

Bach Choruses for General Use

Wohl mir, daß ich Jesum habe *(from S. 147)*

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685 - 1750)

Arranged for
SATB chorus and organ
by Gary Harney

Text and Translation

Wohl mir, daß ich Jesum habe,
O wie feste halt ich ihn,
Daß er mir mein Herze labe,
Wenn ich krank und traurig bin.
Jesum hab ich, der mich liebet
Und sich mir zu eigen givet;
Ach drum laß ich Jesum nicht,
Wenn mir gleich mein Herze bricht.

What joy for me that I have Jesus,
oh how firmly I hold on to him
so that he may make my heart rejoice,
when I am sick and mournful.
I have Jesus, who loves me
and gives himself to me for his own.
Ah, therefore I shall not let go of Jesus,
even if my heart should break.

Text by Martin Jahn (1661)

Translation by Francis Browne. Used by permission.

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

“Wohl mir, daß ich Jesum habe” (from S. 147)

The Cantata

Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben (Heart and Mouth and Deed and Life) existed in two forms during Bach's life. It began in Weimar as a cantata for the Fourth Sunday of Advent, based on a libretto by Salomo Franck. In this form it contained six movements. This use did not fit Leipzig liturgical practice, however, since in Leipzig Advent was considered penitential, with no concerted music heard on the Second through Fourth Sundays of the season.

Desiring to revive the work, Bach re-purposed the cantata as a piece for the Feast of the Visitation (first sung in Leipzig on 2 July 1723), adding two recitatives and two appearances of the chorale *Werde munter, mein Gemüte*. The additional text links the work more closely to the *Magnificat*, reinforcing its new use. It is in this form that we know the cantata today, as there are no extant scores for the Weimar version.

The Leipzig version is in two parts (movements 1-6, and movements 7-10), in which each half ends with the chorale, musically identical in both sections but to different verses of the text. The cantata is scored for trumpet, two oboes, bassoon, strings and continuo and is among the longer of Bach's cantatas, but richly deserves the place it occupies in the genre.

The Chorus

It is hard to know what to say about this chorus that hasn't already been said. In an English version (*Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*), this movement is easily Bach's best-known choral work today, whether in the original scoring, or for piano or organ, or in any number of other arrangements.

In the original, the vocal lines are a simple and straight-forward harmonized presentation of the chorale. The principal interest comes from the obbligato line, played by violins and oboes in unison. What might not be immediately obvious is that the flowing instrumental line takes as its root the chorale tune, thus further unifying the movement. The version here is as it appears at the middle of the cantata.

The Accompaniment

One of the many attractions of this chorus is that little needs to be altered to make it suitable for performance by chorus and organ. The obbligato line is retained as in the original and can be played either on the same manual as the left hand, or on a separate manual with a different registration. With the exception of one octave transposition, the bass line in the pedal is retained as well. Between the outer voices, harmonic support is provided in the left hand. Any number of registration possibilities present themselves, depending on the instrument at hand.

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

Wohl mir, daß ich Jesum habe (from Cantata #147)

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685 - 1750)

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Manuals

Pedals

6

Wohl mir, daß ich
Daß er mir mein

Wohl mir, daß ich
Daß er mir mein

Wohl mir, daß ich
Daß er mir mein

11

Je - sum ha - be, O wie fe - ste und
Her - ze la - be, Wenn ich krank und

Je - sum ha - be, O wie fe - ste und
Her - ze la - be, Wenn ich krank und

Je - sum ha - be, O wie fe - ste und
Her - ze la - be, Wenn ich krank und

Je - sum ha - be, O wie fe - ste und
Her - ze la - be, Wenn ich krank und

16

halt ich ihn, trau - rig bin.
halt ich ihn, trau - rig bin.

halt ich ihn, trau - rig bin.
halt ich ihn, trau - rig bin.

halt ich ihn, trau - rig bin.
halt ich ihn, trau - rig bin.

21

Je - sum

Je - sum

Je - sum

Je - sum

Je - sum

26

hab ich, der mich lie - bet

hab ich, der mich lie - bet

hab ich, der mich lie - bet

hab ich, der mich lie - bet

31

Und sich mir zu ei - gen gi - bet;

Und sich mir zu ei - gen gi - bet;

Und sich mir zu ei - gen gi - bet;

Und sich mir zu ei - gen gi - bet;

36

Ach drum laß ich Je - sum nicht, *tr*

Ach drum laß ich Je - sum nicht,

Ach drum laß ich Je - sum nicht,

Ach drum laß ich Je - sum nicht,

41

Wenn mir gleich mein Her - ze bricht.

Wenn mir gleich mein Her - ze bricht.

Wenn mir gleich mein Her - ze bricht.

Wenn mir gleich mein Her - ze bricht.

46

46

51

51