

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV Form (Cantata for Alto): Aria - Recit - Aria. (Chiastic form, no closing chorale!)

Introduction & updates at [melvinunger.com](http://melvinunger.com).

NBA I/17; BC A106

6. S. after Trinity (BWV 170, 9)

\*Romans 6:3–11 (Through Christ's death believers die to sin)

\*Matthew 5:20–26 (From Sermon on the Mount:

True righteousness is characterized by love of one's neighbor)

Librettist: Georg Christian Lehms (BWV 170 and 35 are the

last Bach cantatas to use librettos from Lehms's

"Gottgefälliges Kirchen-Opfers" of 1711.) See

note for more on Lehms.

FP: 28 July 1726 (Leipzig: St. Thomas).

From Bach's third cantata cycle in Leipzig.

See notes for details.



## Cantata No. 170



### Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust

Compare Handel's setting of Matthew 11:28: in *Messiah* ("Come unto him, all ye that labor...").

•Contentment of soul found only in concord & virtue (170/1).

In no. 1, the rocking 12/8 meter of a siciliano (with its pastoral associations) and the slowly descending bass against a sustained melody note convey the idea of "vergnügte Ruh, beliebt Seelenlust" ("contented rest, beloved joy of soul") in the manner of a lullaby. This phrase alludes to Jesus' words in Matthew 11:29, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."



Instrumentation:

Oboe d'amore

Vin I, II

Vla

Alto (see note)

Obbligato organ (see note)

Continuo



Regarding the descending bass against the sustained F#, compare Air on a G String.

Regarding the effect Bach's personal circumstances may have had on his compositional choices in this cantata, see note.



This type of aria is called a "Devisenarie" (a term coined by Hugo Riemann) or "motto aria." After the ritornello, the singer presents the first phrase of the aria as a kind of motto. This is followed by a short instrumental bridge before the aria proper begins. The motto sets the tone (and the literary perspective) for the movement

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10.

lieb - te See - lenlust, ver -

L.H.

A7 D7 G major A7

12.

gnüg - te Ruh', be - lieb - te See - lenlust, ver-gnüg - te -

D major D major E7

14.

Ruh', be - lieb - te See - lenlust, be -

A major A7

16.

lieb - te See - lenlust, dich kann man nicht bei Höl - len -

"Höllensünden" ("hell's sins") is chromatically inflected.

D major E7 A major A major B minor

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18.

Sün - den, wohl a - ber Himmels-Ein-tracht fin - den,

(tr)

E# dim.7 C#7 F# minor F# minor E7 A major

20.

du stärkst al - lein die schwache Brust, du stärkst al -

L.H.

A7 D major D# dim.7 B7 E7 A major

22.

lein - die schwa - che Brust, vergnüg - te Ruh, ver - gnüg - te -

D# dim.7 E major E7 A major

24.

Ruh, be - lieb - te See - len - lust, be - lieb - te See - len.

A7 D major E7 A major

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26. *lust.*

*mf* Ritornello

A major A7 D major

28. L.H.

E major E7 A major

30. B7 E7 A major D major

31. Drum,

D# dim.7 B7 D7 A major E7

33. drum sol - len lau - ter Tu - gend - gaben in mei - nem Her - zen Woh - nung

*p*

A major A7 D major

The musical score is for a section of J.S. Bach's Church Cantata BWV 170. It consists of five systems of music. The first system (measures 26-27) shows a keyboard part with a ritornello marked 'mf' and a vocal part with a 'lust.' (lively) tempo marking. The second system (measures 28-29) continues the keyboard part with a 'L.H.' (left hand) marking. The third system (measures 30-31) shows the keyboard part with a 'Drum,' marking. The fourth system (measures 32-33) shows the vocal part with the lyrics 'drum sol - len lau - ter Tu - gend - gaben in mei - nem Her - zen Woh - nung'. The fifth system (measures 34-35) shows the keyboard part with a 'p' (piano) marking. Chord progressions are indicated in red text below the keyboard part: A major, A7, D major, E major, E7, B7, D# dim.7, A major, A7, D major.

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35.  
ha - ben. Ver-gnüg-te Ruh, — be - lieb - te See - len.

F#7 B minor A# dim.7

37.  
lust! Drum sol - len lau - ter Tu - gend-gaben in mei - nem

F#7 B minor D7 G major

39.  
Her - zen Woh - nung ha - ben, drum, drum sol - len lau - ter Tu - gend.

B7 E minor F#7 B minor

41.  
ga - ben in meinem Her - zen Woh - nung ha - ben.

F#7 B minor F#7 A# dim.7 B minor B minor



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43. 

Vergnüg-te Ruh', \_\_\_\_\_ be-lieb-te See-len.

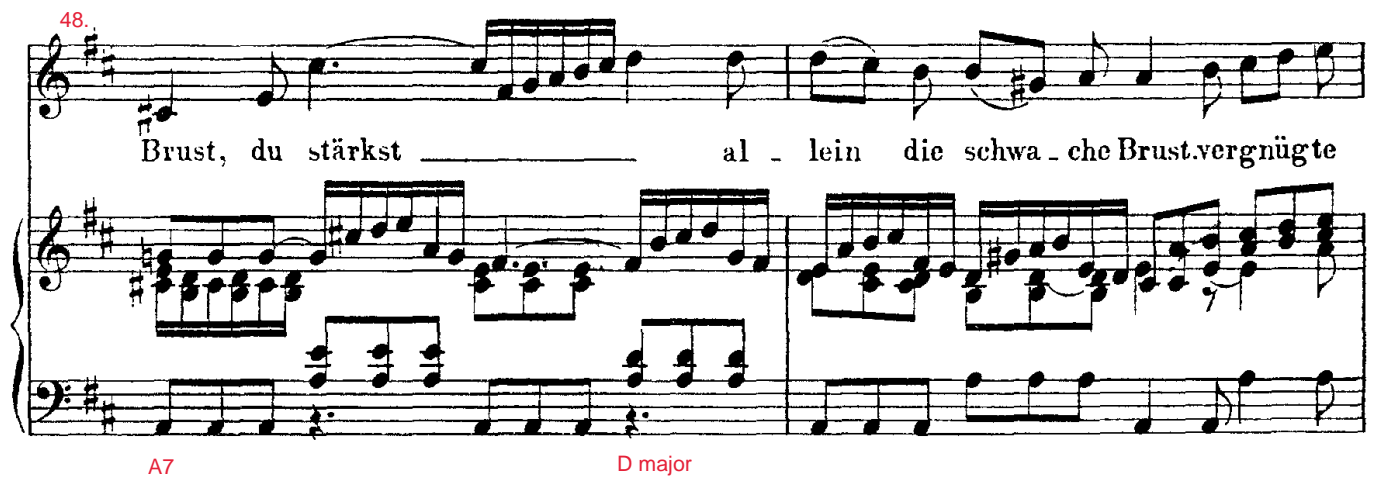
B minor A7

46. 

lust, vergnüg-te Ruh', \_\_\_\_\_ be-lieb-te See-len lust, du stärkst al-lein die schwache

D major D7 G major E7

Chromatic inflection for "schwache" ("weak").

48. 

Brust, du stärkst \_\_\_\_\_ al-lein die schwa-che Brust, vergnüg-te

A7 D major

50. 

Ruh', \_\_\_\_\_ ver-gnüg-te Ruh', \_\_\_\_\_ be-lieb-te See-len.

A7 D major D7 G major

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52. lust, be-lieb - - te See-len-lust.

mf

A7 D major D major

55. D major D7 G major D major

57. A7 A pedal... D major E7

59. A major A7 D major G major G# dim.7 E7

60. Secco G# dim.7 D minor D major D major

## Recitativo.

170/2.

•Hatred manifested by a world alienated from God (170/2).

Al<sup>F#</sup>

Die Welt, das Sün-den-haus, bricht nur in Höllen-lie-der aus und  
The world, that house-of-sin, breaks only with songs-of-hell der forth and

B minor

A# dim.

B7

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 12 mm.

Dramatic condemnation of the sinful world: Unstable harmonies and many diminished 7th chords are used to depict the world as a "house of sin."



3. C A

sucht durch Hass und Neid des Satans Bild an sich zu tragen. Ihr Mund ist voller Ottergift.  
 seeks through hatred and envy - Satan's image - - to bear. Its mouth is filled with poison-of-vipers.

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

6. G#

der oft die Unschuld tödtlich trifft, und will allein von Racha, Racha sagen.  
 Which often - innocence fatally strikes, and wants only of "Raca, Raca!" to speak.

G#7 B# dim.7 C# minor E major D# dim.7 B major

9. Prayer:

Ge-rechter Gott, wie weit ist doch der Mensch von dir ent-fer-net: du liebst, je-  
 Righteous God, how far is indeed - man from thee distanced; thou lovest, yet

E major F#7 A# dim.7 D7 G# dim.7

12. F Text painting: Descending line for "trample [underfoot]."

Chromaticism colors the description of the human condition.

doch sein Mund macht Fluch und Feindschaft kund und will den Nächsten nur mit Füßen treten.  
 his mouth proclaims curse(s) and enmity (abroad) and wants the neighbor just with feet to-trample.

D# dim.7 B7 E major D minor A minor

15. Arioso-like... Lehms's original: "nimmer" ("never")

Ach! die-se Schuld ist schwerlich zu ver-söh-nen.)  
 Ah! this guilt is difficult to for-give-ten.)

A major B7 E# dim.7 F# minor B# dim.7 C# major

The final line may allude to the Lord's prayer, i.e., one cannot blithely pray, "Forgive us our trespasses..."



This is the central (pivot) movement in the cantata's chiastic form, where the antithesis of Jesus' thinking and that of scoffers is shown. It reflects Jesus' words in the Gospel reading (part of the Sermon on the Mount): "You have heard...but I say..." A distinctive feature of this aria is the absence of continuo support. Such bassetto technique is often used by Bach to depict something heavenly, unearthly, incomprehensible, or without foundation. An entire movement in bassetto texture is rare. Here its absence (Aria.) underscores the despair of the lament over "perverted hearts." See note by Alfred Dürr.

170/3. Adagio. (♩ = 54.) •Pity the hearts who scoff at law against hatred! (170/3).  
Quasi-fugal organ obbligato with chromatic neighbor tones...

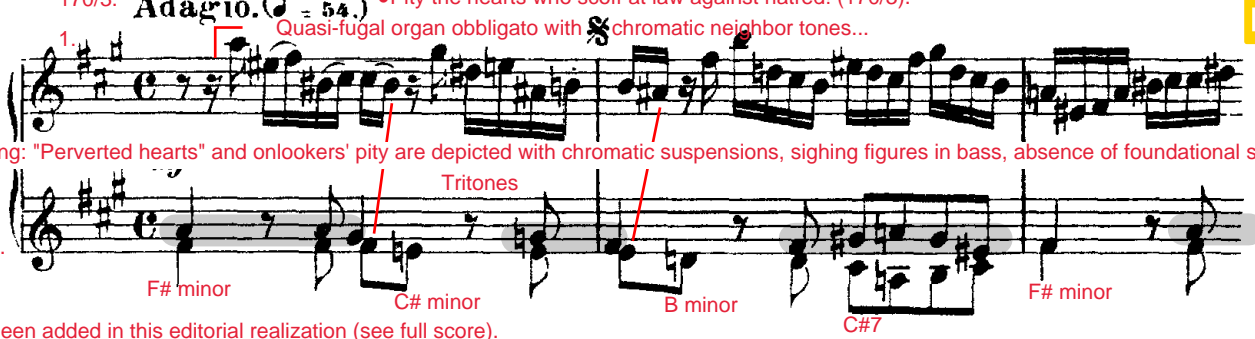
Organ Obbligato for two manuals (See note at no. 1.)

"Bassett" played by Vln & Vla in unison. No continuo.

Additional lines have been added in this editorial realization (see full score).

For Johann Mattheson's comments about the significance of F# minor, see note.

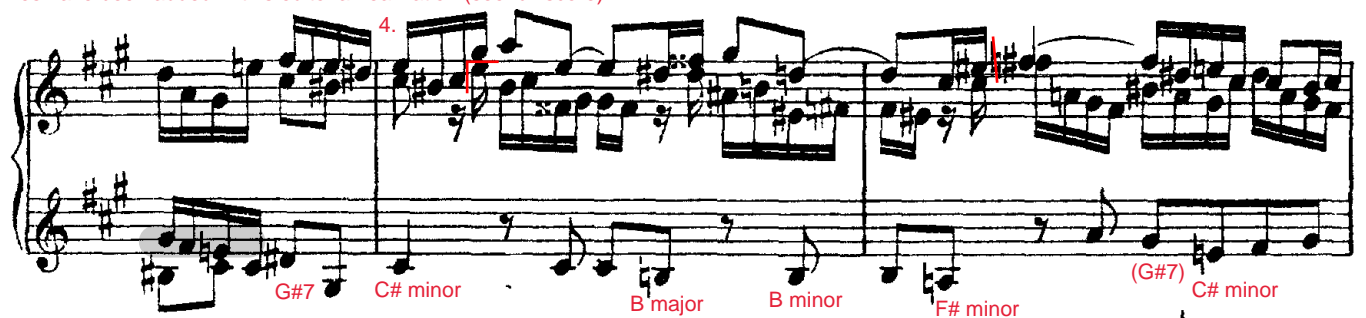


1. 

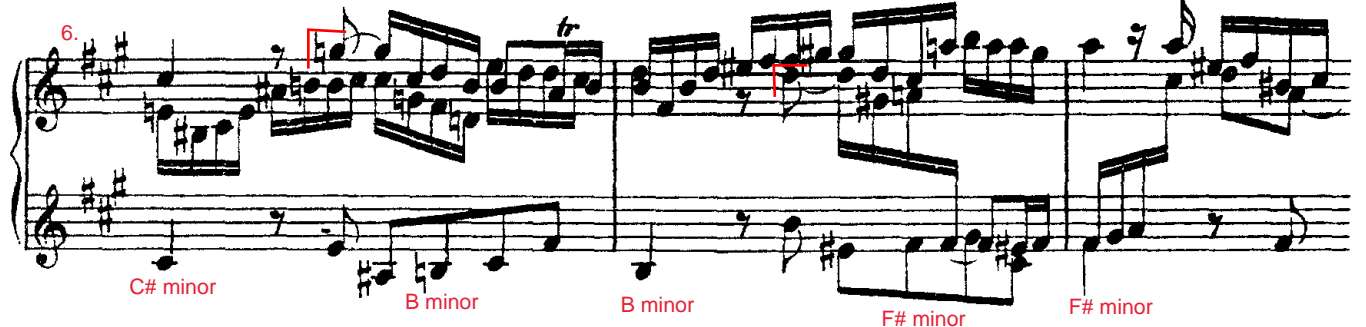
Text painting: "Perverted hearts" and onlookers' pity are depicted with chromatic suspensions, sighing figures in bass, absence of foundational support.

Tritones

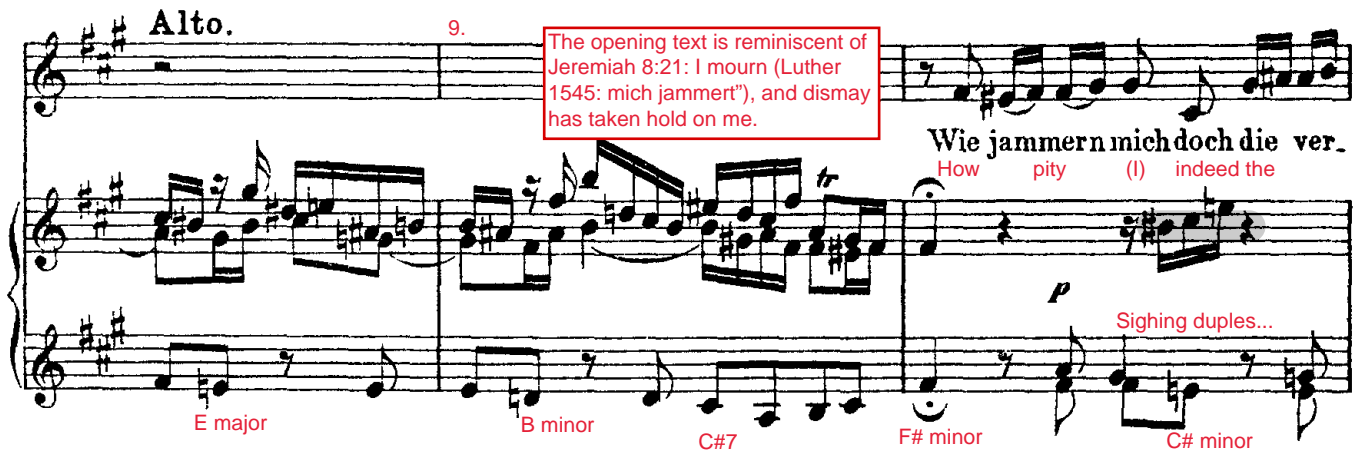
F# minor C# minor B minor C#7 F# minor

4. 

G#7 C# minor B major B minor F# minor (G#7) C# minor

6. 

C# minor B minor B minor F# minor F# minor

9. 

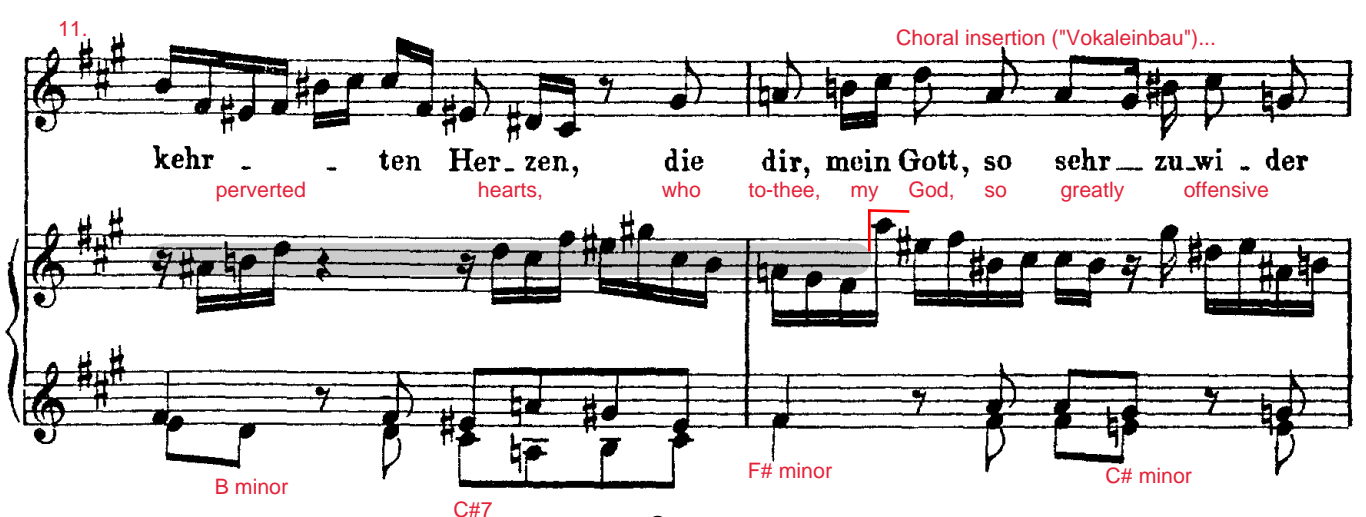
Alto.

The opening text is reminiscent of Jeremiah 8:21: I mourn (Luther 1545: mich jammert"), and dismay has taken hold on me.

Wie jammern mich doch die ver.  
How pity (I) indeed the

p Sighing duples...

E major B minor C#7 F# minor C# minor

11. 

Choral insertion ("Vokaleinbau")...

kehr - - - ten Her - zen, die dir, mein Gott, so sehr - zu - wi - der  
perverted hearts, who to-thee, my God, so greatly offensive

B minor C#7 F# minor C# minor

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13. sein, — die dir, — — — — — mein Gott, so — sehr, mein Gott, so sehr zu — wi — der  
are, who to-thee, my God, so greatly, my God, so greatly offensive der

B minor C#7 F# minor C# minor

15. sein. Ich zitt' — re recht — und füh — le tau — send  
are. I tremble quite and feel (a) thousand

Text painting: Broken sighs...

C# minor G#7 C#7 F# major G#7 C# minor

17. Schmer — — — — — zen, tau — send  
torments, thousand

C# minor B minor B minor F# minor

19. Schmer.zen, wenn sie sich nur an Rach', — — — — —  
torments, when they only in vengeance Aggressive/"laughing" coloraturas for "rejoice in vengeance and hate."

F# minor B minor E7 A major

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21. Chromatic inflection...

an Rach' und Hass, in vengeance and hatred, an Rach' und Hass er. in vengeance and hatred

A major N6 A minor (E7)

23. freun, rejoice, Energetic melisma (laughter) for "erfreun" wenn sie sich nur an Rach' und Hass er. when they - only in vengeance and hatred

A major A major

25. freun. rejoice. Text painting: "Cascades of laughter" in fanfare-like figures by the organ (See Petzoldt 1:133).

*mf* A major B7 E major A major D minor E major

27. Prayer: Lehms's original: muß (must)

Gerechter Gott, was magst du doch ge-den-ken, was magst du doch ge-den-ken  
Righteous God, what may you indeed think, what may you indeed think

Canon *p* Sighing duples...

Check?? A major B# dim.7 G#(7) C# minor C# minor

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30. Convoluted lines for "what must you think."

ken, doch ge - den  
indeed think,

(G# minor) F# minor G#7 C# minor

32.

ken, wenn sie al - lein mit  
when they only/but with

Fx dim.7 G# minor G# minor C#7 (F#7)

34.

rech - ten Sa - tans - Rän  
true satanic intrigues

D#7 G# minor F# minor F# minor

36.

ken dein schar - fes Strafgebot so frech,  
your stern precept-of-judgment so insolently,

B# dim.7 C# minor C# minor B7 E major

Energetic coloraturas for "frech."



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38.

deinscharfes Straf - ge - bot  
your stern precept-of-judgment

E major

40.

Energetic melisma (laughter) for "erfreun" ("rejoice").

so frech verlacht,  
so insolently deride.

deinscharfes Straßge.  
your stern precept-of-

B7 E major E major

42.

Long vocal trill with energetic organ coloraturas for "verlacht" ("scoff/deride").

bot so frech verlacht.  
judgment so insolently deride.

Organ plays descending runs...

E major C# minor??

44.

Modified da capo...

Ach!  
Ah!

ohne Zweifel hast du so ge -  
Without doubt have you thus thought,

E major B minor



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46. dacht, oh, ne Zwei, fel hast du so gedacht. Wie jammern mich doch die ver - kehr - ten  
Without doubt have yo thus thought: How pity (I) indeed the perverted

B minor B minor F# minor E minor

49. Herzen, wie jam - mern mich doch  
hearts, How pity (I) indeed

F#7 B minor F# minor E minor F#7

51. die ver - kehr - ten Herzen, wie jam - mern mich doch  
the perverted hearts, how pity (I) indeed

B minor F# minor F# minor C#7

54. die ver - kehr - ten Herzen, wie jammern mich doch  
the perverted hearts, how pity (I) indeed

F# minor F# minor C#7 F# minor C# minor

56. 

die verkehrten Herzen!  
the perverted hearts!

*mf*

**Dal Segno.**

## 170/4. Recitativo. • Yearning to leave hate-filled world for heaven (170/4).

1. Alto.



Wer sollte sich demnach wohl hier zu leben wünschen wenn man nur Hass und  
Who would - accordingly indeed here to live wish, when one only hatred and

"Halo" of strings for the emphasis on love and concord...

A major A7 F# major D# dim.7

4.

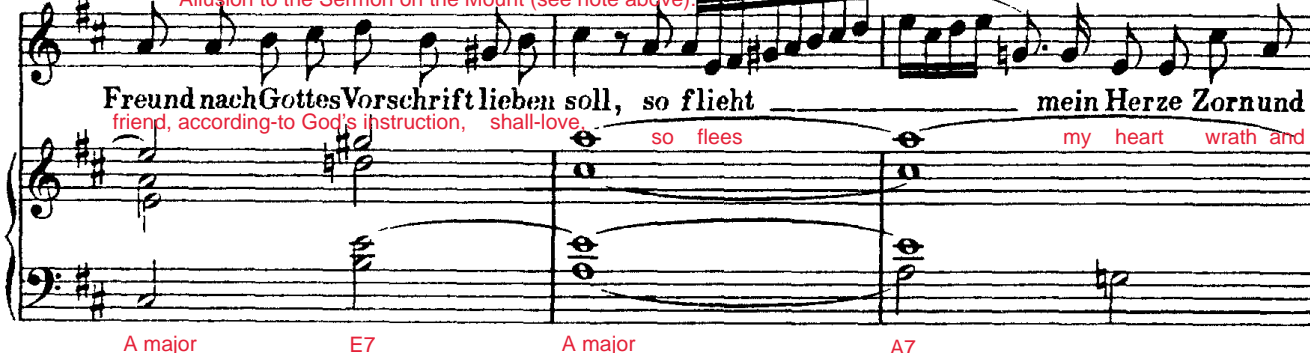


Un-gemach (für) seine Liebe sieht? Doch weil ich auch den Feind wie meinen besten  
unpleasantness for his love sees? Yet, because I even (my) enemy as my best

B7 E minor "Flight" of notes... E7

7.

Allusion to the Sermon on the Mount (see note above).



Freund nach Gottes Vorschrift lieben soll, so flieht mein Herz Zorn und  
friend, according to God's instruction, shall love, so flees my heart wrath and

A major E7 A major A7

10.

"Love" treated with embellishment.



Groll und wünscht allein bei Gott zu leben, der selbst die Liebe heisst. Ach,  
animosity and desires only with God to live, who himself - love is-called Ah,

More active strings for God as personification of love.

D7 G major G major

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 170

13.

13. NBA: wenn  
 eintracht\_voller Geist, wann wird er dir doch nur sein Himmels-Zi - on geben?  
 peaceable spirit, when will he to-thee indeed - his heavenly-Zion grant?

A7 D major D major

Da capo

**Aria.** • Loathing to live here; yearning for tranquil heaven (170/5).

170/5.

(Moderato  $\text{♩} = 80$ )

Tritone 1.



For the significance of the tritone, see note.

Ritornello derived from vocal theme.



Dürr writes, "The concluding aria is a triumphant song of renunciation of the world and longing for heaven, surrounded by the figurations of the obligato organ, which was replaced by obligato flute in a performance that took place during the last years of Bach's life (around 1746/7). See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, 435-36.

1. A major G major A major

E7 D major Bourée, perhaps here a "Totentanz" ("danse macabre"). See also BWV 26/4.

3.

Figura corta (see note)



(A7)

D major

6.

D major

D major

This type of aria is called a "Devisenarie" (a term coined by Hugo Riemann) or "motto aria." After the ritornello, the singer presents the first phrase of the aria as a kind of motto. This is followed by a short instrumental bridge before the aria proper begins. The motto sets the tone (and the literary perspective) for the movement.

Tritone for "wie ekelt" ("to-me is loathsome/I loathe")

Vocal insertion ("Vokaleinbau")

8.

(Wie leid ist mir das Le - ben,  
 Mir e - kelt mehr zu le - ben,  
 (I) loath longer to live

L. H.

D major

D major

E7

A major

A7

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 170

10.

wie leid ist mir das -  
mir e\_kelt mehr zu -

D major E7

Rising scale for "take me, Jesus, away."

13.

~~Le-ben,)~~  
le-ben, drum nimm mich, Je-su, hin, mir e\_kelt mehr zu le-ben, wie mir

A major G major D7 G major

15.

leid ist mir das Le-ben, wie leid ist mir das Le-ben,)  
e\_kelt mehr zu le-ben, mir e\_kelt mehr zu le-ben, drum nimm mich, Je-su,

E7 A major B7 E major

18.

hin, (wie leid ist mir das Le-ben, das Le-ben,  
mir e\_kelt mehr zu le-ben, zu le-ben,

(E7 E7 A7

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 170

20.

wie leid ist mir das Le - ben,) mir e\_kelt mehr zu le - ben, drun nimm mich. Je-su.

(B minor) E7 A major

23.

hin.

Ritornello

mf

A major B7 E major D major E major

25.

(E7) A major

28.

mf

tr

A major

30.

(Wie leid ist mir das Le - - - - - Mir e\_kelt mehr zu le - - - - -

A major A7 D major



# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 170

32.

ben, mir das Le - ben, wie leid ist mir das Le - ben.)  
 ben, mehr zu le - ben, mir e - kelt mehr zu le - ben, drum nimm mich, Je - su,

D7 G major E7 A major G major

35.

hin, (wie leid ist mir das Le - ben, das Le - - ben,  
 mir e - kelt mehr zu le - ben, zu le - - ben,

D major A major (A7) D major D7

37.

wie leid ist mir das Le - ben,)  
 mir e - kelt mehr zu le - ben, drum nimm mich, Jesu,

(E minor) A7 D major

40.

hin.

Ritornello

D major E7 A major G major

42. *mf* *p*

(A7) D major D7

45. *mf*

G major A7 D major D major

47. B. Section

Mir graut vor allen Sün - - den, lass

D major A# dim.7 F#7

49.

mich dies Wohnhaus fin - - den, wo selbst ich ru - hig bin, wo - selbst,

B minor E7 A major B minor

51.

wo selbst ich ru - - hig bin.

Ritornello

*mf*

E# dim.7 F# minor C# major (C# major) F# minor

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 170

53.

mir graut vor al - len

C# major C#7

55.

Sün - den, lass mich dies Wohn - haus fin - den, wo -

F# major B minor E7

56.

selbst ich ru - hig bin, woselbst, wo selbst ich ru -

A major A major E7 C#7

58.

- hig bin.

Descending lines for "where I at rest may be."

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

**Da Capo.**