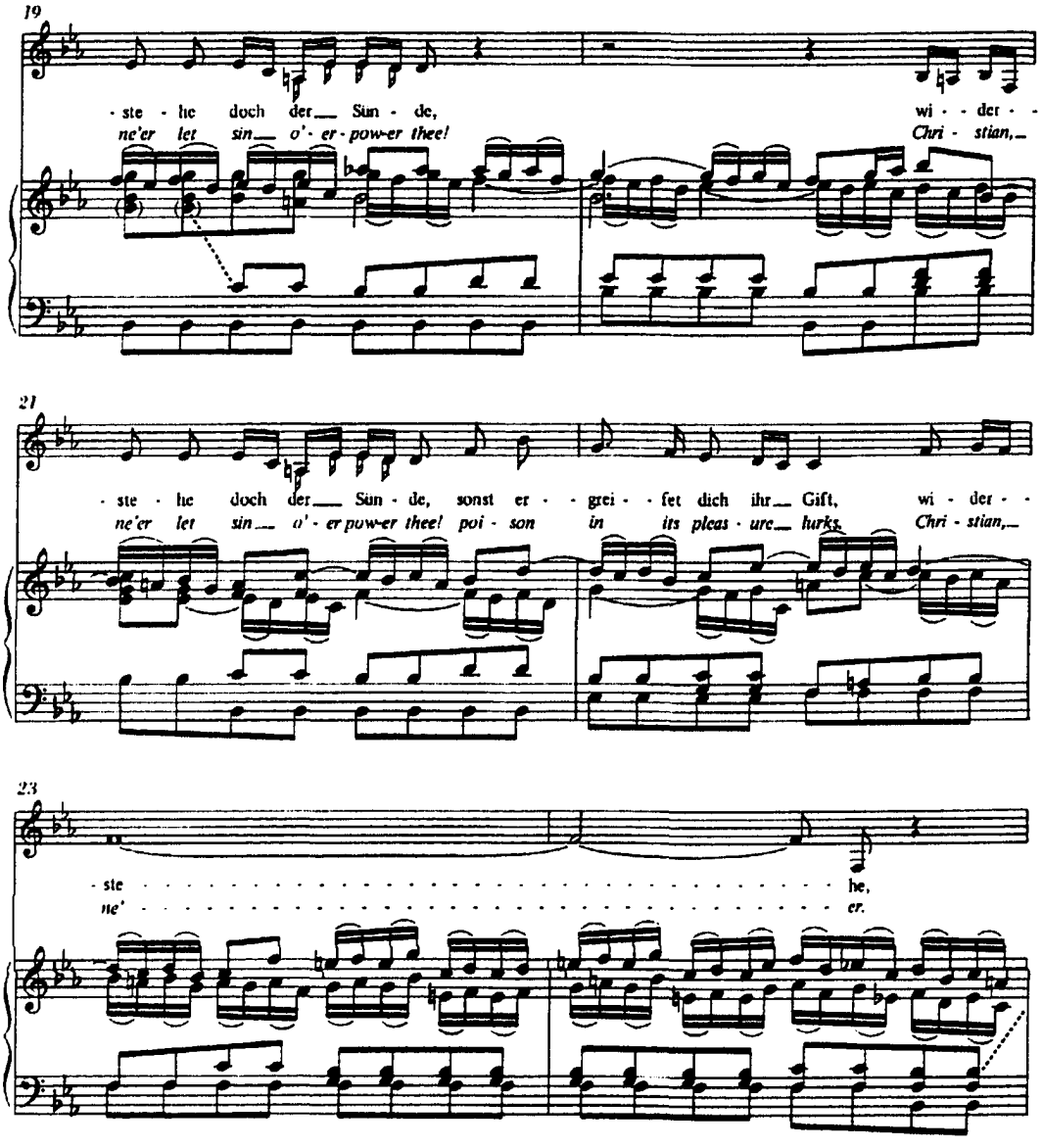
[104] Geiringer, *Johann Sebastian Bach,* 203. [The reconstruction was attempted by Diethard Hellmann in 1964, and was premiered in 1965.]

[105] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*, 183.

f (below middle c) to $b^{\flat 1}$, considerably lower than the others. It's tessitura lies from c^1 to $a^{\flat 1}$. Clearly, this piece is better suited to the contralto, since it sits very low and utilizes the chest and middle registers exclusively. This represents the most comfortable (and most beautiful) parts of the contralto voice. The mezzo-soprano, who tends to sing more effortlessly in the middle and head registers, may find that the extensive use of the chest and lower middle registers tiring and would not show her voice to its best advantage.

The setting of the melodic line requires the singer to seamlessly maneuver between these two lowest registers. Such motion is usually easier for the contralto, who is able to take the middle (mixed) voice lower than most mezzo-sopranos without a loss of power and less noticeable change in timbre. Figure 8 illustrates the motion between registers necessary throughout the movement. Despite the fact that the accompaniment is not especially thick in texture, it is still necessary for the singer to be able to produce sufficient sound without loss of color in the lower part of her range. In most cases, the contralto will have an easier time accomplishing this than will the mezzo-soprano.

In seeming contrast, the vocalist must also be able to keep the voice light enough to enable the agility needed in this movement. The melody is not complex rhythmically and has no extended melismatic phrases, but most phrases do require relatively quick movement over the lower passaggio, as shown in the first two measures of Figure 8. Again, this kind of movement over the lower break is more easily accomplished by the contralto, who is more "at home" in this low tessitura.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· ste · he doch der Sün · de,
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that even an intermediate singer with developed breath support will have the ability to negotiate the movement without any insurmountable problems.

Therefore, this first movement is an appropriate selection for an intermediate contralto who has a command of the lower passaggio. I would not recommend the piece for the mezzo-soprano because of the range and tessitura, although one who can fairly easily traverse the lower break without a distinct change in quality could get through it. Still, I think it is contrary to healthy production for the mezzo-soprano to sing extensively in this very lowest part of her range. Frankly, every other cantata in this study is a better choice for the mezzo-soprano.

Second Movement: *Recitativo*

This recitative exhibits a range and tessitura that is even lower than the first aria. Extending from f to a^{b1} with a tessitura of b^{b} to g^{1}, it too is better suited to the contralto for the same reasons previously stated. Furthermore, there are extended, "wordy" phrases that lie at the lower end of the chest range, which would be more difficult for the higher voice type to sing clearly. And since the text of recitative by definition delivers the action in the story, it is imperative that the text be clearly communicated.

Translation:

Die Art verruchter Sünden	*The appearance of vile sin*
ist zwar von außen wunderschön;	*is indeed outwardly very beautiful;*
Allein man muß	*But one must*
Hernach mit Kummer und Verdruß	*Afterwards with trouble and vexation*
Viel Ungemach empfinden.	*Experience much hardship.*
Von außen ist sie Gold;	*From outside it is gold;*
Doch, will man welter gehn,	*Yet if ones goes further,*
So zeigt sich nur ein leerer Schatten	*Then emerges only an empty shadow*

Und ubertunchtes grab.	*And [a] whitewashed tomb.*
Sie ist den Sodomsäpfeln gleich,	*It is similar to Sodom's apples,*
Und die sich mit derselben gatten,	*And those who unite themselves with the same,*
Gelangen nicht in Gottes Reich.	*Do not attain God's kingdom.*
Sie ist also wie ein scharfes Schert,	*It is like a sharp sword,*
Dans uns durch Leib und Seele fährt.	*Which pierces through our body and soul.*[106]

Other considerations for delivery of this recitative are much the same as mentioned in the discussion of the recitatives of the previous cantata. At one cadence point a passing tone should be interpolated, although most cadences are approached by leap (or the appropriate passing tones are written for the singer). The style of recitative is predominantly declamatory, which is consistent with Bach's experimentation with Italianate forms during this period of composition.

Third Movement: *Aria*

The final movement of BWV 54, *Wer Sünde tut, der ist vom Teufel*, demonstrates Bach's facility in composition of both instrumental and vocal forms. In this movement he sets the aria as a three-voice fugue.[107] The instruments used in the fugal writing at any given time vary, but include the voice, both violins, violas, and the bass line of the continuo. Instruments (except for voice) that are not involved in the actual fugue at any given time provide harmonic support. Despite the dire warning in the first part of the text (that those who sin without repentance are sons of Satan and will share his fate), the

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[106] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*, 184.

[107] Richard Dale Sjoerdsma, "The Solo Liturgical Cantatas of J. S. Back (Part II)," *The NATS Journal* 42, no. 5 (May/June, 1986), 13.

overall mood of the movement reflects the joy and triumph of those who resist temptation and cast their lot with the Lord.

Translation:

Wer Sünde tut, der ist vom Teufel,	*Whoever commits sin, he is of the devil,*
Denn dieser hat sie aufgebracht;	*For he has reared sin;*
Doch wenn man ihren schnöden Banden	*Yet when one its base bonds*
Mit rechter Andacht widerstanden,	*With true devotion has resisted,*
Hat sie sich gleich devon gemacht.	*It [sin] immediately takes flight.*[108]

The movement is set in the same range as the first movement, however, the tessitura is identical to that of the recitative, lower than the first movement. This lower tessitura, along with the complication of many rapid melismas that lay in the chest and lower middle range, makes this movement particularly challenging. It is necessary that the vocalist keep the color of the voice light enough to negotiate the movement in the melodic line, but must also keep enough power and sonority to be heard over the instrumentation (usually at least one other fugal voice and supporting harmony). This is especially true because in several instances one of the violins is doing a fugal voice a third or more above the vocal line (and in certain instances up to a twelfth above it, as shown in Figure 9).

[108] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*, 184-185.

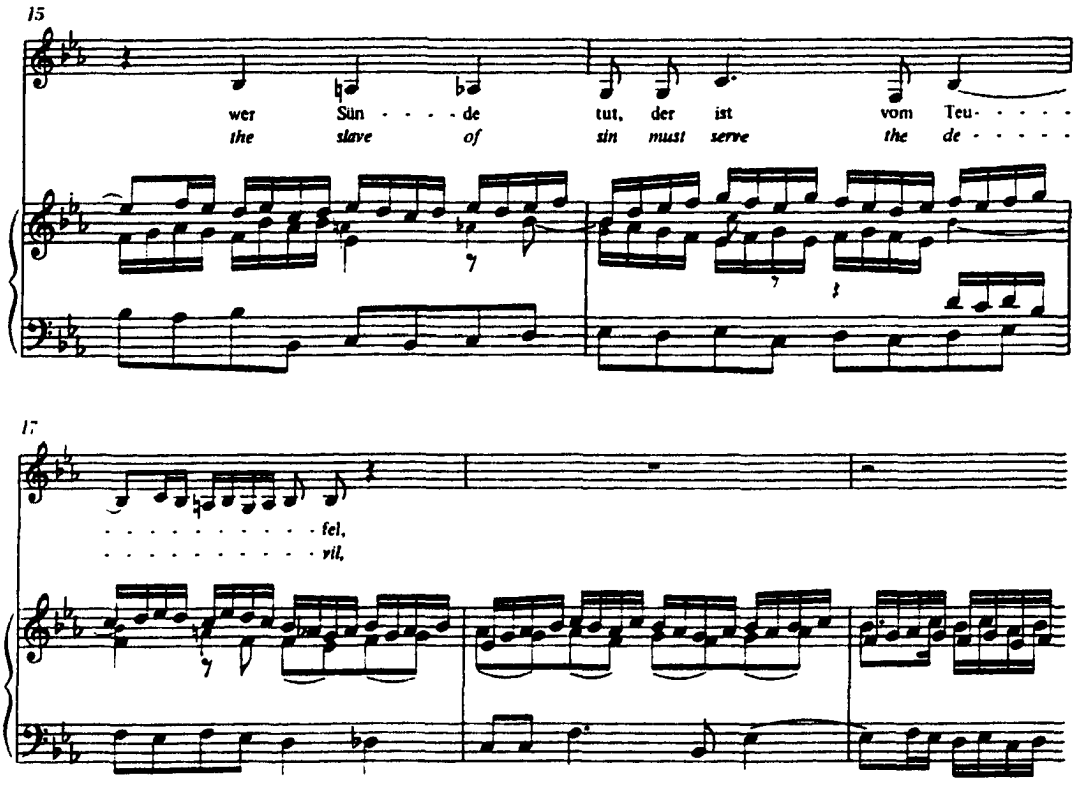

Figure 9. Copyright by Breitkopf & Haertel, Wiesbaden.
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The danger for the singer is obvious: the violin is higher in its range and will carry over the other instruments quite easily. On the other hand, the voice is written low in its range and could easily be overcome by the instrumentation, even though it should be an equal partner with the fugue. The tendency to "push" for volume in this instance must be resisted (especially by the mezzo-soprano, who is at the very bottom of her range). The contralto will have a better chance of achieving dynamic balance without pushing the chest voice, since she would be singing in a more comfortable part of her range.

Unlike the first movement of the cantata, this movement does present some challenges in breath management, largely due to the melismatic work. The text of this

movement does not provide the same opportunities for breathing at punctuation marks as seen in earlier ones, so the singer will have to take care to select places to breathe that make sense musically and textually. It is important to avoid breathing in the middle of words of course (except in very long melismas, where musical considerations dictate breath placement); but one should also avoid breaking the melodic line in the middle of prepositional phrases or between an adjective and the noun it modifies, unless absolutely necessary. As much as possible, breaths should be placed in ways that make musical sense, but also keep poetic phrases intact.

Summary

Widerstehe doch der Sünde is a beautiful and challenging cantata, however its range and tessitura almost dictate that it should remain the province of the contralto voice. The first movement might be accomplished without damage to the mezzo-soprano singer, but I would not recommend the successive movements for that voice type unless the singer has exceptional command of the chest and lower middle registers, and can negotiate between them easily and without noticeable break.

In determining the level of difficulty, I find that the tessitura considerations make this cantata inappropriate for most mezzo-sopranos, intermediate or advanced. On the other hand, an intermediate level contralto could be quite successful with this piece. The first aria and the recitative should present few significant problems. The final aria is certainly more challenging because of its melismatic work and lengthier phrases, but the contralto who has developed agility in the low range and sufficient support to maintain the breath through the longer phrases should be able to master this cantata.

BWV 169: *Gott soll allein mein Herze haben*

Gott soll allein mein Herze haben is part of Bach's third Leipzig cycle. It was composed for the 18th Sunday after Trinity and received its first performance on October 20, 1726.[109] It is considered to be a companion piece to BWV 35, *Geist und Seele wird verwirret,* with identical instrumentation and the same number of movements. However the oboe, taille (oboe da caccia, or tenor oboe) and english horn are not utilized except in the opening sinfonia and closing movements. Although the librettist is unknown, the text material can be traced to two biblical texts; I Corinthians 1:4-9, which is Paul's prayer of thanks for the blessings of the Gospel, and Matthew 22:34-46, wherein Jesus names the greatest of the commandments and asks the Pharisees who he is (the Son of God).

BWV 169 is unique in that much of its content is borrowed from earlier works. It is one of six sacred cantatas that makes extensive use of material from earlier orchestral suites or instrumental concertos. For instance, the opening sinfonia and second aria (fifth movement) are near reproductions of the first and second movements of Bach's Concerto in E major for Harpsichord (BWV 1053), itself believed to be based on a transcription of an even earlier violin concerto.[110] The harpsichord movements are played by the organ, which again functions as an obbligato instrument; the vocal line is

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[109] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts,* 767.

[110] W. Gillies Whittaker, *The Cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 249.

newly composed for the cantata. The melody of the third movement aria is believed to have been derived from another unknown (lost) instrumental work, a conclusion reached in part because of the nature of the vocal line, which consists of long, unbroken melismatic phrases, better suited to violin than voice. Finally, the chorale melody that closes this work (presumably sung either as a solo over instruments, as a choral closing, or for congregational singing) utilizes the melody from the hymn *Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist,* whose original composer remains unknown.[111]

First Movement: *Sinfonia* (instrumental)

Second Movement: *Arioso*

This movement, labeled *Arioso,* actually alternates brief sections of accompanied arioso with declamatory style secco recitative. As expected, the accompaniment of the arioso sections is much more active than that of the declamatory recitative. And while both section types have time signatures indicating meter, there is more rhythmic freedom associated with the secco recitative, whereas in the arioso sections the triple meter is very precise, as in a dance. The vocal range has a compass of b to e^2, with the majority lying toward the high end ($f^{\#1}$ to d^2). The text of the arioso portions specifically introduces the title and main point of the cantata (*Gott soll allein mein Herze haben* is the focus of each arioso section text), and the declamatory sections expound on why this is so, culminating in a repetition of the title.

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[111] Young, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach,* 113.

Translation:

(Arioso)	
Gott soll allein mein Herze haben.	*God alone my heart shall have.*
(Recitativo)	
Zwar merk ich an der Welt,	*Indeed, I observe of the world,*
Die ihren Kot unschätzbar hält,	*Which its dirt as priceless holds,*
Weil sie so freundlich mit mir tut,	*Which it so friendly acts [toward] me,*
Sie wollte gern allein	*It would dearly [all] alone*
Das Liebte meiner Seele sein;	*The beloved of my soul be;*
Doch nein;	*Yet no;*
(Arioso)	
Gott soll allein mein Herze haben,	*God alone my heart shall have,*
Ich find in ihm das höchste Gut.	*I find in him the highest worth.*
(Recitativo)	
Wir sehen zwar	*We see indeed*
Auf Erden heir und dar	*On earth here and there*
Ein Bächlein der Zufriedenheit,	*A rivulet of contentment,*
Das von des Höchsten Güte quillet:	*Which from the Most-High's goodness wells up:*
Gott aber ist der Quell,	*God however is the fount,*
mit Strömen angefüllet,	*with streams replete,*
Da schöpf ich, was mich allezeit	*There I draw, what me for all time*
Kann sattsam und wahrhaftig laben.	*Can sufficiently and truly refresh.*
(Arioso)	
Gott soll allein mein Herze haben.	*God alone my heart shall have.*
(Recitativo)	
Gott soll allein mein Herze haben.	*God alone my heart shall have.*[112]

The opening two-measure phrase of each occurrence of the arioso (always on *"Gott soll allein mein Herze haben")* is the same each time, and the figures that follow are similar, regardless of the text.

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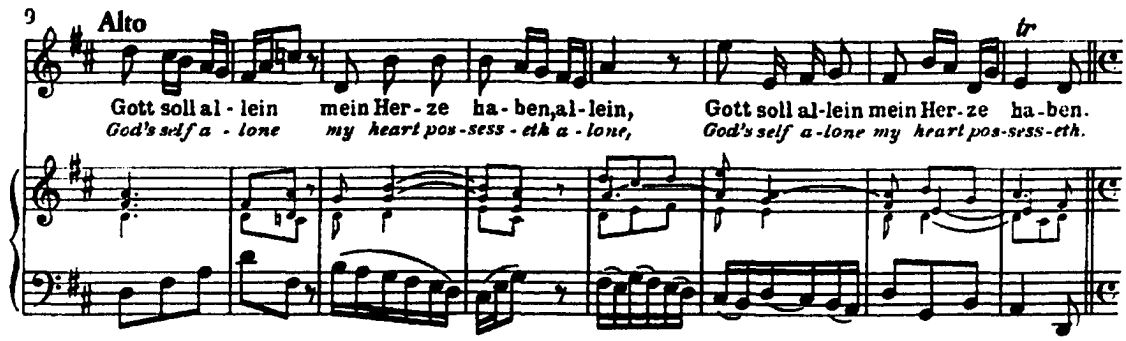
[112] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*, 584-585.



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The arioso with its thicker texture has a dance-like quality to it, and is reminiscent of the ritornello style in Vivaldi's concertos (known to be studied by Bach). The melodic writing in these sections is quite lyrical, allowing the singer to employ more legato singing than in the secco recitative. It must be sung lightly enough to accommodate the rapid motion of the melody line, that at times crosses both the upper and lower passaggio, usually via leap. But it must also be sung with enough power and clarity to carry over the instrumental ensemble.

The first and second secco recitative sections are less linear melodically than those discussed previously in this study. There are several leaps of a fourth or more, which is somewhat awkward in recitative where nearly every pitch has a corresponding syllable or word. The disjointed nature of the recitative may make it somewhat difficult to preserve the legato of the melodic line.

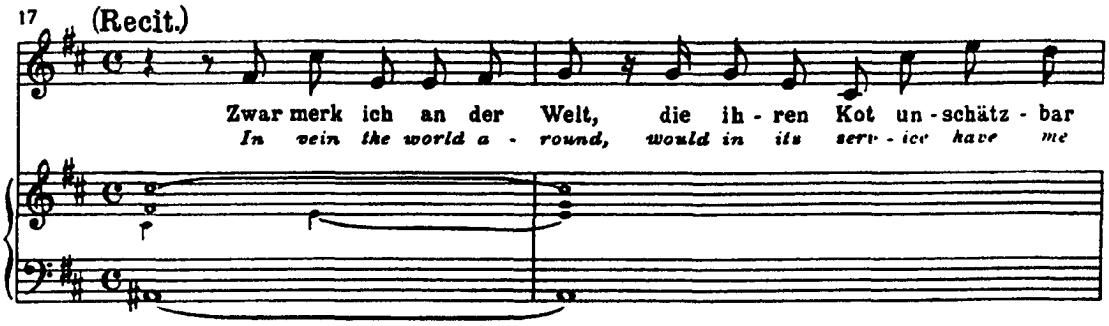

Figure 11. Copyright by Breitkopf & Haertel, Wiesbaden.
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There are several strategies a singer may employ in order to preserve the integrity of the vocal line. First of all, adequate breath support is vital, since a drop in support will immediately compromise the line. Second, the singer must guard against reinitiating each pitch in a leaping passage (like an arpeggio), singing with a consistent vibrato and as legato as the line allows. Slight accents at the beginning of melismatic groupings may be done to improve the clarity of melismatic phrases, if needed. Above all, pitches must be sung precisely when using the above strategies.

With the exception of those characteristics mentioned above, there are really no further factors that would make this movement especially challenging for even the intermediate vocalist. However, there are certain considerations related to the character and meaning of the movement that every singer should think about, particularly since this arioso movement is really an introduction to the next aria movement.

The drive to the next movement seems to truly begin near the end of the second recitative. Its declamatory style starts to give way to more lyrical moments, and there are even suggestions of tone painting (such as a short, arpeggiated melisma for the vocalist on the word "*strömen*" (streams), as though imitating the movement of the

water. Though not nearly as lyrical and dance-like as the arioso, there does seem to be some attempt to move the recitative toward that style. This characteristic continues in the final, brief recitative, which echoes the text of the arioso sections (and the upcoming aria). It is almost as though the voices of the arioso and recitative have come to agreement, both in style and in text.

This growing similarity between the arioso and recitative is supported by the fact that the element of lyrical melody becomes more dominating as the movement progresses. In the beginning, the arioso is but a few measures, and the recitative is longer. But as the movement progresses, the arioso sections become longer and the recitative sections become shorter and as noted above, more lyrical. Indeed, the final recitative section (which leads directly into the third movement aria) is only two measures long.

For maximum effectiveness, the singer must understand the opposition of the arioso and recitative styles, how they gradually change in dominance, becoming more alike until they finally become one, their fusion resulting in the third movement aria. Through the use of vocal timbre and interpretation the performer must convey the joining of the two voices (ideas) as expressed in the joining of musical styles, and carry the interpretation over into the next movement.

Third Movement: *Aria*

The opening of this movement is in reality only an introduction of the organ obbligato, since the vocal idea is already familiar from the preceding movement. The

obbligato is in many ways a partner to the voice, accompanied by continuo only. The aria reiterates the central theme (and text) set forth in the previous movement. The text then states that God's love is unending, and His blessings will refresh the troubled soul. Translation:

Gott soll allein mein Herze haben,	*God alone my heart shall have,*
Ich find in ihm das höchste Gut.	*I find in him the highest worth.*
Er liebt mich in der bösen Zeit	*He loves me in hard times*
Und will mich in der Seligkeit	*And shall me in Paradise*
Mit Gütern seines Hauses laben.	*With [the] goods of his house delight.*[113]

The aria's main theme is a variation of the thematic material introduced in the arioso sections of the previous movement, with new material introduced in the contrasting ("B") section. The range (b to e^2) and tessitura ($f^{\#1}$ to d^2) are identical to that of the preceding movement and is within the capabilities of either the mezzo-soprano or contralto, although certain phrases might be more challenging to the contralto due to their tessitura. Still, in most cases higher pitches are approached stepwise and once reached, usually the pitch descends quite rapidly. This melodic movement aids in keeping the singer from tiring due to the demands of singing in the area of the upper passaggio.

Once again, the melismatic work demands that the vocalist sing quite lightly, and without taking too much of the alto "heaviness" or "darkness" into the upper middle or head voice. Although this aria is not particularly fast, even at this tempo there is a danger of limiting the singer's ability to move the voice efficiently if she tries to take

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[113] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*, 585.

excessive weight through the melismas, particularly in the upper range. Extra heaviness in this aria will also have an impact on the singer's ability to manage the breath through the lengthier phrases, since the chest and lower middle registers (and their associated darkness) require more air to sustain the tone.

The first part of the aria ("A" section) and its da capo repetition are very similar to the arioso sections of the previous movement and like the arioso, is equally accessible to both classifications of singers (assuming the tessitura demands are not overwhelming to the contralto; for most they shouldn't be). There is also an assumption that the singer has developed the agile movement necessary to perform the melismatic work (which is not overly difficult to begin with). The middle, "B" section is somewhat more challenging. Phrases seem somewhat longer and require more breath (especially for the contralto) because of the slower tempo, and are often set in an unforgiving manner from the standpoint of tessitura (ending higher than they begin, as shown in measures 34-35 of Figure 12). Note that the beginning of the phrase (*"Er liebt mich"*) begins in the area of the upper passaggio, then continues without break across and above the upper passaggio (*"in der bösen"*) before finally dropping on the final word of the phrase (*"Zeit"*). This configuration across the upper passaggio is common in this aria, and while it may be a bit challenging to the mezzo-soprano, it will undoubtedly fatigue most contralto singers.

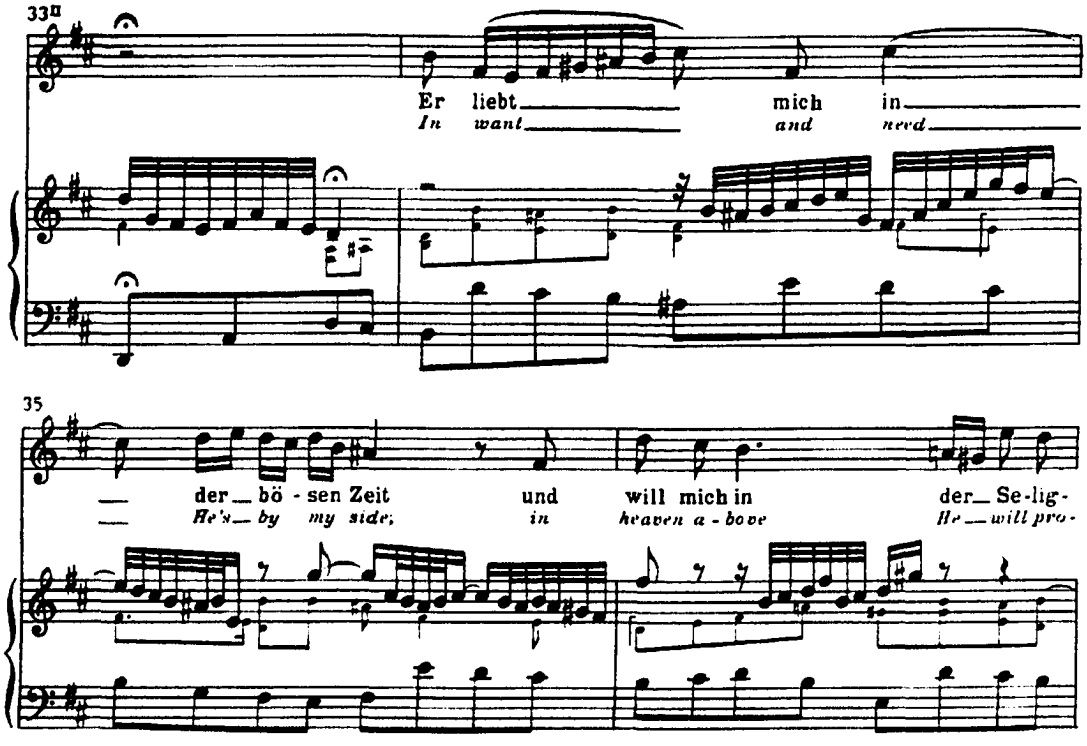

Figure 12. Copyright by Breitkopf & Haertel, Wiesbaden.
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Lengthy phrases with little or no punctuation to allow for breathing need to be broken in places which do not affect the musicality of the line. Such breaks must be planned with an eye to the demands of the German language, since there are places where a singer would be inclined to breathe because they make sense musically, but do not make sense grammatically. For instance, in the example shown in Figure 13 (measures 41-43), the inclination might be to breathe in the middle of measure 41 after the tied notes of d^2 (between "in" and "der"), replenishing the breath just prior to the anacrusis (pick-up) to the sixteenth note pattern that ties the first part of the phrase to the second. The problem is that while this break makes sense musically, it does not make sense poetically because it divides a prepositional phrase (*"in der bösen Zeit"*).

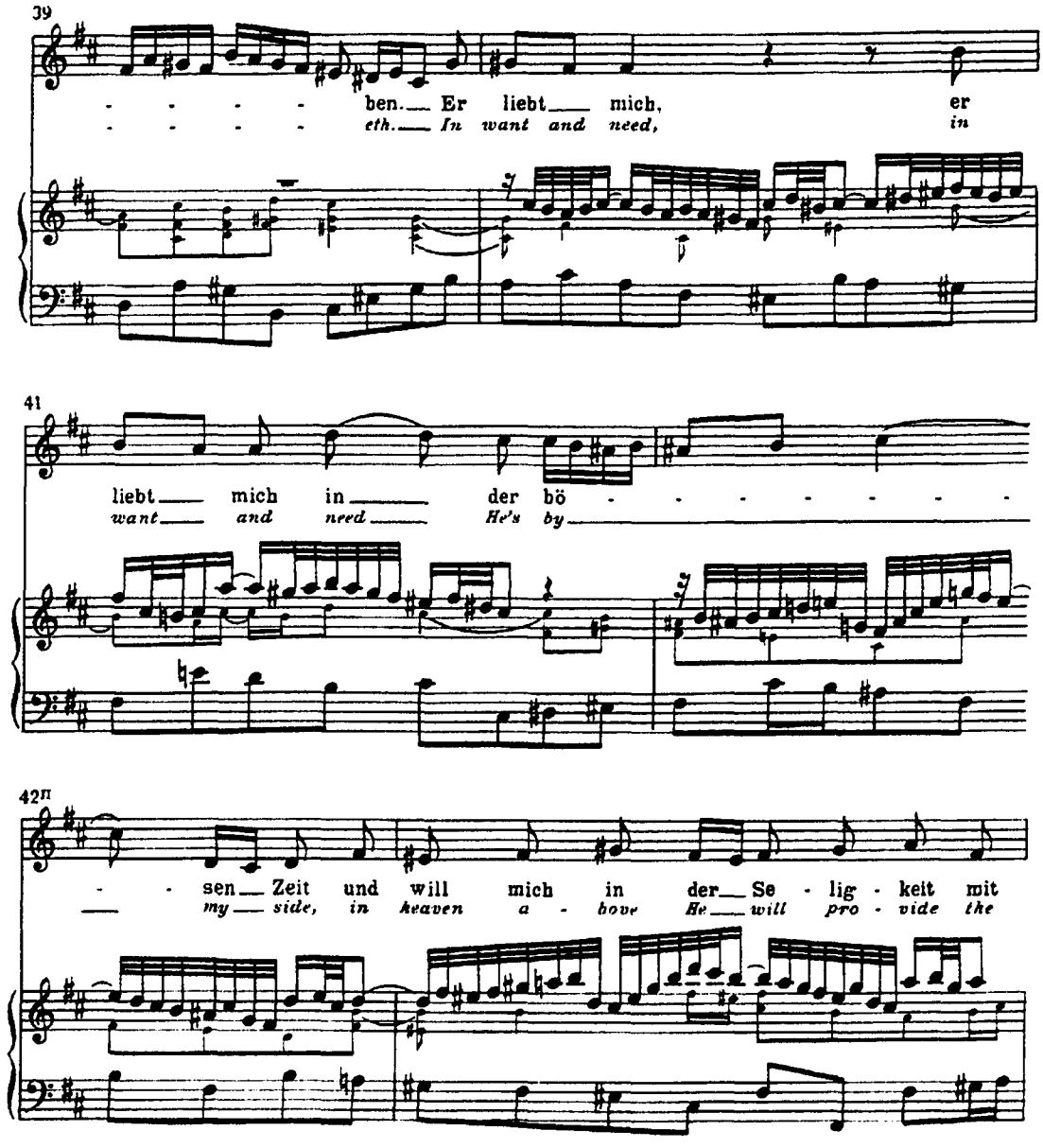

Figure 13. Copyright by Breitkopf & Haertel, Wiesbaden.
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A better choice would be to take the breath before the word "in" (rather than after it). Although it isn't as desirable musically, it makes much more sense with regard to the text and to German grammar; also, the leap that occurs at the point of the breath will

disguise the break in the line. In sum, consideration of both musicality and text are necessary to successfully communicate the message of the aria with maximum vocal ease and beauty.

Fourth Movement: *Recitativo*

This brief recitative's purpose is to define God's love. It is in declamatory style and accompanied by basso continuo only.

Translation:

Was ist die Liebe Gottes?	*What is the love of God?*
Des Geistes Ruh,	*The Spirit's rest,*
Der Sinnen Lustgenieß,	*The senses' satisfaction,*
Der Seele Paradies.	*The soul's paradise.*
Sie schließt die Hölle zu,	*It shuts the [gates of] Hell,*
Der Himmel aber auf;	*Heaven, however, [it] opens.*
Sie ist Elias Wagen,	*It is Elijah's chariot,*
Da werden wir im Himmel nauf	*In which we are carried up to heaven*
In Abrahms Schoß getragen.	*Into Abraham's bosom.*[114]

The range of the recitative is $a^{\#}$ to e^2, but the majority of this movement lies between d^1 and d^2. The writing is quite instrumental in nature, featuring several leaping intervals in arpeggio-type configurations. The leaps and the higher tessitura are the key elements that make this ten-measure movement relatively difficult to sing well. Advanced technique isn't quite required to perform this recitative, but a command of both register breaks and the ability to leap back and forth over them without loss of quality (or sounding as if more than one singer is singing) is essential. The higher

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[114] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*, 586.

tessitura, especially in the first two and last four measures of the movement, favor the mezzo-soprano.

Fifth Movement: *Aria*

The mournful melody of this aria is set over the original harpsichord part the second movement of Bach's Harpsichord Concerto in E Major (BWV 1053), now played by the organ and accompanied by the strings. As darkly disturbing as it is beautiful, the supplicant calls for the death of all vile earthly pleasures.

Translation:

Stirb in mir,	*Die within me,*
Welt und alle deine Liebe,	*World and all your love,*
Daß die Brust	*That my breast*
Sich auf Erden für und für	*On earth forever and ever*
In der Liebe Gottes übe;	*In the love of God practice;*
Stirb in mir,	*Die within me,*
Hoffart, Reichtum, Augenlust,	*Pride, wealth, lust of the eyes,*
Ihr verworfnen Fleischestriebe.	*You depraved impulses of the flesh.*[115]

With a range of a to e^2 and a tessitura fairly evenly distributed from d^1 to d^2, this aria doesn't present any particular problems with regard to range or tessitura to either alto voice classification. However, there are some qualities inherent in the aria which indicate that a more advanced singer, regardless of classification, is needed to perform *Stirb in mir* effectively.

In other arias where vocal agility is a prerequisite, it has been indicated that the alto singer should take care to lighten their vocal timbre. But in *Stirb in mir* another

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[115] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts,* 586-587.

view might be taken: that the darker timbre is appropriate and even necessary to communicate the haunting text. Certainly this was not a consideration for Bach, who undoubtedly wrote the work for a young male alto who probably did not possess such a timbre. But then, no grown women singing in a healthy manner will sound like a prepubescent boy, so there is no reason not to exploit her natural vocal color for the purpose of interpretation.

The key words here are "natural vocal color," for to artificially darken the voice for the sake of interpretation will make it extremely difficult to successfully perform the aria. Adding heaviness or darkness to the voice for effect may be done sparingly, but to do so with regularity will have an impact on the effectiveness of the breath, the agility of the voice, and the ability to articulate; skills that are imperative in the performance of any of Bach's works.

The skills mentioned above have been discussed in conjunction with other arias in this cantata, and the same problems associated with other arias apply here. Since the tempo of this aria is relatively slow, problems of breath management may be more pronounced, but the same strategies for selecting appropriate moments to breathe mentioned before may be applied here. A requisite vocal agility is necessary to maneuver through the melismatic work, but it is no more demanding than that of other Bach arias. And although more darkness/heaviness may be desirable in this aria, it is likely that no special adjustments will need to be made by the singer, since the tessitura of the melismas is lower to begin with (where the voice is naturally a bit darker and production is easier,

especially for the contralto). There are a few rather nasty leaps for the vocalist but none outside of the capability of the intermediate singer.

Even so, musicologists have singled this aria out as being among the more difficult for the alto singer.[116] This is partly due to the interpretive issues already mentioned, but more importantly, it is due to issues of basic musicianship. One of the most troublesome characteristics has to do with its rhythmic structure. Normally an aria in 12/8 time could be easily counted by subdividing each measure into four beats. Although this aria, too, may divided by four, the rhythmic structure of the melody doesn't always fit neatly into that metrical pattern. Rather than evenly dividing the beats, Bach has written several dotted rhythms which don't fall into his usual predictable, repetitive patterns.

In the middle of the aria there is an extended passage that is quite chromatic, both harmonically and melodically. The result of the melodic chromaticism is a vocal line which contains sequences of intervals that may be difficult to sing in tune (such as a series of half steps, or tritones that don't resolve as expected). Naturally, the challenge of performing this kind of melody increases when coupled with an obbligato voice or harmonic accompaniment that doesn't necessarily support the vocal part.

The challenging elements of this aria, including its syncopation, chromaticism, and negotiation of register breaks are illustrated in Figure 14.

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[116] Whittaker, *The Cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach*, 249.

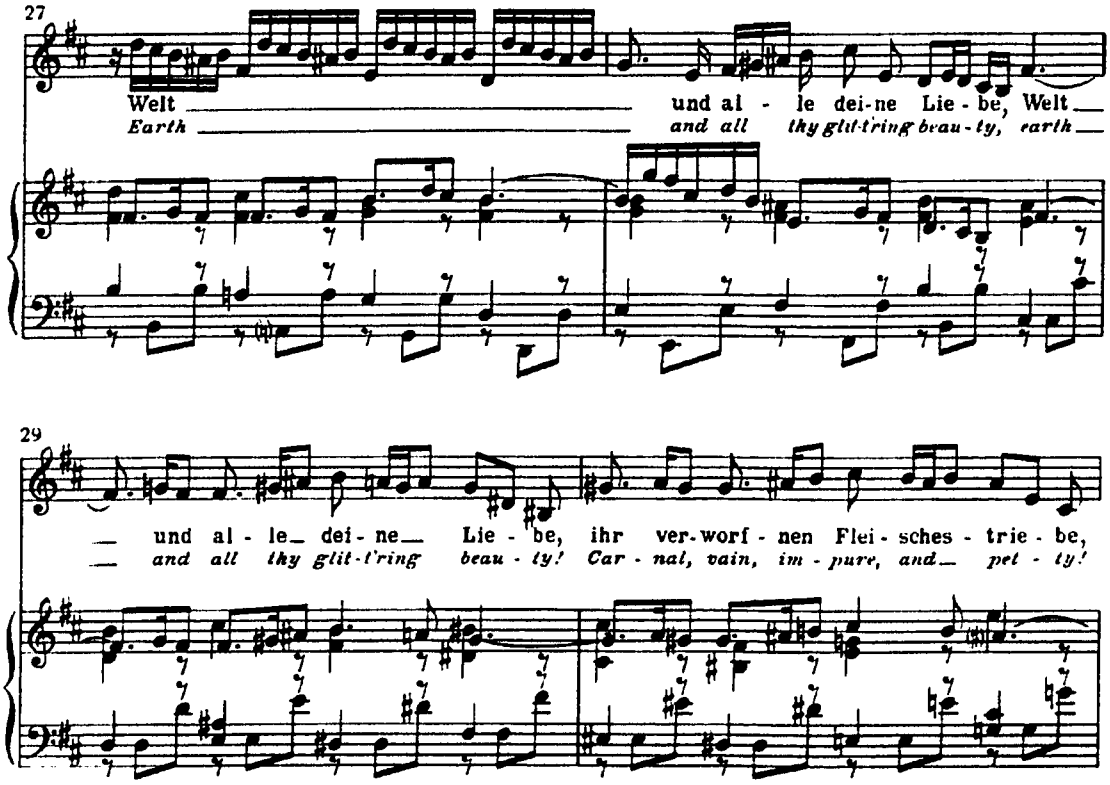

Figure 14. Copyright by Breitkopf & Haertel, Wiesbaden.
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Finally, a mention must be made about the use of the [i] and [e] vowels, and their application in certain parts of the aria. There are two places in particularly were melismatic work at the top of the range occur on words with these closed vowels (a long melisma on *"Fleischestriebe"*, and a shorter one on the word *"Stirb"*). Interestingly enough, the closed [i] or [e] may actually be helpful to the contralto, since many are more comfortable on the closed vowels than the open ones. The mezzo-soprano on the other hand, probably will want to open the vowel sound, modifying it toward [a] (ah). In any case, these particular phrases sit in a range more favorable to the mezzo-soprano's

range, so it may not be necessary to modify them. However, this issue must be handled according to the capabilities of the individual singer.

In summary, the aria is indeed somewhat difficult, and probably more conducive to the mezzo-soprano than contralto, however, an advanced contralto could certainly handle it. It appears that it is not any single characteristic that makes *Stirb in mir* a troublesome piece; rather, it is the combination of traits that provide its challenge.

Sixth Movement: *Recitativo*

This very brief recitative is designed to poetically sum up the lessons of the cantata, and musically introduce the concluding chorale.

Translation:

Doch meint es auch dabei	*Yet means this also therewith*
Mit eurem Nächsten treu;	*To your neighbor [be] true;*
Denn so steht in her Schrift geschrieben:	*For thus [it] stands in Scripture written:*
Do sollst Gott und den Nächsten lieben.	*You shall God and your neighbor love.*[117]

Only six measures long, the recitative contains no particularly difficulties. The range and tessitura are about the same as noted in the fourth movement recitative, except that it is much less active rhythmically.

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[117] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*, 587.

Seventh Movement: *Chorale*

The chorale represents the prayer at the conclusion of the cantata's lesson.

Translation:

Du süße Liebe, schenk uns deine Gunst,	*You sweet love, grant us your favor,*
Laß uns empfinden der Liebe Brunst,	*Let us experience love's ardor,*
Daß wir uns von Herzen einander lieben	*That we from [our] hearts one another might love*
Und in Friede auf einem Sinn bleiben.	*And in peace, of one mind continue.*
Kyrie eleison.	*Kyrie eleison.*[118]

The concluding chorale was probably sung by the soloist along with Bach's chancel choir, and possibly with the congregation. Today it may be performed in either of those ways, or the melody could be sung by the soloist accompanied by instruments only. If the latter option is selected, some definite range and tessitura issues must be considered. First, if the melody (soprano part) of the chorale is sung as written, the range needed is e^1 to $f^{\#2}$, and the tessitura g^1 to d^2. Much of that melody lies right where the upper registration break occurs in most mezzo-sopranos and contraltos. In short, the chorale melody wouldn't be particularly comfortable for either voice type, but since the mezzo-soprano is more comfortable in the head and upper middle register, she would definitely have an easier time with the chorale melody than would the contralto. The contralto could consider singing the chorale down the octave, which would provide an easier tessitura for the singer. However, there might well be a mismatch in quality with other movements in the cantata, which lay mostly in the head and upper middle registers

[118] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*, 587.

of the voice. To suddenly perform the final movement in what would primarily be chest and lower middle registers would certainly constitute a noticeable (and potentially displeasing) difference, as well as an anticlimactic one.

Summary

There are two particular problems with this cantata for the contralto singer, either intermediate or advanced. One has to do with the tessitura in certain sections of the work. While they may not present particular difficulties when performing any individual movement, performance of the work as a whole may be especially fatiguing for the contralto, who would have to deal with the higher tessitura in movement after movement. An advanced contralto who has the ability to pace herself may be able to effectively present the entire work, but I do not believe it would be particularly appropriate for the intermediate contralto to do so (although work on the individual movements would help to develop facility in that part of the voice). The second problem is the chorale, whose melody is set in the soprano voice. It is truly quite high for the contralto, and comes at the end of the entire work. There is no problem if the chorale is being performed by a choir or as a congregational response, but as a solo it would be difficult indeed, if sung as written. And I don't believe it would be an effective ending to the cantata if sung down the octave.

The challenges of the fifth movement aria are sufficient to conclude that the work in its entirety is not appropriate for the intermediate mezzo-soprano. The advanced mezzo-soprano is most capable of undertaking this dramatic and satisfying cantata.

BWV 170: *Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust*

This is the third solo cantata of the third Leipzig cycle for alto voice, leading some musicologists to speculate that all three (BWV 35, BWV 169 and BWV 170) were composed for the same singer.[119] Whether or not this is the case, it is true that there are a great many similarities that tend to support that conjecture. It is known that there is a compositional relationship between *Geist und Seele wird verwirret* (BWV 35) and *Gott soll allein mein Herze haben* (BWV 169), as demonstrated in the earlier discussion of those works. *Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust* shares several characteristics of the other third cycle cantatas but also possesses unique characteristics that distinguishes it from the others.

One major difference is that BWV 170 is set without an opening sinfonia; rather, the piece opens with the title aria. There are a total of five movements, ordered in the same familiar pattern of alternating aria and recitative. The instrumentation is somewhat different, utilizing oboe d'amore and flute (flauto transverso, not recorder) rather than oboe d'amore and taille. However, it does contain an organ obbligato part similar to those discussed previously, as well as the same configuration of strings and continuo.

Like BWV 35 and BWV 169, *Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust* makes use of borrowed material, but less than that found in the other cantatas. Only the final aria is believed to be a derivative of an earlier instrumental concerto (now lost). This belief is based largely on the similar construction of that movement to those of other cantatas

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[119] Whittaker, *The Cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach*, 242.

with origins in Bach's concerto repertoire.[120] The other aria movements, and certainly the recitatives, are believed to be newly composed.

Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust was composed for the sixth Sunday after Trinity, and is believed to have been first performed on July 28, 1726. It is set to a Lehms text based (rather loosely) on Romans 6:3-11, which explains that no man is righteous and all have turned from God; and Matthew 5:20-26, a portion of Christ's Sermon on the Mount which says that true righteousness is characterized by one's love of their neighbor.

First Movement: *Aria*

The opening aria bears the same title as the cantata, and is perhaps one of Bach's loveliest melodies for any voice. It's message is central to the Christian faith; that by Christ, death is but a pathway to resurrection and new life.

Translation:

Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust,	*Happy rest, beloved joy of [the] soul,*
Dich kann man nicht bei Höllensünden	*One cannot amidst hell's sins*
Wohl aber Himmelseintracht finden;	*But rather in Heaven's concord find;*
Du stärkst allein die schwache Brust.	*You alone strengthen the weak breast.*
Drum sollen lauter Tugendgaben	*Therefore shall naught but virtue's endowments*
In meinem Herzen Wohnung haben.	*In my heart [its] dwelling find.*[121]

[120] Young, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, 126.

[121] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*, 588.

It is fortunate that this most beautiful aria is set in a range (b to e^2) and tessitura (d^1 to c^2) that makes it relatively accessible to both the contralto and mezzo-soprano singer. At first glance, this statement may seem contradictory to previous discussions, since aria movements in BWV 35 and BWV 169 with similar ranges and tessituras were recommended for the mezzo-soprano voice. The difference is due to the approach to the upper tessitura utilized in this aria. Although there are occasionally leaps to pitches in the higher tessitura, in most cases those pitches are approached stepwise, within the context of melismatic scale passages. Those top notes (usually c^2 or d^2) represent the apex of an ascending scale and once reached, descent occurs immediately. In other words, the singer spends the majority of the piece in a lower part of the tessitura, moving up and then right back down, much as when performing stepwise warm up exercises, which are ususally performed by both voice types to substantially higher pitches than c^2 or d^2. If such passages were to be removed from consideration, the tessitura of the movement would actually be much lower (d^2 or a^2), and easily negotiated by either the mezzo-soprano or contralto.

The lyrical nature of this aria also contributes to making the piece less problematic for the singer than other Bach arias. The melodic writing is quite linear, utilizing (as mentioned) much stepwise motion. Most leaping intervals are quite small, consisting of thirds and fourths. The majority of the few larger leaps appear in the brief middle, or contrasting section, of the aria and are used as connectors of melodic (stepwise) patterns. Furthermore, there is no real rhythmic intricacy for the vocalist. The performer should count this 12/8 piece in four (four groups of three per measure),

with the dotted quarter receiving the beat, as established by the instruments in the introduction. All rhythmic divisions for the singer fit evenly within this counting scheme. Furthermore, counting the piece in four enables the vocalist to "move" the melody forward, rather than plodding along note to note.

The only difficulty detected in this movement has to do with breathing; Lehms wrote long text phrases, which Bach has set to even longer musical phrases. Even so, the same strategies mentioned in earlier movements containing lengthy phrases may be applied in this movement. In the first section (which is partially repeated to close the aria) there are sufficient punctuation points in the text to provide opportunities for breathing. In the middle section the phrase "drum sollen lauter Tugendgaben in meinem Herzen Wohnung haben," is to be performed unbroken on three occasions, each presumably on a single breath (this section also contains the connecting leaps in the higher tessitura mentioned earlier). While an advanced mezzo-soprano should have no problem performing these phrases on a single breath, the intermediate singer, or the contralto (because of the tessitura in this section) may need to break the phrase to breathe. In considering other options for breath placement (based on earlier discussion), the option of breaking at the end of a tied note should be eliminated, since ties in this section happen in the middle of words. Probably the best place to break each is right in the middle of the phrase, before the preposition "in" (Figure 15, measures 40-42).

Drum sollen lauter Tugendgaben **(breath)** *in meinem Herzen Wohnung haben.*

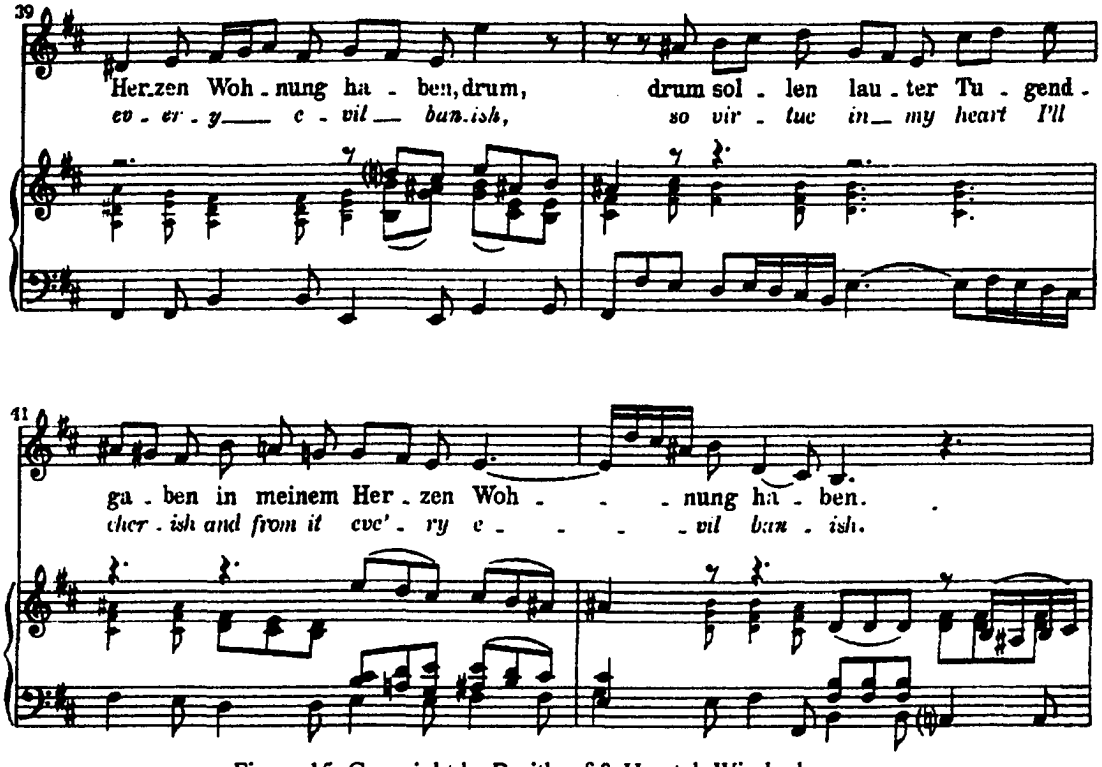

Figure 15. Copyright by Breitkopf & Haertel, Wiesbaden.
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This choice is best for two reasons. First, it makes the best sense grammatically; second, in two out of the three repetitions the breath would occur at an intervallic leap, which will help obscure the breath if done skillfully.

Taking into consideration all of the factors noted above, it is my opinion that this aria is an excellent choice for either the mezzo-soprano or contralto, and may be successfully performed by the singer of intermediate skill. The universal message of the text would also make the aria appropriate for a variety of performing situations even when taken out of the context of the full cantata, thus making the piece an excellent choice for inclusion in the singer's repertoire.

Second Movement: *Recitativo*

This declamatory recitative, accompanied by continuo, declares the world a "house of sin," where hatred, envy and thoughts of vengeance ("Raca")[122] prevail.

Translation:

Die Welt, das Sündenhaus
Bricht nur in Höllenlieder aus
Und sucht durch Haß und Neid
Des Satans Bild an sich zu fragen.
Ihr Mund ist vollerOttergift,
Der oft die Unschuld tödlich trifft,
Und will allein von Racha! sagen,
Gerechter Gott, wie weit
Ist doch der Mensch von dir entfernet;
Du liebst, jedoch sein Mund
Macht Fluch und Feindsch aft kund
Und will den Nächsten nur mit
Füßen treten.
Ach! diese Schuld ist schwerlich
zu verbeten.

The world, that house of sin
Breaks out only with songs of hell
And seeks through hatred and envy
Satan's image to bear.
Its mouth is filled with poison of vipers,
Which often fatally strikes the innocent.
And would only of "Raca!" speak.
Righteous God, how far
Is indeed man from you distanced;
You love, yet his mouth
Proclaims curse and enmity abroad
And would his neighbor trample
under his feet.
Ah! This offense [can] scarcely be
prayed away.[123]

Many of the same characteristics mentioned in relation to the recitatives of cantatas also apply to those in BWV 170. However, there are some unique qualities in this particular recitative. First, it has the distinction of having the largest range of all the alto recitatives (a to e^2), although the majority sits between e^1 and c^2. Second, it is one of the most chromatic of the alto movements and much more unpredictable

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[122] Young, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, 126.

[123] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*, 588-589.

harmonically[124] than is usual in Bach's declamatory recitatives. The melodic line set over the unique harmonic landscape is equally disquieting, featuring phrases that sit at range extremes, and containing more leaping intervals within phrases. This may be intended to reflect the unsettling content of the text, which dwells upon the sinful ways of the man, far removed from the ways of God.

Third Movement: *Aria*

Aptly introduced by the previous recitative, the aria *Wie jammern mich doch die verkehrten Herzen* continues to be unsettling. The chromaticism established in the recitative continues in this aria, which speaks of the "perverted hearts" of man.

Translation:

Wie jammern mich doch die verkehrten Herzen,	*How I indeed pity the perverted hearts,*
Die dir, mein Gott, so sehr zuwider sein;	*Who to you, my God, are so very offensive;*
Ich zittre recht und fühle tausend Schmerzen,	*I tremble quite and feel a thousand torments,*
Wenn sie sich nur an Rach und Haß erfreun.	*When they only in vengeance and hatred rejoice.*
Gerechter Gott,	*Righteous God,*
Was magst du doch gedenken,	*What must you then think,*
Wenn sie alleinmit rechten Satansränken	*When they but with real Satanic intrigues*
Dein scharfes Strafgebot so frech verlacht.	*Your stern precept of judgment so insolently deride.*
Ach! ohne Zweifel hast du so gedacht:	*Ah! Without doubt you have thus thought:*
Wie jammern mich doch die verkehrten Herzen!.	*How I indeed pity the perverted hearts![125]*

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[124] Sjoersma, "The Solo Liturgical Cantatas of J. S. Bach, Part II," *The NATS Journal*, 13.

[125] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*, 589-590.

Undoubtedly the dramatic apex of the cantata, this aria is as passionate as it is challenging. Many consider it a duet between the voice and organ rather than a solo, and it demands a high level of proficiency from both musicians. The melodic range of the movement is b to e^2, with a tessitura of e^1 to $c^{\#2}$. As seen in the first movement aria, the tessitura actually lays lower than one would suspect in relation to the range. Again, this has to do with the melodic approach to upper range pitches (ascending to them, then immediately descending to portions of the middle voice comfortable for both contralto and mezzo-soprano. In other words, this aria (like the first) may be successfully sung by the mezzo-soprano or contralto in terms of range and tessitura.

On the other hand, the level of difficulty is greatly escalated in this aria, as compared to the title aria. Many of the challenging components are similar to those mentioned in the discussion of *Stirb in mir* (the fifth movement of *Gott soll allein mein Herze haben*, BWV 169). The melodic and harmonic structures are quite chromatic in places, making it difficult to hear and accurately sing certain intervals. The rhythm of the movement is not as syncopated as *Stirb in mir*, but there are dotted rhythms that must be executed precisely in order to match the obbligato voice. The long melismas require an advanced level of agility; they must be precise and in perfect tune since they are executed in rhythmic and harmonic "unison" with the organ obbligato (see Figure 16). Also, breath placement in these passages is an issue, since any pause to breathe other than at the end of tied pitches will disrupt the synchronicity of the organ and vocal line.

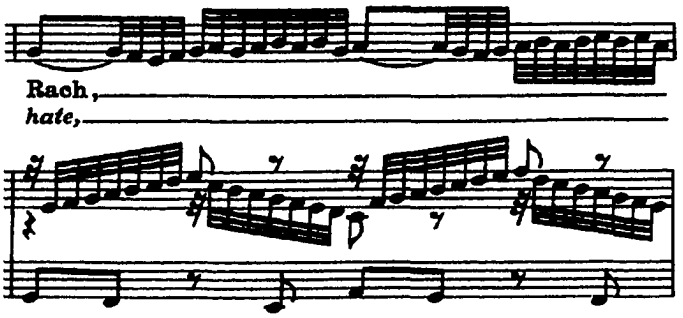

Figure 16. Copyright by Breitkopf & Haertel, Wiesbaden.
Excerpts used by kind permission for research purposes.

In many ways this aria is the most challenging of all the arias evaluated for this study. It is my opinion that the only thing that isn't especially problematic is the tessitura. For these reasons, this movement should be reserved for the advanced vocalist of either classification.

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Fourth Movement: *Recitativo*

The second recitative of the cantata is shorter than the first, but it is accompanied by strings and continuo rather than continuo only. While the practice of making later recitatives shorter than earlier ones is consistent within the alto solo cantatas, this recitative is unique within that literature in that the voice is accompaniment by instruments in addition to the continuo. It also exhibits much less musical tension than that seen in the second movement recitative, perhaps a reflection of its calmer, more reflective text.

Translation:

Wer sollte sich demnach	*Who would, accordingly,*
Wohl hier zu leben wunschen,	*Indeed wish to live here,*
Wenn man nur Haß und Ungemach	*When one only hatred and hardship*

Vor seine Liebe sieht?	*For his love sees?*
Doch, weil ich auch den Feind	*Yes, because I also my enemy*
Wie meinen besten Freund	*As my best friend*
Nach Gottes Vorschrifft lieben soll,	*According to God's instruction shall love,*
So flieht	*So flees*
Mein Herze Zorn und Groll	*My heart [from] wrath and animosity*
Und wünscht allein bei Gott zu leben,	*And desires only with God to live,*
Der selbst die Liebe heißt.	*Who himself is called love.*
Ach, eintrachtvoller Geist,	*Ah, peaceable spirit,*
Wenn wird er dir doch nur	*When will he indeed finally grant to you*
Himmelszion geben?	*his heavenly Zion?*[126]

While this recitative exhibits characteristics discussed previously, such as the need to add passing tones as dictated by the performance practice of the period, and the inherent difficulties for the singer with the glottal nature of the language, it also presents unique qualities. Though primarily in declamatory style, it does have brief moments that revert back to Bach's older arioso style. One such moment occurs in measures eight through twelve of Figure 17. In most of Bach's declamatory recitatives the practice seems to be to sing one syllable on each pitch, except in rare cases where a passing tone is added to match rhythmic content of a phrase with that of the music. Yet in the example above there is a melisma on the word "flieht" (to flee), a bit of tone painting more consistent with arioso than declamatory recitative. The end of that same sequence ("*die Liebe heißt*") also seems to have a more lyrical melodic construction, however the majority of the movement employs a fairly consistent declamatory style.

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[126] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*, 590-591.

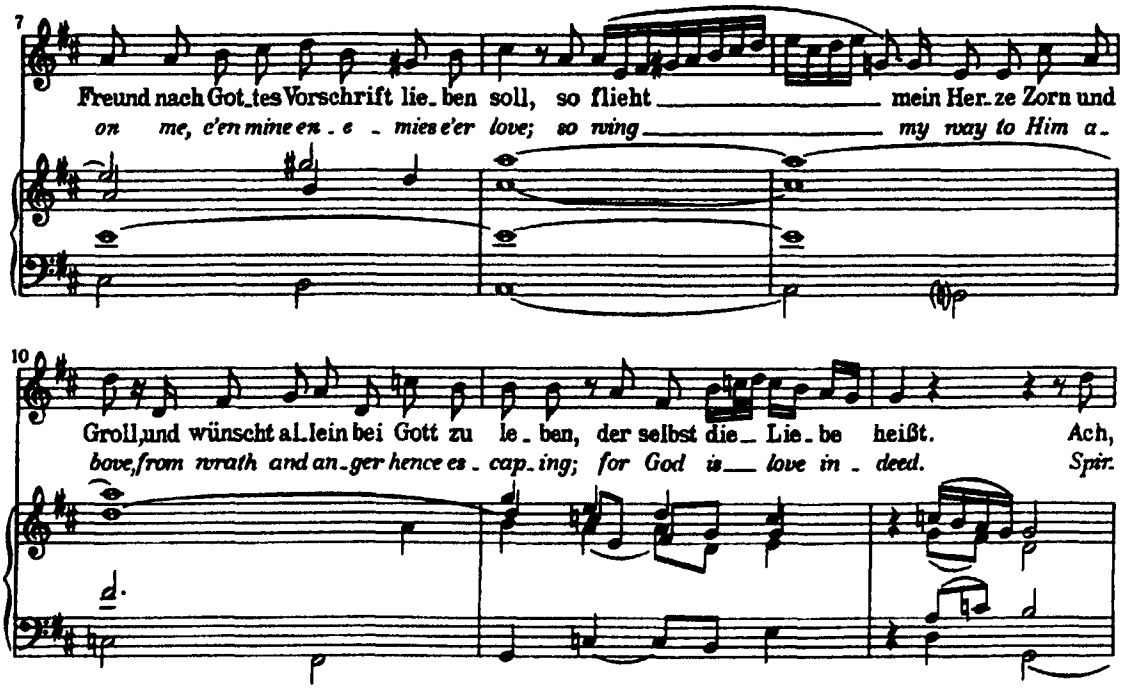

Figure 17. Copyright by Breitkopf & Haertel, Wiesbaden.
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There is no drawback to the recitative being sung by either the contralto or mezzo-soprano; both are more than capable of negotiating its range ($c^{\#1}$ to e^2) or its tessitura (c^1 to b^1). There are no melodic maneuvers or rhythmic intricacies beyond the skills of the intermediate singer. In fact, in many ways this recitative is somewhat easier than the others examined thus far. It is very straightforward, and the arioso-like moments actually aid the singer, allowing legato articulation in the upper register (where the melisma is written) and alleviating some of the "wordiness" of the language.

Fifth Movement: *Aria*

A summary of the descriptions of this final aria movement might be "joyous but odd." As stated previously, it is the one movement of the entire cantata that is believed to be derived from an earlier work, probably an instrumental concerto. This conjecture is based on the quasi-ritornello form utilized in the movement (perhaps a work from his Weimar years and his experimentation with Italian forms?) and the use of the interval of an augmented fourth to open the main theme[127] (very unusual in Bach's vocal writing). Furthermore, the melodic writing style seems to have a dance-like quality, perhaps a necessity when coming to the end of a cantata whose overall message is rather morose. Translation:

Mir ekalt mehr zu leben,	*I loath longer to live,*
Drum nimm mich, Jesu, hin!	*Therefore, take me, Jesus, hence!*
Mir graut vor allein Sünden,	*I have aversion to all sins,*
Laß mich dies Wohnhaus finden,	*Let me this dwelling-house find,*
Woselbst ich ruhig bin.	*Where I may be at rest.*[128]

The range of this aria is identical to that of the preceding recitative, $c^{\#1}$ to e^2, but the tessitura sits about a third higher ($f^{\#1}$ to d^1). While this is within the standard range of a contralto, she would experience a bit more fatigue in this aria because of the elevated tessitura. Since both the range and tessitura lie within the best parts of the average mezzo-soprano voice, these issues would not be of particular concern to a vocalist of that classification.

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[127] Alex Robertson, *The Church Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1972), 210.

[128] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*, 591.

When compared to the third movement aria of this cantata, this finale appears to be fairly easy and may be sung successfully by a mezzo-soprano of intermediate ability. It may also be sung with only a bit more difficulty by an intermediate contralto (taking the occasionally higher tessitura into consideration). Written in common time (4/4), the rhythmic content of the aria is easy to count; although even if it was difficult, the singer has the advantage of having her part doubled by the first or second violin part almost continuously. This practice also aids the singer in holding her part against the organ obbligato, which is very complex and very active.

The tempo is quick enough that there should be no particular problems with breath management. Even longer phrases have textual punctuations that provide sufficient opportunities for the singer to breathe, providing she supports adequately. It is only at the very end of the middle section (just before the da capo marking, measures 57-60) where breath upon punctuation is not adequate. As shown in Figure 18, the majority of this phrase is set to a single syllable, so there is no punctuation. For most singers, a low breath at the beginning of the phrase (*"woselbst ich ruhig bin"*) will be sufficient to maintain the phrase, given the tempo. However, if in performance a somewhat slower tempo is being taken, or if the singer is a contralto (who will tire more quickly in the middle section with its higher tessitura), the option of taking an additional discreet breath might be desirable. Musically, the best place to break the line in the middle of this sequence is at the last moment of a tied pitch, preferably $f^{\#1}$ in the center of the melisma. A break in the line at that point will more than likely be covered by the impending movement to the next vocal pitch, as well as the rapid motion of the organ obbligato.

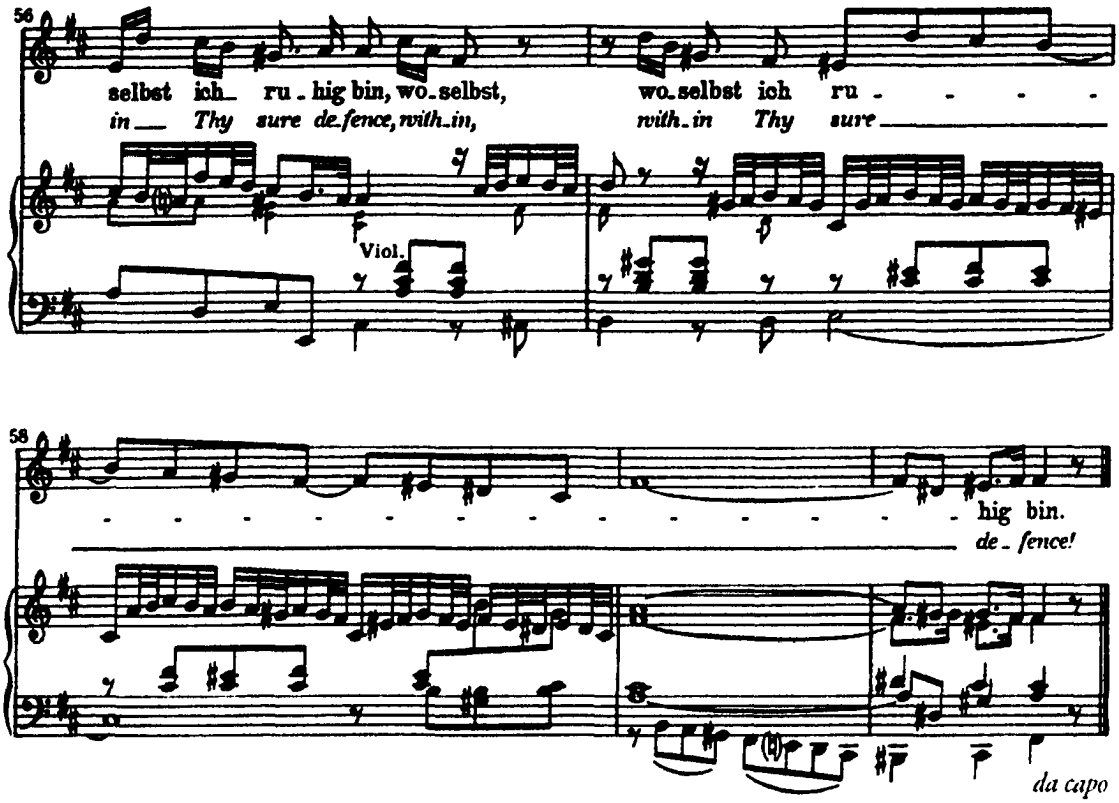

Figure 18. Copyright by Breitkopf & Haertel, Wiesbaden.
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With the possible exception of a couple of rather large leaps that cross the upper passaggio, the rest of the aria is reasonably accessible to the intermediate singer. Considering how those leaps are approached in the aria, it is my opinion that most singers won't have undue difficulty negotiating them. The one additional warning I would make has to do with pronunciation. For the most part, the aria pairs one syllable to one note, with occasional melismas on an accented syllable. Considering the tempo of the music, the singer must be prepared to "spit the words out," but without losing the flow of the vocal line (legato). Furthermore, the words need to be carefully pronounced, since in some cases words appear in the same phrase that are pronounced almost

identically. For instance, in the first phrase the words "mir" and "mehr" both appear (in the International Phonetic Alphabet or IPA, the central vowels are [i] and [e] respectively). This phrase is repeated several times, and it would be very easy to mispronounce one or both words, not because of laziness or ignorance, but because it goes by so quickly. In this aria, additional care should be given to the differentiation between the [i] and [e] vowels, as well as the pronunciation of vowels with umlauts, double consonants, the schwa sound (especially in the final syllable of multi-syllabic words), and the open and closed "o" sound. This dedication to proper pronunciation should be stressed in all of the cantatas; it is particularly important when the tempo of the music and nature of the movement dictate rapid speech articulation.

Summary

As a whole work, this cantata would be ideal for the intermediate singer except for the third movement. The demands of that aria require a more technically advanced singer. However the first and final arias are excellent pieces for the intermediate singer, and may be performed out of context in anticipation of the time when the singer is capable of performing the entire cantata. With regard to classification, *Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust* is definitely appropriate for the mezzo-soprano, but can be performed well by most contraltos if the higher phrases are prepared carefully, and if the singer paces herself so she doesn't become overly fatigued before completing her performance of the work.

BWV 200: *Bekennen will ich seinen Namen*

Of all of the alto solo cantatas, the least is known of this last work. The only surviving part of this cantata is a single aria, for which the cantata is named. It is one of the very few sacred cantatas attributed to the 1740's; the work has been dated 1742,[129] but the first actual date of the first performance is unknown. But even though no performance date is available to confirm the occasion for which the cantata was written, the text setting indicates that it was composed either for Candlemas (Sunday of the Purification of Mary) or Epiphany. The text of the lone extant aria comes from biblical sources associated with both Candlemas (Malachai 3:1-4 and Luke 2:22-32) and Epiphany (Isaiah 60:1-6 and Matthew 2:1-12).[130] The actual librettist is unknown.

Translation:

Bekennen will ich seinen Namen,	*I will confess his name,*
Er ist der Herr, er ist der Christ,	*He is the Lord, he is the Christ,*
In welchem aller Völker Samen	*In whom all nations' seed*
Gesegnet und erlöset ist.	*Is blessed and redeemed.*
Kein Tod raubt mir die Zuversicht:	*No death robs me of this confidence:*
Der Herr ist meines Lebens Licht.	*The Lord is my life's light.*[131]

It has been reasoned that this piece must be an internal aria within a larger work, probably a cantata. Reasons given for this theory is the lack of Bach's inscription normally found on the first and last score pages (indicating it wasn't an opening or

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[129] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*, 767.

[130] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*, 703.

[131] Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*, 703.

closing aria), and the light instrumentation, consisting only of two violins, cello and basso continuo, also indicative of an interior movement.[132] The vocal line has a compass of the interval of a ninth (d^1 to e^2), and a fairly evenly distributed tessitura of an octave (d^1 to d^2). Although the tessitura is quite wide and crosses the upper registration break, there is no problem with the range of the piece for a mezzo-soprano, and because the tessitura never remains at the top of the piece's range for very long, a contralto capable of a smooth transition over the upper break will be able to perform the piece nearly as easily as the mezzo-soprano.

In terms of rhythmic, harmonic and melodic difficulty, this is one of the very few Bach arias that doesn't present problems to the singer. While not simple, a trained singer should be capable of sightreading the piece with relative ease. Phrases are quite short because of the lively tempo, and longer musical phrases can be broken at punctuation marks for the purpose of breathing (there is one place where a breath may be needed and no punctuation is present, but as noted in other similar instances, a slight break at the end of a tied note midway through the phrase can serve to allow the singer to breathe).

The aria is truly lovely and can be performed well by a singer of intermediate ability. The problem with selecting this aria for performance is its limited availability. Whereas all of the previously discussed cantatas are available for voice and full score or in keyboard reduction from recognized publishers (Breitkopf and Härtel, Leipzig, holds many of the cantatas, and their works are available from any number of music catalogs),

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[132] Young, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, 235.

Bekennen will ich seinen Namen is not yet available except within the volumes of the *Neue Ausgabe Sämtlicher Werke* (Bärenreiter-Verlag, Kassel, Germany). Furthermore, this single publication of the work is in score form (two violins, voice and continuo), with no keyboard reduction available for the singer. Therefore, if the singer wishes to perform the work with organ or piano, she must first obtain the proper volume of the *Neue Ausgabe Sämtlicher Werke* or obtain the needed permissions to copy the piece. Then she must either find an accompanist who can read multiple staves while simultaneously performing a realization of the continuo part, or must write out the reduction and realization. While the latter may take some time, it would be well worth the trouble, since this graceful aria is beautiful to hear, uncomplicated to sing, and its message is appropriate to many of the occasions where sacred music may be performed.

Summary

Bekennen will ich seinen Namen is a wonderful piece that is appropriate to either the intermediate mezzo-soprano or contralto. The greatest difficulty in preparing to perform the work is obtaining a copy of it. However, most large libraries (and especially university libraries) house the *Neue Ausgabe Sämtlicher Werke* (collected works of J. S. Bach), which contains this and all other cantatas and arias discussed in this study. The publisher of the *Neue Ausgabe Sämtlicher Werke* may be contacted online for the purpose of obtaining any necessary permissions.

Chapter Five

CONCLUSIONS

Many of the individual arias and accompanying recitatives may be successfully accomplished by either the mezzo-soprano or contralto singer, but the performance of the complete cantatas evaluated in this study do tend to favor one voice type or the other. *Widerstehe doch der Sünde* (BWV 54) is the only cantata that is clearly better suited to the contralto singer. The last cantata considered, *Bekennen will ich seinen Namen* (BWV 200) is equally appropriate for both voice types. The three cantatas of the third Leipzig cycle, *Geist und Seele wird verwirret* (BWV 35), *Gott soll allein mein Herze haben* (BWV 169) and *Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust* (BWV 170), are better suited for performance by the mezzo-soprano, largely because of the demands of their tessituras.

Most of the cantatas studied require an advanced singer, often due to the demands of a single movement within the cantata. In *Geist und Seele wird verwirret*, the complexity of the final aria place the work outside of the capabilities of the intermediate singer; this is also true of the third movement aria of *Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust. Gott soll allein mein Herze haben* is suggested for the advanced singer due to the facility and rhythmic content of its last aria, along with the tessitura needed for the concluding chorale should the singer need to perform it as a solo.

Widerstehe doch der Sünde has been suggested for the intermediate contralto voice, but it should be noted that the melismatic passages required in the final aria

movement may be beyond some intermediate contraltos. I consider this work in its entirety to be borderline as to assigning it an intermediate or advanced rating, depending on the flexibility of the particular voice in the lower registers. Finally, *Bekennen will ich seinen Namen* is truly an intermediate cantata.

Alto solo aria movements from all extant cantatas have been listed in Appendix A, along with a designation of the most appropriate voice type for the aria, and an intermediate or advanced rating. The conclusions found in the appendix are based on the same criteria as that used in evaluating the solo cantata movements; consideration of range, tessitura, musical complexity, agility, and breath management. The actual range and approximate tessitura are provided, along with additional information including the cantata title and movement number, a statement summarizing the cantata text, and a notation of any specific performance demands that may be helpful to the teacher or singer in choosing a particular aria for study.

There are still many avenues open for future research of the Bach cantatas. First, although pedagogical studies of the soprano and bass solo cantatas have been done, this type of research is lacking for the tenor cantatas. Furthermore, a catalog of cantata arias aimed at providing information to teachers for the purpose of selecting appropriate literature for students (or performers selecting repertoire for themselves) has not been done for either the soprano or tenor voices.

Research on the performance of the alto cantatas by male voices (either the boys of Bach's era or the countertenors of today) is also unavailable, although there are several recordings available of countertenors performing all of the complete solo alto

cantatas except for *Bekennen will ich seinen Namen*. Obviously, men are still performing these works, and a pedagogical study of the demands on the male singer and how they differ from the female would be very interesting.

Several of Bach's other sacred cantatas have been the subject of theoretical, historical, poetic and biblical research, particularly the chorale cantatas composed in Leipzig. But such extensive research seems to be limited to several dozen of the most popular works. There are many more that have not been the subject of such interest, which could be explored in more depth. This is especially true of many of the extant secular cantatas. Some, like the so-called *Coffee Cantata* and *Peasant Cantata*, have received more attention, but others could and should be explored in greater depth. It would be an understatement to say that a great deal has been written on the life and works of Johann Sebastian Bach, but there is still much more that can be gleaned from further research of his body of work.

APPENDIX A

ARIAS FOR ALTO IN THE CANTATAS OF J. S. BACH

Using the Appendix

This appendix is intended as a guide for the selection of alto solo arias from Bach's cantata repertoire for teaching purposes or for performance. Most information provided is based upon perusal of the *Neue Ausgabe Sämtlicher Werke* (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 1958). The text summaries come from the *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantatas: An Interlinear Translation with Reference Guide to Biblical Quotations and Allusions* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1996), by Melvin P. Unger.

The format of each appendix entry begins with necessary identification, including the BWV number and cantata title (with the movement number of the aria immediately below the BWV number); the title of the aria; and a brief summary of the text content of the aria. This is followed by more specific information to aid in deciding the appropriateness of an aria for the teacher or performer, namely the specific range of the aria, and a designation of its tessitura (a low tessitura designation means the majority of the aria lies in the chest and lower middle register; a medium one means that it utilizes the middle voice primarily, and a high designation means it lies in the upper middle and head register about the upper registration break). A recommendation is then made about what type of singer the aria is best suited for in terms of difficulty and classification (but

keep in mind that this is only a suggestion and that the capabilities of the individual singer must be considered in selecting from this repertoire).

Finally, specific areas of potential difficulty are noted as "notable challenges." Most fall under the headings of "rhythms" (indicating difficult or intricate rhythmic patterns), "leaps" (several large or tricky intervals), "agility" (extensive melismatic passages), and "breath management" (lengthy phrases which require developed support, or for which the singer must make informed decisions in breaking the phrase for the purpose of breathing). Additional pertinent comments with regard to performance demands are made as needed.

Comprehensive List of Cantata Arias

BWV 2 Cantata Title: *Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein*
m. 3 **Aria: "Tilg, O Gott, die Lehren"**
Text Summary: Prayer to stop false teachers
Range: c - e^{b2} Tessitura: Medium
Recommendation: advanced; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: rhythms, agility, breath management

BWV 6 Cantata Title: *Bleib bei uns, denn es will Abend werden*
m. 2 **Aria: "Hochgelobter Gottessohn"**
Text Summary: Christ, remain our light
Range: b^{b} - b^{b2} Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: advanced; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: leaps, breath management

BWV 11 Cantata Title: *Lobet Gott in seinen Reichen (Ascension Oratorio)*
m. 4 **Aria: "Ach, bleibe doch, mein liebstes Leben"**
Text Summary: Plea for Christ to remain
Range: a - e^{2} Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto or mezzo-soprano

BWV 12 Cantata Title: *Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen*
m. 4 **Aria: "Kreuz und Krone sind verbunden"**
Text Summary: Christ's wounds are our comfort
Range: c^{1} - c^{2} Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: advanced; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: agility, breath management

BWV 13 Cantata Title: *Meine Seufzer, meine Tränen*
m. 3 **Aria: "Der Gott, der mir hat versprochen"**
Text Summary: God's promise of aid has not come to pass (despair)
Range: c^{1} - c^{2} Tessitura: Low
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto
Notable challenges: breath management
(chorale in augmentation against violin duet)

BWV 20 Cantata Title: *O Ewigkeit, du Donnerwort*
m. 6 **Aria: "O Mensch, errette deine Seele"**
Text Summary: Flee sin and its judgment
Range: $c^{\#1}$ - d^{2} Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto or mezzo-soprano

BWV 22 Cantata Title: *Jesus nahm zu sich die Zwölfe*
m. 2 **Aria: "Mein Jesu, ziehe mich nach dir"**
Text Summary: Draw near to me, and I will go with you
Range: b^{b} - e^{b2} Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto or mezzo-soprano

BWV 24 Cantata Title: *Ein ungefärbt Gemüte*
m. 1 **Aria: "Ein ungefärbt Gemüte "**
Text Summary:
Range: c^{1} - d^{2} Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: agility in middle voice

BWV 27 Cantata Title: *Wer weiß, wie nahe mir mein Ende*
m. 3 **Aria: "Willkommen! will ich sagen"**
Text Summary: I will follow joyfully when death calls me
Range: a^{b} - d^{b2} Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: advanced; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: agility, breath management

BWV 29 Cantata Title: *Wir danken dir, Gott, wir danken dir*
m. 7 **Aria: "Halleluja, Stärk und Macht"**
Text Summary: Hallelujah, strength and might to the name of God
Range: a - e^{2} Tessitura: low
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto
Notable challenges: agility

BWV 30 Cantata Title: *Freue dich, erloste Schar*
m. 5 **Aria: "Kommt, ihr angefochtnen Sünder"**
Text Summary: Grace is offered by the Savior
Range: e^{1} - e^{2} Tessitura: high
Recommendation: advanced; mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: rhythms, agility

BWV 33 Cantata Title: *Allein zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ*
m. 3 **Aria: "Wie furchtsam wankten meine Schritte"**
Text Summary: Christ's grace is sufficient
Range: c^{1} - d^{2} Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: advanced; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: agility, breath management, chromaticism

BWV 34 Cantata Title: *O ewiges Feuer, o Ursprung der Liebe*
m. 3 **Aria: "Wohl euch, ihr auserwählten Seelen"**
Text Summary: God dwelling in us is the greatest blessing
Range: b - d^2 Tessitura: medium (with a few higher phrases)
Recommendation: advanced; mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: agility, breath management

BWV 39 Cantata Title: *Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot*
m. 3 **Aria: "Seinem Schnöpfer noch auf Erden"**
Text Summary: Charity is God-like and is its own blessing
Range: b - e^{b2} Tessitura: middle to high
Recommendation: intermediate; mezzo-soprano (advanced contralto)
Notable challenges: leaps, agility

BWV 42 Cantata Title: *Am Abend aber desselbigen Sabbats*
m. 3 **Aria: "Wo zwei und drei versammlet sind"**
Text Summary: Where two or three are gathered, Christ is there
Range: b - e^2 Tessitura: high
Recommendation: advanced mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: high agility, breath management

BWV 43 Cantata Title: *Gott f*ähret auf mit Jauchzen
m. 9 **Aria: "Ich sehe schon im Geist"**
Text Summary: Christ sits at God's right hand
Range: c^1 - e^2 Tessitura: medium to high
Recommendation: advanced; mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: leaps, agility (in all registers)

BWV 44 Cantata Title: *Sie werden euch in den Bann*
m. 3 **Aria: "Christen müssen auf der Erden"**
Text Summary: Persecution awaits true disciples of Christ
Range: b^b - e^2 Tessitura: low to medium
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto
Notable challenges: rhythms

BWV 45 Cantata Title: *Es ist dir gesagt, Mensch, was gut ist*
m. 5 **Aria: "Wer Gott bekennt"**
Text Summary: Acknowledging Christ before men
Range: c^1 - d^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: advanced; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: agility, breath management

BWV 46 Cantata Title: *Schauet doch und sehet, ob irgendein Schmerz sei*
m. 5 **Aria: "Doch Jesu will auch bei der Strafe"**
Text Summary: Jesus will shelter the righteous like sheep
Range: g^1 - d^2 Tessitura: low to medium
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto

BWV 48 Cantata Title: *Ich elender Mensch, wer wird mich erlösen*
m. 4 **Aria: "Ach, lege das Sodom, der sündlichen Glieder"**
Text Summary: Destroy my sinful flesh but spare my soul
Range: $b^{\flat}$ - $e^{\flat 2}$ Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto or mezzo-soprano

BWV 64 Cantata Title: *Sehet, welch eine Liebe hat uns der Vater erzeiget*
m. 7 **Aria: "Von der Welt verlag ich nichts"**
Text Summary:
Range: b - e^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: intermediate; mezzo-soprano

BWV 69 Cantata Title: *Lobe den Herrn, meine Seele*
m. 3 **Aria: "Meine Seele, Auf! erzähle"**
Text Summary: Rise my soul, and sing your thanks to God
Range: b - e^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: intermediate contralto or mezzo-soprano

BWV 70 Cantata Title: *Wachet! betet! betet! Wachet!*
m. 3 **Aria: "Wann kommt der Tag, an dem wir ziehen"**
Text Summary: Yearning to leave this world on the Last Day
Range: a - d^2 Tessitura: low
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto
Notable challenges: rhythms

BWV 71 Cantata Title: *Gott ist mein König*
m. 5 **Aria: "Durch mächtige Kraft"**
Text Summary: Praise God for the power that keeps our land
Range: c^1 - e^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto or mezzo-soprano

BWV 72 Cantata Title: *Alles nur nach Gottes Willen*
m. 2b **Aria: "Mit allem, was ich hab und bin"**
Text Summary: I shall always trust in God's will
Range: b - e^2 Tessitura: medium (a few high phrases)
Recommendation: advanced contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: rhythm, agility, breath management

BWV 74 Cantata Title: *Wer mich liebet der wird mein Wort halten*
m. 7 **Aria: "Nichts kann mich erretten"**
Text Summary: Christ's blood saves us, makes us his heirs
Range: b - e^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: intermediate contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: agility

BWV 75 Cantata Title: *Die Elenden sollen essen*
m. 10 **Aria: "Jesus macht mich geistlich reich"**
Text Summary: Spiritual wealth given by Jesus through the Spirit
Range: b - e^2 Tessitura: high
Recommendation: intermediate; mezzo-soprano (octave leaps)

BWV 76 Cantata Title: *Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes*
m. 12 **Aria: "Liebt, ihr Christen, in der Tat"**
Text Summary: Christ's example of brotherly love
Range: b - d^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto or mezzo-soprano

BWV 77 Cantata Title: *Du sollt Gott, deinen Herren, Lieben*
m. 5 **Aria: "Ach, es bleibt in meiner Liebe"**
Text Summary: I want to love perfectly, but lack the power
Range: c^1 - d^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto or mezzo-soprano

BWV 79 Cantata Title: *Gott der Herr ist Sonn und Schild*
m. 2 **Aria: "Gott ist unsre Sonn und Schild"**
Text Summary: God is our sun and shield; gratitude for his protection
Range: $c^{\#1}$ - e^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: advanced; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: agility, breath management

BWV 81 Cantata Title: *Jesus schläft, was soll ich hoffen?*
m. 1 **Aria: "Jesus schläft, was soll ich hoffen?**
Text Summary: Jesus sleeps in the storm; I am without hope
Range: a - d^2 Tessitura: low
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto
Notable challenges: leaps, breath management

BWV 83 Cantata Title: *Erfreute Zeit im neuen Bunde*
m. 1 **Aria: "Erfreute Zeit im neuen Bunde"**
Text Summary: Death is welcomed by believers
Range: c^1 - e^{b2} Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: advanced; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: agility across upper passaggio and above

BWV 85 Cantata Title: *Ich bin ein guter Hirt*
m. 2 **Aria: "Jesus ist ein guter Hirt"**
Text Summary: Jesus gave his life for his sheep
Range: b - e^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: advanced; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: agility, breath management

BWV 86 Cantata Title: *Wahrlich, wahrlich, ich sage euch*
m. 2 **Aria: "Ich will doch wohl Rosen brechen"**
Text Summary: Be confident in times of trouble; prayers are heard
Range: b - d^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto or mezzo-soprano

BWV 87 Cantata Title: *Bisher habt ihr nichts gebeten in meinem Namen*
m. 3 **Aria: "Vergib, O Vater, unsre Schuld"**
Text Summary: Prayer of confession and request for forgiveness
Range: b^b - e^{b2} Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: intermediate; mezzo-soprano

BWV 89 Cantata Title: *Was soll ich aus dir machen, Ephraim*
m. 3 **Aria: "Ein unbarmherziges Gerichte"**
Text Summary: Judgment falls on the unmerciful as in Sodom
Range: c^1 - e^{b2} Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: advanced; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: rhythm, agility, breath management

BWV 92 Cantata Title: *Ich hab in Gottes Herz und Sinn*
m. 3 **Aria: "Zudem ist Weisheit und Verstand"**
Text Summary:
Range: $c^{\#1}$ - b^1 Tessitura: low
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto
Notable challenges: solo chorale melody over obbligato oboe duet

BWV 94 Cantata Title: *Was frag ich nach der Welt*
m. 4 **Aria: "Betörte Welt"**
Text Summary: Jesus is true wealth
Range: b - d^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: advanced; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: rhythms, agility, breath management

BWV 97 Cantata Title: *In allen meinem Taten*
m. 6 **Aria: "Leg ich mich späte nieder"**
Text Summary: God's word is our comfort
Range: $b^{\flat}$ - $c^{\flat 2}$ Tessitura: medium to high
Recommendation: advanced mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: rhythms, leaps, agility, breath management

BWV 100 Cantata Title: *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan*
m. 5 **Aria: "Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan**
Text Summary: Future comfort is greater than today's suffering
Range: a - d^2 Tessitura: Low
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto

BWV 102 Cantata Title: *Herr, deine Augen sehen nach dem Glauben*
m. 3 **Aria: "Weh der Seele, die den Schaden"**
Text Summary: Woe to the soul that is not penitent
Range: c^1 - $e^{\flat 2}$ Tessitura: high
Recommendation: advanced; mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: leaps, agility, breath management

BWV 103 Cantata Title: *Ihr werdet weinen und heulen*
m. 3 **Aria: "Kein Arzt ist außer dir zu finden"**
Text Summary: Christ, the physician, is our balm and only hope
Range: b - d^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: advanced; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: rhythms, agility, breath management

BWV 106 Cantata Title: *Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit*
m. 3a **Aria: "In deine Hände befehl ich meinem Geist"**
Text Summary: Commit your spirit to God's hands
Range: c^1 - f^2 Tessitura: high
Recommendation: intermediate; mezzo-soprano

BWV 108 Cantata Title: *Es ist euch gut, daß ich hingehe*
m. 5 **Aria: "Was mein Herz von dir begehrt"**
Text Summary: Lead me in God's ways forever
Range: $c^{\#1}$ - e^{2} Tessitura: medium to high
Recommendation: advanced; mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: rhythm, leaps, agility

BWV 109 Cantata Title: *Ich glaube, lieber Herr*
m. 5 **Aria: "Der Heiland kennet ja die Seinen"**
Text Summary: Christ aids us in battles of faith and doubt
Range: $b^{\flat}$ - $e^{\flat 2}$ Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: advanced; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: rhythm, agility, breath management

BWV 110 Cantata Title: *Unser Mund sei voll Lachens*
m. 4 **Aria: "Ach Herr, was ist ein Menschenkind"**
Text Summary: Praise God with music
Range: $c^{\#1}$ - e^{2} Tessitura: medium to high
Recommendation: intermediate mezzo-soprano

BWV 112 Cantata Title: *Der Herr ist mein getreuer Hirt*
m. 2 **Aria: "Zum reinen Wasser er mich weist"**
Text Summary: The Lord is my shepherd (23rd Psalm)
Range: b - e^{2} Tessitura: medium to high
Recommendation: advanced; mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: agility, breath management

BWV 113 Cantata Title: *Herr Jesu Christ, du höchste Gut*
m. 2 **Aria: "Erbarm dich mein in socher last"**
Text Summary: Have mercy on me, burdened with sin
Range: $c^{\#1}$ - $c^{\#2}$ Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: breath management
(augmented chorale with violin obbligato)

BWV 114 Cantata Title: *Ach lieben Christen seid getrost*
m. 5 **Aria: "Du machst, o Tod**
Text Summary: Death does not frighten me; it is the way to freedom
Range: $b^{\flat}$ - $e^{\flat 2}$ Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: advanced; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: leaps, agility, breath management

BWV 115 Cantata Title: *Mache dich, mein Geist, bereit*
m. 2 **Aria: "Ach schläfrige Seele, wie? ruhest du noch?**
Text Summary: Sleeping still? Judgment will awake you
Range: a - d^2 Tessitura: low to medium
Recommendation: advanced; contralto
Notable challenges: rhythm, leaps, agility, breath management

BWV 116 Cantata Title: *Du Friedefürst, Herr Jesu Christ*
m. 2 **Aria: "Ach, unaussprechlich ist die Not"**
Text Summary: We cry out His name in times of judgment and peril
Range: $c^{\#1}$ - e^2 Tessitura: medium to high
Recommendation: intermediate; mezzo-soprano

BWV 117 Cantata Title: *Sei Lob und Ehr dem höchsten Gut*
m. 7 **Aria: "Ich will dich all mein Leben lang"**
Text Summary: Praise God always, reaching all the earth
Range: a - e^2 Tessitura: medium to high
Recommendation: intermediate; mezzo-soprano

BWV 119 Cantata Title: *Preise, Jerusalem, den Herrn*
m. 5 **Aria: "Die Obrigkeit ist Gottes Gabe"**
Text Summary: Government is the gift and image of God
Range: $b^{\flat}$ - d^2 Tessitura: low
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto

BWV 120 Cantata Title: *Gott, man lobt dich in der Stille*
m. 1 **Aria: "Gott, man lobet dich in der Stille"**
Text Summary: Praise and vows offered to God in Zion
Range: $c^{\#1}$ - e^2 Tessitura: medium to high
Recommendation: advanced; mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: rhythms, leaps, extreme agility

BWV 125 Cantata Title: *Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin*
m. 2 **Aria: "Ich will auch mit gebrochnen Augen"**
Text Summary: Looking to Jesus in death
Range: b - d^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: advanced; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: rhythm, breath management

BWV 129 Cantata Title: *Gelobet sei der Herr, mein Gott*
m. 4 **Aria: "Gelobet sei der Herr"**
Text Summary: Praise to the Trinity, who is praised by all
Range: $c^{\#1}$ - e^2 Tessitura: medium to high
Recommendation: advanced; mezzo-soprano

BWV 132 Cantata Title: *Bereitet die Wege, bereitet die Bahn!*
m. 5 **Aria: "Christi Glieder, ach bedenket"**
Text Summary: Baptism provides clean raiment
Range: b - d^2 Tessitura: low
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto

BWV 133 Cantata Title: *Ich freue mich in dir*
m. 2 **Aria: "Getrost! es faßt ein heilger Leib"**
Text Summary:
Range: b - e^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: advanced; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: agility, breath management

BWV 136 Cantata Title: *Erforsche mich, Gott, und erfahre mein Herz*
m. 3 **Aria: "Es kommt ein Tag"**
Text Summary: Judgment Day will mean destruction to hypocrites
Range: b - d^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: advanced; mezzo (and some contraltos)
Notable challenges: agility in all registers

BWV 137 Cantata Title: *Lobe den Herren, den mächtigen König der Ehren*
m. 2 **Aria: "Lobe den Herren, der alles so herrlich regieret"**
Text Summary: Praise God who bears you up on eagles' wings
Range: d^1 - d^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: breath management
(augmented chorale tune with violin obbligato)

BWV 144 Cantata Title: *Nimm, was dein ist, und gehe hin*
m. 2 **Aria: "Murre nicht, Lieber Christ"**
Text Summary: Being content with one's lot in life
Range: b - d^2 Tessitura: low to medium
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto or mezzo-soprano

BWV 146 Cantata Title: *Wir müssen durch viel Trübsal*
m. 3 **Aria: "Ich will nach dem Himmel zu"**
Text Summary: Sodom is denied the prospect of heaven
Range: c^1 - e^{b2} Tessitura: medium to high
Recommendation: advanced; mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: leaps

BWV 147 Cantata Title: *Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben*
m. 3 **Aria: "Schäme dich, O Seele nicht"**
Text Summary: Denial of Christ now means denial by him later
Range: d^1 - e^2 Tessitura: medium to high
Recommendation: intermediate; mezzo-soprano

BWV 148 Cantata Title: *Bringet dem Herrn Ehre seines Namens*
m. 4 **Aria: "Mund und Herze steht dir offen"**
Text Summary: Receiving God, we rest in him
Range: d^1 - e^2 Tessitura: high
Recommendation: intermediate; mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: leaps, chromaticism

BWV 151 Cantata Title: *Süßer Trost, mein Jesus kömmt*
m. 3 **Aria: "In Jesu Demut kann ich Trost"**
Text Summary: Christ's poverty makes us rich
Range: a - d^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: advanced; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: leaps, agility over both registration breaks

BWV 153 Cantata Title: *Schau, lieber Gott, wie meine Feind*
m. 8 **Aria: "Soll ich meinen Lebenslauf"**
Text Summary: Suffering ends in heaven where it changes to joy
Range: d^1 - e^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto or mezzo-soprano

BWV 154 Cantata Title: *Mein liebster Jesus ist verloren*
m. 4 **Aria: "Jesu, laß dich finden"**
Text Summary: Do not hide yourself in the cloud of my sins
Range: b - e^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: intermediate contralto or mezzo-soprano

BWV 156 Cantata Title: *Ich steh mit einem Fuß im Grabe*
m. 4 **Aria: "Herr, was du willt, soll mir gefallen"**
Text Summary: Prayer of submission to God's will in all things
Range: f - e^{b2} Tessitura: medium, extended over both passaggios
Recommendation: advanced; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: agility in all registers

BWV 161 Cantata Title: *Komm, du süße Todesstunde*
m. 1 **Aria: "Komm, du süße Todesstunde"**
Text Summary: Sweetness comes out of death
Range: a - d^2 Tessitura: low to medium
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto
Notable challenges: agility over lower passaggio

BWV 164 Cantata Title: *Ihr, die ihr euch von Christo nennet*
m. 3 **Aria: "Nur durch Lieb und durch Erbarmen"**
Text Summary: Sharing the pain of others make us God-like
Range: a - e Tessitura: low to medium
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: rhythms

BWV 165 Cantata Title: *O heilges Geist - und Wasserbad*
m. 3 **Aria: "Jesu, deraus großer Liebe"**
Text Summary: May my baptism's healing purpose be ever realized
Range: a - d^2 Tessitura: low
Recommendation: advanced; contralto
Notable challenges: agility, breath management

BWV 166 Cantata Title: *Wo gehest du hin*
m. 5 **Aria: "Man nehme sich in acht"**
Text Summary: Worldly good fortune can change before nightfall
Range: b^b - d^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: advanced; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: agility, breath management

BWV 173 Cantata Title: *Erhöhtes Fleisch und Blut*
m. 3 **Aria: "Gott will, O ihr Menschenkinder"**
Text Summary: It is impossible not to speak of God's great deeds
Range: b - d^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: leaps, agility

BWV 174 Cantata Title: *Ich liebe den Höchsten von ganzem Gemüte*
m. 2 **Aria: "Ich liebe den Höchsten von ganzem Gemüte"**
Text Summary: To love God with all our hearts because he loves us
Range: b - e^2 Tessitura: medium to high
Recommendation: intermediate; mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: leaps

BWV 175 Cantata Title: *Er rufet seinen Schafen mit Namen*
m. 2 **Aria: "Komm, leite mich"**
Text Summary: Yearning for the shepherd and green pastures
Range: b - e^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: intermediate contralto or mezzo-soprano

BWV 176 Cantata Title: *Es ist ein trotzig und verzagt Ding*
m. 5 **Aria: "Ermuntert euch"**
Test Summary:
Range: e^{b1} - e^{b2} Tessitura: high
Recommendation: intermediate; mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: agility, breath management

BWV 177 Cantata Title: *Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ*
m. 2 **Aria: "Ich bitt noch mehr, O Herre Gott"**
Text Summary: Hope in death; depending on God's grace
Range: d^1 - e^{b2} Tessitura: low to medium
Recommendation: advanced; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: rhythms, leaps, agility

BWV 182 Cantata Title: *Himmelskönig sei willkommen*
m. 5 **Aria: "Leget euch dem Heiland unter"**
Text Summary: Lay down your life before the entering king
Range: b - $c^{\#2}$ Tessitura: low to medium
Recommendation: advanced, contralto
Notable challenges: agility, breath management

BWV 185 Cantata Title: *Barmherziges herze der ewigen Liebe*
m. 3 **Aria: "Sei bemüht in dieser Zelt"**
Text Summary: Sow plentifully to receive a rich harvest
Range: a - $d^{\#2}$ Tessitura: low
Recommendation: advanced; contralto
Notable challenges: rhythms, extreme agility, breath management

BWV 187 Cantata Title: *Es wartet alles auf dich*
m. 3 **Aria: "Du Herr, du krönst allein das Jahr mit meinem Gott"**
Text Summary: The Lord crowns the year with his blessing
Range: c^1 - $e^{\flat 2}$ Tessitura: medium to high
Recommendation: intermediate; mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: agility

BWV 188 Cantata Title: *Ich habe meine Zuversicht*
m. 4 **Aria: "Unerforschlich ist die Weise"**
Text Summary: God's way are best but beyond our understanding
Range: b - e^2 Tessitura: high
Recommendation: advanced; mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: rhythms, agility, breath management

BWV 190 Cantata Title: *Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied*
m. 3 **Aria: "Lobe, Zion, deinen Gott"**
Text Summary: God leads us to his pasture like sheep
Range: b - d^2 Tessitura: low to medium
Recommendation: intermediate; contralto

BWV 193 Cantata Title: *Ihr Tore zu Zion*
m. 5a **Aria: "Sende, Herr, den Segen ein"**
Text Summary: A blessing for just administrators
Range: d^1 - e^2 Tessitura: high
Recommendation: advanced; mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: rhythms, agility, breath management
(melismatic synchronicity with oboe obbligato)

BWV 197 Cantata Title: *Gott ist unsre Zuversicht*
m. 3 **Aria: "Schläfert allein Sorgenkummer**
Text Summary: Troubles quieted by trust in God's watchful care
Range: a - e^2 Tessitura: medium to high
Recommendation: advanced; mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: agility, chromaticism

BWV 198 Cantata Title: *Laß, Fürstin, laß noch einen Strahl*
m. 5 **Aria: "Wie starb die Heldin so vergnügt**
Text Summary: Death conquers the body but not the spirit
Range: b - e^2 Tessitura: medium to high
Recommendation: intermediate; mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: leaps, breath management

BWV 248 Cantata Title: *Jauchzet, froh locket, auf, preiset die Tage (Christmas Oratorio, Part I)*

m. 4 **Aria: "Bereite dich, Zion"**
Text Summary: Zion, prepare to receive the Bridegroom
Range: c^1 - e^2 Tessitura: medium to high
Recommendation: advanced; mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: leaps, agility, breath management

BWV 248 Cantata Title: *Und es waren Hirten in derselben Gegend (Christmas Oratorio, Part II)*

m. 19 **Aria: "Schlafe, mein Liebster, genieß der Ruh"**
Text Summary: Lullaby to the Christ child
Range: b - e^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: advanced; contralto or mezzo-soprano
Notable challenges: agility, breath management

BWV 248 Cantata Title: *Herrscher des Himmels, erhöre das Lallen (Christmas Oratorio, Part III)*

m. 31 **Aria: "Schließe, mein Herze, dies selige Wunder"**
Text Summary: Embrace the [Christmas] miracle within your heart
Range: b - e^2 Tessitura: medium
Recommendation: intermediate: contralto or mezzo-soprano

(There are no alto solos in the other sections of the *Christmas Oratorio*)

BWV 249 Cantata Title: *Kommt, eilet und laufet (Oster-Oratorium)*

m. 9 **Aria: "Saget, saget mir geschwinde"**
Text Summary: Where can I find Him who my soul loves?
Range: a - e^2 Tessitura: medium to high
Recommendation: intermediate; mezzo-soprano
(also advanced contralto)
Notable challenges: agility

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