

= Nun komm , der Heiden Heiland , BWV 61 =

Nun komm , der Heiden Heiland (Now come , Savior of the heathens) , BWV 61 , is a church cantata by Johann Sebastian Bach . He composed it in Weimar for the first Sunday in Advent , the Sunday which begins the liturgical year , and first performed it on 2 December 1714 .

The cantata text was provided by Erdmann Neumeister , who quoted the Book of Revelation and framed his work by two hymn stanzas , the beginning of Martin Luther 's " Nun komm , der Heiden Heiland " , the main hymn for Advent with a melody based on Medieval chant , and the end from Philipp Nicolai 's " Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern " . The librettist quoted developed his thoughts like a sermon . Bach structured the cantata in six movements , beginning with a chorale fantasia , followed by a series of alternating recitatives and arias , and concluded by a four @-@ part chorale . He scored it for three vocal soloists (soprano , tenor and bass) , strings and continuo . Bach led the first performance on 2 December 1714 . As Thomaskantor , director of music of the main churches of Leipzig , he performed the cantata again on 28 November 1723 .

= = History and words = =

On 2 March 1714 Bach was appointed concertmaster of the Weimar court capelle of the co @-@ reigning dukes Wilhelm Ernst and Ernst August of Saxe @-@ Weimar . As concertmaster , he assumed the principal responsibility for composing new works , specifically cantatas for the Schlosskirche (palace church) , on a monthly schedule .

The exact chronological order of Bach 's Weimar cantatas remains uncertain . Only four bear autograph dates . BWV 61 is dated 1714 and bears the liturgical designation " am ersten Advent " , the First Sunday of Advent . The prescribed readings for the Sunday were from the Epistle to the Romans , " now is our salvation nearer " (Romans 13 : 11 ? 14) , and from the Gospel of Matthew , the Entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21 : 1 ? 9) .

The cantata text was provided by Erdmann Neumeister , published in Geistliche Poesien in Frankfurt in 1714 . He began and ended his work with a hymn stanza . " Nun komm , der Heiden Heiland " is the main hymn for Advent , which Martin Luther had derived from the Latin Veni redemptor gentium . Its melody is based on Medieval chant and supplies a " dark , imposing character " . For the conclusion , Neumeister chose the second part , the Abgesang , of the seventh and final stanza of Philipp Nicolai 's " Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern " . The librettist quoted the Book of Revelation in the fourth movement : " Siehe , ich stehe vor der Tür und klopfe an . So jemand meine Stimme hören wird und die Tür auftun , zu dem werde ich eingehen und das Abendmahl mit ihm halten und er mit mir . " ? " Behold , I stand at the door and knock . Anyone that hears My voice and opens the door , to him I will enter and keep the evening meal with him and he with me . " (Revelation 3 : 20) . The poet combined the ideas of Jesus ' entry into Jerusalem and his promise to return with an invitation to enter the heart of the individual Christian . He developed his thoughts like a sermon , as the Bach scholar Alfred Dürr notes : mentioning that the arrival of Jesus brings blessing every day (movement 2) , a prayer that Jesus may come to his congregation (movement 2) , and in response to his statement of being at the door (movement 4) the opening of the heart of the individual Christian who knows about his sinfulness (movement 5) . Bach had set one text by Neumeister before , possibly by 1713 , in his cantata Gleichwie der Regen und Schnee vom Himmel fällt , BWV 18 .

Because of Bach 's liturgical designation , the performance can be precisely dated to 2 December 1714 . As Thomaskantor , director of music of the main churches of Leipzig , Bach performed the cantata again on 28 November 1723 , beginning the first liturgical year in the new position . Bach paid attention to the exceptional occasion at beginning of the liturgical year , also when he composed later the chorale cantata Nun komm , der Heiden Heiland , BWV 62 (1724) , and Schwingt freudig euch empor , BWV 36 (1731) , which are all inspired by Luther 's hymn . Bach also began his Orgelbüchlein by a setting of the same tune . In Leipzig , the first Sunday in Advent was the last chance to hear cantata music before Christmas , because tempus clausum was observed during Advent .

= = Scoring and structure = =

Bach structured the cantata in six movements , beginning with chorale fantasia , followed by a series of alternating recitatives and arias and concluded by a chorale . He scored it for three vocal soloists (soprano (S) , tenor (T) and bass (B)) , violins (VI) , two violas (Va) , and basso continuo (Bc) , including cello (Vc) and bassoon (Fg) . The autograph score is titled : " Dominica 1 . Adventus Xsti . / Nun komm der Heyden Heyland . / â . / due Violini / due Viole / Violoncello / è & / Fagotto . / Sopr : Alto . Tenore è Baſſo / Col ' / Organo . / da / Joh Sebast Bach / anno . / 1714 " . The duration is given as 18 minutes . According to the Bach scholar Christoph Wolff , the use of two viola parts is French style . Dürr notes that perhaps the strings were doubled by oboes , at least in the Leipzig performance , in a practise that was " not always marked in the score " .

In the following table of the movements , the scoring , keys and time signatures are taken from Dürr , using the symbol for common time (4 / 4) . The continuo , playing throughout , is not shown .

= = Music = =

= = = 1 = = =

The first Sunday of Advent begins the liturgical year . Bach marked it by creating the opening chorus , " Nun komm , der Heiden Heiland " (Now come , Saviour of the Gentiles) , as a chorale fantasia in the style of a French overture , which follows the sequence slow ? fast (fugue) ? slow . In a French opera performance , the King of France would have entered during the overture ; Bach greets a different king . Two of the four lines of the chorale melody are combined in the first slow section , line three is treated in the fast section , and line four in the final slow section . The melody of line 1 is first presented in the continuo , then sung by all four voices one after another , accompanied by a solemn dotted rhythm in the orchestra . Line 2 is sung by all voices together , accompanied by the orchestra . Line 3 is a fast fugato , with the instruments playing colla parte , marked " gai " . Line 4 is set as line 2 . Wolff notes that Bach possibly followed the model of an opera by Agostino Steffani , Henrico Leone , which uses a chorus in a French overture .

= = = 2 = = =

The recitative for tenor , " Der Heiland ist gekommen " (The Saviour has come) , begins secco but continues as an arioso , with tenor and continuo imitating one another . This more lyrical style of recitative derives from early Italian operas and cantatas , where it was known as mezz 'aria ? half aria .

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The tenor aria , " Komm , Jesu , komm zu deiner Kirche " (Come , Jesus , come to Your Church) , is accompanied by the violins and violas in unison . It is written in the rhythm of a gigue , and the combination of voice , unison strings and continuo gives it the texture of a trio sonata . Dürr comments that the use of the unison string ritornello , played even during the vocal passages , provides a " rather pointedly strict and unified character " . The musicologist Richard Taruskin comments : " This hybridization of operatic and instrumental styles is ... standard operating procedure in Bach 's cantatas . "

= = = 4 = = =

The quote from Revelation , " Siehe , ich stehe vor der Tür und klopfe an " (See , I stand before the door and knock) , is given as a recitative to the bass as the vox Christi (voice of Christ) . The

knocking on the door is expressed by pizzicato chords in the strings . Dürr notes : " The most expressive text @-@ engendered declamation is here ingeniously melted down into a structure only ten bars long but of compelling musical logic . " John Eliot Gardiner , who conducted the Bach Cantata Pilgrimage in 2000 , compares it to an Emmaus scene in Bach 's later cantata Bleib bei uns , denn es will Abend werden , BWV 6 , the " post @-@ Resurrection appearance to the disciples " in Halt im Gedächtnis Jesum Christ , BWV 67 , even to " the entry of the Commendatore in Mozart 's opera Don Giovanni . Bach would later frequently use the bass as the voice of Christ , in his St Matthew Passion even with a similar string accompaniment .

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The response to the invitation is the individual prayer of the soprano , " Öffne dich , mein ganzes Herze " (Open , my whole heart) . It is accompanied only by the continuo , with an adagio middle section .

= = = 6 = = =

In the closing chorale , " Amen , amen ! Komm , du schöne Freudenkrone " (Amen , amen ! Come , you fair crown of joy) , Bach sets the Abgesang only of the final stanza of Nicolai 's hymn . The musicologist Julian Mincham offers the thought : " Conceivably the most convincing explanation lies , as it so often does , within the text ? ... do not delay , I await You longingly . The hymn tune itself , through its very abbreviation implies a sense of urgency and the feeling of being unable to defer any longer . " In Bach 's setting , the violin adds a jubilant fifth part to the four vocal parts . The violin has to " climb three octaves to convey the extent of the soul 's longing for the joys of a future life and the prospect of Jesus returning at the end of time " .

= = Selected recordings = =

The listing is taken from the selection on the Bach @-@ Cantatas website . Choirs and ensembles are roughly marked as large by red background . Green background indicates performances with one voice per part (OVPP) for the vocal column , instrumental groups playing period instruments in historically informed performances in the instrumental column Instr ..