

## Erschallet, ihr Lieder, Coro 1

Music by J. S. Bach

Text based on St. John 14, 23 attributed to

Salomo Franck

SATB scored with instruments, with keyboard transcription

From Cantata BWV 172

Berenreiter BA 10 172a



The heart of *Erschallet* lives in the jubilant feel of the celebratory dance-like rhythm and the playful, joyous melismatic interplay between voices and instruments.

### ANALYSIS

**Broad Description:** Baroque concerto chorus with instruments, (in this case keyboard transcription)

#### **Background information**

Bach wrote over 200 cantatas for either church/liturgical events (1-199) such as advent or Pentecost Sunday, or as secular, non-liturgical events (200-215) such as weddings and coronations. The prefix BWV (Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis, or Bach Works Catalog) followed by the work's number is the shorthand identification system and is thematic rather than chronological. And even though the cantatas were written for specific days or events, they are frequently performed today as concert pieces.

On 25 June 1708, Bach was appointed organist and chamber musician at the court of the co-reigning Dukes Wilhelm Ernst and Ernst August of Saxe-Weimar. On 2 March 1714, he was promoted to *Konzertmeister*, an honor which included a monthly performance of a church cantata which he composed. The text, like those of the majority of the cantatas Bach composed in Weimar, is probably the work of poet Salomo Franck, the Weimar court librarian and head of the mint. Franck was the finest poet that Bach ever collaborated with, and all of the Weimar works are notable for their passionate music and high literary quality.

*Erschallet, ihr Lieder* is the third of the series and in its entirety –like most of the cantatas - is about 18 minutes in performance length. We are only singing the opening chorus 1 - a joyous piece written in the festive spirit of the celebratory Whit Sunday, which in the Lutheran church year is the 1<sup>st</sup> day of Pentecost.

Translation:

*Erschallet ihr Lieder* Ring out you songs

*Erklinget ihr Saiten* Resound you strings

*O seligste Zeiten* O blessed times!

*Gott will sich dei Seelin zu Tempeln bereiten* God will prepare our souls to be his temples.

(See also, "Baroque Music" handout for a more extensive treatise on the general subject)

#### Musical Selection

Bach's Opening Choruses represent some of his finest and most compelling compositions. Here he would use all his arts to create music which would inspire his congregation; he would carefully craft the music and its mood to reflect the biblical text, a feature which can clearly be seen and heard when one listens to the opening chorus in conjunction with its text. This was music which for Bach represented the highest purpose to which any art can aspire: the Glory of God. Indeed his cantatas were generally "signed" S.D.G. for Soli Deo Gloria – to the Glory of God Alone.

#### MUSICAL ELEMENTS

**FORM:** Baroque concerto form chorus with accompaniment, in this case chorus with keyboard. Da capo resulting in overall ABA structure.

A section - The “seed” around which the overall chorus is built is a 3-note motive beginning in the intro. becoming clearly evident in the choir entrance in m. 12 pickup to m. 13. It is an intervallic leap up and back with intervals of a 4<sup>th</sup>(S), 3<sup>rd</sup>(A, T) and 8ve(B). Development of the “seed” begins immediately in mm. 14 -15 by trading the initial intervals between the s and t, and adding 16<sup>th</sup> note stepwise motion in the alto and sop. Development follows with a 2 measure I-V-I statement, followed by cascading melismatic sequences of a 2 part canon between ST and AB for 8 measures. 4 bar instrumental taking us into a 2X4, or perhaps an 8 measure homophonic dev. section wh/ moves directly back into a statement of the opening motivic material, w/ variations, some minute as in mm. 38 AT 16<sup>th</sup> notes, others more obvious as in the canon now being between SA and TB. Followed by 2 closing statements using the first sustained phrases in the piece.

B section – 4 part fugue running BTAS, followed by SATB, which sort of physically resembles the “temple” in the text.

**RHYTHM:** Wonderful 3/8 meter with a jubilant dance-like feel of minuet; with the A section in a ternary form. There is a constant feel of the pick up into the 3/8 bar so it feels like da-DUM-dum-da-DUM-dum so care must be taken to avoid sounding pedantic and trite, or in hammering final syllables. The 3/8 feel described runs through the entire piece with the exception of the implied *hemiola* at mm. 116-118. Notice the constant, forward rolling interplay between straight syllabic rhythmic motives of three 8<sup>th</sup> notes and extensive melismas, as well as carefully placed sustained points spilling into melismatic phrases, present throughout all four voice parts, as well as instruments so that every line is essential to the overall structure.

**MELODY:** Because of the form and rhythm as described above, and the brilliant interdependence of all parts, the melody is not an overriding factor in making this piece work and will bear close examination at some point. In other words, no one will walk out of the concert whistling or humming much beyond the initial motives which open the A section and B section respectively. Each voice and instrumental line plays an equal role in melody as well. Overall, the melody will most frequently be heard in upper voice (soprano or tenor) or, as one would expect, in the canon sections, the entrance voice followed by subsequent voices. The overall melodic effect is a rising, joyous contour through the statement and returning to rest at ends of statements, creating a playful and exuberant rise and fall of the overall sound.




**HARMONY:** Is predominantly triadic. A section is homophonic chords followed melismatic 2-part canons. The B section is built with single voice entering successively in imitation, first from bottom to top, followed by top to bottom. Again, in the homophonic and canonic entrances each voice plays essential harmonic function, making it absolutely necessary for performers to work to precise pitch and articulation to sustain harmonic integrity, with a clear understanding of their function within the harmony. The A section moves between Tonic and Dominant harmony in a conventional (but not uninteresting!) manner, and the B section is in the relative minor.

**TIMBRE:** Bright, but be careful not to make it a shout. The trick is to make it joyous without over singing. So balancing exuberance with rich choral tone, and being particularly mindful of the vowels sustained over rapidly moving melismas will provide the desired sonic style.


**TEXTURE:** Because we will perform with keyboard rather than string and wind instruments the texture may seem thinner than most recorded versions. Organ is available, but piano may be preferred to keep it clean and precise. Basically homophonic with canonic entrances as previously described. Awareness of levels of texture




**EXPRESSION:** In the absence of instruments, attention must be paid to how the voices and keyboard can plateau the dynamics. Also, syllabic phrasing will bring out the meaning but be careful not to become redundant and losing interest. Knowing one's melodic versus harmonic function, i.e. "importance" will help determine dynamics and phrasing.

### **SKILL OUTCOME:**

- Students will make artistic decisions regarding breath, diction and melismatic phrasing focusing on syllabic stress, rhythmic vitality and vowel tone appropriate to Baroque style.
  -  **1:** Using a variety of 3/8 rhythms have students pulse on 'sh'. Create a variety of combinations from longest value of dotted quarter to 16<sup>th</sup> note combos. Once students are comfortable with this, move to specific 2 measure examples from the piece. Particularly mm. 40 – 56. Noting the 3/8 time signature, make note of where each phrase starts (beat 3 pick-up). Draw student attention to the pick-up beat and see how this shapes phrasing. Have them describe the affect this pick up note has on their performance of these rhythms. Now go back and double underline the beat 3 pickups. Have students suggest specific rhythmic phrases for the choir to perform on neutral "sh". Try a variety of sections with each on his/her own voice part.
  -  **2:** Ask student partners to discuss with each other what they believe to be the prevailing 2 measure patterns in the piece. (e.g. mm.44.3 – 46.2) Have them perform identified patterns for the class. Now point out **syllabic** setting of 'ershallet' in mm. 38.3-39.2 and the **melismatic** setting in mm. 44.3 – 46.2 Recall the term **melisma** as was learned in "Sicut Cervus" pointing out that this is also a prevalent device found in baroque music which we defined as: the singing of a single syllable of text over several notes. Remind them about connecting low breath to pulse. Using a low breath pulse perform these two rhythms and have students discuss the feeling of 'melismas sung with low breath' and being mindful of how this is consistently achieved. With a pencil and a partner use a dotted underline to mark the places in the score where 'low breath melismas' occur.
  -  **3:** Sing through mm. 12 – 26 on solfege syllables until the parts are stable. Have students work in groups of 3 to get the solfege worked out. Identify points in each phrase where rhythmic vitality gets lost and determine how to retain the vitality at these points. Place ! at each of these spots. Share/discuss choices with the choir.




### ❖ **KNOWLEDGE OUTCOME:**

- Students will consider and discuss how philosophy, characteristics and forms of baroque music influence performance.
  -  **1:** "If it ain't baroque..." Ask students to list music styles/genres of music, e.g. Rock, Jazz, Classical, Romantic etc. As they do so see if they can say where the labels for these styles originated, pointing to the origins as you go. Next, have students read section one from "Baroque Music" handout on the 'what and when'. Address the following questions:

- Origins of the term “baroque” and what music of an “oddly shaped pearl” might sound like. Can you think of any examples of musical styles that reflect – or are strongly linked to- the name of that style?
  - Given the dates, what else was going on in Western Europe that strike you? How can knowing this affect our Bach performance?
-  **2:** “I know a guy...” Looking at the Who and Where section of “Baroque Music” have students determine and discuss the origins of baroque by country and composer, and the forms and concepts in the development of the music.
- Narrowing the focus to Italy and Germany, ask students if they recognize any of those particular composers and can they identify specific works? What is meant by “national style” and how did it come about? Do we have an American style? (Jazz, Rock, Blues, Classical)
    - Assessment: With one or two partners, find an audio or video example of one Italian baroque composer and one German baroque composer. Be prepared to compare and contrast what you believe give the pieces their distinctive national style.
-  **3:** “I feel you, man...” Section 3 – Philosophy of Baroque Music – Prior to having students read this section ask the following:
- What is a philosophy of music? Examples? Are these new or old ideas? How do you know? When did they start?
  - After reading section 3 discuss the “power to communicate” idea-its origins, the beliefs and ideas. How is this philosophy put into “practice” (hint, hint).
    - Assessment: Find and underline those examples in “Erschallet” which best support this philosophical idea in practice 2.
  - What is patronage? What in the author’s opinion are the realities of patronage and how did they play out for Bach?
    - Assessment: Write and share at least one example of arts patronage today.
-  **4:** “What’s it all about, Johann?” Section 4 & 5- Characteristics and Forms
- Prior to reading these sections have a discussion around what we mean by “characteristics” and “forms” in music. Use familiar music examples to begin the discussion, such as “what are the characteristics of a rock/jazz/pop song?” Are these the big parts of the song, or small parts, as in the Legos ex. Pieces of the whole.
  - Listen to Pachelbel Canon in D (ouch) and apply discussion of characteristics to this piece specifically focusing on
    - Contrast and drama
    - Basso continuo
  - Have students read the sections 4 and 5 in “Baroque Music” asking them to focus particularly on subtitles as noted above recap/add to the discussion on Pachelblah.
  - Listen to “erschallet” and compare/contrast with Pachelblech. Move on to “form” and read this section. Allow students in small groups to discuss the form they think the Bach is – as well as Pachelbling- and come up with a supporting argument for why it is or is not one of the forms discussed in the article. What makes a cantata a cantata?

- After pointing out that we are only singing the first chorus of a larger work, listen to Erschallet Coro 1 and Tenor Aria #4 to compare and contrast these sections. Then listen to the Bass recit #2 and discuss the function of these sections in the piece (drama and oratory) Can you think of musical dramas using these musical ideas? (Les Mis, etc.) How do these differ from Oratorio? Opera? How are they related?
  - Assessment: Students will compose and perform an “instant cantata” using a familiar subject and a. recit, b. aria, and c. chorus Be creative – it may be sung or spoken, accompanied however you want and as simple or elaborate as you can make it in 15 minutes!

❖ **AFFECTIVE OUTCOME:**

- Students will describe their favorite part of the piece and the compositional devices used to create that musical moment.
  -  **1:** Discuss text painting as a compositional device and ask students to mark/point to specific examples where Bach uses this.
  -  **2:** Listen to a recording of the piece and note the different instrumentation Bach uses from section A to section B and then returning to A. How are they different-be specific. What is the overall affect of this? What emotions do you think Bach is trying to convey/elicit?
  -  **3:** Sing through “Erschallet” and invite students to share musical moments which they feel are most moving to them. Ask if there are any other students who share the same experience at that point and identify what they believe Bach has done to illicit this feeling. How can you communicate this within the ensemble? To the audience?
    - Assessment: Popcorn cards: My favorite moment in the piece is \_\_\_\_\_ and I think Bach creates this by using \_\_\_\_\_.