

= Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin , BWV 125 =

Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin (With peace and joy I depart) , BWV 125 , is a church cantata by Johann Sebastian Bach . He composed the chorale cantata in Leipzig in 1725 for the Feast of the purification of Mary and first performed it on 2 February 1725 . The text is based on the hymn " Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin " in four stanzas by Martin Luther , published in 1524 . The gospel for the feast day , the presentation of Jesus at the Temple , includes Simeon 's canticle Nunc dimittis , which Luther paraphrased in his hymn .

An unknown librettist retained the first and the last of Luther 's four stanzas . He paraphrased the second stanza in an aria , then juxtaposed it , quoting it completely , by recitative , and derived two more movements from the third stanza . Bach structured the cantata in six movements , framing four movements for soloists by a chorale fantasia and a closing chorale . He scored it for three vocal soloists , a four @-@ part choir , and a Baroque instrumental ensemble of a horn to support the chorale tune , flauto traverso , oboe , oboe d 'amore , strings and basso continuo . The opening chorus , a chorale fantasia on the hymn tune in Phrygian mode has been compared to the opening movement of Bach 's St Matthew Passion : " death , sleep , a journey of departure , peace and consolation are some of the intertwined themes and images . "

= = History and words = =

Bach wrote the chorale cantata in his second year as Thomaskantor in Leipzig for the Feast of Purification , as part of his second annual cantata cycle , planned to consist of chorale cantatas . The prescribed readings for the feast day , which is always celebrated on 2 February , were from the book of Malachi , " the Lord will come to his temple " (Malachi 3 : 1 ? 4) , and from the Gospel of Luke , the purification of Mary and the presentation of Jesus at the Temple , including Simeon 's canticle Nunc dimittis (Luke 2 : 22 ? 32) .

Luther 's hymn in four stanzas is a paraphrase of this canticle , " With peace and joy I depart in God 's will " . Luther phrased each verse of the canticle in one stanza . An unknown librettist kept the first and the last stanza and paraphrased the inner stanzas in four movements . Movement 2 takes Luther 's second stanza as a starting point and relates Simeon 's view as an example on how to look at death . Movement 3 comments the complete text of Luther 's second stanza in recitative . The allusion to " light for the heathen " from the Gospel and the hymn is seen related to " He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved " (Mark 16 : 16) . Movements 4 and 5 are derived from the third stanza , 4 relates to Paul 's teaching about God 's grace , " Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood , to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past , through the forbearance of God " (Romans 3 : 25) , thus declaring the Lutheran teaching of justification " by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone " even more clearly than Luther 's song .

Bach led the first performance of the cantata on 2 February 1725 . He performed it at least one more time after 1735 .

= = Structure and scoring = =

Bach structured the cantata in six movements , framing by a chorale fantasia and a closing chorale a sequence of alternating arias and recitatives , in movement 3 using a chorale stanza in contrast to the recitative . He scored it for three vocal soloists (alto (A) , tenor (T) and bass (B)) , a four @-@ part choir , and a Baroque instrumental ensemble horn to support the chorale tune sung by the soprano in the outer movements , flauto traverso (Ft) , oboe (Ob) , oboe d 'amore (Oa) , two violins (VI) , viola (Va) , and basso continuo (Bc) . The title page of the original parts reads : " Festo Purificat : Mari [ae] / Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin etc . / â / 4 Voc : / Travers : / Hautbois d ' Amour / 2 Violini / Viola / con / Continuo / di / Sign : / JS . Bach " .

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 = =

= = = 1 = = =

The opening chorus , " Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin in Gottes Willen " (With peace and joy I depart in God 's will) , begins with a concertante ritornello , in which the flute and the oboe play opposed to the strings . A motif in triplets rises a fifth , related to the first interval of the chorale tune . The soprano sings the cantus firmus in Phrygian mode in long notes . The lower voices participate in the instrumental motifs for lines 1 , 2 , 3 and 5 , but lines 4 and 6 are treated differently . In accordance to the text , " sanft und stille " (calm and quiet) and " der Tod ist mein Schlaf worden " (death has become my sleep) , they are performed softly (piano) , in homophony , chromatic , and modulating to distant keys . The musicologist Julian Mincham relates the opening movement to that of Bach 's later St Matthew Passion . It is similar in its motifs in triplets , density of counterpoint , and is in the same key of E minor , shared by the Crucifixus of his Mass in B minor which he derived from the 1714 Weinen , Klagen , Sorgen , Zagen , BWV 12 (Weeping , lamenting , worrying , fearing) . Mincham concludes : " death , sleep , a journey of departure , peace and consolation are some of the intertwined themes and images . Bach is always at his most creative and imaginative when dealing with such complexities " .

= = = 2 = = =

The alto aria , " Ich will auch mit gebrochenen Augen " (Even with broken eyes ,) , is richly ornamented and accompanied by the flute and oboe d 'amore , on a calm foundation of repeated notes in the continuo , marked " legato " . The phrase " gebrochene Augen " (broken eyes) is pictured by a broken vocal line , flute and oboe d 'amore play dotted rhythm to the " almost trembling declamation " of the voice .

= = = 3 = = =

In the bass recitative " Das macht Christus , wahr ? Gottes Sohn " (Christ , God ? s true son , does this) with chorale , " Herr , du siehst statt guter Werke " (Lord , you see , instead of good works) , the chorale tune is unadorned but for the last line , " im Tod und auch im Sterben " (in death and also in dying) , where the music is extended by two measures and coloured in chromatic and rich ornamentation . The elements recitative and chorale are distinguished , the free text rendered as recitative , the chorale as arioso , but unified by a motif in the strings , called " Freudenmotiv " by Alfred Dürr , which " always indicates an underlying mood of happiness " .

= = = 4 = = =

The duet of tenor and bass , " Ein unbegreiflich Licht erfüllt den ganzen Kreis der Erden " (An unfathomable light fills the entire orb of the earth) , is focused on the light mentioned by Simeon , expressed in a joyful mood . . The Bach scholar Klaus Hofmann notes : " The playful character is shown by the extended , circling coloratura on the word " Kreis " (" circle " or " orb ") , and the baroque sound effect of statement and response unfolds to the words " Es schallet kräftig fort und fort " (Powerfully there rings out time after time .) "

= = = 5 = = =

The alto expresses in recitative " O unerschöpfter Schatz der Güte " (O uncreated hoard of

goodness) . Mincham notes that an " unexpected chord " illuminates the phrase " ein Stuhl der Gnaden " (a throne of clemency) .

== 6 ==

The closing chorale , " Er ist das Heil und selig Licht " (He is the salvation and the blessed light) , is a four @-@ part setting of the hymn tune . The horn , the flute (an octave higher) , the oboe and the first violin all reinforce the soprano part , the second violin the alto , and the viola the tenor .

= = 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 ..