

= Lobet Gott in seinen Reichen , BWV 11 =

Lobet Gott in seinen Reichen (Laud to God in all his kingdoms) , BWV 11 , known as the Ascension Oratorio (Himmelfahrtsoratorium) , is an oratorio by Johann Sebastian Bach , marked by him as Oratorium In Festo Ascensionis Xsti (Oratorio for the feast of the Ascension of Christ) , probably composed in 1735 for the service for Ascension and first performed on 19 May 1735 .

Bach had composed his Christmas Oratorio , based on the gospels of Luke and Matthew , in 1734 . He had composed an Easter Oratorio already in 1725 . The text for the Ascension Oratorio , a compilation of several biblical sources , free poetry and chorales , was presumably written by Picander who had worked on the libretto for the Christmas Oratorio . It follows the story of the Ascension as told in Luke , Mark and the Acts of the Apostles . The oratorio is structured in eleven movements in two parts , taking about half an hour to perform . It is framed by extended choral movements , Part I is concluded by the fourth stanza of Johann Rist 's hymn " Du Lebensfürst , Herr Jesu Christ " in a four part setting . The closing chorale on the seventh stanza of Gottfried Wilhelm Sacer 's " Gott fähret auf gen Himmel " is set as a chorale fantasia . The work is richly scored for the feast day , exactly like the Christmas Oratorio for four vocal parts , three trumpets , timpani , two flauti traversi , two oboes , strings and continuo . While the recitatives and the first chorale were new compositions , Bach based the other choral movements and the two arias on parts of earlier cantatas . He used the model for the alto aria again much later for the Agnus Dei of his Mass in B minor .

= = History = =

Bach had composed his Christmas Oratorio , based on the gospels of Luke and Matthew , in 1734 , a work in six parts to be performed on six occasions during Christmas tide . He had composed an Easter Oratorio already in 1725 . The Ascension Oratorio appeared thus in the same liturgical year as the Christmas Oratorio . The text for the Ascension Oratorio , a compilation of several biblical sources , free poetry and chorales , was presumably written by Picander who had written the libretti for the St Matthew Passion and the Christmas Oratorio , among others . It follows the story of the Ascension as told in Luke , Mark and the Acts of the Apostles .

The bible narration is compiled from multiple sources : the first recitative of the Evangelist (movement 2) is from Luke 24 : 50 ? 51 , the second (5) from Acts 1 : 9 and Mark 16 : 19 , the third (7) from Acts 1 : 10 ? 11 , the last (9) from Luke 24 : 52a , Acts 1 : 12 and Luke 24 : 52b . The biblical words are narrated by the tenor as the Evangelist . In his third recitative two men are quoted , for this quotation tenor and bass both sing in an Arioso .

Part I , which tells of the Ascension , is concluded by the fourth stanza of Johann Rist 's hymn " Du Lebensfürst , Herr Jesu Christ " in a four part setting . Part II reflects the reaction of the disciples . The closing chorale on the seventh stanza of Gottfried Wilhelm Sacer 's " Gott fähret auf gen Himmel " is set as a chorale fantasia . While the music for the narration and the first chorale were new compositions in 1735 , Bach based the framing choral movements and the two arias on earlier compositions . He used the model for the alto aria again much later for the Agnus Dei of his Mass in B minor .

In the first complete edition of Bach 's works , the Bach @-@ Ausgabe of the Bach Gesellschaft , the work was included under the cantatas (hence its low BWV number) , and in the Bach Compendium it is numbered BC D 9 and included under oratorios .

= = Scoring and structure = =

The oratorio spans eleven movements in two parts to be performed before and after the sermon , 1 ? 6 before the sermon and 7 ? 11 after the sermon . It takes about half an hour to perform . The title on the first page of the autograph reads :

" J.J. Oratorium Festo Ascensionis Xsti. à 4 Voci . 3 Trombe Tamburi
2 Travers . 2 Hautb . 2 Violini , Viola e Cont. di

Bach

" J.J. " is short for " Jesu juva " (Jesus , help) , a formula which Bach and others often wrote at the beginning of a sacred piece . The title in Latin translates to " Oratorio for the feast of the Ascension of Christ " , and the scoring in a mixture of French and Italian names the parts and instruments as four vocal parts , three trumpets (Tr) , timpani , two flauti traversi (Ft) , two oboes (Ob) , two violins (Vn) , viola (Va) and basso continuo (Bc) by Bach . The voices are soprano , alto , tenor and bass , forming a four @-@ part choir (SATB) . The work is festively scored , exactly like the Christmas Oratorio .

The structure shows symmetry around the central chorale . Expansive chorale movements using the complete orchestra frame the work . Both parts contain besides the bible narration (rec .) a reflective accompagnato recitative (acc .) and an aria with obbligato instruments . In the following table of the movements , the scoring is taken the Neue Bach @-@ Ausgabe . The keys and time signatures are taken from Alfred Dürr , using the symbol for common time (4 / 4) . The timpani always play with the trumpets and are not mentioned .

= = Music = =

The Bach scholar Richard D. P. Jones compares the Christmas Oratorio and the Ascension Oratorio and arrives at similarities :

the festive opening chorus with trumpets and drums , the Evangelist 's secco recitatives , the intermediate four @-@ part chorale , the meditative accompagnati , the semi @-@ dramatic treatment of biblical characters (here the " two men in white ") and the elaborate chorale @-@ finale .

The oratorio is similar especially to Part VI of the Christmas Oratorio which also begins with an extended opening chorus and a chorale fantasia as a conclusion .

= = = 1 = = =

The festive opening chorus , Lobet Gott in seinen Reichen , is believed to be based on a movement from the lost secular cantata Froher Tag , verlangte Stunden , BWV Anh . 18 . The movement has no fugue , but dance @-@ like elements and Lombard rhythm .

= = = 2 = = =

Bach marks the first recitative of bible narration " Recit. nach dem ersten Chor " (Recitative after the first chorus) . It is sung by the Evangelista (Evangelist) , which Bach assigns to the tenor singing secco recitative . The action begins , Der Herr Jesus hub seine Hände auf (The Lord Jesus lifted up His hands) , with Jesus blessing the disciples and leaving them .

= = = 3 = = =

A reflecting recitative for bass , Ach , Jesu , ist dein Abschied (Ah , Jesus , is Your departure) , shows the situation of the disciples afraid that Jesus will leave them soon . Marked " Rec : col accomp . " (Recitative : with accomp [animent]) , it is accompanied by the flutes and continuo as a recitativo accompagnato .

= = = 4 = = =

Deeper reflection is expressed in an aria , marked " Aria Violini unisoni e Alto " (Aria Violins in unison and Alto) . The singer requests Jesus to stay : Ach , bleibe doch , mein liebstes Leben (Ah , just stay , my dearest Life) . The music is based on a movement from the lost wedding cantata Auf , süß entzückende Gewalt , BWV Anh . 196 , written in 1725 on a libretto by Johann Christoph Gottsched .

Bach used the model for the alto aria also for the Agnus Dei of his Mass in B minor .

== 5 ==

The Evangelist continues the narration with the Ascension : Und ward aufgehoben zusehends (And He was apparently lifted up) .

== 6 ==

The first chorale , closing part 1 , is the fourth stanza of " Du Lebensfürst , Herr Jesu Christ " , written in 1641 by Johann Rist . The text Nun lieget alles unter dir (Now everything is subject to You) imagines Jesus in heaven , with the angels and elements serving him .

It is composed as a four part setting , with the instruments playing colla parte : oboes and violin I enforce the chorale tune , the flutes an octave higher , violin II plays with the alto , viola with the tenor , and the continuo with the bass .

== 7 ==

The evangelist begins Part II , Und da sie ihm nachsahen (And as they watched) , telling of two men in white gowns addressing the disciples . The two men are represented by tenor and bass in a duet .

== 8 ==

A reflecting recitative for alto , Ach ja ! so komme bald zurück (Ah yes ! Then come back soon ;) , requests the return of Jesus . Parallel to the bass recitative in Part I , it is also accompanied by the flutes and continuo .

== 9 ==

The evangelist ends the narration , Sie aber beteten ihn an (They however prayed to Him) , telling of the disciples ' return from the mountain which is named the Mount of Olives .

== 10 ==

The soprano aria , Jesu , deine Gnadenblicke (Jesus , Your merciful gaze) , is also based on the wedding cantata Auf , süß entzückende Gewalt . It is one of the rare pieces in Bach 's music without basso continuo , with the two unison flutes , the oboe and the unison strings playing a trio , augmented to a quartet by the singer . The original words in the wedding cantata mentioned " Unschuld " (innocence) . Brian Robins notes " the lightly translucent texture reflecting the text 's allusion to Christ leaving his body to ascend to Heaven " . Jones thinks that the setting without an earthly continuo represents the Gnadenblicke (glances of Grace) of the text .

== 11 ==

The closing chorale , " Wenn soll es doch geschehen " (When shall it happen ") , is the seventh stanza of " Gott fähret auf gen Himmel " , written in 1697 by Gottfried Wilhelm Sacer . Set in the first person , it expresses the desire of the speaker for the " liebe Zeit " (dear time) when he sees the Saviour in his glory . Continuing saying " wir " (we) , he imagines to greet him and kiss him .

It is set as a chorale fantasia . The soprano sings the cantus firmus in long notes , on the melody of " Von Gott will ich nicht lassen " . Similar to the final chorale Nun seid ihr wohl gerochen of the Christmas Oratorio , the chorale tune in a church mode appears in the triumphant context of a different major key . The text expresses longing for the day of being united with Jesus in Heaven .

The musicologist Julian Mincham interprets the mode of the tune as " the human state of waiting and hoping " , while the concerto represents the fulfillment . Mincham compares the writing to the opening chorale fantasias of the second cantata cycle of chorale cantatas , finding the composition for the lower voices " endlessly inventive , frequently related to the textual images " pointing out " the passionate and clinging representation of kissing the Saviour beneath the caressing flutes , in the penultimate phrase " .

= = Selected recordings = =

The sortable listing is taken from the selection provided by Aryeh Oron on the Bach @-@ Cantatas website . The type of choir and orchestra is roughly shown as a large group by red background , and as an ensemble with period instruments in historically informed performance or a choir of one voice per part (OVPP) by green background .