

NBA I/27; BC A162

24. S. after Trinity (BWV 60, 26)

*Colossians 1:9–14 (Paul's prayer for the Colossians)

*Matthew 9:18–26 (Jesus raises Jairus's daughter from the dead; on the way, he heals the woman who touched his garment)

Librettist: Unknown

FP: 19 November 1724 (St. Thomas). This cantata belongs to Bach's chorale cantata cycle (see note).

In addition to losing both parents when he was a young boy, Bach experienced much death later in life.

1713, 23 February: newborn twin son

1713, 15 March: newborn twin daughter

1719, 28 September: 1-year-old son

1720, July: wife

1726, 29 June: 3.5-year-old daughter

1727, 1 November: newborn son

1728, 21 September: 3.5-year-old son

1730, 4 January: newborn daughter

1732, 31 August: 1.5-year-old daughter

1733, 25 April: 4.5-year-old daughter

1733, 6 November: newborn son

Instrumentation:

Corno

Flauto traverso

Ob I, II, III

Vln I, II

Vla

SATB

Continuo, Organo

Corno

Fl. trav.

Ob. I, II, III

Viol. solo

Viol. I, II

Va.

Continuo

Günther Stiller notes that on this Sunday of the liturgical year, hymns on death and dying should be used. (See note).

A chorale cantata about the transience of life.



J.S. Bach

Cantata No. 26

Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig

26/1.

(Chorale v.1.) • Transience of life is like a mist that disappears (26/1).

1. Coro

1.

Fl/Ob I, Ob II, Ob III

fauxbourdon

Tutti I-V progression, derived from chorale opening, forms basis for opening vocal motive.

Palindrome in bass, perhaps related to the anagram described below.

A minor

Text painting: Short, punctuating chords and rapid ascending scales in faux bourdon, which initially stop short, depict the text "Ach, wie flüchtig ist der Menschen Leben" ("Ah, how fleeting is human life").

As noted at m. 33, the words "Leben" and "Nebel" were capitalized in the text booklet, alerting readers to the fact that they form an anagram, suggesting equivalency.



A minor

A7

D minor

Concerto-like exchange of short motives...

G7

C major

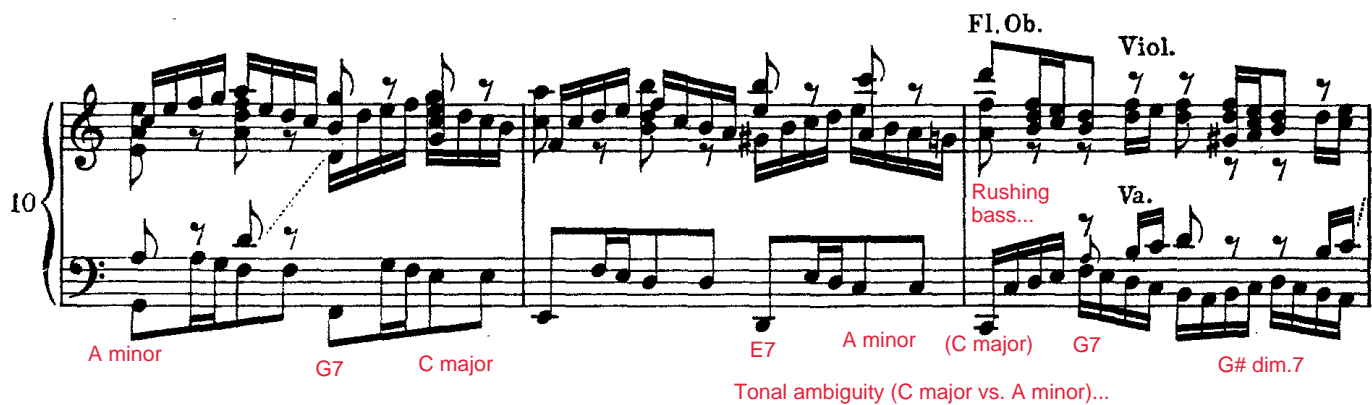
A minor

G7

Sequentially descending bass figure, mm. 9–13, perhaps depicts descent to grave (compare mm. 57–60 and ascending counterpart in mm. 62–63).

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 26

10



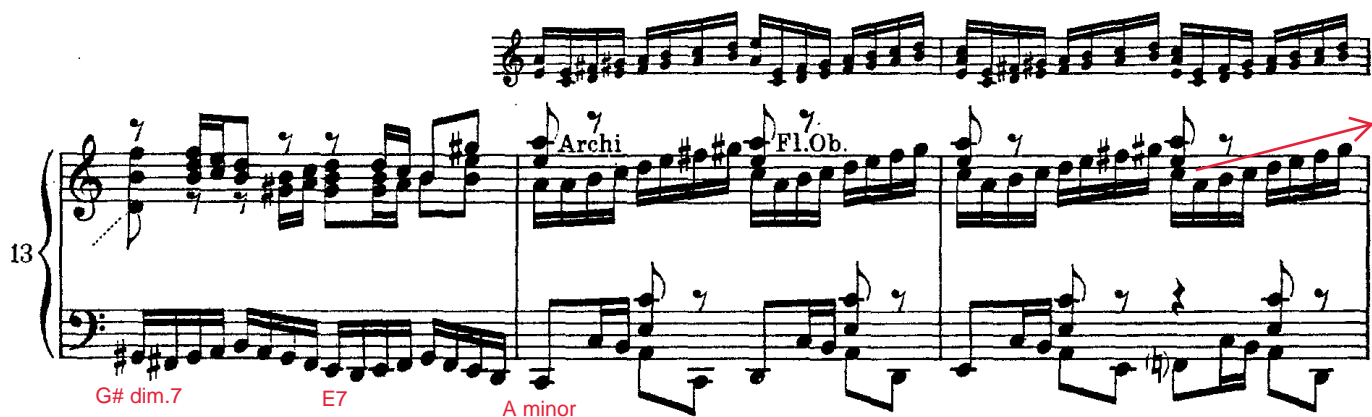
Fl. Ob. Viol. Va. Bassoon

A minor G7 C major E7 A minor (C major) G7 G# dim.7

Rushing bass...

Tonal ambiguity (C major vs. A minor)...

13



Archi Fl. Ob. Bassoon

G# dim.7 E7 A minor

For a word-for-word translation, see Unger, "Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts."

Soprano (col Corno)

Ach wie flüch - - tig,
Ah! how wea - - ry,
Om - - bre vai - - ne,

Alto

Ach wie flüchtig,
Ah! how wea - ry,
Om-bre vai - ne,

Basso

Ach wie flüchtig,
Ah! how wea - ry,
Om-bre vai - ne,

Fl. Ob. Viol. Archi

A minor

Text painting: While sopranos (doubled by horn) intone the chorale tune, the other voices depict the fleetingness of life with syllabic interjections of quick eighth notes. A four-note, chordal interjection is followed by a unison statement based on the first line of the chorale.

At cadences, the lower 3 voices join in unison with a statement based on the first line of the chorale ("Ah how fleeting...": mm. 18-19, 22-23, 28-29, 36-37, 42-43, 48-49. Adding the statement in the cantus firmus (mm. 17-18 / 21-22) produces a total of 7 statements. This number perhaps alludes to Psalm 90:10a: "[As for] the days of our years, in them are seventy years; and if [men should be] in strength, eighty years...."

Ach wie flüchtig,
I-V chordal interjection, related to Ritornello opening

ach wie flüchtig, ach wie
ah! how wea - ry, ah! how

1. Unison statement based on 1st line of chorale, at cadence.

ach wie flüchtig, ach wie
ah! how wea - ry, ah! how
om-bre vai - ne, fu - gi -

With the entrance of the chorale text, the meaning of the fleeting motives and their abrupt end becomes clear: "Life is fleeting, death will come brusquely, and all attempts to evade this will be stopped short and torn down." See Helmuth Rilling, *The Oregon Bach Festival Master Class Lectures*, vol. 2 (Dayton, Ohio: Roger Dean Publishing, 2001), p. 6.

ach wie
ah! how
fu - gi -

nich - tig,
fleet - ing,
ti - ve,

ach wie nichtig,
ah! how fleet.ing,
fu - gi - ti - ve,

nich - tig,
fleet - ing,
ti - ve,

ach wie nichtig,
ah! how fleet.ing,
fu - gi - ti - ve,

nich - tig,
fleet - ing,
ti - ve,

ach wie nichtig,
ah! how fleet.ing,
fu - gi - ti - ve,

19

A minor G major

nich - - - - - tig
fleet - - - - - ing,
ti - - - - - ve,

ach wie flüch.tig, ach wie nicht - tig,
ah! how wea - ry, ah! how fleet - ing,
2. Unison statement based on 1st line of chorale, at cadence.

ach wie flüch.tig, ach wie nicht - tig,
ah! how wea - ry, ah! how fleet - ing,
om - bre vai - ne, fu - gi - ti - ve,

ach wie flüch.tig, ach wie nicht - tig,
ah! how wea - ry, ah! how fleet - ing,
om - bre vai - ne, fu - gi - ti - ve,

22

C major

ist der Men - - - schen
is the life we
telle est no - - - tre

ach wie flüchtig, ach wie
ah! how wea - ry, om - bre vai - ne, fu - gi -

ach wie flüchtig, ach wie flüchtig, ach wie
ah! how wea - ry, om - bre vai - ne, fu - gi -

ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig, ach wie nichtig,
ah! how wea - ry, ah! how fleet - ing, ah! how fleet - ing
om - bre vai - ne, fu - gi - ti - ve, fu - gi - ti - ve,

24

C major

E7 A minor

Text painting: Rising series of entries suggests the life dissipating like mist, as referenced in the upcoming text.

Cadential statement in imitation before final unison statement.

Le - - - - - ben!
cher - - - - - ish!
vi - - - - - e!

nichtig ist der Men - schen Le - - - ben,
fleet - ing is the life we cher - - - ish!
ti - ve, telle est no - tre vi - - - e,

nichtig ist der Men - schen Le - - - ben,
fleet - ing is the life we cher - - - ish!
ti - ve, telle est no - tre vi - - - e,

ist der Men - schen Le - - - ben,
is the life we cher - - - ish!
telle est no - tre vi - - - e,

ach wie flüchtig, ach wie
ah! how wea - ry, ah! how

ach wie flüchtig, ach wie
ah! how wea - ry, ah! how
om - bre vai - ne, fu - gi -

ach wie flüchtig, ach wie
ah! how wea - ry, ah! how
om - bre vai - ne, fu - gi -

27

A minor

3. Unison statement based on 1st line of chorale, at cadence.

nich.tig!
fleet.ing!
ti - ve!

nich.tig!
fleet.ing!
ti - ve!

nich.tig!
fleet.ing!
ti - ve!

29

A minor

Wie ein Nebel
As a va. - pour
Comme un brouil - lard

Wie ein Nebel
As a va. - pour
Comme un brouil - lard

Wie ein Nebel
As a va. - pour
Comme un brouil - lard

32

A minor

A major

A7

Ne - - - bel bald ent - - - -
 va - - - - pour it ap - - - -
 brouil - - - lard naît sur

bald ent - ste - het und auch wie - der bald ver - ge - het
 it ap - pear - eth, and as swift - ly dis - ap - pear - eth,
 naît sur l'heu - re, et sur l'heu - re se dis - si - pe,

bald ent - ste - het und auch wie - der bald ver - ge - het
 it ap - pear - eth, and as swift - ly dis - ap - pear - eth,
 naît sur l'heu - re, et sur l'heu - re se dis - si - pe,

bald ent - ste - het und auch wie - der bald ver - ge - het
 it ap - pear - eth, and as swift - ly dis - ap - pear - eth,
 naît sur l'heu - re, et sur l'heu - re se dis - si - pe,

34

D minor

ste - - - - het,
 pear - - - - eth,
 l'heu - - - - re,

wie ein Ne - bel bald ent - ste - het,
 as a va - pour it ap - pear - eth,
 4. Unison statement based on 1st line of chorale, at cadence.

wie ein Ne - bel bald ent - ste - het,
 as a va - pour it ap - pear - eth,
 comme un brouillard naît sur l'heu - re,

wie ein Ne - bel bald ent - ste - het,
 as a va - pour it ap - pear - eth,
 comme un brouillard naît sur l'heu - re,

36

D minor

D minor

und auch wie - - - der
and as swift - - - ly
 et sur l'heu - - - re

wie ein Ne. bel bald ent - ste. - het und auch
as a va - pour it ap - pear - eth, and as
 comme un brouil. lard naît sur l'heu - re, et sur

wie ein Ne. bel bald ent - ste. - het und auch
as a va - pour it ap - pear - eth, and as
 comme un brouil. lard naît sur l'heu - re, et sur

wie ein Ne. bel bald ent - ste. - het und auch
as a va - pour it ap - pear - eth, and as
 comme un brouil. lard naît sur l'heu - re, et sur

39

G7 C major C7

bald ver. - - - ge - - - het,
dis - - - ap - - - pear - - - eth;
 se dis. - - - si - - - pe,

wie. der bald ver. ge. het, und auch wieder bald ver. ge. het,
swift. ly dis. ap. pear. eth, and as swift. ly dis. ap. pear. eth;
 l'heu. re se dis. si. pe, 5. Unison statement based on 1st line of chorale, at cadence.

wie. der bald ver. ge. het, und auch wieder bald ver. ge. het,
swift. ly dis. ap. pear. eth, and as swift. ly dis. ap. pear. eth;
 l'heu. re se dis. si. pe, et sur l'heu. re se dis. si. pe,

wie. der bald ver. ge. het, und auch wieder bald ver. ge. het,
swift. ly dis. ap. pear. eth, and as swift. ly dis. ap. pear. eth;
 l'heu. re se dis. si. pe, et sur l'heu. re se dis. si. pe,

41

F major G7 C major C major

Helmuth Rilling observes, "At the last line 'So ist unser Leben, sehet!' Bach intensifies the expression by repeating 'So': 'Such, such, such is our life.' At the same time the high strings and the oboes exchange a four-note motive which was earlier sung by the altos, tenors, and basses, adding the connotation of 'fleeting' and 'empty' to 'such is our life.'" See *The Oregon Bach Festival Master Class Lectures*, vol. 2 (Dayton, Ohio: Roger Dean Publishing, vol. 2 (2001), p. 8.

so ist un - ser Le - ben,
when, and where, no mor - tal
tels nos jours, hé - las, s'é - cou - lent,

so, so, so ist un - ser Le - ben,
when, where, when and where, no mor - tal
tels, tels, tels nos jours s'é - cou - lent,

so, so, so ist un - ser Le - ben,
when, where, when and where, no mor - tal
tels, tels, tels nos jours s'é - cou - lent,

so, so, so ist un - ser Le - ben,
when, where, when and where, no mor - tal
tels, tels, tels nos jours s'é - cou - lent,

44

E7 A minor A minor

Le - ben, se - het!
mor - tal know - eth!
las, s'é - cou - lent!

se - het, un - ser Le - ben, se - het, so ist un - ser Le - ben, se - het!
know - eth, when no mor - tal know - eth, when and where, no mor - tal know - eth!
hé - las, tels nos jours s'é - cou - lent, 6. Unison statement based on 1st line of chorale, at cadence.

se - het, un - ser Le - ben, se - het, so ist un - ser Le - ben, se - het!
know - eth, when no mor - tal know - eth, when and where, no mor - tal know - eth!
hé - las, tels nos jours s'é - cou - lent, tels nos jours, hé - las, s'é - cou - lent!

se - het, un - ser Le - ben, se - het, so ist un - ser Le - ben, se - het!
know - eth, when no mor - tal know - eth, when and where, no mor - tal know - eth!
hé - las, tels nos jours s'é - cou - lent, tels nos jours, hé - las, s'é - cou - lent!

47

A minor A minor Ritornello

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 26

50

53

A7 D minor G7

56

C major E7 A minor (G7)

Sequentially descending bass figure, mm. 57–60, perhaps depicts descent to grave (compare mm. 9–13 and ascending counterpart in mm. 62–63).

59

E7 A minor (C major) G# dim.7 G# dim.7 E7

Helmuth Rilling writes, "The end is striking. Bach gives to the final chord only an eighth-note value, notates the pauses exactly, and puts his sign of ending, the fermata, only after that. What an expression: life is abruptly cut off and after that there is silence, nothing." See *The Oregon Bach Festival Master Class Lectures*, vol. 2 (Dayton, Ohio: Roger Dean Publishing, 22001), p. 10.

62

A minor A major

Fermata over barline.

Sequentially ascending bass figure, mm. 62–63, perhaps depicts ascent after death (compare descending counterparts in mm. 9–12 and 57–60).

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 26

Da capo

26/2. 2. Aria (Based on Chorale v.. 2)

Time passes like a rushing stream of water (26/2).

Regarding demanding flute parts in Bach's cantatas of 1724, see side note.

Fl. trav.
Viol. solo
Continuo

Text painting: Obligato of "bubbling" 16th notes played by solo flute (doubled periodically by solo violin as if providing an echo) depicts the rushing, swirling water referenced in the singer's coming melisma. The line swirls, then shoots upward.

Pulsing bass line associated with later text: "so the days of our life hasten" (see also mm. 17-19, 28-30, 32-33, 40-43, 69-71, 73-76, 79-81, 98-99). Perhaps the pulsing line depicts rising water or the inexorable passage of time.

This type of aria is called a "Devisenarie" 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.

Pulsing bass line: Mm. 8-11, 17-19, 28-30, 32-33, 40-43, 69-71, 73-76, 79-81, 98-99. For possible significance, see note at m. 8.

so schnell ein rau schend
as swift as rush ing
tor rent qui rou les

20

C major C major

Fl Violino

Text painting: Downward scurrying melisma now on word "hasten."

Was serschießt, so ei
wa ters flow, so hast
vers la mer, nos jours

24

C major (G major) D7

3 independent lines...

len un sers Le bens Ta ge, un sers Le bens
ens life's short jour ney on wards, life's short jour ney
res semblent à tes on des, res semblent à tes

28

G major C major D7 G major

Pulsing bass line: Mm. 8-11, 17-19, 28-30, 32-33, 40-43, 69-71, 73-76, 79-81, 98-99. For possible significance, see note at m. 8.

Ta on on ge, un sers Le bens
on wards life's short jour ney
on des, à tes

32

G major D7

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 26

B

Ta - ge.
on - wards.
on - des.

Fl. Viol.

forte

Ritornello

Vln pauses at times, then provides a kind of echo.

G major

C major D7 G major

Pulsing bass line: Mm. 8-11, 17-19, 28-30, 32-33, 40-43, 69-71, 73-76, 79-81, 98-99. For possible significance, see note at m. 8.

So schnell, so schnell,
As swift, as swift,
Tor - rent, tor - rent,

FI

+Vln

G7 C major A7

G major

so schnell ein rau - schend
as swift as rus - ing
tor - rent qui rou - les

FI

+Vln

Cross relation

D minor G7 C major

Continuo bass outlines first notes of the chorale "Herzlich tut mich verlangen," which creates the cross relation.

C Text painting: Melisma on "hasten."

52

Was-ser schießt, so ei - - - - -
 wa-ters flow, so hast - - - - -
 vers la-mer, nos jours

C major

55

- - len un - sers Le - bens Ta-ge, so ei - - - - -
 - - ens life's short jour - ney on-wards so hast - - - - -
 - - res - sem - blent à - - tes on - des, nos jours

C major

58

- - - - - len - un - sers Le - bens - - - - -
 - - - - - ens life's short jour - ney - - - - -
 - - - - - res - sem - blent à - - tes - - - - -

61

Ta-ge, so schnell, so - - - schnell, so schnell ein rau - - -
 on - - - wards, as - - - swift, as swift as rush - - -
 on - des, tor-rent, tor - - rent, tor-rent qui rou - - -

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 26

Florid passages for singer get even more demanding.

64

schend Was ser schießt, so ei
ing wa ters flow, so hast
les vers la mer, nos jours

Vln
8va jup

C major

67

len
ens
res

C major

70

un sers Le bens Ta ge, un sers Le bens
life's short jour ney on wards, life's short jour ney
sem blent à tes on des, res semblent, à tes

C major

Pulsing bass line: Mm. 8-11, 17-19, 28-30, 32-33, 40-43, 69-71, 73-76, 79-81, 98-99. For possible significance, see note at m. 8.

73

Ta ge,
on wards
on des,

G7 C major

D

un - sers Le - bens Ta - ge.
life's short journey on - wards.
 ressemblent à tes on - des.

77

C major C7 F major G7

Pulsing bass line: See above.

B Section. Bach continues an imaginative handling of the text rather than reducing the texture to just continuo for the singer to showcase his skill.

Die Zeit ver - geht, die
The days de - part be -
 Le temps s'en - fuit, les

81

C major C major (Fine) A minor

Vln

Text painting: Droplet figures in voice and instruments
 Literal text painting: Rests between 8ths for "parting into droplets."

Stun - den ei - len, wie sich die Trop - fen
yond re - call - ing, as wa - ter from the
 heu - res pas - sent, les gout - tes ain - si

85

G major G7 C major F# half-dim.7 B7

Vln FI Vln Flute

Text painting: Harmonic shift for sudden rainfall.

plötzlich tei - len, wenn al -
mountains fall - ing, is lost
 tombent et se dis - per - sent, quand l'eau

88

E minor B7 E minor E minor

Vln Vln

Parallel 6ths add sweetness.

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 26

Text painting: The opening ritornello swirls return on melisma for "all" but this time the line ends by shooting downward.

Text painting: Descending lines for "gushing into the abyss," finishing with continuo low E.

les in den Ab - - - grund schießt.
with in the lake be - low.
 s'en gouf fre dans l'a - bî - - me.

92

E minor

Fi Vln

Swirls of 16ths depict the swirling water; parallel 3rds add sweetness.

95

Ritornello

E minor

98

B7

Pulsing bass line: Mm. 8-11, 17-19, 28-30, 32-33, 40-43, 69-71, 73-76, 79-81, 98-99. For possible significance, see note at m. 8.

Die Zeit ver - geht,
 The days de - part
 Le temps s'en - fuit,

101

E minor

E minor

E minor

E7

Vln

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 26

Text painting: Ascending scales for "time passes, the hours hasten."

104

die Stun - den ei - - - len, wie
be - yond re - call - - - ing, as
les heu - res pas - - - sent, les

Fi Vln

A minor

107

sich die Trop - fen plötz - lich tei - - - wie
wa - ter from the moun - tains fall - - -
gout - tes ain - si tom - bent et se dis - per - - -

Vln Flute

Droplet figures

A minor A minor G7

The droplets now come faster.

In the references to "parting droplets" and "gushing into the abyss" Martin Petzold sees an allusion to the parting of the Red Sea. See "Bach-Kommentar" 1:664-65 (questionable).

110

len, wenn al - - -
ing, is lost - - -
sent, quand l'eau

Fast droplets

C major E7 A minor A minor

Text painting: "Gushing into the abyss."

114

les in - den Ab - - - grund schießt. - - -
with in the lake be - low. - - -
s'en gouf - fre dans l'a - bi - - me.

E7 A minor

dal segno

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 26

26/3. (Based on Chorale Vv. 3-9: The librettist took one human possession or attainment from each of the 7 chorale stanzas (see side note.) • Time brings joy, beauty, learning, etc. to an end (26/3).

Secco 3. Recitativo

Alto

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 6 mm.

For a word-for-word translations, see Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*.

Continuo

For biblical background, see note.

CB A G F E D B-flat

Die Freu - - - - - de wird zur Traurigkeit, die
Our joy - - - - - is turned to mourning, and
La joi - - - - - e devient trisette, la

Text painting: Melisma of 32nd notes in C major for "joy" followed by C# dim.7 chord for "sadness."

6 C major 7b 5 C# dim.7

C# E-flat

Schön - heit fällt als ei - ne Blu - me, die größ - te Stär - ke wird ge - schwächt, es
beau - ty, fad - eth as a flow'r, the strong, be - come as lit - tle children, good
beau - té tom - be comme une fleur, la for - ce s'affai - blit et meurt, for -

Text painting: Descending line to D minor for "falling like a flower."
Text painting: Movement to C minor for "weakened."

6 4 2 A7 3 D minor 6 4 2 G7 b C minor

F# G#

än - dert sich das Glück - ke mit der Zeit, bald ist es aus mit Ehr und Ruh - me, die
for - tune and suc - cess must have an end, e'en so it is with fame and hon - our, with
tu - ne, tes fa - veurs ne sont qu'un mot, honneur et gloi - re que men - son - ge: la

Text painting: G# diminished 7th chord for "change of fortune."

6 4 2 D7 G# dim.7 6 5 E7 5 3 A minor

Wis - senschaft, und was ein Mensche dichtet, wird endlich durch das Grab vernichtet.
know - ledge, and all of mans in - vention. All, all with in the grave must perish.
science hu - maine, la pensée al - tiè - re dans l'ombre de la mort s'éteignent.

6 4 2 B7 7b 5 D# dim.7 E minor 5 6b 4 2 N6 B7 A# dim.7 E minor

Text painting: Circuitous harmonic progression with diminished 7th chords for the perishing of human ambitions and accomplishments.

Modified Da capo Form
 Rit in Em (1-16)
 Lines 1&2 (17-30)+(31-36)
 Rit (37-44)
 Lines 2-5 (45-63)
 Rit in Em (64-79)
 Lines 1&2 (80-93)+(94-103)
 Rit in Em (1-16)

(Based on Chorale v. 10.) • Temporal treasures a seduction: a bourrée, apparently used here as a "Totentanz," the macabre dance of death. See Martin Petzoldt, "Bach-Kommentar" 1:665. The 5-line poem has a rhyme scheme of ABCCA. Though text lines 1 & 2 are repeated at m. 31 before a ritornello introduces lines 3-5 at m. 45, Bach departs from the foregoing music. He does so also at m. 80, when lines 1 & 2 return (perhaps depicting "being led astray" as referenced in the text).



Portion of "Totentanz" by Bernt Notke (ca. 1460) in St. Mary's Church, Lübeck (destroyed in 1942 air raid): representatives of all ages and ranks have death as their final destiny.

26/4. Ritornello
 Ob I, II, III, Continuo

Concerning the significance of E minor in the tonal scheme of the cantata, see side note.

E minor

Ritornello (mm. 1-16) repeated in middle of movement (mm. 64-79) and at end (mm. 1-16 repeated).

6

D major D7 G major A major B major G major

11

D7 G# dim. A major B major E minor

Biblical allusion (Matthew 6:19-21): "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." In the libretto this sentiment is a paraphrase of Luther's exegesis of the first commandment in the Larger Catechism (see side note).

Basso

A Lines 1-2 of the poem.

The oboe was the successor of the shawm, an instrument often shown in medieval pictures of the Totentanz, as in this image from the Codex Palatinus Germanicus, an illustrated 15-th century manuscript.

An Set Aux

ir - di - sche Schät - ze das Her - ze zu hän - gen ist
 not thy - heart on the things of the world, for
 biens de la ter - re, fra - gi - les ri - ches - ses, c'est

The bass singer's line appears to be derived from the first phrase of the closing chorale.

Oboes play sighing figure.

piano

(Fine) E minor

(col oct. bassa ad lib.) E minor

"Threatening" figure is associated with the singer's warning about being led astray.

Dynamic contrast in instruments for rhetorical effect.

"Seduction of the foolish world" alludes to Revelation 12:9: "The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world...." (Luther 1545 Bible: "der die gantze Welt verführet")

19

ei - ne Ver - füh - rung der tö - rich - ten Welt, ist
 vain are its pleas - ures and fleet - ing its joys, for
 pu - re fo - li - e d'at - ta - cher son coeur, c'est

ei - ne Ver - füh - rung,
 vain are its pleas - ures,
 pu - re fo - li - e,

Voice not marked forte like the instruments.

forte

forte

E minor E7

For a word-for-word translation, see Unger, "Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts."

Bach repeats the vocal line with contrasting dynamics to reinforce the warning (mm. 17–21 = mm. 25–29) but varies the accompaniment, using motives from the ritornello in both voice and accompanying parts.

ist ei - ne Ver - füh - rung. An ir - di - sche Schät - ze das
for. vain are its pleas - ures. Set not thy - heart on the
c'est pu - re fo - li - e. Aux biens de la ter - re fra -

22

A minor D major D7 G major

piano

Voice still soft; upper instruments suddenly loud, emphasizing the seriousness of the warning.

Her - ze zu hän - gen ist ei - ne Ver - füh - rung der tö - rich - ten Welt, ist
things of the world, for - vain are its pleas - ures and fleet - ing its joys, for
gi - les ri - ches - ses, c'est pu - re fo - li - e d'at - ta - cher son coeur, c'est

26

E minor E minor

forte

Extension (mm. 31–36). Though repeating the foregoing text, the music departs from previous material, perhaps to depict the "being led astray" referenced in the text.

ei - ne Ver - füh - rung, ist ei - ne Ver - füh - rung der
vain are its pleas - ures, for vain are its pleas - ures and
pu - re fo - li - e, c'est pu - re fo - li - e, d'at -

29

E7 A minor F#7

forte piano

Chromatic neighbor tones.

Text painting: Chromatic neighbor tones for "setting the heart on earthly treasures is a seduction of the foolish world."

In this extension, Bach uses motives from the ritornello in various ways, sometimes composing new material.

tö - rich - ten Welt. An ir - di - sche Schät - ze das Her - ze zu hän - gen ist
fleet - ing its joys. Set not thy - heart on the things of the world, for -
ta - cher son coeur. Aux biens de la ter - re, fra - gi - les ri - ches - ses, c'est

32

B minor

35

ei - ne Ver - füh - rung der tö - rich - ten Welt.
vain are its pleas - ures and fleet - ing its - joys.
 pu - re fo - li - e d'at - ta - cher son coeur.

Chromatic harmonic progression depicts the deceptiveness of earthly goals and treasures.
 Ritornello (mm. 37-44)

forte

B minor E major F# major G7 E minor
 C# dim. D major

39

A7 D# dim. E major F# major B minor

B Section. Lines 3-5 of the poem (mm. 45-63). While the singer continues the bourée rhythm, a new musical idea is introduced in the continuo.

43

Wie leicht - lich ent - ste - hen ver -
By world - ly am - bi - tion thy
 La flam - me per - fi - de sur -

piano

B minor E# dim.7

Text painting: Long descending scalar passage of 16th notes in continuo for "torrents rush and tear until everything gushes into the abyss."

46

zeh - ren - de Glu - ten, wie rau - schen und rei - ßen die
soul is en - dan - gered, as floods, in the strength and the
 prend ta de - meu - re, les flots en - fu - ri - e - dé -

forte *piano*

C# major F# minor D# dim.7

48

wal - len - den Flu - ten, bis al - les zer - schmet -
 might of their fu - ry, de - stroy - ing and rend -
 bor - dent et gron - dent, tout tom - be s'ef - fon -

forte *piano*

B7 E minor E minor

Text painting: The wave-like figure now appears as a long melisma in the voice for "shatters." In the instruments, the bourée rhythm is "rhythmically displaced and led in imitations. The result is that the bourée rhythm is completely destroyed, things are out of order, falling apart in ruins, and finally 'shattered' with parallel downward scales in the oboes, a reminiscence of the opening movement." See Helmluth Rilling, *The Oregon Bach Festival Master Class Lectures*, vol. 2 (Dayton, Ohio: Roger Dean Publishing, 2001), pp. 18-19.

50

tert in
 ing, sweep
 dre, tout

D7 G major

53

Trüm - mer zer - fällt.
 all things be - fore them.
 croule à l'in - stant.

forte

G major G major

Helmuth Rilling notes, "Bach could stop here and go back and repeat the first part of the aria. But he goes on and once more sets the same text to music in a different way. The bourée pattern is continued, first in the oboes, then in the bass part. Now are the quickly descending scales that Bach used at the end of the previous section. Now they are constant, dramatically emphasizing that everything is torn down. At the end, the stormy wavelike figure is intensified with the parallel leading of bass and continuo. At the same time the oboes are building up a dissonant chord with repeated notes, which is then released by their downward scales, confirming the ultimate destruction. Only then does Bach return to the first part of the aria, repeating it in a shortened version." See *The Oregon Bach Festival Master Class Lectures*, vol. 2 (Dayton, Ohio: Roger Dean Publishing, 2001), pp. 19-21.

Text painting: oboes play descending triads to depict disintegrating wreckage.

Continuation of the descending scalar figure.

Wie
 By
 La

56

leicht - lich ent - ste - hen ver - zeh - ren - de Glu - ten, wie
 world - ly am - bi - tion thy soul is en - dan - gered, as
 flam - me per - fi - de sur - prend ta de - meu - re, les

Oboes play descending figure in unison, continued by continuo.

E7

58

rau - schen und rei - ßen die wal - len - den Flu - ten, bis
floods, in the strength and the might of their fu - ry, de -
flots en - fu - ri - e dé - bor - dent et gron - dent, tout

A minor F#7

Text painting: Vocal melisma connects to descending scale in continuo at the word "shattered," in parallel 6ths with continuo.

60

al - les zer - schmet - tert in Trüm - mer zer -
stroy - ing and rend - ing, sweep all things be -
tem - be, s'ef - fon - dre, tout croule à l'in -

Ob III Ob II Ob III

piano

B minor F#7 B minor

D A (mm. 64-79+80-93). This repeats mm. 1-30.

63

fällt.
fore them.
stant.

forte

Ritornello = mm. 1-16.

B major E minor E7 A minor D major D7 G major

68

72

A major B major G major D7 G# dim. A major B major E minor

77

E

An ir-di-sche Schät-ze das
Set not thy-heart on the
Aux biens de la ter-re, fra-

Repeat of mm. 17-30.

piano

E minor
col octave bassa ad lib.

81

Her-ze zu hän-gen ist ei-ne Ver-füh-rung der tö-richten Welt, ist
things of the world, for vain are its pleas-ures and fleet-ing its-joys, for
gi-les ri-ches-ses, c'est pu-re fo-li-e d'at-ta-cher son coeur, c'est

forte

Threatening figure for warning about being led astray returns.

84

ei-ne Ver-füh-rung, ist ei-ne Ver-füh-rung. An
vain are its pleas-ures, for vain are its pleas-ures. Set
pu-re fo-li-e, c'est pu-re fo-li-e. Aux

piano

E minor E7 D major D7 G major

88

ir-di-sche Schät-ze das Her-ze zu hän-gen ist ei-ne Ver-füh-rung der
not thy-heart on the things of the world, for vain are its pleas-ures and
biens de la ter-re, fra-gi-les ri-ches-ses, c'est pu-re fo-li-e d'at-

E minor

Extension (mm. 94-103). Music departs from previous material, perhaps to depict the "being led astray" referenced in the text.

Warning/threatening figure

91

tö-richten Welt, ist ei-ne Ver-füh-rung, ist ei-ne Ver-füh-rung,
fleet-ing its-joys, for vain are its pleas-ures, for vain are its pleas-ures,
ta-cher son coeur, c'est pu-re fo-li-e, c'est pu-re fo-li-e,

forte

E minor E7 A minor D minor D7

Text painting: Chromaticism for "being led astray" by foolish world."

95

ist ei-ne Ver-füh-rung der tö-richten Welt, der tö-
for vain are its pleas-ures and fleet-ing its joys, and fleet-
c'est pu-re fo-li-e d'at-ta-cher son coeur, d'at-ta-

G major D# dim.7 E minor D7 G# dim.

99

- richten Welt, der tö- - richten Welt.
- ing its joys, and fleet- ing its joys.
- cher son coeur, d'at-ta- - cher son coeur.

A major D# dim.7 E minor B major

dal segno
E minor

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 26

Secco 5. Recitativo (Based on Chorale Vv. 11-12: Stanza 11 mentions "Herrschen; stanza 12 mentions "Pracht".)

•Death brings down the greatest earthly splendor (26/5).

Soprano

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 5 mm.

For biblical background, see note.



Continuo

Die höch.ste Herr.lich.keit und Pracht um.hüllt zu . letzt des To . des
Both,high and low, and rich and poor, all in the grave at last must
Sur l'or et le man.teau des rois, la mort é . ten . dra son lin .

Chorale stanza 11 has "Herrschen" (lordship); stanza 12 has "Prangen" (flaunting pomp).

Text painting: Juxtaposed high and low range depict human status before and after death.

6 G major 6 E major 6b E7

Possible biblical allusions: Isaiah 14:11, 13, 14: "Your pomp is brought down to Sheol...You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven...I will make myself like the Most High,'" 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4. "...the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God." See Martin Petzoldt, "Bach-Kommentar" 1:667.

Nacht. Wer gleich.sam als ein Gott ge . ses . sen, ent . geht dem Staub und A.sche
lie. The great . est mon . arch of the earth, when strikes the hour of his de .
ceul. Quand tu se . rais un Dieu sur ter . re, qu'es . tu, si non cendre et pous .

Text painting: Descending line to "night" and ascending line for "he who has sat like a god."

Chromaticism begins, depicting the disintegration of earthly attainments and possessions.

A minor 6 D major 7b 5b F# dim.7

For a word-for-word translation, see Unger, "Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts."

nicht, und wenn die letz . te Stun . de schlä . get, daß man ihn zu der Er . de
part.ure, must lay a . side his crown and scep . tre and to the si . lent grave be
sière. Quand son . ne . ra le glas fu . nè . bre, ap . pel su . prê . me de la

Text painting: Descending line for "carry to the grave."

G minor 6 4 2 A7 D minor G minor

trä . get, und sei . ner Ho . heit Grund zer . bricht: wird sei . ner ganz ver . ges . sen.
car . ried; na . ked from out the earth we came, and na . ked shall we re . turn .
tom . be, sur ta gran . deur a . né . an . tie se fe . ra le si . len . ce.

Text painting: High G for "loftiness"

Apparent allusion to Wisdom (Apocrypha) 2:4a: "Our name will be forgotten in time, and no one will remember our works...."

Cross symbol?

C# dim. C7 C# dim.7 F# dim.7 E7 A minor



The closing chorale serves its usual catechismal function.

6. Choral (Verse 13.)

•Transience of the earthly; whoever fears God abides (26/6).

Sopr.
+Corno
Fl, Ob I, II
Vln I

Alto
+Ob III
Vln II

Ten.
+Vla

Basso
+Continuo

Corno
Fl, trav.
Ob. I, II, III
Viol. solo
Viol. I, II
Va.
Continuo

Ach wie flüch-tig, ach wie nich-tig sind der Men-schen
Ah! how wea-ry, Ah! how fleet-ing is the life we-
Om-bre vai-ne, fu-gi-ti-ve, telle est no-tre-
The first phrase is set in utmost simplicity. Then wave-like formations commence.

A minor

A minor

A minor

C major

The active 8th-note lines reflect the fleetingness of human affairs referenced in the text (reminiscent of the rhythmic motion in earlier movements).

Sa-chen! Al-les, al-les, was wir se-hen, das muß fal-len
cher-ish! Days of la-bour, days of sor-row; here to-day, and
vi-e! Tout est son-ge, rien n'est sta-ble, tout sur ter-re
A major A major D major G major

und ver-ge-hen; wer Gott fürcht't, bleibt e-wig ste-hen.
gone to-mor-row, God a-lone can nev-er per-ish.
meurt et pas-se; l'hom-me jus-te seul de-meu-re.
Finally, in the last two measures, the text adopts a hopeful tone, with a cross figure in the continuo.
C major F major A major A major