

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 120

Form: Aria (A) - Chorus - Recit (B) - Aria (S) - Recit (T) - Chorale.
 The cantata is in symmetrical form. Bach often used chiasmic (x-shaped/symmetrical) forms, in which center movements (where the mirror image begins) provide the crux of the matter. There antithetical elements meet or are paradoxically inverted (formal inversion reflects an aspect of reversal or turning in the text). The peculiar symmetry of the work...assigns movement 1 the role of a rather introverted exposition, here performed as an aria for alto—assuming the role of the "believing soul"—clearly defined by the word "silence." (See note for more by Martin Petzoldt.)

Introduction & updates at melvinunger.com.

NBA I/32; BC B6

Change of Town Council (BWV 71, 119, 193, 120, 29, 69) (See note.)

Librettist: Unknown. Some movements apparently parodies, details unclear. The autograph score is dated 1742; some movements are based on an earlier version, composed before 1729. Services for change of town council were held on the first Monday after St. Bartholomew's Day (August 24), at St. Nicholas. See notes for more.



J.S. Bach

Cantata No. 120

Gott, man lobet dich in der Stille

1. (Aria)

120/1.

•Praise offered & vows paid to God in Zion: Psalm 65:1 (120/1). The subdued character of the opening movement is surprising. It appears inspired by the concept of "stillness," despite its virtuosity and a possible derivation from the middle movement of a lost violin concerto from Bach's Cöthen period (see above note; see also BWV 35/1).

Instrumentation:

Tromba I, II, III
 Timpani
 Ob I, II; Ob d'amore I, II
 Vln Concertino
 Vln I, II
 Vla
 SATB
 Continuo
 (Full ensemble enters in no. 2.)



Ob d'am I, II
 Strings

A major

Fast pulsing bass provides a sense of urgency, while rests suggest "Stille" ("stillness"). See note for biblical basis.

3II (90II)

B major

E major

6 (93)

E major

B minor

D major

8 (95)

E7

A major

A major

A major

11 A Alto

Gott, man lo -

Word painting: Long coloraturas for "lobet" (to "praise"), with trumpet-like figures in voice and instruments (but soft).

In BWV 120a (an earlier version of the cantata in two parts for a wedding), this movement is no. 6—a duet (with different text) that is much less virtuosic. Bach must have had a very fine singer at his disposal.

A major, A pedal...

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21

in der Stil - - - le,

A major B7 E minor A7

23

B

Gott, man lo -

Ob d'am I & II

D major E7

25

-bet dich in der Stil - le - zu - Zi - on, in der

+Strings Ob d'am I & II

A major (B7) E major (B7) B7 B pedal...

Fermata for contemplation in "stillness."

27II

Stil - le, in der Stil - le, in der Stil - - -

+Strings

E major (F#7) B major

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30

- le. man lo -

B major F# minor A major

32

- bet dich in der Stil - le

B7 E major

34

zu Zi - on,

Tutti

Ob d'am I & II

f Ritornello

E major E major E pedal,,

37

Figura corta (see note).

E7 A major F#7 B major

39

B7 B pedal... B7 E major E major

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41
F# minor A major B7 D B section (employs the same dotted rhythm of the head motive).

43

und dir be - zah - - let

Ob d'am I & II

E major E7 C#7

Detailed description: This system contains measures 41 and 43. Measure 41 shows a complex piano accompaniment with a dotted rhythm. Measure 43 features a vocal line with the lyrics 'und dir be - zah - - let' and a piano accompaniment with a 'p' dynamic marking. A red box highlights a specific chord in the piano part.

44

man Ge - lüb - de, und dir be - zah -

Virtuosic coloraturas that link "paying vows" to "praise" of A section.

Str.

F# minor B minor E major

Detailed description: This system contains measures 44 and 45. Measure 44 has the lyrics 'man Ge - lüb - de, und dir be - zah -'. Measure 45 features a vocal line with virtuosic coloraturas and a piano accompaniment with a 'Str.' marking.

46

47

48

let man Ge - lüb -

A major E# dim.7

Detailed description: This system contains measures 46, 47, and 48. Measure 46 has the lyrics 'let man Ge - lüb -'. Measure 47 and 48 show the piano accompaniment with a 'dim.' marking.

49

50

- de, dir be - zah -

C#7 F# minor F pedal...

Detailed description: This system contains measures 49 and 50. Measure 49 has the lyrics '- de, dir be - zah -'. Measure 50 shows the piano accompaniment with a 'pedal...' marking.

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53

- let man Ge - lü b - de, Ge - - lü b - - de, dir be - zah. let man Ge -

G#7

55

l ü b - de, Ge - lü b - de, und dir be - zah -

Ob d'am I & II Figura corta (see earlier note).

C# minor

57

- - let man Ge - lü b - de, dir be - zah - - - let

+Str

C# minor

59

man Ge - lü b - - de.

Ritornello

C# minor A major A pedal...

62

tr

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64 **E** A' Section.
Gott, man lo -

A major
A pedal,,

66 - - - - - bet dich in - der Stil - le,

A major
A pedal...

68 Gott, man lo -

Ob d'am I & II
Vln I & II

70 - - - - - bet dich in der Stil - le - zu - Zi - on,

A major

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72 **F**

in der Stil - - - - le,

Ob d'am I & II

Strings

F#7 B minor E7

74

in der Stil - - - - le.

Ob d'am I & II

Strings

A major B7 E minor A7

76

in der Stil - - - -

Ob d'am I & II

+Vln I & II

D major F#7 B minor F#7 B7

78

E7 A# dim.7 B minor

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80 **G**
- - le zu Zi - on, in der Stil - le,
Tutti
E major E pedal... A major A major

82
in der Stil - - - - - le,
B7 E major E major

84
Gott, man lo - - - - -
B minor D major E7

86
- - bet dich in der Stil - le zu Zi - - - on.
Ob d'am I & II
A major A major

dal segno

The full festive orchestration enters first with the second movement, featuring the figura corta (see note). Alfred Dürr writes, "Here the orchestra...plays a sinfonia-like introduction which includes the two principal themes of the following chorus: a triadic fanfare for 'Jauchzet' ('Sing for joy') and a sequence of stepwise rising

semiquavers for 'steiget' ('climb'). These themes are partly adopted by the choir in a figurative and imitative texture and partly used as the orchestral framework for passages of choral insertion...The movement has become well known through the reuse of its principal section, albeit in a radically altered form, as the setting of the words 'Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum' from the Credo of the B minor Mass." See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, p. 737.

2. Coro

120/2. •Voices raised in praise to God for his goodness (120/2). This act of praise serves to fulfill the vows referenced in no. 1.

Instrumentation:
Tromba I, II, III
Timpani
Ob I, II; Ob d'amore I, II
(doubling violins)
Vln Concertino
Vln I, II
Vla
SATB
Continuo

1.

Ritornello

D major Figura corta in ascending triads signifies the praise referenced in the text (see note).

3

D major

5II

E7 A major A major A7

8

D major D7 G major

10II

A7

13

D major D major

A Section.

15 **A** Soprano *Figura corta* (often associated with rejoicing; see note above).

Soprano: Jauch-zet, jauch-zet, jauch-

Alto: Jauch-zet, jauch-zet, jauch-

Tenore: Jauch-zet, jauch-zet, jauch-

Basso: Jauch-zet, jauch-zet, ihr er-freu-

Lyrics: Jauch-zet, ihr er-freuten Stimmen, jauch-

Soprano: -zet, jauch-zet, ihr er-freu-

Alto: -zet, ihr er-freu-

Tenore: -ten Stimmen, jauch-

Basso: -zet, jauch-zet, jauch-

Lyrics: -ten Stimmen, jauch-zet, jauchzet, jauch-

Soprano: -ten, ihr er-freuten Stimmen, er-freuten

Alto: -zet, ihr er-freuten Stimmen, er-freuten

Tenore: -zet, ihr er-freuten Stimmen, er-freuten

Basso: -zet, ihr er-freuten

Lyrics: -ten, erfreuten

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Text painting: Rising coloraturas in imitation depicts "[erfreuten Stimmen] steigt bis zum Himmel" ("voices of praise climbing up to heaven").

23 **B**

Stimmen. stei-
Stimmen, stei- get bis zum
Stimmen. stei-
Stimmen,

26 D major E major A7 D major (F#7) B minor

- get bis zum Him- mel, stei- get bis zum
Him- mel, stei- get bis zum Himmel, stei- get-
- get bis zum Himmel 'nauf. stei- get, stei-get
stei- get bis zum Him-mel, stei-get

28ff E major E7 A major A major

Him - mel 'nauf!
bis zum Himmel 'nauf!
bis zum Himmel 'nauf!
bis zum Himmel 'nauf!

Ritornello

A major A major

31

Jauch - - zet, ihr er -

C

A major

34

Jauch - - zet, ihr er - freu -

freu - - ten Stimmen, jauch -

A major

36II

- ten Stimmen, stei - - get bis zum Himmel, stei - - get bis zum

- - zet, jauchzet, stei - - get bis zum Himmel, stei -

- - zet, ihr er - freu - - ten Stimmen, ihr er - - ten Stimmen, ihr er -

D7

G major

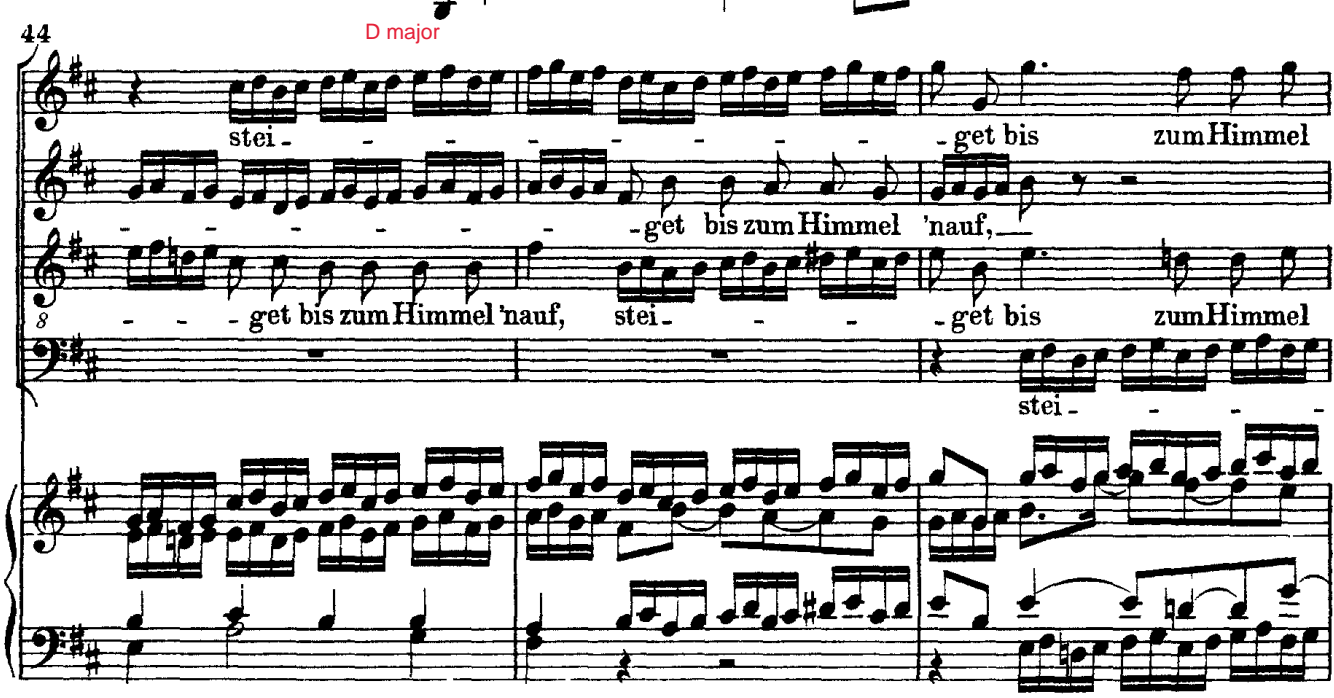
39
Himmel 'nauf. zum Himmel 'nauf. jauch - zet, ihr er - freuten Stimmen, ihr er -
bis zum Himmel 'nauf, zum Himmel 'nauf. jauch - - - - - zet, ihr er -
- get, stei - get bis zum Himmel 'nauf, jauch - - - - - zet, ihr er -
freu - - - - - ten Stimmen, jauch - - - - - zet, jauchzet



41 II
freu - - ten Stimmen,
freu - - ten Stimmen, stei -
freu - - ten Stimmen, stei -
ihr er - freuten Stimmen,
A7 D A7 D major



44
stei - - - - - get bis zum Himmel
- get bis zum Himmel 'nauf,
- get bis zum Himmel 'nauf, stei - - - - - get bis zum Himmel
stei - - - - -
D major



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47

'nauf, zum Him - mel - 'nauf, stei -
stei -
'nauf, stei - get bis zum
- get, stei - get bis zum

50

D major

- get bis zum Himmel, zum Himmel 'nauf!
- get, steigt bis zum Himmel 'nauf!
Himmel, steigt bis zum Himmel 'nauf!
Him - mel, zum Himmel 'nauf!

Ritornello

D major

53

- get bis zum Himmel, zum Himmel 'nauf!
- get, steigt bis zum Himmel 'nauf!
Himmel, steigt bis zum Himmel 'nauf!
Him - mel, zum Himmel 'nauf!

D major

D major

E7

56

- get bis zum Himmel, zum Himmel 'nauf!
- get, steigt bis zum Himmel 'nauf!
Himmel, steigt bis zum Himmel 'nauf!
Him - mel, zum Himmel 'nauf!

A major

A major

A7

D major

D7

59

G major

A7

62

A7

D major

D major

B Section. Alfred Dürr writes, "The bipartite middle section of this da capo form movement is taken up with largely homophonic choral writing with accompanying instruments, leaving aside an articulating instrumental episode. See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, 737.

65

E

Lo-bet Gott im Hei-lig-tum und er-he-bet sei-nen Ruhm; sei-ne

Lo-bet Gott im Hei-lig-tum und er-he-bet sei-nen Ruhm;

8 Lo-bet Gott im Hei-lig-tum und er-he-bet sei-nen Ruhm; sei-ne

E Lo-bet Gott im Hei-lig-tum und er-he-bet sei-nen Ruhm;

f Continuo alone...

B7 E minor F#7 B minor F#7

67II

D major

Chromatic inflection (flatward) for reference to compassion.

Gü-te, sein er-bar-men-des Ge-mü-te, sein er-

sei-ne Gü-te, sein er-bar-men-des Ge-mü-te, sein er-

Gü-te, sein er-bar-men-des Ge-mü-te,

sei-ne Gü-te, sein er-bar-men-des Ge-mü-te,

Strings

Str

Trps

F#7 B minor D7 G major E minor

Vocal lines embedded in ritornello material.

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70

bar - men - des Ge - müte hört zu kei - nen Zeiten auf.
 - men - des Ge - müte hört zu kei - nen Zeiten auf.
 sein er - bar - men - des Ge - müte hört zu kei - nen Zeiten auf.
 sein er - bar - men - des Ge - müte hört zu kei - nen Zeiten auf.

Trps

C# dim.7 F#7 B minor B minor

73

Strings

B minor B7 E minor E minor N6

76

Lobet Gott im Hei - lig - tum und er - he - bet seinen
 Lobet Gott im Hei - lig - tum und er - he -
 Lobet Gott im Hei - lig - tum under - he - bet
 Lobet Gott im Hei - lig - tum und er -

Rising figures for "erhebet" ("raise").

+Trps Strings

A# dim.7 B minor B minor E7 A major

"Lindenstadt" refers to Leipzig, whose name derives from "lipa," the Slavic name for Linden. In comparison to movement no. 5, Martin Petzoldt calls this movement a "descriptio" (a rhetorical term for a vivid description).

120/3. **3. Recitativo** • Pay vows for civic blessings, seek further blessing (120/3).
Basso

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 10 mm.

Bass is often the voice of authority, such as the minister.

1. **D** **A#** **B** **G** **E** **C#**

Auf, **du ge-lieb-te Lin-den-stadt! Komm, fal-le vor dem Höchsten**
 Arise, thou beloved city-of-Lindens! Come, fall before the Most-High

B minor

Text painting: Descending intervals for the exhortation to prostrate oneself before God.

Possible allusion to Proverbs 4:9 (see note).

3 **G#** **A** **E#** **F#**

nieder; **er-kenne, wie er dich in deinem Schmuck und Pracht so vä-ter-lich er-**
 down; recognize, how he thee in thine adornment and splendor, so father-like preserves,

B minor **C#7** **F# minor**



5II **E# dim.7** **C#7** **F# minor** **D major**

hält, beschützt, be-wacht, und sei-ne Lie-bes-hand noch ü-ber dir be-stän-dig
 protects, guards, and his hand-of-love still over thee steadfastly

8 **F# minor** **F# minor** **B7** **D# dim.7**

hat. **Wohl-an, be-zah-le die Ge-lüb-de, die du dem Höchsten hast ge-**
 (doth-hold). Well-then, pay the vows, which thou to-the Most-High hast made,

10II **Quasi-arioso...** **E minor** **G major** **E major** **E7**

tan, und sin-ge-Dank-und Demuts-lie-der; komm, bit-te, dass er Stadt und
 and sing (songs of thanks and songs-of-humilty; come, pray, that he town and

The theological basis of the text is found in biblical passages such as Romans 13:1. Let every person be subject to the governing authorities (Luther 1545:

Obrigkeit). For there is no authority (Luther 1545: Obrigkeit) except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 1 Timothy 2:1-2. ...I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions (Luther 1545: Obrigkeit), that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way.

13

Land un-end-lich wol-le mehr er-quick-ken und die-se wer-te O-brig-keit. ("this esteemed authority")

country unendingly would further refresh and this worthy government.

E7 A minor

The text refers to transfer of authority from the sitting council and its mayor to one of the two "dormant" councils (see note at no. 1).

15

keit, so heu-te Sitz und Wahl ver-neut, mit vielem Segen wol-le schmücken.

which today seat and poll renews, with many blessings would adorn.

B7 D# dim.7 B7 E minor A# im.7 B minor

The text refers to the annual rotation in Leipzig from the "sitting" town council and its mayor to one of the two "dormant" councils and its mayor (see note at no. 1).

4. Aria

•Blessing on government brings justice & faithfulness (120/4). This strikingly lyrical movement is the central (pivot) movement in the cantata's chiasitic form, where (normally) antithetical elements meet or are paradoxically inverted (formal inversion reflects an aspect of reversal or turning in the text). In this text, justice and faithfulness meet—as if to balance each other. This theme derives from Psalm 85 (see note). Regarding the movement's origin, see below.

120/4.

Violine concertino
Vln I, II
Vla
Continuo

1.

Ritornello

G major

4 (82)

G major D7

6 (84)

D7 G7

8 (86)

G7 C major D7

Alfred Dürr writes, "[This movement] is based on a presumably secular composition from the Cöthen period. The original itself does not survive, but we possess an early adaptation of it as a movement from the Sonata in G for violin and obbligato harpsichord, BWV 1019a. The cantata version is an exceptionally lovely jewel

among Bach's arias. With its intimate melody and the filigree-like figuration of the solo violin, it returns to the 'still' mood of the opening movement." See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, translated by Richard Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 737. The movement is a fine example of Bach's ability to match preexisting music to a new text. For a comparison of the text used in the wedding cantata BWV 120a, see note.



10 (88)

13

G7 C major D7 G major G major

A Soprano

Heil und Se - gen, Heil und Se - gen soll und muss zu aller Zeit,

This line is more ornamented in BWV 120a.

Vln concertino

G major

16

soll und muss zu al - ler Zeit sich auf unsre O - brig - keit in er - wünsch - ter Fül - le

Awkward stress on the final syllable of "Obrigkeit" (presumably the original text fit better).

G major

18 II

le - - gen; Heil und Se gen,

Continuo alone.

G major G major A7 B minor

22

Heil und Se - - gen, Heil und Se - gen, Heil und Se - - gen

(D major) G major G major G major

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25

soll und muss zu al-ler Zeit sich auf un- - sre O-brigkeit

Vln concertino

A7 A7

27

in erwünsch-ter Fül- - le, in er- wünsch- ter Fül- - le

Vln I

D major D major

29II

le- - - -gen, Heil und Se- - gen, Heil und

A7

32

Se- - - -gen soll und muss zu allerZeit,

In its new setting, the violin obbligato appears to signify the fill of "Heil und Segen" ("well-being and blessing") referenced in the text.

A7 D7

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34
soll und muss zu al - ler Zeit sich auf un - sre O - brig -

D(7) G major A major

36
keit in er - wünsch - ter Fül - le le - gen,

B minor A7 D7 G major D major A major D major

39 *Tutti* *mf* Ritornello

D major

42 **B** B Section.
dass sich Recht und Treu -

D major D(7) G major

44
- e müs - sen mit ein - an - der

Vin concertino alone...

G# dim.7 A minor A minor D# dim.7 E minor

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46

freund - lich küs - sen, dass sich Recht und

E minor

48

Treu - e, Recht und Treu - e müs - sen

+Strings tr

E minor

D7

G major7

Solo violin and singer alternate their ornate figuration for the reference to justice and faithfulness kissing each other...

51

mit ein - ander freund -

B7

53

- - - - -

E7

A minor

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55

- lich küs - sen, dass sich

D7 G major

57

Recht und Treu - e müs - sen mit ein - an - der freund - lich

Vln concertino alone... Continuo alone

B7 E minor E7 D# dim.7 E minor

60

kü - sen, freund - lich küs - sen.

Ritornello

E minor (D7) E minor E7

63

Heil und Se - gen,

C

A minor B7 E minor E minor D7 G major

66

Heil — und Se - gen soll und muss zu aller Zeit, soll und muss zu aller

Vln concertino +Strings

G major D7 G major

68II

Zeit sich auf unsre O - brig - keit in er - wünschter Fül - le le - - - gen,

Vln concertino alone...

G major

71

dass sich Recht — und Treu - - - e müs - - - sen

+Strings tr

D7 D7

73

mit ein - an - der freund - - - lich küs - - - sen,

Vln concertino alone...

G7 G(7)

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75

dass sich Recht und Treue müssen

C major D7

77

mit einander freundlich küssen.

Tutti Ritornello

G major G major G major G major dal segno

5. Recitativo •Prayer for new government: righteousness & blessing (120/5).
 120/5. 1. Tenore NBA: das

In contrast to no. 3, Martin Petzoldt calls this movement a "precatio" (a rhetorical term for a prayer). Bach often uses a "halo" of strings to signify divine presence.

Nun, Herr, so weihe selbst dein Regiment mit deinem Segen ein, dass alle

Now, Lord, - inaugurate thyself (this) government with thy blessing - , that all

"Halo" of strings...

A(7) D major

3II

8

Bosheit von uns fliehe und die Gerechtigkeit in unsern Hütten blühe, dass deines

iniquity from us might-flee and - righteousness in our dwellings would-flourish, that thy

Wrenching harmonic progression for "iniquity."

D# dim.7 C#7 F# minor E# dim.7 C#7 F# minor

6

8

Vaters reiner Same und dein gebedeiter Name bei uns verherrlicht möge sein!

Father's pure seed and thy blessed name amongst us glorified might be!

D major E major A# dim.7 B minor E# dim.7 F# minor

"Thy Father's pure seed" appears to signify God's Word. However, some scholars understand it to mean Christ, the seed of David. See references in note.



The closing movement, 4 lines from the German Te Deum, serves as a catechismal statement in which the citizenry is seen as identical with the Christian community.

•Te Deum Extract: Bless this people, thine inheritance: paraphrase of Psalm 28:9 (120/6). This is a section of Luther's 1529 German paraphrase of the Te Deum (see below).

120/6. **6. Choral** (Aus: „Herr Gott, dich loben wir“)

Bach clothes the modal melody with harmonic ingenuity.

Soprano 1.
+Ob I, II
+Vln I
Alto
+Vln II
Tenore
+Vla
Basso

Nun hilf uns, Herr, den Dienern dein, die mit dein'm Blut er - löset sein. Lass uns im Himmel

ha - ben Teil mit den Heil'gen im ew' - gen Heil. Hilf deinem Volk, Herr Je - su Christ, und

seg - ne, was dein Erb - teil ist; wart' und pfleg' ihr'r zu al - ler Zeit und heb' sie hoch in E - wigkeit.

8

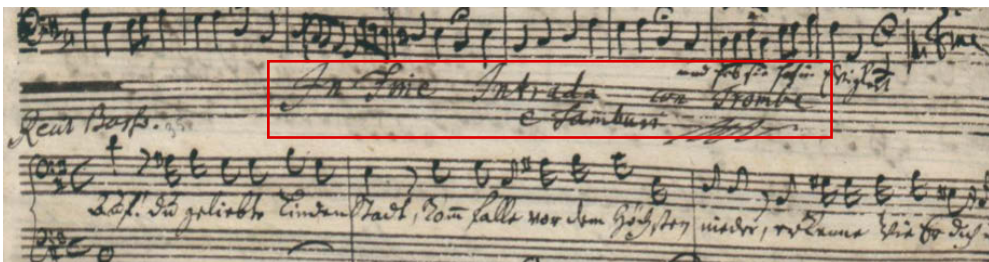
11

9

B minor B7 (C#7) F#m AM BM Bm Em DM DM DM

(E7) AM DM D# dim.7 Em BM Bm DM D major

D7 GM B7 Em BM GM A7 DM DM DM D major



In the closing chorale (as also in BWV 119), the trumpets and timpani do not reappear. Klaus Hofmann argues that the original performances actually included the trumpets and timpani and that the (lost) performing parts would have included them. See *Bach-Jahrbuch* 2001, 151–162. After the chorale in BWV 120, Bach has written "In Fine Intrada con Trombe e Tamburi" (At the end, an intrada with trumpets and timpani"). The instruction may have signified that trumpets and timpani accompanied the final line with a flourish, "giving the cantata a conclusion similar to that of BWV 130, movement 6" (Martin Petzoldt, *Bach Kommentar* 3:238, citing Hofmann, pp. 157–159). However, Ulrike Utsch notes that "Bernd Heyder assumes that this indication refers to a fanfare-like entry of the trumpet choir in the closing cadence, resembling the one that Bach wrote out fully in the final chorale of...BWV 149." See Ulrike Utsch citing *Bachs Kantaten. Das Handbuch*, ed. by Reinmar Emans and Sven Hiemke, vol. 2 (Laaber, 2012), p. 163., *Johann Sebastian Bach in The Sacred Vocal Music Complete Edition. Cantatas* (Stuttgart: Carus Verlag, 2017), vol. 11, p. 298 (Ulrike Utsch, translated by David Kosviner). Interestingly, the chorale appears on the top of the manuscript page that contains the bass recitative, no. 3—presumably an anomaly associated with the parody process.

484 An den Apostel Festen.

C Chor. I. Chor. II.
 Laß uns im Himmel haben Theil Mit den Heiligen im ewigen Heil.

Chor. I. Chor. II.
 Hülf deinem Volk/ Herr Jesu Christ/ Mi segne/ was dein Erbtheil ist/

Chor. I. Chor. II.
 Wart und pfeg ihr zu aller Zeit/ Und heb sie hoch in Ewigkeit.

Excerpt from *Neu Leipziger Gesangbuch* (Leipzig, 1682), p. 484.
 Luther's German paraphrase of the Te Deum, Cantus part.

Portions of the German Te Deum appear in BWV 119, 120 (for city elections), and in BWV 190 and 16 (New Year).