

= Wir danken dir , Gott , wir danken dir , BWV 29 =

Wir danken dir , Gott , wir danken dir ( We thank you , God , we thank you ) , BWV 29 , is a sacred cantata by Johann Sebastian Bach . He composed it in Leipzig in 1731 for Ratswechsel , the annual inauguration of a new town council , and first performed it on 27 August of that year . The cantata was part of a festive service in the Nikolaikirche . The cantata text by an unknown author includes in movement 2 the beginning of Psalm 75 , and as the closing chorale the fifth stanza of Johann Gramann 's " Nun lob , mein Seel , den Herren " . Bach scored the work in eight movements for four vocal parts and a festive Baroque orchestra of three trumpets , timpani , two oboes , strings , an obbligato organ and basso continuo . The organ dominates the first movement Sinfonia which Bach derived from a Partita for violin . The full orchestra accompanies the first choral movement and plays with the voices in the closing chorale , while a sequence of three arias alternating with two recitatives is scored intimately .

Bach used the music from the choral movement for both the Gratias agimus tibi and Dona nobis pacem of his Mass in B minor .

= = History and words = =

Bach composed the cantata in 1731 for Ratswechsel , the inauguration of the new town council , which was celebrated annually in a festive service in the Nikolaikirche on the Monday following the feast day of St. Bartholomew ( 24 August ) . It was not a democratic election , but a " ceremonial transfer of office " of council members who were appointed . The service was not part of the liturgical year with cantata texts related to prescribed biblical epistle and gospel readings . For the same occasion , Bach had already written the cantata Preise , Jerusalem , den Herrn , BWV 119 , in his first year in Leipzig , 1723 . For the Ratswechsel service , he could count on the entire council ( his employer ) listening , probably also civil servants and representatives of the Elector 's administration for the region . The musicologist Klaus Hofmann notes : " It was an opportunity for Bach to show how sacred music was flourishing under his direction and to present himself as a composer . "

The cantata text of Wir danken dir , Gott by an unknown author includes in movement 2 the first verse of Psalm 75 ( Psalm 75 : 1 ) and as the closing chorale the fifth stanza of Johann Gramann 's hymn of praise " Nun lob , mein Seel , den Herren " ( 1540 ) .

Bach first performed the cantata on 27 August 1731 . In 1733 , he adapted the music of the first choral movement with only minor changes for the Gratias agimus tibi of his Missa ( Kyrie and Gloria ) for the Dresden court , on a text expressing the same idea in Latin . According to Hofmann , the movement is based on an earlier lost composition .

Bach performed the cantata for Ratswahl at least two more times , on 31 August 1739 and on 24 August 1749 . He expanded the Missa of 1733 to his Mass in B minor and concluded his work by repeating the music as the Dona nobis pacem .

= = Scoring and structure = =

The cantata is structured in eight movements and takes about 28 minutes to perform . The instrumentation reflects the festive occasion for which it was written . Bach scored the work for four vocal soloists ( soprano ( S ) , alto ( A ) , tenor ( T ) and bass ) ( B ) , a four @-@ part choir , and a Baroque orchestra of three trumpets ( Tr ) , timpani ( Ti ) , two oboes ( Ob ) , two violins ( VI ) ( violin solo in movement 3 ) , violas ( Va ) , an obbligato organ ( Org ) and basso continuo ( Bc ) . The autograph score is titled : " Bey der Rahts @-@ Wahl / 1731 . / Wir dancken dir , Gott , wir dancken dir . / à / 4 Voci . / 3 Trombe / Tamburi / 2 Hautbois / 2 Violini / Viola / e / Continuo / con Organo obligato / di / Joh.Seb : Bach .

In the following table of the movements , the scoring follows the Neue Bach @-@ Ausgabe , and the abbreviations for voices and instruments the list of Bach cantatas . The time signature is provided using the symbol for common time ( 4 / 4 ) . The timpani are listed with the trumpets

because they always play together .

= = Music = =

= = = 1 = = =

The cantata is one of few sacred Bach cantatas opened by an orchestral sinfonia . Another is the early Weinen , Klagen , Sorgen , Zagen , BWV 12 . The music , marked Presto is an arrangement of the prelude from Bach 's Partita for violin , BWV 1006 , which Bach had already revised for organ and strings in 1729 for the wedding cantata Herr Gott , Beherrscher aller Dinge , BWV 120a . In the cantata for Ratswechsel , the solo organ plays the original violin part " in virtuoso motoric writing " , while the full orchestra adds an accompaniment .

= = = 2 = = =

The first vocal movement is a setting of verse 1 of Psalm 75 , " Wir danken dir , Gott , wir danken dir , und verkündigen deine Wunder " , translated in the King James version of the bible as " Unto thee , O God , do we give thanks , unto thee do we give thanks : for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare " . In contrast to the virtuoso introduction , the chorus begins in motet style in grave stile antico . The bass begins in great simplicity a theme in even steps ; the tenor starts imitating almost immediately , the alto a little later , then the soprano . A countersubject illustrates the telling of God 's wonders , embellishing the words verkündigen ( " declare " ) and Wunder ( " wondrous works " ) . In the beginning only oboes and strings play colla parte with the voices , then a trumpet doubles the soprano . Developing further , two trumpets take part in the polyphony , and a climax is reached when the third trumpet and timpani enter . Hofmann comments that although the movement begins in old style , " Bach 's method of intensification ( by means of which he gradually introduces trumpets and ultimately allows the theme to be heard in stretta ) is thoroughly baroque .

= = = 3 = = =

" Halleluja , Stärk und Macht " ( Alleluia , strength and power ) is set as an aria for tenor . The voice , a solo violin and the continuo are equal partners .

= = = 4 = = =

A recitative for bass , " Gottlob ! es geht uns wohl ! " ( Praise God ! It is well for us ! ) mentions that God " holds his hand protectively and in blessing above the city " .

= = = 5 = = =

The soprano aria is a prayer , " Gedenk an uns mit deiner Liebe " ( Consider us with Your love ) ? ? ( ? Think of us with your love ? ) for " God 's future providence " , described by Hofmann as " a musical display piece full of warmth and tenderness in a rocking siciliano rhythm . For long stretches in the vocal sections , Bach does without a continuo accompaniment ( thus without the instrumental bass register ) ? a tactic that effectively contributes to creating a sonic impression of tenderness and charm " .

= = = 6 = = =

A recitative for alto is a prayer for future protection , " Vergiß es ferner nicht , mit deiner Hand " ( Do not forget later , with Your hand ) ? ? , concluded by a choral Amen in unison . The surprise is an interpretation of a line quoted from Deuteronomy 27 : 1526 , " und alles Volk soll sagen : Amen ! " (

And all the people shall answer and say , Amen . ) .

= = = 7 = = =

The alto performs the last aria , " Halleluja , Stärk und Macht " ( Hallelujah , power and might ) ? ? , repeating and reinforcing the thoughts of the first . The music repeats the main section of the tenor aria , now accompanied by the organ . This close connection within the structure of the work of both the theme ( 3 and 6 ) and the instrument ( 1 and 6 ) is unusual in Bach 's cantatas .

= = = 8 = = =

In the closing chorale , " Sei Lob und Preis mit Ehren " ( Glory , and praise with honor ) the trumpets accentuate the ends of some lines of the fifth verse of Johann Gramann 's " Nun lob , mein Seel , den Herren " .

= = Selected recordings = =

A list of recordings is provided by Aryeh Oron on the Bach @-@ Cantatas website .