

= Der Herr ist mein getreuer Hirt , BWV 112 =

Der Herr ist mein getreuer Hirt (The Lord is my faithful Shepherd) , BWV 112 , is a cantata by Johann Sebastian Bach , a church cantata for the second Sunday after Easter . Bach composed the chorale cantata in Leipzig and first performed it on 8 April 1731 . It is based on the hymn by Wolfgang Meuslin , a paraphrase of Psalm 23 written in 1530 , sung to a melody by Nikolaus Decius .

Bach , the Thomaskantor in Leipzig from May 1723 , composed this cantata to complete his second cantata cycle of chorale cantatas , begun in 1724 . He used the lyrics of the hymn unchanged , which reflect the psalm and Jesus as the Good Shepherd . Bach structured the work in five movements . The outer choral movements are a chorale fantasia and a four @-@ part closing chorale , both on the hymn tune . Bach set the inner stanzas as aria ? recitative ? aria , with music unrelated to the hymn tune . He scored the cantata for four vocal soloists , a four @-@ part choir and a Baroque instrumental ensemble of two horns , two oboes d 'amore , strings and continuo . Bach scholars agree that the brass instruments , normally reserved for Feast days , could come from an earlier chorale fantasia of the same melody with the text of the German Gloria .

= = History and words = =

In his second year as Thomaskantor in Leipzig , Bach composed chorale cantatas between the first Sunday after Trinity of 1724 and Palm Sunday of 1725 , but for Easter he returned to cantatas on more varied texts . He had not composed a chorale cantata yet for the occasion Misericordias Domini , the second Sunday after Easter . The prescribed readings for that Sunday were from the First Epistle of Peter (Christ as a model ? 1 Peter 2 : 21 ? 25) , and from the Gospel of John , (the Good Shepherd ? John 10 : 11 ? 16) .

During the cycle of 1724 / 25 , the text of the inner stanzas of a hymn was paraphrased by a contemporary poet with whom Bach collaborated . In this cantata however , Bach used the hymn text unchanged , a 1530 hymn in five stanzas written by Wolfgang Meuslin as a paraphrase of Psalm 23 . The hymn is sung to the melody of " Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr " , the German Gloria , by Nikolaus Decius (1522) . Meuslin 's hymn is different from the one with the same opening line by Cornelius Becker , but sung to the same melody , which Bach had used in his other two cantatas for the same occasion , Du Hirte Israel , höre , BWV 104 and Ich bin ein guter Hirt , BWV 85 . The hymn 's topic , the Lord as the Good Shepherd , has traditionally been used for Jesus and is thus related to the gospel .

Bach first performed the cantata at the Nikolaikirche on 8 April 1731 .

= = Structure and scoring = =

Bach structured the cantata in five movements . The text and tune of the hymn are kept in the outer choral movements , a chorale fantasia and a four @-@ part closing chorale , which frame a alternating arias and a recitative . Bach scored the work for four vocal soloists (soprano , alto , tenor , bass) , a four @-@ part choir and a Baroque instrumental ensemble of two horns (Co) , two oboes d 'amore (Oa) , two violins (VI) , viola (Va) and basso continuo .

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 = =

In the opening chorus , a chorale fantasia , the melody of the German Gloria " Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr " is embedded in an orchestral concerto . The movement opens with calls derived from the chorale tune played on the two horns , leading to a free concerto with the strings and oboes . The cantus firmus is sung by the soprano in long notes , while the lower voices engage in imitation .

John Eliot Gardiner compares the movement to the openings of the two former cantatas for the same occasion : " The presence of two horns ... reveals a much more regal portrait of the Good Shepherd than we have previously met . " Both Alfred Dürr and Klaus Hofmann assume that the music was not originally composed for this pastoral text , but previously , for the Gloria . Bach had composed a different chorale fantasia on the same melody in Auf Christi Himmelfahrt allein , BWV 128 , with similar instrumentation .

The inner three movements quote the text of the hymn without change , but their music is not related to the hymn tune . The alto aria is accompanied by an obbligato oboe . It is structured in two similar parts , and is in pastoral 6 / 8 time . The steady flow of the oboe can be seen as depicting the " pure water " mentioned in the text , the steps in the continuo as " the steps made on this significant journey " " on the pathway of the righteousness of His commandments " .

The central movement begins as an arioso , accompanied by the continuo , illustrating the walk through the " valley of darkness " . The second part is a dramatic recitative with strings , first expressing " Verfolgung , Leiden , Trübsal " (persecution , sorrow , trouble) in a broken melodic line against sustained string chords , then " Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me " , where the " first violins weave a comforting little melody " .

The following duet expresses enjoyment at God 's table in a dance , a bourrée .

The cantata closes with a four @-@ part chorale , most instruments playing colla parte , while the horns play different parts because of their limited range .

= = Selected recordings = =

The selection is taken from the listing 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 ..