

J.S.Bach: Cantata 'Jesu, der du meine Seele' (Jesus, by Thy Cross and Passion), BWV 78

A more exact translation of the title is 'Jesus, who through Thy bitter death'

Written for the fourteenth Sunday after Trinity, (the gospel for that day is the story of the healing of the 10 lepers, Luke, 17, 11-19).

Cantata 78 was composed and first performed in September 1724.

for 4 solo voices, (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass), Chorus, Flute, Horn, 2 Oboes, Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Continuo (Organ cello and bass).

The text is based on a hymn by Johan Rist.

There are seven movements in the work:

1. Chorale: 'Jesu, der du meine Seele' (Jesus by Thy Cross and Passion) (page 1)

Chorale melody, taken from final movement, changed from 4/4 time to 3/4, broken into eight separate phrases, bars 21-25, 33-36, 53-57, 65- 68, 81-83, 95-99, 118-121, 137-140.

Sung by soprano, and played by horn, flute.

Four other themes, Polyphonic texture

Form: Ritornello: Ritornello theme, non-vocal section, appears at the beginning, between each phrase, and at the end.

Choir, S.A.T.B., Horn , flute, 2 oboes, strings, continuo (cello and organ)

Key g minor, moves through keys of D(69), F (86), B flat (100), g minor (122),

ends with a tierce de picardie (G Major chord)

2. Aria - Duet: Soprano, Alto, 'Wir eilen mit schwachen, doch emsigen Schritten' (We hasten with eager yet faltering footsteps)

(page 18)

Ritornello form

Organ, cello, double bass.

Key B flat, moves through keys of g minor (53),c minor (61), d minor (80), ends in F.

3. Recitative: Tenor, 'Ach, ich bin ein Kind der Sunder' (Ah! My failings sorely grieve me) (page23)

No tonal centre, chromatic, use of diminished 7th chords and wide intervals to interpret the anguish of the words.

Recitative is more closely related to dramatic speech than to singing.

Mono-syllabic approach to the text. (One note per syllable)

Accompanied by continuo with figured bass.

4. Aria Tenor (Duet with Flute) and continuo

'Dein Blut, so meine Schuld durch-streicht' (Thy sacrifice has cleansed the stain)

Alternating ritornello and vocal sections.

Da Capo structure. (ABA)

g minor - B flat (27) - c minor (43) - g minor (61)

flute expresses the lightness

use of sequence, 5-7, 9-10, 33-36, 47, 51-56.

5. Bass Recitative 'Die Wunder, Nagel, Kron' und Grab' (The torments, nail scars, thorns: the grave)

No tonal centre, starts with the chord of E flat, goes to A flat and finishes with f minor.

Violins, viola, bass, continuo.

Many different emotions are expressed here corresponding with to changes of tempo

Word painting - und Grab (the grave) - the melody leaps down an 11th.

Use of rests to heighten the tension.

6. Bass Aria (duet with oboe) violin, viola, bass, continuo

'Nun du wirst mein Gewisen stilen' (Do Thou O Lord, appease my conscience)

Ritornello

Da Capo form

c minor - g minor (26) -c minor (43)

Concerto-like movement

Sequences (2-3, 6-7 oboe)

Parallel movement in 6ths 11, 22, 38

in 3rds 39

Antiphonal dialogue between strings and continuo 46-47

7. Chorale 'Herr, ich glaube, hilf mir Schwachen' (Lord I Trust Thee I adore Thee)

Joyous affirmation of faith in God

Choir S.A.T.B. with continuo, violin, flute, oboe and horn

Eight 2bar phrases

g minor, - D -g - D -F -B flat -D, ends tierce de picardie (G major)

This cantata is set out in a very logical way

It starts and finishes with a Chorale movement (1 and 7)

Arias are arranged in order from highest to lowest voice, all are duets

2. Soprano and alto aria

4. Tenor and flute

6. Bass and oboe

3. Tenor recitative before Tenor aria

5. Bass recitative before Bass aria

Definitions:

Ostinato or **Ground Bass**: Consists of a short piece repeated over and over again in the bass with different harmonies above it each time.

Chaconne: Like an ostinato but the melody can be given to other parts and inverted and imitated.

Figured Bass: is the shorthand of harmony that came into use at the beginning of the 17th century, when solo vocal recitative, accompanied by plain chords was beginning. Such music often had as its accompaniment a line of bass notes with numbers under them, indicating to the accompanist what chords were to be used, and he could construct his own accompaniment. While he was doing this the cellos and double basses were playing the actual bass line so providing a firm foundation. A knowledge of harmony was absolutely essential for a keyboard accompanist in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Cantata: Originally a work to be sung as opposed to a sonata which was a work to be sounded (instrumental). A sacred or secular work with vocal solos, chorus, arias, recitatives, and orchestral accompaniment.

Baroque: 1600-1750, applied to the style of Bach's music and earlier eg. Monteverdi. Highly ornamental, polyphonic texture (many melodies combined), Fugue, Suite, Concerto, were forms in use.

Recitative: A free style of vocal declamation used in operas, oratorios and cantatas.

Aria: A solo vocal piece in ABA form (Da Capo Aria), Ternary Form, found in opera, Oratorio, and Cantata.

Chorale: German congregational hymn-tune adapted from plainsong.

Melismatic: Several notes to a syllable.

Syllabic: one note per syllable.

Ritornello: The return of the main theme eg. ABACADA

Chromatic Harmony: One or more notes used that are foreign to the prevailing key.

