

= Unser Mund sei voll Lachens , BWV 110 =

Unser Mund sei voll Lachens ( May our mouth be full of laughter ) , BWV 110 , is a church cantata by Johann Sebastian Bach . He composed the Christmas cantata in Leipzig for Christmas Day and first performed it on 25 December 1725 .

Bach composed the cantata in his third year as Thomaskantor in Leipzig . He used a text by Georg Christian Lehms , which was published already in 1711 . The text has no recitatives alternating with arias , but instead three biblical quotations , opening with verses from Psalm 26 , then a verse from the Book of Jeremiah about God 's greatness , and finally the angels ' song from the Nativity according to the Gospel of Luke . The closing chorale is taken from Caspar Fuger 's " Wir Christenleut " .

Bach scored the work festively for four vocal soloists , a four @-@ part choir and a Baroque instrumental ensemble of trumpets and timpani , transverse flutes , different kinds of oboe , strings and basso continuo including bassoon . He derived the first chorus , in the style of a French overture , from the overture to his fourth Orchestral Suite , embedding vocal parts in its fast middle section . The song of the angels is based on the Christmas interpolation Virga Jesse Floruit of his Magnificat in E @-@ flat major , BWV 243a . He chose obbligato instruments to differentiate the character of the three arias : two flutes with the tenor expressing the " lowly birth " , oboe d 'amore with the alto , representing God 's love , and trumpet , oboes and strings with the bass for his call to sing songs of joy together . Bach led the Thomanerchor in the first performances on Christmas Day , one in the Nikolaikirche and one in the Thomaskirche .

= = History and words = =

Bach composed the cantata in his third year as Thomaskantor in Leipzig for Christmas Day , the first day of a Christmas celebration which lasted for three days . The prescribed readings for the feast day were from the Epistle of Titus , " God 's mercy appeared " ( Titus 2 : 11 ? 14 ) or from Isaiah , " Unto us a child is born " ( Isaiah 9 : 2 ? 7 ) , and from the Gospel of Luke , the Nativity , Annunciation to the shepherds and the angels ' song ( Luke 2 : 1 ? 14 ) .

In 1723 , his first year in Leipzig , Bach had composed no new cantata for Christmas Day , but revived Christen , tzet diesen Tag , BWV 63 , on a text of free poetry without any biblical or chorale content . That year , he composed new works for the second and third feast day . In 1724 , his second year , he composed three chorale cantatas for the three feast days , beginning with Gelobet seist du , Jesu Christ , BWV 91 . In his third year , Bach used a cantata text by Georg Christian Lehms , which was published already in 1711 in Darmstadt in the collection Gottgefalliges Kirchen @-@ Opfer . The librettist began with a quotation of two verses from Psalm 126 which deals with the hope for delivery of Jerusalem , " When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion , we were like them that dream . " , and the joyful reaction ( Psalms 126 : 2 ? 3 ) . The poet included for a recitative a verse from the Book of Jeremiah , praising God 's greatness ( Jeremiah 10 : 6 ) , and he quoted from the Christmas story in the Gospel of Luke the singing of the angels ( Luke 2 : 14 ) . In this early text , three biblical quotations alternate with arias . The closing chorale is the fifth stanza of Caspar Fuger 's hymn " Wir Christenleut " .

Bach led the Thomanerchor in the first performance in the morning of Christmas Day in the Nikolaikirche , repeated in the afternoon in the Thomaskirche . He led at least one more performance between 1728 and 1731 .

Some Bach scholars believed that the cantata was written in 1734 for the end of the War of the Polish Succession , but the discovery of the printed text showed that it was not related . The cantata was not published until 1876 when it appeared in the Bach Gesellschaft Ausgabe , the first complete edition of the composer 's works .

= = Structure and scoring = =

Bach structured the cantata in seven movements . An opening chorus and a closing chorale frame

a sequence of arias , a recitative and 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 three trumpets and timpani ( Ti ) , two transverse flutes ( Ft ) , three oboes ( Ob ) ( also oboe d 'amore and oboe da caccia ) , two violins ( VI ) , viola ( Va ) , and basso continuo including bassoon . The heading of the original parts reads : " J.J. Feria 1 Nativitatis Xsti . Concerto. a 3 Trombe , Tamburi . 3 Hautb . / Baßon . 2 Violini e Viola , 4 Voci è Continuo . " , which means " Jesus help . First feast day of the birth of Christ . Concerto for 3 trumpets , timpani , 3 oboes , bassoon , 2 violins and viola , 4 voices and continuo " . The duration is given as 27 minutes .

In the following table of the movements , the scoring follows 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 symbols for common time ( 4 / 4 ) and alla breve ( 2 / 2 ) . The continuo , playing throughout , is not shown .

= = Music = =

In 1725 , Bach typically composed alternating recitatives and arias in his cantatas , both on contemporary poetry . The text for this work is in an older style , with biblical texts interspersed with arias . Bach followed it , using different musical forms for the biblical quotations . The opening chorus on psalm verses is an adaptation of his overture to his fourth Orchestral Suite in D major , BWV 1069 . The duet " Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe " is based on the Christmas interpolation Virga Jesse floruit from Bach 's Magnificat in E @-@ flat major , BWV 243a , of 1723 , performed for his first Christmas in Leipzig .

= = = 1 = = =

The opening chorus is " Unser Mund sei voll Lachens " ( May our mouth be full of laughter ) . It calls for all instruments to perform . The text " concludes with acknowledgement that the Lord has achieved great things for his people " . Bach based the music on the overture to his fourth Orchestral Suite in D major , adding festive trumpets and timpani as well as flutes to the original music and embedding the voices . He followed the format of the French overture by instrumental slow sections framing the fast choral section . The French overture , normally played upon the arrival of the king to a performance , seemed suitable to greet the King of Heaven . The laughter mentioned in the text is " often made quite graphically audible " , as the Bach Scholar Alfred Dürr words it . When Bach performed the work again later , he marked some vocal sections as " ripieno " , achieving even more variety in the " concerto " . John Eliot Gardiner , who conducted the Bach Cantata Pilgrimage , interprets it as Bach 's vote against a strict one voice per part concept . He chose this cantata in one of three Christmas concerts to conclude the endeavour of a full year , and notes the first movement 's " marvellous rendition of laughter @-@ in @-@ music " and " innate elegance and lightness of touch " .

= = = 2 = = =

A tenor aria , " Ihr Gedanken und ihr Sinnen " ( You thoughts and musings ) , is accompanied by two transverse flutes . Dürr interprets the choice of the flutes as a symbol for the " lowly birth " .

= = = 3 = = =

A bass recitative , " Dir , Herr , ist niemand gleich " ( There is no one like You , Lord ) , is accompanied by the strings , which accompany the expressive line of the bass voice by " upward @-@ pointing gestures " .

= = = 4 = = =

The alto aria , " Ach Herr , was ist ein Menschenkind " ( Ah , Lord , what is a human being ) , is accompanied by a solo oboe d 'amore that " expresses wonder about the nature of man " and God 's interest in him . The aria , as the first one , is not a da capo aria , but in two parts . The idea of man in a sinful condition which is presented first , is changed to redemption . The Bach scholar Klaus Hofmann relates the choice of the oboe d 'amore to the answer to the singer 's question " Why do you do all this for man ? " : " Aus Liebe " ( through love ) .

= = = 5 = = =

The duet " Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe " ( Glory to God in the highest ) , combines two high voices over a simple continuo accompaniment , singing of God 's glory in the highest and peace on Earth . The music is based on the Virga Jesse floruit from the Magnificat , changing the vocal lines to the different text but retaining the " essentially lyrical character " . Gardiner notes that " goodwill towards men " is expressed in pastoral style , with the voices in parallels of tenths .

= = = 6 = = =

The bass aria " Wacht auf , ihr Adern und ihr Glieder " ( Awaken , veins and limbs ) , is a final call to wake up and join the praise of the angels . Trumpet and oboe add to energetic music . The oboes double the strings or rest , for more dynamic effect . Virtuoso passages in the trumpets are reminiscent of the first movement . The first triad call of the trumpet is of martial character , and imitated by the voice . When the text refers to the strings , the winds have a rest .

= = = 7 = = =

The closing chorale , " Alleluja ! Gelobt sei Gott , " ( Alleluia ! Praise be to God ) , is a four @-@ part setting of the tune by an anonymous composer . Bach set the same tune again to close Part III of his Christmas Oratorio with another stanza from the hymn , " Seid froh , dieweil " ( Be glad , therefore ) .

= = Selected recordings = =

The listing is taken from the selection on the Bach @-@ Cantatas website . Choirs and orchestras are roughly marked as large by red background ; instrumental groups playing period instruments in historically informed performances are highlighted green under the header Instr ..