

J.S. Bach

Cantata No. 196

Der Herr denket an uns

Early Cantata of Modest Dimensions.

NBA I/33; BC B11

Marriage Ceremony (BWV 196, 195, 197)

Librettist: Scripture (Psalm 115:12–15)

Time of Composition: presumably 1707/1708

(Mülhausen), based on stylistic grounds

(see note).

1. Sinfonia

Concerto-like texture (reminiscent of Corelli) in which Vln I & II lead in imitative dotted rhythms, over steady, walking 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.

Contrasting middle section, with triplets.

A minor

B7

E minor

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12 Vln II Vln I

Opening motive in E minor

E minor

Opening motive inverted

Vln I

15

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

Opening motive, treated imitatively, ties this movement with the foregoing sinfonia.

For biblical background, see note.

No ritornello

Tutti response

Viol. I, II

Va.

Vc.

Continuo

Continuo alone

Figura corta (see note)

C major

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

4

uns, der Herr den - ket an
 uns, der Herr den - ket an
 uns, der Herr den - ket an
 uns, der Herr den - ket an
 Continuo alone
 mf Tutti Response
 G major

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.
 Instruments repeat choral statement.
 Continuo alone for choral cadential phrase.
 pp
 D7 G major

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Second phrase of the psalm text is handled fugally.

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.

12

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

Er

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.

21

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

Vln I (eighth C)
Vln II

24

Aa - - ron. net das Haus Aaron, das Haus Aaron

26

Er seg - - net das Haus Israel, er seg

ron. net das Haus Israel, er seg

Cello with theme 8va up

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

G major C major

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29

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

- - - net das Haus Aa- - ron, er seg- -

Er

31

- net das Haus Aa- - ron, er seg- -

- - - net

Er

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

33

- net, er

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- -

G major

C major

G major

G major

+Vln I & II

+Vla

+Cello & Continuo

+Vln I

+Vln II

+Vla

+Vln II

+Vla

+Cello

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).

Petzelt (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.



Vlins 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")

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

net.

D minor

A minor

A minor

Ritornello with vocal part built in ("Vokaleinbau")

die den Herrn fürch - ten, die

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

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• 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.

For biblical background, see note.

Viol. I, II
Va.
Vc.
Continuo

p

Vln I

Violin motives appear derived from Sinfonia

hemiola at cadence

C major



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

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

Basso

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

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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.

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-der

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 - -
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 a men, a

men, a men, a

Instruments enter. a men, a

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

[illegible][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 marking
by Bach. See side note.

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