



# 2010 Bach

THE COMPLETE CHORAL CANTATAS



## CANTATAS IV 21 August 2005

BWV 28: Gottlob! nun geht das Jahr zu Ende  
BWV 122: Das neugeborne Kindelein  
BWV 121: Christum wir sollen loben schon

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Now praise, my soul, the Master,  
All I possess, his name give praise!  
His kindness he will increase,  
Forget it not, O heart of mine!  
He hath thy sin forgiven  
And heals thy weakness all,  
He saves thy life so wretched,  
Takes thee in his embrace;  
With comfort rich anoints thee,  
Made young with eagle strength.  
The King is just and guardeth  
Those suffring in his realm.

Be glory, praise and honour  
To all the Holy Trinity.  
In faith will God uphold us,  
For as He promised, must it be.  
That we may trust Him wholly  
To His control resign  
Rely upon Him solely,  
with heart and will and mind  
Hold fast to Him forever,  
so sing we all today:  
Amen! For this is our portion,  
that naught can take away.

SYDNEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL



## BWV 28: Gottlob! nun geht das Jahr zu Ende

### 1. Aria (Soprano)

Gottlob! nun geht das Jahr zu Ende,  
Das neue rücket schon heran.  
Gedenke, meine Seele, dran,  
Wieviel dir deines Gottes Hände  
Im alten Jahre Guts getan!  
Stimm ihm ein frohes Danklied an;  
So wird er ferner dein gedenken  
Und mehr zum neuen Jahre schenken

Praise God! For now the year is ending,  
The new year draweth quickly nigh.  
Consider, O my spirit, this,  
How much thee these thy God's own hands have  
Within the old year richly blest!  
Raise him a happy song of thanks;  
And he will further thee remember  
And more in this new year reward thee.

### 2. Chorus

Nun lob, mein Seel, den Herren,  
Was in mir ist, den Namen sein!  
Sein Wohlthat tut er mehren,  
Vergiß es nicht, o Herze mein!  
Hat dir dein Sünd vergeben  
Und heilt dein Schwachheit groß,  
Errett' dein armes Leben,  
Nimmt dich in seinen Schoß.  
Mit reichem Trost beschütet,  
Verjüngt, dem Adler gleich.  
Der Kön'g schafft Recht, behütet,  
Die leid'n in seinem Reich.

Now praise, my soul, the Master,  
All I possess, his name give praise!  
His kindness he will increase,  
Forget it not, O heart of mine!  
He hath thy sin forgiven  
And heals thy weakness all,  
He saves thy life so wretched,  
Takes thee in his embrace;  
With comfort rich anoints thee,  
Made young with eagle strength.  
The King is just and guardeth  
Those suff'ring within his realm

### 3. Recitative (Bass)

So spricht der Herr: Es soll mir eine Lust sein, daß ich ihnen Gutes tun soll, und ich will sie in diesem Lande pflanzen treulich, von ganzem Herzen und von ganzer Seele.

Thus saith the Lord: It shall to me bring pleasure that I unto them give favor, and them will I within this land in faith establish, with all my heart now and with all my spirit.

### 4. Recitative (Tenor)

Gott ist ein Quell, wo lauter Güte fließt;  
Gott ist ein Licht, wo lauter Gnade scheint;  
Gott ist ein Schatz, der lauter Segen heißt;  
Gott ist ein Herr, der's treu und herzlich meinet.  
Wer ihn im Glauben liebt, in Liebe kindlich ehrt,  
Sein Wort von Herzen hört  
Und sich von bösen Wegen kehrt,  
Dem gibt er sich mit allen Gaben.  
Wer Gott hat, der muß alles haben.

God is a spring, where nought but kindness wells;  
God is a light, where nought but mercy shineth;  
God is a store, which nought but blessing gives;  
God is a Lord, with loyal, heartfelt purpose.  
All him in faith who love, in childlike love adore,  
His word sincerely heed  
And from all wicked pathways turn,  
He gives himself with ev'ry blessing.  
Who God hath must have ev'ry treasure.

### 5. Duet (Alto-Tenor)

Gott hat uns im heurigen Jahre gesegnet,  
Daß Wohltun und Wohlsein einander begegnet.  
Wir loben ihn herzlich und bitten darneben,  
Er woll auch ein glückliches neues Jahr geben.  
Wir hoffens von seiner beharrlichen Güte  
Und preisens im voraus mit dankbarm Gemüte.

God hath us in this very year brought such blessing,  
That good deed and good health each other encounter.  
We praise him sincerely and ask in addition  
That he might a happy new year also give us.  
Our hope springs from his own unswerving compassion,  
We praise him already with most grateful spirit.

### 6. Chorale

All solch dein Güt wir preisen,  
Vater ins Himmels Thron,  
Die du uns tust beweisen  
Durch Christum, deinen Sohn,  
Und bitten ferner dich:  
Gib uns ein friedsam Jahre,  
Für allem Leid bewahre und nähr uns mildiglich.

We praise all thy compassion  
Father on heaven's throne,  
Which thou to us hast proven  
Through Christ who is thy Son,  
And further ask of thee:  
Give us a peaceful year now,  
From ev'ry woe defend us and us with kindness feed.

## BWV 122: Das neugeborne Kindelein

### 1. Chorus

Das neugeborne Kindelein,  
Das herzeliebe Jesulein  
Bringt abermal ein neues Jahr  
Der auserwählten Christenschar.

The newly born, the tiny child,  
The darling, little Jesus-child,  
Doth once again the year renew  
For this the chosen Christian throng.

### 2. Aria (Bass)

O Menschen, die ihr täglich sündigt,  
Ihr sollt der Engel Freude sein.  
Ihr jubilierendes Geschrei,  
Daß Gott mit euch versöhnet sei,  
Hat euch den süßen Trost verkündigt.

O mortals, ye each day transgressing,  
Ye ought the angels' gladness share.  
Your jubilation's joyful shout  
That God to you is reconciled  
Hath you the sweetest comfort published.

### 3. Recitative (Soprano)

Die Engel, welche sich zuvor  
Vor euch als vor Verfluchten scheuen,  
Erfüllen nun die Luft im höhern Chor,  
Um über euer Heil sich zu erfreuen.  
Gott, so euch aus dem Paradies  
Aus englischer Gemeinschaft stieß,  
Läßt euch nun wiederum auf Erden  
Durch seine Gegenwart vollkommen selig werden:  
So danket nun mit vollem Munde  
Vor die gewünschte Zeit im neuen Bunde.

The angels all who did before  
Shun you, as though the cursed avoiding,  
Make swell the air now in that higher choir,  
That they at your salvation tell their gladness.  
God, who did you from paradise  
And angels' sweet communion thrust,  
Lets you again, on earth now dwelling,  
Through his own presence perfect blessedness recover:  
So thank him now with hearty voices  
For this awaited day in his new order.

### 4. Chorale (Alto) and Duet (Soprano-Tenor)

Ist Gott versöhnt und unser Freund,  
O wohl uns, die wir an ihn glauben,  
Was kann uns tun der arge Feind?  
Sein Grimm kann unsern Trost nicht rauben;  
Trotz Teufel und der Höllen Pfort,  
Ihr Wüten wir sei wenig nützen,  
Das Jesulein ist unser Hort.  
Gott ist mit uns und will uns schützen.

If God, appeased, is now our friend,  
How blest are we in him believing,  
How can us harm the cruel foe?  
His rage our comfort cannot ravish;  
'Spite devil and the gate of hell,  
Their fury will them little profit,  
The Jesus-child is now our shield.  
God is with us and shall protect us.

### 5. Recitative (Bass)

Dies ist ein Tag, den selbst der Herr gemacht,  
Der seinen Sohn in diese Welt gebracht.  
O selge Zeit, die nun erfüllt!  
O gläubigs Warten, das nunmehr gestillt!  
O Glaube, der sein Ende sieht!  
O Liebe, die Gott zu sich zieht!  
O Freudigkeit, so durch die Trübsal dringt  
Und Gott der Lippen Opfer bringt!

This is a day himself the Lord hath made,  
Which hath his Son into this world now brought.  
O blessed day, here now fulfilled!  
O faithful waiting, which henceforth is past!  
O faith here, which its goal doth see!  
O love here, which doth draw God nigh!  
O joyfulness, which doth through sadness press  
And God our lips' glad offering bring.

### 6. Chorale

Es bringt das rechte Jubeljahr,  
Was trauern wir denn immerdar?  
Frisch auf! itzt ist es Singenszeit,  
Das Jesulein wendt alles Leid.

It brings the year of Jubilee,  
Why do we mourn then anymore?  
Quick, rise! Now is the time for song,  
The Jesus-child fends off all woe.

## BWV 121: Christum wir sollen loben schon

### 1. Chorus

Christum wir sollen loben schon,  
Der reinen Magd Marien Sohn,  
So weit die liebe Sonne leucht  
Und an aller Welt Ende reicht.

To Christ we should sing praises now,  
The spotless maid Maria's Son,  
As far as our dear sun gives light  
And out to all the world doth reach.

### 2. Aria (Tenor)

O du von Gott erhöhte Kreatur,  
Begreife nicht, nein, nein, bewundre nur:  
Gott will durch Fleisch des Fleisches Heil erwerben.  
Wie groß ist doch der Schöpfer aller Dinge,  
Und wie bist du verachtet und geringe,  
Um dich dadurch zu retten vom Verderben.

O thou whom God created and extolled,  
With reason not, no, no, with wonder see:  
God would through flesh the flesh's health accomplish.  
Though great is he, the maker of all nature,  
And though thou art despiséd and unworthy,  
That thou by this be rescued from corruption.

### 3. Recitative (Alto)

Der Gnade unermeßlich's Wesen  
Hat sich den Himmel nicht  
Zur Wohnstatt auserlesen,  
Weil keine Grenze sie umschließt.  
Was Wunder, daß allhie Verstand und Witz gebricht,  
Ein solch Geheimnis zu ergründen,  
Wenn sie sich in ein keusches Herze gießt.  
Gott wählet sich den reinen Lieb zu einem Tempel seiner  
Ehren,  
Um zu den Menschen sich mit wundervoller Art zu  
kehren.

The nature of unbounded favor  
Hath chosen heaven not  
To be its only dwelling,  
For it no limits can contain.  
Why wonder that in this all sense and reason fail  
So great a mystery to fathom,  
When grace into a virgin heart is poured?  
God chooseth him this body pure to make a temple for his  
honor,  
That to mankind he might in awe-inspiring form be  
present.

### 4. Aria (Bass)

Johannis freudenvolles Springen  
Erkannte dich, mein Jesu, schon.  
Nun da ein Glaubensarm dich hält,  
So will mein Herze von der Welt  
Zu deiner Krippe brünstig dringen.

Then John's own glad and joyful leaping  
Acknowledged thee, my Jesus, first.  
Now while an arm of faith holds thee,  
So would my heart escape this world  
And to thy cradle press with fervor.

### 5. Recitative (Soprano)

Doch wie erblickt es dich in deiner Krippe?  
Es seufzt mein Herz: mit bebender und fast geschloßner  
Lippe  
Bringt es sein dankend Opfer dar.  
Gott, der so unermeßlich war,  
Nimmt Knechtsgestalt und Armut an.  
Und weil er dieses uns zugutgetan,  
So lasset mit der Engel Chören  
Ein jauchzend Lob- und Danklied hören!

But how doth it regard thee in thy cradle?  
My heart doth sigh: with trembling and almost unopened  
lips now  
It brings its grateful sacrifice.  
God, who all limits did transcend,  
Bore servile form and poverty.  
And since he did this for our benefit,  
Thus raise now with the choirs of angels  
Triumphant sounds of thankful singing!

### 6. Chorale

Lob, Ehr und Danke sei dir gesagt,  
Christ, geborn von der reinen Magd,  
Samt Vater und den Heiligen Geist  
Von nun an bis in Ewigkeit.

Laud, praise, and thanks to thee be giv'n,  
Christ, now born of the spotless maid,  
With Father and the Holy Ghost  
From now until eternity.

## PROGRAMME NOTES

### **BWV 28: Gottlob! nun geht das Jahr zu Ende**

This cantata dates from Bach's third cantata cycle in Leipzig, receiving its premiere performance on 30 December 1725. As the date would suggest, it is a cantata that offers thanks for the old year and prayers for the coming one. The libretto was written by Erdmann Neumeister in 1714. Neumeister created the form of the cantata so favoured by Bach, but this is actually one of only two examples of a Neumeister libretto dating from his Leipzig years.

In a departure from the bulk of Bach's Leipzig cantatas, this opens with a soprano solo instead of a choral movement. The orchestral ritornello is quite Italian, with elements of a *concerto grosso* interplay between the winds and strings. Bach immediately juxtaposes this "modern" style with a look back to the *stile antico*, with a choral movement reflecting the tradition of Palestrina, whose music Bach regularly used in the Leipzig services. The use of the ancient polyphonic style, coupled with a text based on Psalm 103, is an allegory for the old year as the new one approaches. As a *cantus firmus*, Bach uses the 1530 chorale tune *Nun lob, mein Seel, den Herren*.

Reflecting the text's depiction of a loving, gift-giving God, the middle three movements are quite intimate. Just as the chorale-prelude represented the old year with a psalm-derived text, the bass arioso is a prophecy of God's blessing from Jeremiah. As so often is the case, Bach uses the bass as the voice of the prophet. The tenor then sings a beautiful accompanied recitative extolling the characteristics of God as provider.

The alto-tenor duet that follows is reminiscent of the soprano-tenor duet that we heard in BWV 110, similarly scored for continuo only, and also in three non-repeating sections. Like that triplet-based duet, this one also praises God, thanking him for the blessings of the year. The cantata ends with the sixth verse of the Paul Eber chorale, "Helft mir Gotts Güte preisen". The first half is a song of praise, but the mood shifts in the third phrase, with the choir asking for a peaceful year marked by God's kindness.



### **BWV 122: Das neugeborne Kindelein**

Like BWV 28, this cantata was written for the Sunday after Christmas. Its text uses the Christ-child as a mechanism for renewal on two levels: he ushers in the new year; and his birth brings reconciliation and renewal to the believer's relationship with God. All of the movements are either directly from the chorale "Das neugeborne Kindelein" or are free interpretations of verses. Typical of Lutheran incarnation theology, the text points towards the celestial warfare surrounding Christ's birth. In this cantata, the angels (representing by recorders, an ancient musical tradition) are able to rejoice again, having had to shun sinful man until Christ's appearance on earth.

The opening chorus certainly reflects this rejoicing: though it is a bit muted in G minor, the dance-like triple metre provides a gently rocking *Affekt* for the chorale-prelude setting for the first verse of the chorale. The soprano sings the melody throughout as a *cantus firmus* above the three other parts, while the instruments play the ritornello-based accompaniment in concerto form.

The extreme chromaticism and tightly conceived melodic material of the bass aria represent sinful man's condition before salvation; this is transformed into Eb major, Bach's key of consolation, when the angels rejoice over the reconciliation. This is explained further in the soprano recitative, where we hear of a paradise lost. Over the complex recitative, Bach sets the chorale in block harmonies played by the three recorders, one of the loveliest effects in any of his recitatives.

Many elements converge in the deceptively simple trio that follows. The alto, doubled by the strings, sings a verse of the chorale, asserting that we have nothing to fear with God on our side. The soprano and tenor echo this sentiment, summoning up images of Satan and hell which are reflected in the vocal melismas that swirl around the sturdy chorale tune. The whole structure is set as a *siciliano*, the pastoral dance form that Bach uses to tell the Nativity story.

Following the accompanied bass recitative, which offers thanks for the fulfilled promise, the chorale appears in yet another dance-like movement. Alluding again to the coming year, this verse has a distinctly joyful feel, with many hemiolas and the text's exhortation to "rise up" and sing. We are reminded yet again that in the Baroque period, minor keys did not yet have the association with sadness that so many modern ears have been trained to hear.

## BWV 121: Christum wir sollen loben schon

This is the only cantata on today's programme that makes no reference to the new year; instead, this was written for 26 December 1724. It is a deeply introspective work, pondering the mystery of the incarnation. It is not like the immediately accessible cantatas from the *Christmas Oratorio*; instead, its basis is theological rather than narrative. Bach uses such elements as the choice of keys, choice of compositional forms and complex musical devices in much the same way that a great preacher would have used rhetorical devices to explicate his texts and to draw broad doctrinal analogies. That such an approach was conscious is thoroughly documented: Bach was intensely proud of his knowledge of theology, and left an extensive theological library when he died.

The opening chorus uses the same Palestrina-like *stile antico* that we saw in BWV 28. The archaic reference is doubled here: in addition to using the Renaissance-style imitative counterpoint, Bach has also chosen an ancient hymn, "Christen wir sollen loben schon" as the basis for the chorale-prelude. This is one of a handful of chorales that Martin Luther took over from the original Latin repertoire, in this case a reworking of "A solis ortus cardine." Its ancient flavour comes from its use of two modes; it begins in the dorian, and ends in the phrygian. This makes the movement sound rather ascetic, while at the same time giving Bach many opportunities for harmonic colour. This may be a song of praise, but its praise to an ancient, severe God, an Old Testament sovereign.

So many of Bach's tenor arias seem to grapple with deep theological issues; in this aria, the tenor states that we can only understand the mystery of incarnation with wonder, not with reason. The alto expands on this theme in the following recitative, asking why God, whose identity knows no bounds, would choose to appear on earth in the humbles of forms.

If the use of modes and minor keys in the first three movements refers to the unfathomable, then the shift to the major key for the bass aria signals man's faithful acceptance of the miracle itself. This is a charming aria, full of text-painting. The opening leap and upward scale is a musical depiction of John the Baptist leaping in the womb; the repeated bass notes and rocking string syncopations above it represent the cradle to which the believer hastens.

The recitative and final chorale show the believer's joy, and offer the congregation's thanksgiving. Although the final chorale—a harmonised version of the tune heard in the first movement—is still modal in design, Bach's harmonies transform it from the ascetic to the triumphant.



## Musica Antiqua et Nova

Since these cantatas all deal with the intersection between the old and new, we thought that it would be most appropriate to use early instruments for this afternoon's concert. The Baroque violins, viola and cello are all using gut strings, and the entire ensemble is tuned to A415 using Valotti temperament.

We must confess that we aren't entirely authentic, however. For reasons of balance, we have opted not to use the cornetto and trombones that would have doubled the voice parts in some choruses, and we have made further use of our guest recorder players by having them play the oboe parts in BWV 28 and 122. I can only hope that Bach himself would understand such expediency, knowing first-hand the difficulties of balancing his artistic vision with the realities of funding! In any case, we have preserved Bach's original intentions: the instrumental colours provided by the recorders and trombones were meant to have sounded archaic even in 1724—an equivalent aesthetic to using Baroque instruments today.

C.P. Shepard



*We wish to thank Andrew Koll for his preparation of the parts for cantatas BWV 121 and 122. Based in Canberra, Andrew is the Director of the Real Bach Society. All of us who are involved in performing Bach's music are indebted to his efforts in supporting and promoting our concerts.*



### V. 25 SEPTEMBER, 4pm

*Ich freue mich in dir, BWV 133*

*Sehet, welch eine Leibe, BWV 64*

*Darzu ist erschienen der Sohn Gottes, BWV 40*

### VI. 27 NOVEMBER, 4pm

*Jesu, nun sei gepreiset, BWV 41*

*Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied!, BWV 190*

*Gott, wie dein Name, so ist auch dein Ruhm, BWV 171*

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