

Bach Choruses for General Use

Was willst du dich betrüben *(from S. 107)*

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685 - 1750)

Arranged for
SATB chorus and organ
by Gary Harney

Text and Translation

Was willst du dich betrüben,
O meine liebe Seel?
Ergib dich, den zu lieben,
Der heißt Immanuel!
Vertraue ihm allein,
Er wird gut alles machen
Und fördern deine Sachen.
Wie dir's wird selig sein!

Why do you want to distress yourself,
o my dear soul?
Give yourself up to love of him
who is called Immanuel!
Have trust in him alone,
he will make everything good
and promote your affairs.
What blessings there will be for you!

Text by Johann Heermann

Translation by Francis Browne. Used by permission

Presented by *Bach on a Budget*
<http://www.immanuelbachconsort.org>

“Was willst du dich betrüben” (from S. 107)

The Cantata

Composed for the Seventh Sunday after Trinity, *Was willst du dich betrüben?* (Why do you want to distress yourself?) was part of the Leipzig “chorale cantata cycle” of 1724-5, receiving its first performance on 23 July 1724. The text of the work moves from pain and suffering at the beginning to faith in God at the end.

The typical structure of a chorale cantata is to use the chorale text and music for an opening chorus and for a closing chorale. Between these two are normally free text verses which paraphrase or interpret the chorale or Gospel for the day. S. 107 is unusual in that Bach chose to use the text (but not necessarily the music) of the chorale for every movement. Neither scriptural text nor free text is included in the cantata.

Commentators have speculated on why Bach took this approach, many surmising perhaps he had an issue with the librettist. It is worth noting, however, that in the cantata Bach wrote just before this one, *Wer nur den lieben Gott läßt walten* (S. 93), he chose to use the *melody* (but not the text) of the chorale in every movement, just as in S. 107 he chose to use the *text* of the chorale (but not the music) in every movement. Could Bach have been experimenting in these two cantatas to see if he might find a new approach he liked? We will never know, but the use of these two unusual practices in consecutive cantatas is suggestive. (Note: While *Wer nur den lieben Gott läßt walten* was written for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity and first performed on 9 July 1724, Bach and his wife were in Cöthen on 16 July 1724, so his next cantata performance after *Wer nur den lieben Gott läßt walten* was *Was willst du dich betrüben* on 23 July 1724.)

The Chorus

“Was willst du dich betrüben” is the opening chorus of S. 107. Intimate and more guided by the first line of the text (“Why do you want to distress yourself, o my dear soul?”) than the more affirmative lines of the libretto, this b minor movement is both simple and exquisite. The chorale tune is set out in the soprano voice (somewhat ornamented), with the alto, tenor, and bass providing simple support.

Compared to many opening choruses in Bach’s cantatas, “Was willst du dich betrüben” is short and simple, but an appropriate beginning, given the chorale’s text. The work greatly rewards a nuanced and sensitive approach, and is well within the capability of most choirs.

The Accompaniment

This chorus is accompanied by an especially rich collection of woodwinds, consisting of paired flutes and paired oboes d’amore, in addition to strings, continuo, and horn (doubling the chorale melody). More often than not, at least two (if not three) of these families play in unison; however, in several places they function as separate groups. The overall effect is one of mystery, but also of confident support.

For this edition, the top-sounding voice (usually violin I) has been preserved, as has the bass line. Between these two, a combination of general harmonic support and borrowing of the more important lines has been provided. The accompaniment is designed to be played on a single manual, with a suitably gentle registration.

Created for performance by the Immanuel Bach Consort,
and dedicated to Dr. Gerre Hancock (1934-2012)

Was willst du, dich betrüben

(from Cantata #107)

Johann Heermann (1630)

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685 - 1750)

The first system of the musical score consists of five staves. The top four staves are for the vocal parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. Each staff begins with a treble clef (except for Bass, which has a bass clef) and a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The vocal staves contain rests for the first two measures and a fermata in the third measure. A repeat sign is placed at the end of the third measure. The fifth staff is for the keyboard, divided into 'Manuals' and 'Pedals'. The 'Manuals' part has a treble clef and contains a melodic line with various ornaments and a fermata in the third measure. The 'Pedals' part has a bass clef and contains a bass line with chords and a fermata in the third measure.

The second system of the musical score consists of five staves. The top four staves are for the vocal parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The vocal staves contain rests for the first two measures and a fermata in the third measure. A repeat sign is placed at the end of the third measure. The fifth staff is for the keyboard, divided into 'Manuals' and 'Pedals'. The 'Manuals' part has a treble clef and contains a melodic line with various ornaments and a fermata in the third measure. The 'Pedals' part has a bass clef and contains a bass line with chords and a fermata in the third measure.

7

Musical score for measures 7-9. The score consists of four staves: three treble clefs and one bass clef. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). Measures 7-9 show a complex piano accompaniment with various rhythmic patterns and articulations. The vocal line is silent in these measures.

10

Musical score for measures 10-12. The score consists of four staves: three treble clefs and one bass clef. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). Measure 10 contains the vocal line with the word "Was". The piano accompaniment continues with complex rhythmic patterns. A trill (*tr*) is marked in the bass line of measure 12.

13

willst du dich be - trü - ben, o mei - ne lie - be Seel;
Was willst du dich be - trü - ben, o mei - ne lie - be Seel;
Was willst du dich be - trü - ben, o mei - ne lie - be Seel;
Was willst du dich be - trü - ben, o mei - ne lie - be Seel;

17

20

er gieb dich den zu lie - ben, der

er gieb dich den zu lie - ben, der

er gieb dich den zu lie - ben, der

er gieb dich den zu lie - ben, der

er gieb dich den zu lie - ben, der

24

heißt Im - ma - nu - el;

heißt Im - ma - nu - el, Im - ma - nu - el, Im - ma - nu - el;

heißt Im - ma - nu - el, Im - ma - nu - el, Im - ma - nu - el;

heißt Im - ma - nu - el, Im - ma - nu - el;

heißt Im - ma - nu - el, Im - ma - nu - el;

27

ver - trau - e ihm al - lein,
ver - trau - e ihm al - lein,
ver - trau - e ihm al - lein,
ver - trau - e ihm al - lein,
ver - trau - e ihm al - lein,

31

er wird gut
er wird gut
er wird gut

35

tr

Al - les ma - chen und för - dern_ dei - ne Sa -

Al - les ma - chen und för - dern dei - ne Sa -

er wird gut Al - les ma - chen dei - ne Sa -

Al - - les ma - chen und för - dern dei - ne Sa - chen, dei - ne Sa -

38

Dal Segno

chen, wie dir's wird se - - lig sein.

chen, wie dir's wird se - lig sein.

chen, wie dir's wird se - - lig sein.

chen, wie dir's wird se - - - - lig seing.