

= Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes , BWV 76 =

Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes ( English : The heavens are telling the glory of God ) , BWV 76 , is a cantata by Johann Sebastian Bach . He composed the church cantata in Leipzig for the second Sunday after Trinity within the liturgical year and first performed it on 6 June 1723 .

Bach composed the cantata at a decisive turning point in his career . Moving from posts in the service of churches and courts to the town of Leipzig on the first Sunday after Trinity , 30 May 1723 , he began the project of composing a new cantata for every occasion of the liturgical year . He began his first annual cycle of cantatas ambitiously with Die Elenden sollen essen , BWV 75 , in an unusual layout of 14 movements in two symmetrical parts , to be performed before and after the sermon . Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes has the same structure .

The unknown poet begins his text with a quotation from Psalm 19 and refers to both prescribed readings from the New Testament , the parable of the great banquet as the Gospel , and the First Epistle of John . Bach scored Part I with a trumpet as a symbol of God 's Glory . In Part II , performed after the sermon and during communion , he wrote chamber music with oboe d 'amore and viola da gamba , dealing with " brotherly devotion " . Both parts are closed with a stanza of Martin Luther 's hymn Es woll uns Gott genädig sein ( 1524 ) .

= = Background = =

Johann Sebastian Bach had served in several churches as Kantor and organist , and at the courts of Weimar and Köthen , when he applied for the post of Thomaskantor in Leipzig . He was 38 years old and had a reputation as an organist and organ expert . He had composed church cantatas , notably the funeral cantata Actus tragicus around 1708 . In Weimar , he had begun a project to cover all occasions of the liturgical year by providing one cantata a month for four years , including works such as Weinen , Klagen , Sorgen , Zagen , BWV 12 , and Nun komm , der Heiden Heiland , BWV 61 .

= = History and words = =

Bach composed the cantata for the Second Sunday after Trinity and first performed it in a service in the Thomaskirche , Leipzig , on 6 June 1723 , a week after he took up position as cantor in Leipzig with Die Elenden sollen essen . The cantata is similar in many respects to the earlier work . While BWV 75 was probably begun in Köthen , this cantata may have been composed in Leipzig , according to a manuscript with many corrections . The two cantatas mark the beginning of Bach 's first " annual cycle " : he started to compose one cantata for each Sunday and holiday of the liturgical year , a project described by Christoph Wolff as " an artistic undertaking on the largest scale " .

The prescribed readings for the Sunday were from the First Epistle of John , " Whoever doesn 't love , remains in Death " ( 1 John 3 : 13 ? 18 ) , and from the Gospel of Luke , the parable of the great banquet ( Luke 14 : 16 ? 24 ) . The unknown poet was likely the same as for the first cantata for Leipzig , also in 14 movements , also arranged in two symmetrical parts to be performed before and after the sermon . Again the cantata begins with words from a Psalm , Psalms 19 : 1 @, @ 3 ( verses 2 and 4 in the Luther Bible ) , " The heavens declare the glory of God , and the firmament shows His handiwork . There is no speech or language , where their voice is not heard " , connecting the Gospel to the Old Testament . The poet first expands in movements 2 and 3 the thought of the Universe praising God 's creation . In the following two movements he deplores , following the Gospel , that nonetheless people did not follow the invitation of God , therefore he had to invite " von allen Straßen " ( from all streets ) and bless those , as movement 6 says . Part I closes with the first stanza of Martin Luther 's chorale Es woll uns Gott genädig sein ( 1524 ) , a paraphrase of Psalm 67 . Part I was to be performed before the sermon , Part II after the sermon and during communion . Part II talks about the duties of those who follow God 's invitation , to pass the love of Christ in order to achieve heaven on earth , a thought also expressed in the Epistle

reading . The third stanza of Luther 's chorale closes the work .

John Eliot Gardiner , who conducted the Bach Cantata Pilgrimage with the Monteverdi Choir in 2000 , evaluated the work , connected to Bach 's first cantata for Leipzig :

this cantata is clearly more than just a sequel to the previous Sunday 's Die Elenden sollen essen ... together they form a diptych revealing a thematic continuity extended over two weeks , with plentiful cross @-@ referencing between the two set Gospels and Epistles beyond the obvious parallels between the injunction to give charitably to the hungry ( BWV 75 ) and of brotherly love manifested in action ( BWV 76 ) .

He described the works as featuring " a characteristically Lutheran interpretation " of the First Epistle of John . He also noted the depth of metaphorical uses of " eating and drinking " , highlighting " the rich man 's table , from which Lazarus tried to gather fallen crumbs ( BWV 75 ) , standing in opposition to the " great supper " and God 's invitation through Christ to the banquet of eternal life ( BWV 76 ) " . Summarising both pieces , Gardiner wrote :

evidently a lot of thought and pre @-@ planning had gone on while Bach was still in Köthen , as well as discussions with his unknown librettist and possibly with representatives of the Leipzig clergy , before he could set the style , tone and narrative shaping of these two impressive works .

= = Scoring and structure = =

The cantata is structured in two parts of seven movements each , to be performed before and after the sermon . It is scored for four vocal soloists ( soprano ( S ) , alto ( A ) , tenor ( T ) and bass ( B ) ) , a four @-@ part choir SATB , trumpet ( Tr ) , two oboes ( Ob ) , oboe d 'amore ( Oa ) , two violins ( VI ) , viola ( Va ) , viola da gamba ( Vg ) and basso continuo ( Bc ) . The two parts of seven movements each are composed as the same arrangement of alternating recitatives and arias with a concluding chorale , only Part II is opened by a sinfonia instead of a chorus . The duration is given as 35 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 instruments are shown separately for winds and strings , while the continuo , playing throughout , is not shown .

= = Music = =

Similar to the opening chorus of BWV 75 , Bach sets the psalm in two sections , comparable to a prelude and fugue on a large scale . An instrumental concerto unites the complete " prelude " , the trumpet " calls " to tell the glory of God . The fugue in C major is a permutation fugue , which develops the subject twice , starting with the voices , up to a triumphal entrance of the trumpet , similar in development to the first chorus of Wir danken dir , Gott , wir danken dir , BWV 29 , composed much later and used twice in the Mass in B minor . Joseph Haydn later set the same words , also in C major , in his oratorio The Creation .

In the first recitative the strings accompany the voice , most keenly in motifs in the arioso middle section , in Gardiner 's words " to evoke the spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters " . Trumpet and bass voice are used to convey the call " to banish the tribe of idolaters " , while the strings possibly illustrate " the hordes of infidels " . The last recitative leads in an arioso to the chorale . In the chorale , Bach has the violin play an obbligato part to the four @-@ part setting of the voices and separates the lines by interludes , with the trumpet anticipating the line to follow . The continuo plays ostinato a motif which is derived from the first line of the chorale .

Whereas Part I begins with a trumpet announcing ( " erzählen " ) God 's glory , Part II starts on an intimate chamber music scale with oboe d 'amore and viola da gamba , concentrating on " brotherly devotion " ( brüderliche Treue ) . A sinfonia in E minor for these two instruments is reminiscent both of Bach 's compositions for the court in Köthen and of a French overture , marked " adagio " , then " vivace " . Bach used the music of this movement later in his organ trio , BWV 528 . Gardiner calls the movement " in effect a sonata da chiesa " . The tenor aria illustrates the " masochistic " " Hate

me , then , hate me with all your might , o hostile race ! " by a first dissonant entry on an ostinato bass line full of chromatic , leaps and interrupting rests . Oboe d 'amore and viola da gamba return to accompany the last aria , and " the sombre qualities of both voice and instruments create a feeling of peace and introspection " . The music of the closing chorale is identical to that of Part I.

= = 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 by green background .