

= Nach dir , Herr , verlanget mich , BWV 150 =

Nach dir , Herr , verlanget mich ( For Thee , O Lord , I long ) , BWV 150 , is an early church cantata by Johann Sebastian Bach composed for an unknown occasion . It is unique among Bach 's cantatas in its sparse orchestration and in the independence and prominence of the chorus , which is featured in four out of seven movements . The text alternates verses from Psalm 25 and poetry by an unknown librettist . Bach scored the work for four vocal parts and a small Baroque instrumental ensemble of two violins , bassoon and basso continuo .

Many scholars think that it may be the earliest extant cantata by Bach , possibly composed in Arnstadt in 1707 .

= = History and text = =

Bach 's original score is lost . The music survives in a copy made by C F Penzel , one of Bach 's last pupils , after the composer 's death . Although the date of composition is not known , this is one of Bach 's earliest surviving cantatas . Sources differ as to when and where Bach composed the work , but the balance of opinion has tended to push the date back to the beginning of Bach 's career . Suggestions for the place of composition have been :

Weimar , where Bach worked from 1708 . The conductor and academic Jonathan Green dates the work c . 1708 ? 1710 ; the Bach scholar William G. Whittaker dates it c . 1712 .

Mühlhausen , where Bach worked in 1707 / 1708 . The Zwang catalogue ( which attempts to list the cantatas chronologically ) dated it as the sixth of the surviving cantatas by Bach , and placed Aus der Tiefen rufe ich , Herr , zu dir , BWV 131 , as the earliest . Aus der Tiefen rufe ich , Herr , zu dir is known to have been composed in Mühlhausen in 1707 / 1708 .

Arnstadt , where Bach worked until his move to Mühlhausen in the summer of 1707 . Recent scholarship suggests Nach dir , Herr , verlanget mich could have been composed at Arnstadt .

The Bach scholar Andreas Glöckner argued in 1988 that the cantata may have been composed in Arnstadt . The scholar Hans @-@ Joachim Schulze identified in 2010 a remarkable acrostic in the concluding four movements ( which he described in the 2010 Bach @-@ Jahrbuch , the journal of the Neue Bachgesellschaft ) . Adjusting for transposition errors by the copyist , the initial letters should spell DOKTOR CONRAD MECKBACH and plausibly therefore the work was composed to mark this Mühlhausen councillor 's 70th birthday in April 1707 . On this basis the cantata may date from Bach 's time in Arnstadt . Possibly the cantata was heard a few weeks later after the end of Lent , and thus it may have formed a test @-@ piece for the Mühlhausen appointment , composed in Arnstadt with Bach 's supporter Meckbach in mind .

The cantata is , as John Eliot Gardiner notes , " generally accepted to be Bach 's very first church cantata . Gardiner conducted in 2000 the Bach Cantata Pilgrimage and performed the cantata in the church for which it was then probably composed , at Bach 's time called Neue Kirche ( new church ) , now the Johann @-@ Sebastian @-@ Bach @-@ Kirche .

The libretto alternates between biblical verses and free contemporary poetry , which is common in Bach 's later cantatas , but rare among his early cantatas . The text of movements 2 , 4 , and 6 are selected psalm verses , Psalms 25 : 1 ? 2 , 5 , 15 . The author of the poetry is unknown . On the basis of the text , it has been suggested that the work was written for a penitential service .

The cantata was first published in 1884 in the Bach @-@ Gesellschaft @-@ Ausgabe , the first edition of Bach 's complete works . The composer Johannes Brahms , who served on the editorial board of the Bach @-@ Gesellschaft @-@ Ausgabe , took an interest in the cantata as it was being published . He used an adapted version of the bass line of the closing chaconne for a work he completed in 1885 , his Symphony No. 4 .

= = Structure and scoring = =

Bach structured the cantata in seven movements , an opening instrumental sinfonia and four choral movements interspersed by only two arias . He scored it for four soloists ( soprano , alto , tenor and

bass ) , a four @-@ part choir , and a small Baroque instrumental ensemble of two violins ( VI ) , bassoon ( obbligato ) ( Fg ) and basso continuo . The duration of the cantata is about 17 minutes .

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

= = Music = =

The work begins with a sinfonia and then alternates choral movements and arias . There are no recitatives , no da capo repeats , and there is no chorale tune , unusually for Bach 's cantatas . Bach makes extensive use of choral fugues and imitative polyphony , often shifting the tempo and character of the music within movements very quickly to accommodate a new musical idea with each successive phrase of text .

The sinfonia and the opening choral movement are both based on the motive of an octave leap followed by five descending half steps . This chromatic figure , sometimes dubbed the " lamento bass " or passus duriusculus , has been utilized by composers as early as Monteverdi as a musical representation of anguish , pain , and longing . The sinfonia also introduces thematic material developed later in the work , uses asymmetric phrasing , and " a seamless flow of unstoppable melody " .

The first chorus on the beginning of Psalm 25 , " Nach dir , Herr , verlanget mich . Mein Gott , ich hoffe auf dich . " ( Lord , I long for you . My God , I hope in you . ) , is " waywardly constructed despite its relative brevity " . It is episodic , emphasizing a descending chromatic scale motif . The musicologist Tadashi Isoyama notes " the graphically chromatic phrases of the opening sinfonia and the following chorus ; these are evocative of the suffering of the world " .

The following soprano aria , " Doch bin und bleibe ich vergnügt " ( Yet I am and remain content ) , is also brief but includes significant word painting .

The fourth movement , " Leite mich in deiner Wahrheit und lehre mich " ( Lead me in your Truth and teach me ) , is another short and episodic chorus , divided into four sections .

Movement five , " Zedern müssen von den Winden oft viel Ungemach empfinden " ( Cedars must , before the winds , often feel much hardship ) , is one of only a handful of vocal trios to be found in Bach 's oeuvre , as well as the only movement in the cantata in all major . Isoyama writes : " the continuo part drives the music forward with its phrase describing the trials of the stormwinds " .

The penultimate movement , " Meine Tage in den Leiden endet Gott dennoch zur Freuden " ( My days in suffering God will nevertheless end in joy ) , features a " celestial haze " of instruments as part of a complex texture . It is in binary form and modulates from D major through B minor to B major .

The final movement , " Gott ist mein König von altersher " ( God is my King from long ago ) , is a chaconne , a form which is typically constructed over a repeated ground bass . Bach uses a ground bass which is possibly a borrowing from Pachelbel . It is the inversion of the chromatic fourth ostinato from the opening movement . Bach 's orchestration includes strumming effects which could be seen as recalling the origin of the chaconne in Spanish guitar music . From a theological point of view , both the inversion of the lamento bass and the series of modulations in this movement express in baroque musical affect how Christ leads from sorrow to joy .

= = Selected recordings = =

Heinrich @-@ Schütz @-@ Chor Heilbronn , Württembergisches Kammerorchester Heilbronn , dir . Fritz Werner . Les Grandes Cantates de J.S. Bach Vol . 28 . Erato , 1973 .

Knabenchor Hannover , Collegium Vocale Gent , Leonhardt @-@ Consort , dir . Gustav Leonhardt . J.S. Bach : Das Kantatenwerk ? Complete Cantatas Vol . 36 . Teldec , 1985

Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra & Choir , dir . Ton Koopman . J.S. Bach : Complete Cantatas Vol . 1 . Antoine Marchand , 1994 .

Bach Collegium Japan , dir . Masaaki Suzuki . Bach Cantatas Vol . 1 . BIS , 1995 .

Monteverdi Choir , English Baroque Soloists , dir . John Eliot Gardiner . Bach Cantatas . Soli Deo Gloria , 2000 .