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NBA I/23; BC A138

16. S. after Trinity (BWV 161, 95, 8, 27=meditations on death)

*Ephesians 3:13–21 (Paul's prayer for the Ephesians; that they be spiritually strengthened)

*Luke 7:11–17 (Jesus raises young man of Nain from the dead)

Librettist: Unknown. Movement 6 is borrowed from Johann Rosenmüller. See notes below at individual movements for apparent sources of individual lines.

FP: 6 October 1726 (St. Thomas)

Instrumentation (NBA):

Corno

Ob I (also Ob da caccia, Ob II)

Vln I, II

Vla

SATB

Basso

Cembalo o Organo obligato

Continuo (see notes here and at no. 3)

J.S. Bach

Cantata No. 27

Wer weiß, wie nahe mir mein Ende

(Coro.)

1. Chorale & Soprano, Alto, & Tenor Recits. (Chorale: see also 166/6).

•Death comes at any time, only God knows how soon (27/1). Our time (on earth) and death are contrasted. Oboe figure is apparently derived from the opening of the chorale tune. (See Dürr/Jones, 555).

27/1.

(Larghetto) = 60.

1. Ob I

Ob II

Strings

mf

C minor

Note clashes (pain of death referenced in the text?)

Strings play unifying figure of descending 8th arpeggios, perhaps depicting slipping down to impending death (see also continuo, mm. 28–31), while the oboes play a questioning figure (Dürr/Jones, 555).

5.

Oboes play chains of 2-note sighing figure.

Vln I & II (see full score)

C minor

Continuo takes over the 8th-note arpeggio figure, this time ascending, violins play previous oboe motive.

8.

Vln I & II

11.

Soprano.

Alto.

Tenore.

Basso.

Chorale Phrase 1. A

+Horn

Chorale tune doubled by horn.

Wer weiss, wie na - he

Wer weiss, wie na - he

Wer weiss, wie na - he

Wer weiss, wie na - he

C minor

16. **Recit.**

mir mein En - - - de? Das weiss der lie-be Gott al-

mir mein En - - - de?

mir mein En - - - de?

mir mein En - - - de?

E dim.7

20.

lein, ob meine Wallfahrt auf der Erden kurz ———> o-der länger mö-ge

Ob I

Ob II

F minor

C minor F7 F7

24. Chorale Phrase

sein. die Zeit, her - kommt der

die Zeit, her - kommt der

die Zeit, her - kommt der

Hin - geht die Zeit, her - kommt der

B

mf

B-flat major C7 F minor G7 F# dim.7 C minor

Text painting: In the poem, the word "Erden" is the end of the line (rhyming with "werden" of m. 35). By moving immediately to the word "kurz" (short), which belongs to the next poetic line, followed by rests, Bach depicts the possibility of an untimely death.

Dürr notes that the cantata presents a childlike trust in the face of death. This attitude is reinforced by the use of "dear God" (here and twice in movement 5), the simplicity of the 2 chorale arrangements, the songlike alto aria, and the serene treatment of "Gute Nacht" in the bass aria. See Dürr/Jones, 556.

This is the first stanza of 13 in the 1686 chorale by Ämilie Juliane von Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt (1637–1706). (The tune is more commonly associated with the text "Wer nur den lieben Gott läßt walten"). The chorale statements are mostly homophonic. An exception is the last chorale line, which is set polyphonically (mm. 65–74). The ends of individual lines also become polyphonic.

death: h approaches.

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28. Text painting: Death is depicted with a long (immoveable) note.

Tod, der Tod, her- kommt der Tod, und

Vln I & II

Vln I & II have 3 mm. of questioning figure before continuing with descending arpeggios.

C7

F minor

32. Continuo takes over 8th-note motion, with 2-note striving figure slipping down step by step to death.

Second Stollen of Chorale: Phrase 3.

end- lich kommt es doch so weit, dass sie zusammentreffen werden. Ach,

Text painting: Leap upward for "weit" (far: finally the point is reached).

Text painting: "So weit" (literally, "so far": finally, the point is reached where departing time and approaching death meet). Bach depicts the jarring and sudden event of death by with a clashing C against an E dim.7 chord. Martin Petzoldt notes that this is reminiscent of Isaiah's words: "I said, "In the prime of my life I shall go to the gates of Sheol; I am deprived of the remainder of my years." (Isaiah 28:10, New King James version. See Petzoldt, Bach-Kommentar 1:482.

Up 8va

E dim.7

36. E dim.7

F minor

G7

Second Stollen repeats music of first Stollen with a few alterations (cf. mm. 14–18, 25–31). This time there is no intervening recitative.

wie ge- schwin- de und be- hen-

C minor

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40. Chorale Phrase 4.

de kann kom - - - men mei - - -

de kann kom - - - men mei - - - ne

de kann kom - - - men mei - - - ne

de kann kom - - - men mei - - - ne

C7 F minor G7 F# dim.7

44. To - des - - - noth! Text painting: "Pain of death" is inflected with chromatic voice leading.

To - des - - - noth, mei - ne To - des - - - noth, To - des -

To - des - - - noth, mei - ne To - - - - des -

To - - - des - - - noth, mei - ne To - - - - - des -

Vln I & II Vln I & II have 3 mm. of questioning figure before continuing with descending arpeggios.

C7 F minor

48. C minor Continuo takes over 8th-note motion, with the 2-note striving figure slipping down step by step to death.

noth! Recit. Opening notes of recitative recall opening of soprano recitative on similar words: "das weiß" (m. 19).

noth! Wer weiss, ob heu - te nicht mein Mund die letz - ten Wor - te

noth! This recitative, like an arioso, connects directly to the prayer that comprises the chorale's Abgesang.

Ob I Ob II

F7

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52.

Text painting: sustained note and chromatic harmonies for "I pray" (plead).

spricht? Drum bet' ich al.le

56. D7 G minor D7 D dim.7 B dim.7 G7

Abgesang of chorale's bar form is a prayer. Chorale Phrases 5 & 6 are joined.

Petzoldt notes that the commitment to constant prayer is related to the foregoing concern about uttering one's final words and is reminiscent of Jesus' command in Luke 18:1b to pray without ceasing. Bach depicts praying constantly on all occasions with a held note (above), then quick notes on the repeated text. See Petzoldt, 1:483.

Mein Gott, ich Mein Gott, ich

Zeit, al - le Zeit, drum bet' ich al - le Zeit: Mein Gott, mein Gott, ich

Mein Gott, ich

Oboes play chains of 2-note striding figure.

C minor F# dim.7 G minor A-flat major D-flat dim.

60.

bitt' durch Chri - sti Blut, bitt' durch Chri - sti Blut, mein Gott, ich bitt' durch bitt' durch Chri - sti Blut, ich bitt' durch bitt' durch Chri - sti Blut, ich bitt' durch

Vln I & II

C minor E-flat major E-flat 7 F minor B-flat 7 E-flat 7 A-flat major E-flat 7

Text painting: Chromatic harmonies for "pleading through Christ's blood."

Continuo takes over 8th-note motion, with 2-note striding figure slipping down step by step to death. Vln I & II have 4 mm. of questioning figure before continuing with descending arpeggios.

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64.

Chorale Phrase 6. Final chorale line is set polyphonically, the chorale tune prefigured with imitation in alto and tenor, the material derived from the chorale phrase. The imitation serves to emphasize the repeated request for a "good end."

Text painting: The request for a "good end" is repeated.

Chri - sti Blut, mach's nur mit mei - nem mach's

Vln I & II

Vln I & II; oboes play 2-note striding figure (see full score).

68. A-flat major

E-flat major

G7

C minor

nur mit mei - nem En - de gut!

mei - nem En - de gut, mach's nur mit

En - de, En - de gut, mach's nur mit

nur mit mei - nem En -

Regarding the historical and musical significance of this phrase, see note.



72.

C7

F minor

After 2 mm. of the ascending arpeggio figure, the continuo takes over the 2-note striding figure slipping down step by step to death. Vlns and Ob have questioning figure before Vlns return to descending arpeggios at the ritornello.

mei - hem En - de gut!

mei - nem En - de gut!

- de gut!

Ritornello

C7

F minor

C minor

Chromatic harmonies continue...

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Oboes play chains of the 2-note striving figure.

76.

E dim.7 C7 F minor B dim.7 C minor D#7

Ob I Ob II

80.

G major G7 A-flat major C minor

The ascending form of the arpeggios now predominates, expressing the positive end mentioned in the text. See Chafe, "Tonal Allegory," 189.

Vln I & II play chains of the 2-note striving figure.

83.

C minor

Secco

27/2. **Recitativo.** •Goal of my life is to prepare for death (27/2).

Chromatic Saturation in the vocal part in 9 mm.

For biblical background, see note.

1. Tenore. D G F# B-flat A C

Mein Le-ben hat kein an-der Ziel, als dass ich mö-ge se-lig

My life has no other goal, than that I may blessedly

Continuo alone (secco recitative)

G minor E-flat

This phrase connects the recitative to the foregoing movement's statement "Drum bet ich allezeit."

3.

ster-ben und meines Glaubens An-theil er-ben. Drum leb' ich

die and my faith's portion inherit. Therefore live I

G minor B-flat major (see NBA)

"Selig sterben" alludes to Revelation 14:13: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord...that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"

5.

al-le-zeit zum Gra-be fer-tig und be-reit, und was das Werk der Hän-de

at-all-times for-the grave ready and prepared, and what the work of-(my) hands

Apparent allusion to Psalm 90:14: "Establish thou the work of our hands upon us..."

F A-flat

G major

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7.

thut, ist gleichsam ob ich si - cher wüs - te, dass ich noch heu - te ster - ben

does, is the-same, (as) if I assuredly knew that I yet today die

9.

müss - te; denn En - de gut, mach! Al - les gut.

had-to; For: End good makes everything good!

"Ende gut" gets virtually the same rhythm as "Flügel her" in movement 4.

C minor E-flat major B See side note. C7 F minor G7 C minor C minor

27/3. **Aria.** (First two lines are based on Neumeister aria; more below.) •Death is welcome; I take afflictions to the grave (27/3). (Moderato ♩ = 116).

Obbligato harpsichord

Ob da caccia prefigures vocal melody ("Willkommen ich will sagen").

Modified ternary form (A-B-A').

Although the overall mood is happy, the frequent shifts between major and minor suggest ambivalence (as also the pulsing, sighing motive, which could depict the soft, stealthy tread of approaching death).

3.

The "sighing" figures may also depict the soft, stealthy tread of approaching death.

Ob da caccia plays sighing figures (see full score) = "der Tod."

Ob da caccia plays descending line (descent to grave?)

Line derived from "Willkommen will ich sagen"

B-flat 7 E-flat major E-flat pedal... E-flat 7 B-flat major F7 B-flat major G minor (F major) B-flat major B-flat minor B-flat minor

Later, the sighing figure (= "der Tod") & the descending line (= "Willkommen will ich sagen") are combined (see mm. 27, 70).

8.

B-flat major E-flat major B-flat pedal...

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10.

E-flat major E dim.7 F minor F minor C minor

12.

B dim.7 C minor E-flat 7 A-flat major (B-flat 7)

14.

E-flat 7 B dim.7 E-flat major

16. **Alto.** The first two lines are based on Neumeister aria (see note).
 Eric Chafe sees the rising fifth of the opening (fore-shadowed by the oboe da caccia in the ritornello) as a sign of hope. See "Tonal Allegory," 190.

Will - kom - men! will ich sa - gen, wenn der

p Ob da caccia tacet...

E-flat major E-flat major

18.

Tod ans Bet - te tritt, — will - kom - men, will - kom - men! will ich —

E-flat 7 A-flat major A-flat pedal...

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20.

sa - gen, wenn der Tod ans Bet - te tritt, will - kom - men! will ich

B-flat 7 E-flat major E-flat pedal...

23.

sa - gen, will - kom - men! will ich sa - gen, wenn der Tod ans Bet - te tritt, will -

E-flat 7 A-flat major (B-flat 7) E-flat major B-flat major

25.

kom - men! will ich sa - gen, will - kom - men! will ich sa - gen, wenn der Tod, der

Ob da caccia

F7 B-flat minor

The sighing figure and descending line are combined.

Though death is welcomed, it is still disturbing, so Bach moderates the joyful mood by moving to minor (cf. mm. 70-72). See Petzoldt, 1:485.

28.

Tod, will - kom - men! will ich sa - gen, wenn der Tod ans Bet - te tritt.

Ob da caccia

B-flat minor B-flat minor B-flat major

mf

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30. Ritornello

B-flat pedal... B-flat major (F7) B-flat 7

33.

B-flat major B-flat minor A dim.7 B-flat minor

35. Middle Section

"Fröhlich" always begins with upbeat, set as melisma.

Fröh - lich will ich fol - gen, fröh - lich will ich

Text painting: Oboe da caccia and obligato organ follow voice in imitation to depict "I will follow joyously" (see full score).

B-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major C7

38. Text painting: Descending 8va for into the grave.

fol - gen, wenn er ruft, in die Gruft, fröh - lich folg' ich, fröh -

Bach chooses to link this phrase to the foregoing line. In the poem, this phrase could just as easily relate to the following line.

F minor F# dim.7 G7 C minor C pedal...

40.

- lich will ich fol - gen, wenn er ruft, - in die Gruft, wenn er

C minor

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42.

ruft, fröh - lich folg' ich, fröh - lich folg' ich, wenn er - ruft, in - die

C minor
G pedal... C minor

45.

In the poem, this phrase could easily go with the next line.

Gruft. → Ritornello

C minor

47.

In the poem, "In die Gruft" relates just as easily to this line.

Alle, al - le - mei - ne

C minor C major C7

50.

Pla - gen nehm' ich mit, alle, al - le - mei - ne Pla -

Text painting: Chromatic descent for "Plagen"

F minor B-flat major B-flat 7

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52.

gen nehm' ich mit, alle. al

B-flat 7 E-flat major E-flat major

55.

le mei.ne Pla - gen nehm' ich mit. Will.

E-flat 7 A-flat major E dim. 7 F minor E-flat 7 B-flat 7

57.

kom-men!will ich sa-gen,

Only 2 mm. or ritornello before the A section repeats (modified from m. 67 on).

E-flat major E-flat pedal... E-flat 7 A-flat major E-flat major (B-flat 7) E-flat major

60.

will - kommen!will ich sa-gen, wenn der Tod ans Bet.te tritt, - will.

E-flat major

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62.

kommen, will - kommen! will ich sa - gen, wenn der Tod ans Bet - te tritt,

E-flat 7 A-flat major A-flat major B-flat 7

65.

will - kommen! will ich sa - gen, will - kommen! will ich sa - gen, wenn der

E-flat major E-flat 7 E-flat pedal... A-flat major

67.

Tod ans Bet - te tritt, will - kommen! will ich sa - gen, will - kommen! will ich

A section is modified to remain in E-flat (compare m. 24ff.).

E-flat major

70. Text painting: Change to minor for "death."

sa - gen, wenn der Tod, der Tod, will - kommen! will ich sa - gen, wenn der

Ob da caccia

E-flat minor E-flat minor

The sighing figure and the descending line are combined.

Though death is welcomed, it is still disturbing, so Bach moderates the joyful mood by moving to minor (cf. m. 29). See Petzoldt, 1:485.

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72. *tr*
Tod ans Bet - te tritt.

mf Ritornello

E-flat minor E-flat major D-flat major

74.

E dim. 7 F minor

76.

B dim. 7 C minor (E-flat 7) A-flat major

78.

B dim. 7 E-flat major E-flat major

27/4. Recitativo. Soprano.

• Yearning for heaven where the Lamb and bridegroom is (27/4). Text appears to be derived from hymn (see side note). Biblical allusion to Philippians 1:23. "My desire is to depart (Luther 1545: Ich habe Lust abzuschneiden) and be with Christ, for that is far better."

This phrase is used verbatim also in 146/4. It begins and ends this recitative. The first time it is a wish, the second time, a question.
Text painting: Diminished chord for "ah" and high note for "heaven."

For biblical background, see note.

1. Ach, wer doch schon im Himmel wär! Ich habe Lust zu scheiden und mit dem Lamm,

Ah, (would that) (I) indeed already in heaven were! I have desire to depart and with the lamb,

"Halo" of strings...

B dim. 7 G major C minor E dim. 7 C7

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4. Allusion to passages from Revelation. See side note.

das al-ler Frommen Bräun- gam, mich in der Se-lig-keit zu wei-den. Flü-gel
(who-is-of) all-the righteous (the) bridegroom, myself in - blessedness to pasture. (Ye) wings

C7 F minor E-flat 7 A-flat major

7.

her! Flügel her! Ach. wer doch schon im Him-mel wär!
(come) hither! (Ye) wings, (come) hither! Ah, (would that) (I) indeed already in heaven were!

Text painting: Vln I depicts the wings signaling flight to heaven with 32nd notes.

Phrygian cadence suggests a question.

F7 G7 C minor B dim. 7 F minor G major

27/5.

Aria. •Farewell world! I am going to heaven! (27/5). (Larghetto ♩ = 60).

Ternary form:
A. Gm—B-flat—Dm (mm. 1–53)
B. Dm—E-flat (53–78)
A'. (E-flat—Gm (78–96))

Aria is unified with descending/ascending scales and the agitated, "stile concitato" figures.

Opening motive of the ritornello derived from vocal opening.

Text painting: Descending line to depict descent into grave, ascending line to depict ascent into heaven (compare B section).

Vln I

G minor B-flat major

Ritornello reflects the contradictory ideas in the text: serene motive in sarabande rhythm for "good night" (farewell theme); concitato style for "tumult of the world." The agitated motive predominates in the A section. Scales in opposite directions appear throughout.

Stile concitato (agitated style), followed by continued 8ths (the term invented by Monteverdi in "Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda," one of the pieces in "Madrigali guerrieri, et amorosi").

B-flat major

11.

Stile concitato (agitated style) *cresc.*

B-flat 7 E-flat major F7

14. *dim.*

B-flat major B-flat major D7

17. **Basso.**

Gu - te Nacht, gu - te Nacht, gu - te Nacht, du

G minor G minor B-flat 7 E-flat major

23. *Stile concitato*

Welt - ge - tūm-mel, du Welt-ge - tūmmel, gu - te Nacht, du Welt-ge -

F7 B-flat major B-flat major

27. tūm-mel, gu - te Nacht, gu - te Nacht, du Welt-ge -

B-flat 7 E-flat major F7

30. tūm - - - mel, gu - te Nacht!

B-flat major B-flat major

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33.

Gu - te Nacht,
Opening motive ornamented, perhaps indicating a shiver of fear.

p

B-flat major F# dim.7

37.

du Welt-ge-tüm - mel, gu - te

Stile concitato

D7 G minor A major A7

40.

Nacht, du Welt-ge-tüm-mel, gu - te Nacht, gu - te

cresc.

D minor D7

43.

Nacht, du Welt-ge-tüm - - - mel, gu - te Nacht!

dim.

mf

Shortened ritornello restricted to the "Good night" material.

G minor A7 D minor D minor

47.

53. B Section (no tumult music) D minor

Text painting: Elongated notes for "standing with one foot in the heaven" (contrasts with having one foot in the grave).

Vln I descends by thirds to the low C, depicting descent into the Grave. See Chafe, "Tonal Allegory," 190. Later, the voice ascends to depict the ascent into heaven as referenced in the text (mm. 72-74).

53. Jetzt mach' ich mit dir Be - schluss; ich steh' schon mit einem

Stile concitato not used in B section.

Vln I

59. Fuss, ich steh' schon mit einem Fuss bei dem lie - ben Gott

65. im Him - mel, ich steh' schon mit einem Fuss

71. bei dem lie - ben Gott im Him - mel.

+Vln II Vla

71. bei dem lie - ben Gott im Him - mel.

Text painting: Ascent to heaven.

Dürr notes that the use of "dear God" (twice here and also in the soprano recitative of movement 1) suggests a childlike trust in the face of death. See Dürr/Jones, 556.

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A section returns, modified and shortened (quasi da capo).

77.

Gu - te Nacht, du Welt - ge - tũm -

E-flat major G7

81.

- mel, gu - te Nacht, du Welt - ge -

Stile concitato

C minor D major D7 G minor

84.

tũm - mel, gu - te Nacht, gu - te Nacht, du Welt - ge -

G7 C minor D7

87.

tũm - mel, gu - te Nacht!

mf

G minor G minor

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91.

G minor

27/6.

Choral.

1. Soprano I.

This five-voice movement is borrowed verbatim from a 1652 setting by Johann Rosenmüller (ca. 1619–1684). See side note for more. •Farewell to the world; comparing world and heaven (27/6).

+Corno, Ob I, II

Soprano II.

+Vln I

Alto.

+Vln II

Tenore.

+Vla

Basso.

Welt, a - de! ich bin dein mü - de, ich will nach dem

B-flat major

This is the first stanza of seven in the 1649 chorale by Johann Georg Albinus (1624–1679). As noted, the musical setting is by Johann Rosenmüller.

5.

Himmel zu, da wird sein der rech-te Frie - de und die ew' - ge, stol - ze

Him-mel zu, da wird sein der rech-te Frie - de und die ew' - ge, stol - ze

Himmel zu, da wird sein der rech-te Frie - de und die ew' - ge, stol-ze

Himmel zu, da wird sein der rech-te Frie - de und die ew'ge, stol - ze

Himmel zu, da wird sein der rech-te Frie - de und die ew'-ge, stol - ze

B-flat major

G minor

F7 B-flat major

10.

Ruh'. Welt, bei dir ist Krieg und Streit, nichts, denn lau-ter Ei-tel-keit;

Ruh'. Welt, bei dir ist Krieg und Streit, nichts, denn lau-ter Ei-tel-keit;

Ruh'. Welt, bei dir ist Krieg und Streit, nichts, denn lau-ter Ei-tel-keit;

Ruh'. Welt, bei dir ist Krieg und Streit, nichts, denn lau-ter Ei-tel-keit;

Ruh'. Welt, bei dir ist Krieg und Streit, nichts, denn lau-ter Ei-tel-keit;

B-flat major A major D minor D major

15.

Text painting: Switch to triple meter (archaic style in 3/1 meter) to depict the peace, joy, and blessedness of heaven. Eric Chafe concludes that Bach associated this metrical change with the saying "Ende gut macht alles gut" in movement 2. See "Analyzing Bach Cantatas, 257n34."

in dem Him-mel al-le-zeit Frie-de, Freud' und Se-lig-keit.

in dem Him-mel al-le-zeit Frie-de, Freud' und Se-lig-keit.

in dem Him-mel al-le-zeit Frie-de, Freud' und Se-lig-keit.

in dem Him-mel al-le-zeit Frie-de, Freud' und Se-lig-keit.

in dem Him-mel al-le-zeit Frie-de, Freud' und Se-lig-keit.

E-flat major B-flat major B-flat major B-flat major