

BACH 721 - J.S. BACH: Cantatas 142 & 65, Magnificat BWV 243

Bach moved to Leipzig on May 22, 1723, where he was to live as Cantor of the Thomas Kirche for the remaining 27 years of his life. He quickly realized that the weekly Cantatas were to be his first priority, and he at once determined to fulfil an old ambition to produce a series of Cantatas as required for every Sunday or Special Occasion in the Church's Year, composing almost one per week for the first three years of his tenure. Fortunately he was able to draw upon a basic cantata model already formulated several years earlier while he was at Weimar.

Our first Cantata, **BWV 142: Uns ist ein Kind geboren** – *For unto us a Child is born*, a Cantata for the first day of the Christmas Festival, was composed at Weimar, probably in 1712 or 1713 with a text by Erdmann Neumeister. It is scored for Alto, Tenor and Bass soloists, a full Choir, two Recorders, two Oboes, first and second Violins, Viola and Continuo.

This is followed by **Cantata BWV 65: Sie werden aus Saba alle kommen** – *They shall all come out of Sheba*. This Advent Cantata tells of the visit of the three Wise Men from the Orient, coming to present their gifts to the new-born Christ in the Bethlehem stable. First performed on January 6th, 1724, the Festival of the Three Kings or *Dreikönigsfest* which brought to an end Bach's first Leipzig Christmas, the Cantata is scored for Tenor and Bass soloists, full Choir, two Recorders, two Oboi da caccia, two Horns, Viola, Cello, Double bass and Continuo.

Bach was responsible for music in both the Nikolaikirche and the Thomaskirche, as well as St Paul's University Church. The schedule for December 25th, 1723, called for a 7 am Mass in the Thomaskirche with Cantata 63 and Sanctus BWV 238; a 9 am Service in St Paul's, again with Cantata 63, then a 1.30 pm Vespers with Cantata 63 again and the **Magnificat in E**. The custom of interpolating Christmas Verses within the text of the Magnificat was already well established by Bach's time. The main choir would have sung as usual in the organ loft at the West end of St Thomas' Church; there was also a smaller organ and tiny choir gallery clinging to a high wall opposite the main organ/choir gallery, known as the *Swallows' Nest*. It was from here that the Christmas Verses would have been sung by a secondary choir. The verses most probably described the scenic presentations of the Christmas story, such as are still made, often by children, for our churches today. Ten years later, in 1732 or 33, Bach revised the **Magnificat**, transposing it from **E Major** to **D Major**, one of the standard trumpet keys, and making some other instrumental alterations: for example, replacing recorders with the (then) more modern transverse flutes. He also deleted the Christmas Verses, thus making the Magnificat suitable for performance at any time during the Church Year. For our present performance we have used the later, **D Major** version, but have retained the Christmas Verses.

CANTATA BWV 142: Uns ist ein Kind geboren – For unto us a Child is born.

CONCERTO (*Instrumental Sinfonia*)

CHORUS: *Uns ist ein Kind geboren, ein Sohn ist uns gegeben.* A child is born, a son is given to us.

Bass ARIA: *Dein Geburtstag ist erschienen, so erfordert meine Pflicht, dich mein Jesu, zu bedienen. Doch ich Armer weiss gar nicht, was ich suche, was ich finde, welches dir zum Angebinde als ein heilig Opfer tügt, dich o grosser Gott vergnügt.* Thy day of birth has come, and thus it is my duty to serve Thee, my Jesus. For I, unfortunate, neither know what I seek, nor what I find, and what gift as Holy Sacrifice I can offer Thee that pleases Thee, O great God.

CHORUS: *Ich will den Namen Gottes loben mit meinem Liede, und will ihn hoch ehren mit Dank.* I will praise the name of my God in my hymn, and I will honor and thank him.

Tenor ARIA: *Jesu, dir sei Dank gesungen, Jesu, dir sei Dank und Ruhm. Denn das Lob ist mir in allen auf das lieblichste gefallen, du, du bist mein Eigentum.* Jesus, our hymns are our thanks, all glory and honor are for Thee. For my fate is the sweetest on Earth as Thou and only Thou art mine.

Alto RECITATIVE: *Immanuel! Du wollest dir gefallen lassen, dass dich mein Geist und Glaube kann umfassen; kann ich die Freude gleich so herzlich nicht entdecken, die dein Geburtstag will erwecken, wird doch mein schwaches Lallen dir durch Lob und Preis gefallen.* Immanuel! It is Thy will and wish that my spirit and faith can comprehend Thee; and though I cannot immediately discover the joy that Thy birth rouses I still hope that my weak stuttering gives praise and honor to Thee.

Alto ARIA: *Jesu, dir sei Preis gesungen, denn ich bin durch dich erlöst. Nichts betrübet das Gemüte, da mein Herz durch deine Güte überschwenglich wird getröstet.* Jesus, thou shalt be sung praise for thou art our Savior. Nothing grieves my soul, as Thy exuberant goodness consoles me.

CHORALE: *Alleluja, gelobet sei Gott, singen wir all aus unsers Herzens Grunde; denn Gott hat beut' gemacht solch Freud', der vergessen soll'n zu keiner Stunde.* Alleluja, God be praised, we all sing from the bottom of our hearts; for we shall never forget the great joy God created this day.

CANTATA BWV 65: Sie werden aus Saba alle kommen – They shall all come out of Sheba

CHORUS: *Sie werden aus Saba alle kommen. Gold und Weihrauch bringen und des Herren Lob verkündigen.* They shall all come from Sheba, bringing gold and incense, praising the Lord.

CHORALE: *Die Königen aus Saba kamen dar, Gold, Weihrauch, Myrrhen brachten sie dar. Alleluia!* The Kings came there from Sheba, bringing gold, incense and myrrh. Alleluia!

Bass RECIT: *Was dort Jesaias vorhergesehen, das ist zu Bethlehem geschehn. Hier stellen sich die Weisen bei Jesu Krippe ein und wollen ihn als ihren König preisen. Gold, Weihrauch, Myrrhen sind die köstlichen Geschenke, womit sie dieses Jesuskind zu Bethlehem im Stall beehren. Mein Jesu, wenn ich itzt an meine Pflicht gedenke, muß ich mich auch zu deiner Krippen kehren und gleichfalls dankbar sein: Denn dieser Tag ist mir ein Tag der Freuden, da du, o Lebensfürst, das Licht der Heiden und ihr Erlöser wirst. Was aber bring ich wohl, du Himmelskönig? Ist dir mein Herze nicht zu wenig, so nimm es gnädig an, weil ich nichts Edlers bringen kann.*

Behold! what Isaiah once foretold is now in Bethlehem fulfilled. Here by Jesus' cradle the Wise Men are come, to praise Him as their King. Gold, incense, and myrrh are their precious gifts, with which they give honor to the new-born Jesus

Child in Bethlehem's stable. My Jesus, when I consider my own duty, I must also present myself at Thy cradle and give thanks: For this day is for me a day of gladness, when Thou, O Prince of Life, shall be as light to the Heathen, and their Savior. But what can I bring to Thee, Thou King of Heaven? Though my heart is not worthy to be given, yet, take it graciously, for I can bring no nobler a gift.

Bass ARIA: *Gold aus Ophir ist zu schlecht, weg, nur weg mit eitlen Gaben, die ihr aus der Erde brecht! Jesus will das Herze haben. Schenke dies, o Christenschar, Jesus zu dem neuen Jahr!*

Gold of Ophir is but too little. Away with such poor gifts, which come only from the Earth! Jesus asks for our hearts. Give this then, O Christian Band to Jesus for the New Year!

Tenor RECIT: *Verschmähe nicht, du, meiner Seele Licht, mein Herz, das ich in Demut zu dir bringe; es schließt ja solche Dinge in sich zugleich mit ein, die deines Geistes Früchte sein. Des Glaubens Gold, der Weihrauch des Gebets, die Myrrhen der Geduld sind meine Gaben, die sollst du, Jesu, für und für zum Eigentum und zum Geschenke haben. Gib aber dich auch selber mir, so machst du mich zum Reichsten auf der Erden; denn, hab ich dich, so muß des größten Reichthums Überfluß mir demaleinst im Himmel werden.* Light of my soul, reject not my heart that I offer in humility; within it live rare gifts Thy Holy Spirit gives. The gold of faith, incense of prayer, myrrh of patience are my gifts. But give also of Thyself to me, then surely I'll be the richest of Earth's mortals; for having Thee in me, how greatly favored shall I be and one day enter Heaven's portals.

Tenor ARIA: *Nimm mich dir zu eigen hin, nimm mein Herze zum Geschenke. Alles, alles, was ich bin, was ich rede, tu und denke, soll, mein Heiland, nur allein dir zum Dienst gewidmet sein.*

Take me, Savior, for Thine own; take my heart as a gift. Everything I have, everything I tell, think and do, shall be dedicated only to Thy service, my Savior.

CHORALE: *Ei nun, mein Gott, so fall ich dir getrost in deine Hände. Nimm mich und mach es so mit mir bis an mein letztes Ende, wie du wohl weißt, daß meinem Geist dadurch sein Nutz entstehe, und deine Ehr je mehr und mehr sich in mir selbst erhöhe.* So, my God, I place myself confidently in Thy hands. Take me, and till my life's last breath, I do Thy will and praise Thee.

MAGNIFICAT in D, BWV 243 with Christmas Verses

CHORUS: *Magnificat anima mea Dominum.* My soul magnifies the Lord.

Soprano Aria: *Et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo.* And my spirit rejoiced in God my Savior.

First Christmas Verse - Chorus: *Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her, ich bring euch gute neue Mär. Der guten Mär bring ich so viel, davon ich singn und sagen will.* I come from Heaven above, and bring you good new tidings. Good new tidings I bring so many, of which I will now sing and tell.

Soprano ARIA: *Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae. Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent.* For He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden. And behold, hence forth shall call me blessed.

CHORUS: *Omnes generationes.* All generations.

Bass ARIA: *Quia fecit mihi magna, qui potens est et sanctum nomen eius.* For He that is mighty has done great things for me, and Holy is His name.

Second Christmas Verse - Chorus: *Freut euch und jubiliert; zu Bethlehem gefunden wird das herzeliebe Jesulein, das soll euer Freud und Wonne sein.* Rejoice and be glad; in Bethlehem is found the precious Christ Child, which shall be your joy and gladness.

Alto/Tenor DUET: *Et misericordia a progenie in progenies timentibus eum.* And His mercy is upon those that fear him from generation to generation.

CHORUS: *Fecit potentiam in brachio suo, dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.* He has shown strength in His arm and has scattered those with pride in their hearts.

3rd Christmas Verse - Chorus: *Gloria in excelsis Deo! Et in terra pax hominibus bonavoluntas!* Glory to God in the highest! And on Earth peace, goodwill among men.

Tenor ARIA: *Deposuit potentes de sede, et exaltavit humiles.* He has put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted the humble.

Alto ARIA: *Esurientes implevit bonis, et divites dimisit inanes.* The hungry He has filled with good things, and the rich He has sent empty away.

4th Christmas Verse - Soprano/Bass Duet: *Virga Jesse floruit, Emanuel noster apparuit; induit carnem hominis, fit puer delectabilis; alleluja.* The Virgin Jesse has borne a flower, Emmanuel our Saviour has appeared; He has taken human form, and become a child to bring us joy; Alleluia.

TRIO - Soprano I, II, Alto: *Suscepit Israel puerum suum recordatus misericordiae suae.* And He, remembering His mercy, has succored His servant Israel.

CHORUS: *Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros, Abraham et semini eius in saecula.* As He promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever.

CHORUS: *Gloria Patri, Gloria Filio, Gloria et Spiritui sancto! Sicut erat in principio et nunc, et semper et in saecula saeculorum.* Amen. Glory be to the Father, Glory to the Son, and Glory to the Holy Ghost! As it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be for ever and ever. Amen.