

= Ach Gott , wie manches Herzeleid , BWV 58 =

Ach Gott , wie manches Herzeleid ( Ah God , how much heartbreak ) , BWV 58 , is a church cantata by Johann Sebastian Bach . He composed the dialogue cantata in Leipzig for the Sunday after New Year 's Day .

The text has been attributed to Christoph Birkmann by Christine Blanken of the Bach @-@ Archiv Leipzig . He combined the topics of the readings , the gospel of the Flight into Egypt and teaching about the suffering of Christians from the First Epistle of Peter , in a structure of unusual symmetry with a duet as the first and last of the five movements . Both duets are dialogues of the Soul , represented by a soprano , and Jesus , sung by a bass as the vox Christi ( voice of Christ ) . Both duets are set as a chorale fantasia , combining a stanza from a hymn , sung by the soprano as the cantus firmus , with original poetry set in counterpoint . Both stanzas are sung to the same melody , but come from different hymns , Martin Moller 's " Ach Gott , wie manches Herzeleid " , and Martin Behm 's " Herr Jesu Christ , meins Lebens Licht " . While the poet wrote the duets to fit the same music , Bach composed them in contrast , even changing the meter of the tune , to fit the different mood : lamenting heartbreak in the beginning , comfort in the end .

Bach scored the work for a small Baroque instrumental ensemble of originally just strings and continuo , probably intended to ease the workload of musicians for the Christmas season . In a later version , he added a trio of oboes to the outer movements . Bach counted the work as part of his cycle of chorale cantatas , which he had begun in 1724 . It was presumably first performed on 5 January 1727 .

= = History and text = =

Bach composed the dialogue cantata the Sunday after New Year 's Day , probably of 1727 . This occasion happens only in years with a Sunday between New Year 's Day and Epiphany on 6 January . The prescribed readings for the day are from the First Epistle of Peter , the suffering of Christians ( 1 Peter 4 : 12 ? 19 ) , and from the Gospel of Matthew , the Flight into Egypt ( Matthew 2 : 12 ? 23 ) . In his first year as Thomaskantor ( director of church music ) in Leipzig , Bach had composed Schau , lieber Gott , wie meine Feind , BWV 153 , for this occasion .

The text has been recently attributed to Christoph Birkmann ( 1703 ? 1771 ) , a theologian and student of Bach , by Christine Blanken of the Bach @-@ Archiv Leipzig . He retells the topic of the gospel in the first recitative , and expands it to the journey , suffering and perils of the contemporary Christian , with a focus on the contrast between suffering on Earth and joy in Heaven . The two outer movements are unusually similar , both duets of the Soul and Jesus , using a hymn stanza and free text . The first movements includes the first stanza of " Ach Gott , wie manches Herzeleid " , published by Martin Moller in 1587 ; the last movement includes the second stanza of Martin Behm 's " Herr Jesu Christ , meins Lebens Licht " , published in 1610 in the second volume of the collection Centuria precatationum rhythmicarum . The melody is the same for both hymns and first appeared in Wolflein Lochamer 's Lochamer @-@ Liederbuch ( around 1455 ) . The poet 's own verse for the two movements is also similar , as if the author expected the composer to repeat the music , but Bach set them differently , even contrasting .

Bach performed the cantata presumably first on 5 January 1727 . He performed it again on 4 January 1733 or 3 January 1734 . Only this later version survived , for which Bach had added oboes to the orchestra and wrote a new third movement . The surviving continuo part of the original aria suggests a significantly different character . As only the continuo part of the first version of the central aria movement survived , it is unknown if the text was also changed .

Bach counted the work as part of his cycle of chorale cantatas , which he had begun in 1724 / 25 . In that year 's Christmas season , the Sunday fell between Christmas and New Year , a different occasion with different prescribed readings . Ach Gott , wie manches Herzeleid is not similar to the early works of that cycle which focus on one Lutheran hymn , such as a cantata on Moller 's hymn , Ach Gott , wie manches Herzeleid , BWV 3 , composed for the second Sunday after Epiphany of 1725 . According to the Bach scholar Alfred Dürr , the cantata is " to be numbered among the

successors of the seventeenth @-@ century dialogue compositions as a ' Dialogue of the Faithful Soul with God ' " .

= = Scoring and structure = =

Bach structured the cantata in five movements in a symmetrical arrangement of two framing duets surrounding recitatives and a central aria . Bach scored the work for two vocal soloists ( soprano ( S ) and bass ( B ) ) , and a Baroque instrumental ensemble of originally two violins ( VI ) , viola ( Va ) , and basso continuo . John Eliot Gardiner , who conducted the Bach Cantata Pilgrimage in 2000 , notes that the scoring for just two voices and strings was probably intended to ease the workload of musicians who had a busy time during the Christmas season . In the later version , Bach added a trio of two oboes ( Ob ) and taille ( Ot ) . The duration is given as 17 minutes .

In the following table of the movements , the scoring follows the Neue Bach @-@ Ausgabe of the later version . The keys and time signatures are taken from the book on all cantatas by the Bach scholar Alfred Dürr , using the symbols for common time ( 4 / 4 ) . The continuo , playing throughout , is not shown .

= = Music = =

The structure of the piece is unusually symmetric . It opens and closes with a duet including a chorale text . Harmonically , the piece begins and ends in C major , and the central movement is in D minor . The second movement modulates from A minor to F major , while the fourth movement mirrors this motion .

= = = 1 = = =

The first movement , " Ach Gott , wie manches Herzeleid " ( Ah , God , how much heartache ) , is a chorale fantasia , with the soprano , representing the Soul , singing the cantus firmus , reinforced by the taille , while the bass as the vox Christi ( voice of Christ ) delivers original verse in counterpoint to the melody . The melody is tonal but with a " very chromatic subtext " . The movement , marked Adagio , begins with a ritornello of strings doubled by oboes . A dotted @-@ rhythm figure , characteristic of a French overture , dominates the music . A figure of lament appears first in the continuo , then also in the upper voices . The ritornello recurs midway through the movement .

= = = 2 = = =

The secco bass recitative , " Verfolgt dich gleich die arge Welt , " ( Though the angry world might persecute you ) , is chromatic and in two sections : the first describes a history of persecution related to the Flight into Egypt with " striding angular phrases " , while the second section emphasizes the presence of God using a gentler and smoother melodic line .

= = = 3 = = =

The third movement , " Ich bin vergnügt in meinem Leiden " ( I am cheerful in my sorrow ) , is a soprano aria with an obbligato solo violin . The da capo movement describes the spirit 's confidence in God . The first section includes a " motto theme " transitioning into a " hectic " violin melody . The middle section is characterized by a " muscular " soprano line and " oddly bizarre " solo violin . The first section returns modified and unheralded .

= = = 4 = = =

The soprano recitative , " Kann es die Welt nicht lassen " ( If the world cannot cease ) , begins by recounting persecution , but quickly becomes an arioso with a walking continuo .

= = = 5 = = =

The final movement , " Ich hab für mir ein schwere Reis " ( I have a difficult journey before me ) , opens with a triad fanfare , which the bass voice sings on the words " Nur getrost " ( Be comforted ) . It is similar to a motif in Bach 's Violin Concerto in E minor , BWV 1042 . The soprano reprises the chorale melody in duple rather than the original triple time , with a responding line in the bass voice . After two phrases , the ritornello plays alone for eight measures before both voices re @-@ enter in counterpoint to complete the chorale .

= = Selected recordings = =

Frank Brieff , Bach Aria Group , Bach Aria Group , Decca , 1960 .

Karl Richter , Münchener Bach @-@ Chor , Münchener Bach @-@ Orchester , Bach Cantatas Vol . 1 ? Advent and Christmas . Archiv Produktion , 1970 .

Helmuth Rilling , Gächinger Kantorei , Bach @-@ Collegium Stuttgart , Die Bach Kantate Vol . 20 , Hänssler , 1971 .

Nikolaus Harnoncourt , Tölzer Knabenchor , Concentus Musicus Wien , J.S. Bach : Das Kantatenwerk ? Sacred Cantatas Vol . 3 . Teldec , 1976 .

Michel Corboz , Ensemble vocal de Lausanne , Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne . Bach Cantatas . Erato , 1976 .

Pieter Jan Leusink , Holland Boys Choir , Netherlands Bach Collegium . Bach Edition Vol . 18 ? Cantatas Vol . 9 . Brilliant Classics , 2000 .

John Eliot Gardiner , Monteverdi Choir , English Baroque Soloists . Bach Cantatas Vol . 17 : Berlin . Soli Deo Gloria , 2000 .

Ton Koopman , Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra & Choir . J.S. Bach : Complete Cantatas Vol . 17 . Antoine Marchand , 2003 .

Masaaki SuzukiBach Collegium Japan . J.S. Bach : Cantatas Vol . 38 ( Solo Cantatas ) . BIS , 2006 .