

= Ach Gott , wie manches Herzeleid , BWV 3 =

Ach Gott , wie manches Herzeleid ( Oh God , how much heartache ) , BWV 3 , is a church cantata by Johann Sebastian Bach . He composed the chorale cantata in Leipzig for the Second Sunday after Epiphany and first performed it on 14 January 1725 . It is based on the hymn published by Martin Moller in 1587 .

Bach composed the cantata in his second year as Thomaskantor in Leipzig as part of cantata cycle of chorale cantatas , for the second Sunday after Epiphany . The work is based on a hymn without evident connection to the prescribed readings . It is a meditation on Jesus as a comforter in distress , based on a medieval model . An unknown librettist reworked the ideas of the 18 stanzas in six movements , retaining the words of stanzas 1 , 2 and 18 as movements 1 , 2 and 6 . Similarly , Bach retained the choral melody in three movements , set as a chorale fantasia in the opening chorus with the bass singing the cantus firmus , as a four @-@ part setting with interspersed recitatives in the second movement , and in the closing chorale . He scored the cantata for two oboes d 'amore , strings and continuo , with an added trombone to support the bass in the first movement , and a horn to support the soprano in the last movement .

= = History and words = =

Bach composed the cantata in his second year as Thomaskantor in Leipzig as part of his second annual cycle , planned to consist only of chorale cantatas based on Lutheran hymns . He wrote the cantata for the second Sunday after Epiphany . The prescribed readings for the Sunday were taken from the Epistle to the Romans ( we have several gifts ? Romans 12 : 6 ? 16 ) and from the Gospel of John ( the Marriage at Cana ? John 2 : 1 ? 11 ) .

The cantata is a chorale cantata based on the hymn " Ach Gott , wie manches Herzeleid " in 18 stanzas attributed to Martin Moller ( 1587 ) . It is a paraphrase of the Latin " Jesu dulcis memoria " , a medieval hymn attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux , a meditation on Jesus as a comforter and helper in distress . The unknown librettist retained the words of stanzas 1 , 2 and 18 as movements 1 , 2 and 6 . In movement 2 , stanza 2 is expanded by paraphrases of stanzas 3 ? 5 , while movement 3 is a paraphrase of stanza 6 ; movement 4 incorporates ideas from stanzas 7 ? 14 , and movement 5 relies on stanzas 15 and 16. In movement 2 , stanza 2 is expanded by paraphrases of stanzas 3 ? 5 . Movement 3 is a paraphrase of stanza 6 . Movement 4 incorporates ideas from stanzas 7 ? 14 . Movement 5 relies on stanzas 15 and 16 . The poet did not relate his text to the reading from John 1 : 2 .

Bach led the first performance of the cantata on 14 January 1725 .

= = Scoring and structure = =

Bach structured the cantata in six movements . An opening chorus and a closing chorale frame a sequence of alternating recitatives and arias . The first recitative is unusual : the chorus sings one line of the hymn 's four lines , continued each time by a soloist in words of the poet . The last aria is a duet . Bach scored the work for four vocal soloists ( soprano ( S ) , alto ( A ) , tenor ( T ) , bass ( B ) ) , a four @-@ part choir and a Baroque instrumental ensemble of horn ( Co ) to double the cantus firmus in the closing chorale , trombone ( Tb ) to reinforce the bass in the opening chorus , two oboes d 'amore ( Oa ) , two violins ( VI ) , viola ( Va ) , and basso continuo . The autograph score bears the title : " Dominica 2 post Epiphantias / Ach Gott ! Wie manches Hertzeleyd . / à / 4 Voci . / 2 Hautb : d 'Amour / 2 Violini / Viola . / e Continuo / di J. S. Bach " , which means " Sunday 2 after Epiphany ... for four voices , 2 oboes d 'amore , 2 violins , viola and continuo by J. S. Bach " .

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

= = Music = =

Bach uses a melody of " Herr Jesu Christ , meins Lebens Licht " which appeared first in the Lochamer @-@ Liederbuch . The melody appears in the opening chorus , sung by the bass as a cantus firmus , in the second movement , as a four @-@ part setting with interspersed recitatives , and in the closing chorale .

=== 1 ===

In the opening chorus , " Ach Gott , wie manches Herzeleid " ( Ah , God , how much heartache ) , the cantus firmus is in the bass , which is doubled by the trombone , as in Ach Herr , mich armen Sünder , BWV 135 . Its mood of lamentation is supported by " elegiac sounds " of the oboes d 'amore , sighing motifs in the strings , and the upper voices reflecting the oboe motifs . John Eliot Gardiner , who conducted the Bach Cantata Pilgrimage in 2000 , notes that Bach used a repeated motif of six notes in chromatic descent , which is often used in chaconnes of the Baroque opera to express grief . The motif is used for the instrumental opening , each entry of a voice , interludes and conclusion .

=== 2 ===

The recitative , " Wie schwerlich läßt sich Fleisch und Blut " ( How difficult it is for flesh and blood ) , combines the hymn tune sung by the four @-@ part choir , with interpolated text sung by the soloists in turn . The lines of the hymn are separated by a joyful ostinato motif derived from the chorale tune . The musicologist Julian Mincham writes that the " hybrid recitative provides an excellent example of Bach 's experiments of investing long texts with sustained musical interest " .

=== 3 ===

The bass aria , " Empfind ich Höllenangst und Pein " ( Although I experience the fear and torment of Hell ) , is accompanied by the continuo . It expresses the contrast of Höllenangst ( hell 's anguish ) and Freudenhimmel ( heaven of joy ) , with inestimable sorrows ( unermessnen Schmerzen ) disappearing into light mist ( leichte Nebel ) .

=== 4 ===

A tenor recitative , " Es mag mir Leib und Geist verschmachten " ( My body and spirit might despair ) , expresses trust in Jesus to overcome despair .

=== 5 ===

In the duet for soprano and alto , " Wenn Sorgen auf mich dringen " ( When cares press upon me ) , in " bright E major " , as the Bach scholar Christoph Wolff writes , the voices are embedded in a " dense quartet texture " . He concludes that the movement " banishes human care by means of joyful singing " . The Bach scholar Klaus Hofmann notes that the obbligato motif , which is later picked up by the voices , is played by the oboes d 'amore and violin in unison , providing " a new and remarkable tone colour " . Bach refers to the Cross , as mentioned in the text , by using a cross @-@ motif in the melody and applying double sharp marked by a cross . The voices intensify words such as " dringen " ( press ) and " singen " ( sing ) by extended coloraturas .

=== 6 ===

The closing chorale , " Erhalt mein Herz im Glauben rein " ( If my heart remains pure in faith ) , is a four @-@ part setting . The choral melody , now in the soprano , is reinforced by a horn .

= = Recordings = =

The selection is taken from the listing on the Bach @-@ Cantatas website .