

NBA I/33; BC B11
Marriage Ceremony (BWV 196, 195, 197)
Librettist: Scripture (Psalm 115:12–15)
Time of Composition: presumably 1707/1708
(Mühlhausen), based on stylistic grounds
(see note).

Early Cantata of
Modest Dimensions.

J.S. Bach

Cantata No. 196

Der Herr denket an uns

Form: Sinfonia (orch) - Chorus (with orch) - S aria (trio with orch) - T/B duet (with orch) - Chorus (with orch).
Cantata 196 has come down to us only by means of a secondary source, copied by one of Bach's students around 1730. The fact that the libretto contains no additional poetry in the form of recitatives or reflective arias suggests that the cantata is an early work, perhaps dating from Bach's time in Mühlhausen (1707–1708)—see more in note. There is no chorale. The 4 psalm verses are set as independent movements; the tonal scheme is simple with modulations often restricted to dominant or relative minor keys. The work's modest orchestration (strings and continuo but with independent violoncello part) is nevertheless handled imaginatively, especially in the opening sinfonia, which establishes a buoyant mood with pervasive dotted rhythms. The work is one of Bach's shortest cantatas, taking only about 10 minutes to perform. The occasion for which the work was intended is not specified, but its text (Psalm 115:12–15) suggests that it was probably written for a marriage ceremony—Martin Petzold reviews Philipp Spitta's arguments for identifying the bridegroom as Johann Lorenz Stauber (1660–1723), a widowed pastor with children from a previous marriage, who married Regina Wedemann (1660–1730), an aunt of Bach's first wife, Maria Barbara, on 5 June 1708. See "Bach-Kommentar" 3:432. See also Dürr/Jones, 779–780 and note.

1. Sinfonia Concerto-like texture in which Vln I & II lead in imitative dotted rhythms, over steady 8ths in the continuo, with cello doubling the continuo about 2/3 of the time.

196/1.



Dynamic markings have been
editorially added here.

Instrumentation:
Vln I, II
Vla
SATB
Basso (Violoncello), Violone,
Organo

Perhaps the sinfonia served as music for
the entrance of bride and groom.

C major.

Opening
motive in A
minor

Contrasting middle section,
with triplets.

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 196

Opening motive inverted

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

12 Vln II Vln I

Opening motive in E minor

E minor

C major

15

p *mf*

F major

17

Opening material returns.

C major

C major

19

C major

196/2. 2. Coro • Lord remembers and blesses his people: Psalm 115:12 (196/2).

The first vocal movement is set in a sort of "motet" style, in which individual phrases of the psalm verse are each given appropriate (and contrasting) musical gestures. The first text segment ("der Herr denket an uns") is presented in imitation by pairs of voices, punctuated with affirmations from the entire ensemble.

A 1-measure statement of the words "und segnet uns" (echoed by the instruments) then serves as a brief transition to a substantial fugue on the second half of the Psalm text. Petzoldt notes that the emphasis on "us" is balanced in a symmetrical structure by an emphasis on "you" in movement 4, which also has the same (full) orchestration.

Soprano

Der Herr den - - - - - ket, der Herr den - ket an

Alto

Der Herr den - ket an

Tenore

Der Herr, der Herr den - - - - - ket, den - ket an

Basso

Der Herr den - ket an

For biblical background, see note.

No ritornello

Tutti response

Viol. I, II

Va.

Vc.

Continuo

p *mf*

Continuo alone

Figura corta (see note)

C major

et usic

4

uns, der Herr den - ket an
 uns, der Herr, der Herr den - ket, den - ket an
 uns, der Herr den - ket an
 uns, der Herr den - ket an uns, den - ket an

p Continuo alone
mf Tutti Response

7

uns, der Herr den - ket, er den - ket an uns, der
 uns, der Herr den - ket an uns, an uns, an uns, der
 uns, der Herr den - ket an uns, an uns, der Herr den -
 uns, der Herr den - ket an uns, der Herr den -

Imitative treatment with strings doubling
 C major

9

Herr den - ket an uns, an uns, der Herr den - ket an uns und seg - net uns.
 Herr den - ket an uns, an uns, der Herr den - ket an uns und seg - net uns.
 - ket an uns, an uns, an uns, der Herr den - ket an uns und seg - net uns.
 - ket, der Herr den ket an uns, der Herr den - ket an uns und seg - net uns.

Continuo alone for choral cadential phrase.
pp

D7 G major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 196

12

Permutation fugue. The first subjects' opening is based on upward leap of a fourth (derived from opening of the movement), then descending scale of diatonic fourth.

Er seg - net das Haus Is - ra - el, er seg -

Second phrase of the psalm text is handled fugally.

Tonal answer of subject is at the subdominant.

Er

Descending shape of the subject opening and the descending order of voice entries may be intended to portray divine blessing (text painting).

Continuo alone

G7 C major

15

net das Haus Aa - ron, er seg -

seg - net das Haus Is - ra - el, er seg - net das Haus

Er seg - net das Haus

18

net das Haus Aaron, das Haus Aa - ron.

Aa - ron, er seg - net

Is - ra - el, er seg - net das Haus Aa - ron, er seg -

Er seg - net das Haus Is - ra - el, er seg -

Vln II

Strings begin to join independently with theme, resulting in 9-voice fugue.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for J.S. Bach's Church Cantata BWV 196. Each system includes vocal staves with German lyrics and a basso continuo staff. The first system (measures 12-15) features a permutation fugue on the text 'Er segnet das Haus Israel, er segnet'. Annotations highlight the upward leap of a fourth in the subject's opening and the descending scale of a diatonic fourth. The second system (measures 15-18) continues the fugue with the text 'net das Haus Aaron, er segnet'. The third system (measures 18-21) shows the text 'net das Haus Aaron, das Haus Aaron, er segnet'. A yellow circle marks the entry of the second violin (Vln II) in the third system, with a note indicating that the strings begin to join independently with the theme, resulting in a 9-voice fugue. Other annotations include 'Continuo alone' and 'G7 C major'.

21

das Haus Aaron, das Haus Aaron. net das Haus Aaron, das Haus Aaron, er seg-

Vln I (eighth C)

24

Aaron. net das Haus Aaron, das Haus Aaron.

Cello with theme 8va up

26

Second fugue exposition; entries again alternate between C major and F major, but starting in F.

Er seg- net das Haus Israel, er seg-

Er +Vln II

G major

C major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 196

29

seg-net das Haus Is-ra-el, er seg-net das Haus Aa-ron, er seg-

+Cello & Continuo

Er

G major C major

31

seg-net das Haus Aa-ron, er seg-net das Haus Is-ra-el, er seg-

Er +Vla

C major

33

das Haus Aa-ron, das Haus Aa-ron, er seg-net das Haus Is-ra-el, er seg-net das Haus Aa-ron, er seg-

+Vln II

G major

35

seg-net das Haus Is-ra-el, er seg-net das Haus
seg-net, er seg-net das Haus Is-ra-el, er seg-net das Haus
seg-net das Haus Is-ra-el, er seg-net das Haus
seg-net, er seg-net das Haus

37^{II}

Is-ra-el, er seg-net das Haus Aa-ron. Der Herr den
Is-ra-el, er seg-net das Haus Aa-ron. Opening material returns for short coda.
Is-ra-el, er seg-net das Haus Aa-ron. Der Herr, der
Is-ra-el, er seg-net das Haus Aa-ron. Bach repeats the opening text phrase.

p Continuo alone

C major

40

ket an uns, den ket an uns!
Der Herr den ket an uns!
Herr den ket, den ket an uns!
Der Herr den ket an uns!

Tutti Response

C major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 196

• God blesses all who fear him: Psalm 115:13 (196/3).

A short, "divisen," da capo aria with related ritornello for soprano (early example of da capo form). Its lilting gracefulness suggests tender intimacy and joy; violins combine for obbligato. Its forward-looking traits include the vocal motto at the beginning of the aria ("Divise"), triplets, and "Vokaleinbau" in its A section (vocal texture embedded in instrumental fabric).

Petzzoldt (vol. 3, p. 432) notes that this movement serves as the central movement in a symmetrical structure.



Bach repeats the text several times in the A section, covers the text of the B section only briefly, then the A section repeats.

For biblical background, see note.



Vlms unison

Ritornello

A minor

Soprano

Motives are spun out sequentially ("Fortspinnung").

Voice rhythm is like that of 78/2 ("Wir eilen mit schwachen, doch emsigen Schritten...")

Triplets reappear as in opening sinfonia.

Er seg -
Vocal motto ("Divise")

3

C major

A minor

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.

er seg -
Complete vocal entry

5 II

D minor

A minor

A minor

8

die den Herrn fürch - ten, die

Ritornello with vocal part built in ("Vokaleinbau")

10

den Herrn fürch - ten, er seg -

C major

A minor

In the introduction to the Carus edition of BWV 196, Solvej Donadel (with translation by David Kosviner) writes, "The soprano aria...is one of Bach's first da capo arias. In its succinct form [with text consisting of only one sentence], the conflicting emotions cannot yet be discerned as in works from the

12

- net, die den Herrn fürch - ten.

A minor

A minor

14

bei-de,

16

Klei - ne, beide, Klei - ne und

A minor

G major

18

Gro - ße, und Gro - ße.

E minor

E major

A minor

dal segno

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 196

• Blessing on you and your children: Psalm 115:14 (196/4).

196/4. **4. Duetto** The duet for tenor and bass, with its string and vocal duets in imitation, continues the mood of courtly beneficence. Dürr notes that the exchange of short units makes it sound antiquated. See Dürr/Jones, p. 780.

Viol. I, II
Va.
Vc.
Continuo

p Violin motives appear derived from Sinfonia

hemiola at cadence

C major

For biblical background, see note.

Tenore Text painting: overlapping imitative entries and rising sequences to depict multiplied, greater and greater blessing.

Basso

Der Herr seg - ne euch, der Herr seg - ne euch, der Herr seg - ne euch.

Der Herr seg - ne euch, der Herr seg - ne euch je mehr und

Strings drop out.

G major

13

- je mehr und mehr, je mehr und mehr;

mehr. je mehr, - je mehr und mehr;

Strings enter with imitative material before voices finish.

C major

19

der Herr seg - ne euch, der Herr seg - ne euch je mehr und

der Herr seg - ne euch, der Herr seg - ne euch, der Herr seg - ne euch.

Strings drop out.

G major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 196

25

mehr, je mehr, — je mehr und mehr;
— je mehr und mehr, je mehr und mehr;
Strings enter with imitative material before voices finish.
G major

31

der Herr seg - ne euch, der Herr
je mehr und mehr, je mehr und mehr,
Voices and strings together, strings now chordal.
E minor A minor

36

seg - ne euch je mehr und mehr, je mehr und mehr. — je mehr und
je mehr und mehr, je mehr und mehr. — je mehr und mehr. je mehr.
Strings drop out.
G major

40

mehr, je mehr und mehr, je mehr und mehr, je mehr und mehr, — je mehr und
— und mehr, je mehr und mehr, je mehr, — je mehr und mehr, je mehr und
Strings enter with imitative material before voices finish.

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 196

44

mehr;
mehr;

A minor

Text painting: voices in parallel 6ths perhaps suggest sweetness, and perhaps represent the wedding couple.

50

euch, euch und eu-re Kin-der, euch und eu-re Kin-
Voices and instruments together

F major

Strings enter with imitative material before voices finish.

55

der, der Herr seg-ne euch je mehr und
der, der Herr seg-ne euch je mehr, je mehr und

Strings drop out.

D minor

D minor

61

mehr, euch und eu-re Kin-der.
mehr, euch und eu-re Kin-der.

Strings enter with imitative material before voices finish.

C major

C major

67

Voices enter in a kind of vocal coda on the opening text phrase, in parallel 6ths (suggesting sweetness and perhaps representing the wedding couple), while strings play a descending, 4-octave C major arpeggio to depict divine blessing coming down, the cello ending alone (C major may represent Christ here as elsewhere, see note).

Der Herr seg - neuch!

Der Herr seg - neuch!

pp

C major

C

• You are the Creator's blessed ones: Psalm 115:15 (196/5).

196/5. **5. Coro** The cantata ends with a bipartite, elaborate chorus (not a chorale as is more typical in Bach's cantatas), in which the main text is embedded chordally in an instrumental fabric. The bulk of the movement, however, is given over to an extended loosely constructed fugue on the word "Amen," as if verbal expression is insufficient to capture the joy of the poet. Extended settings of "Amen" are rare for Bach, unlike for other composers of Bach's time. See Petzoldt, "Bach-Kommentar," vol. 3, p. 439.

Soprano Ihr seid die Ge-

Alto Ihr seid die Ge-

Tenore Ihr seid die Ge-

Basso Ihr seid die Ge-

Chordal choral opening

Motives consist of scales and arpeggios.

Vins unison

F major

For biblical background, see note.

3

seg - ne - ten, die Ge - seg - ne - ten des Herrn!

seg - ne - ten, die Ge - seg - ne - ten des Herrn!

seg - ne - ten, die Ge - seg - ne - ten des Herrn!

seg - ne - ten, die Ge - seg - ne - ten des Herrn!

seg - ne - ten, die Ge - seg - ne - ten des Herrn!

Descending arpeggios, presumably depict descending divine blessings.

mf

5

Ihr seid die Ge-seg - ne-ten, die Ge.

Ihr seid die Ge-seg - ne-ten, die Ge.

Ihr seid die Ge-seg - ne-ten, die Ge.

Ihr seid die Ge-seg - ne-ten, die Ge.

f C major

7 II

seg-ne-ten des Herrn! der Himmel und

seg-ne-ten des Herrn! der Himmel und

seg-ne-ten des Herrn! der Himmel und

seg-ne-ten des Herrn! der Himmel und

mf Text painting: contrasting registers for heaven and earth

10

Er - de, der Him-mel und Er - de ge - macht

Er - de, der Him-mel und Er - de ge - macht

Er - de, der Him-mel und Er - de ge -

Er - de, der Him-mel und Er - de ge - macht hat,

f

12

hat, der Him - mel und Er - de, der Him - mel und
 hat, ge - macht hat, der Him - mel und Er - de, der Him -
 macht hat, der Him - mel und Er - de, der Him - mel und
 der Him - mel, der Him - mel und Er - de, der Him

14

Er - de ge - macht hat. Ihr
 mel. Him - mel und Er - de, Him - mel und Er - de ge - macht hat. Ihr
 Er - de gemacht hat. Ihr
 mel und Er - de, der Him - mel, Him - mel und Er - de gemacht hat. Ihr

16

B (Fuga)

seid die Geseg - neten des Herrn! A -
 seid die Geseg - neten des Herrn!
 seid die Geseg - neten des Herrn!
 seid die Geseg - neten des Herrn! A - men, a - men, a - men.

B

mf

C major

Bach adds an "amen" to the psalm, writing a loosely constructed fugue (quasi-fugue) in which the subject's opening motive allows for interplay between 2 voices or pairs of voices.

The countersubject, which includes a descending scale, is introduced immediately.

Instruments drop out.

19

men, a - men, a - - men,
A - - men, a - men, a - - men, a - men, a -
a - men, a - men, a - men, amen. a - men,

G major

22

Subject's opening motive treated imitatively between 2 voices, perhaps to represent the wedding couple.

men, a - men, a - men, a - men, a -

Instruments enter.

C major

25

men!

men!

men!

men!

Vln I & II in duet...

G major

28

A - men,

A -

A - men, a -

A -

C

C major

G major

31

a -

men, a - men, a -

men, a -

men, a - men, a -

men, a - men, a -

men, a - men, a -

men, a - men, a -

Instruments drop out for 3 measures.

G major

33^{II}

men, a - men, a - men, a - men,

men, a - men, a - men,

men, a - men, a -

men, a - men, a -

C major

36

The musical score consists of five staves. The first four staves are vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) with lyrics underneath. The fifth staff is a grand staff for piano accompaniment. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are 'amen, amen, amen, amen, amen'. A red annotation 'Instruments drop out.' is written above the piano staff at the end of the piece.

a - men, a - men, a - men, a - men, a -

a - men, a - men, a - men, a - men, a -

- men, a - men, a - men, a - men,

- men, a -

Instruments drop out.

[illegible][illegible]

45

men!

men!

men!

men!

C major

48

D

A

D A - - men, a - men, a - - men.

Vln II

G major

51

men, a - - men, a - - men, a -

A - - - men, a - men, a -

a - men, a - - men, Vln I a - - - men, a -

G major

C major

53

men. a - - - men. a - - -
men, a - men, a - - - men. a - - -
men, a - men, a - - - men, a - - - men. a - - -
men. a - men, a - - - men, a - - -
men. a - men, a - - - men, a - - -

55

men, a - men, a - men, a -

men, a - men, a -

men, a - men, a -

men, a - men, a -

mf

Piano marking

57

piano
by Bach. See side note.

men. a - men. a - men. a - men. a - men, a - men!

men, a - men, a - men, a - men, a - men, a - men!

men. a - men. a - men, a - men. a - men, a - men!

men, a - men, a - men. a - men. a - men, a - men!

p