

J. S. BACH

Motets

Jesu, meine Freude • Komm, Jesu, Komm

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied • Fürchte dich nicht

Der Geist hilft unsrer Schwachheit auf • Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden

The Scholars Baroque Ensemble



Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750)

Motets BWV 225 to 230

Singet dem Herrn, BWV 225 (Sing unto the Lord)

Der Geist hilft, BWV 226 (The Spirit helpeth)

Jesu, meine Freude, BWV 227 (Jesu, joy of man's desiring)

Fürchte dich nicht, BWV 228 (Fear thou not)

Komm, Jesu, komm, BWV 229 (Come, Jesu, come)

Lobet den Herrn, BWV 230 (Praise the Lord)

The career of Johann Sebastian Bach, the most illustrious of a prolific musical family, falls neatly into three unequal parts. Born in 1685 in Eisenach, from the age of ten Bach lived and studied music with his elder brother in Ohrdruf, after the death of both his parents. After a series of appointments as organist and briefly as a court musician, he became, in 1708, court organist and chamber musician to Duke Wilhelm Ernst of Weimar, the elder of the two brothers who jointly ruled the duchy. In 1714 he was promoted to the position of Konzertmeister to the Duke, but in 1717, after a brief period of imprisonment for his temerity in seeking to leave the Duke's service, he abandoned Weimar to become Court Kapellmeister to Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen, a position he held until 1723. From then until his death in 1750 he lived in Leipzig, where he was Thomaskantor, teaching at the choir school and with responsibility for the music of the five principal city churches, in 1729 assuming direction of the university Collegium musicum, founded by Telemann in 1702.

At Weimar Bach had been principally employed as an organist, and his compositions of the period include a considerable amount written for the instrument on which he was recognised as a virtuoso performer. At Cöthen, where Pietist traditions dominated the court, he had no church duties, and was responsible rather for court music. The period brought the composition of a number of instrumental works. The final 27 years of Bach's life brought a variety of preoccupations, and while his official employment necessitated the provision of church music, he was able, among other things, to provide music for the university Collegium musicum and to write or re-arrange a number of important works for the keyboard.

On 23rd August 1730 Bach submitted a memorandum to the Leipzig City Council in which he makes clear what is needed for the adequate performance of the church music for which he is responsible. He suggests that there should be four solo singers, with a

possible four more, who could also help in chorus, as necessary, with a further eight singers as *ripienists*, rank-and-file. He distinguishes between singers who can sing the cantatas that formed a principal musical element in the Lutheran service, motet singers, who needed less skill, and those who could sing a chorale, for which they did not need a great deal of musical knowledge. While it is true that the motets often sung required no very great skill, Bach's own motets offer much more of a challenge, to be undertaken on the special occasions for which they were apparently written by *Concertisten*, soloists.

The dating of all six motets cannot be definite. The first, *Singet dem Herrn*, BWV225, (Sing unto the Lord a new song), can be placed in 1726 or 1727, and may have been intended, it has been suggested, for the birthday of Friedrich August, King of Poland and Elector of Saxony. *Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf*, BWV226, (The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities), was certainly written for the funeral of Johann Heinrich Ernesti, Rektor of the Thomasschule for 45 years, on 24th October 1729. It has been suggested that *Fürchte dich nicht*, BWV228, (Fear thou not), and *Komm, Jesu, komm*, BWV229, (Come, Jesu, come), were intended for memorial services, the first perhaps for Frau Stadthauptmann Winkler on 4th February 1726 and the second for Maria Elisabeth Schelle on 26th March 1730. Best known of all is *Jesu, meine Freude*, BWV227, (Jesu, joy of man's desiring), possibly written for a memorial service for Johanna Maria Kees on 18th July 1723. The authenticity of the sixth motet, *Lobet den Herrn alle Heiden*, BWV230, (Praise the Lord all ye nations), has been questioned.

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied is written for double choir, eight voices. It opens with the first choir offering a decorative figure over a sustained bass note, while the second group offers an emphatic treatment of the opening word, a figure that soon appears in the first choir, after which the two groups are used antiphonally or together, in the latter case often with a well defined imperative on the opening word. At the words *mit Pauken und Harfen sollen sie ihm spielen* (let them sing praises to him with timbrel and harp) the first section ends, followed by a chorale in the second choir and what is described as an aria in the first, the two interwoven, with words taken from the 1530 verse of Johann Gramann. The words of the Psalm resume in the following section, leading to a final four-part fugue in which the two groups join together.

Some sources provide *Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf* with a string accompaniment for the first choir and a woodwind doubling for the second. The two groups start with a suggestion of canonic imitation, the second group imitating the first, a process then reversed. The triple rhythm of the first section changes to quadruple at the words

sondern der Geist selbst vertritt uns (but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us), moving forward into an *Alla breve* four-voice fugue at the words *Der aber die Herzen forschet* (And he that searcheth the hearts). There is a final chorale, *Du heilige Brunnst* (Thou holy warmth), to words by Martin Luther.

Jesu, meine Freude is for five voices and opens with a chorale in E minor, followed by words taken from St Paul's Epistle to the Romans, *Es ist nichts Verdammliches an denen* (There is therefore now no condemnation for them), with a particular emphasis on the words *nichts*, declaring confidence in salvation of the deceased. The chorale resumes, *Unter deinem Schirmen* (Under your protection). The upper three voices then continue the words of St Paul, *Denn das Gesetz des geistes* (For the law of the Spirit of life), before resumption of the chorale, now in more dramatic form, with marked dynamic contrasts. The biblical text is taken up again, in a G major fugal section, ending in slower homophonic style. The fourth verse of the chorale, again in E minor, gives an opportunity for a dramatic banishing of earthly treasures, as the word *Weg* (Away) is repeated. Now the three lower voices return to the text of St Paul, *So aber Christus in euch ist* (And if Christ be in you) in C major, with the four upper voices then singing an A minor chorale variation on the words *Gute Nacht, o Wesen* (Good night, O being). The five voices return to the words of the Epistle, *So nun der Geist* (But if the Spirit) and to the original key of E minor. The motet ends with the sixth verse of Johann Franck's chorale, now in its initial musical form, as it had first appeared.

Fürchte dich nicht finds its biblical text in the Book of Isaiah. The motet is scored for double choir, with the basses initially together, while the upper parts answer each other antiphonally. The possible freedom in contemporary performance practice is shown in mention of a Berlin performance of the work in which there was not only a continuo part but also single string doubling of all vocal parts. The antiphonal first section, in A major, is followed by the joining of the two choirs at the words *denn ich habe dich erlöset* (for I have redeemed thee), over which the chorale of Paul Gerhardt, *Herr, mein Hirt, Brunn aller Freuden* (Lord, my shepherd, source of all joys) is heard. The motet ends with a return to the words of the prophet, *Fürchte dich nicht, du bist mein* (Fear thou not, thou art mine), a conflation of two texts.

Komm, Jesu, komm is again scored for two choirs. Opening in G minor, it makes strong use of the opening imperative, a prolonged bass pedal-point leading to a fugal section at the words *Komm, komm, ich will mich dir ergeben* (Come, come, I will give myself to thee). The motet ends with the final *Aria*, a hymn by Paul Thymich, *Drum schließ ich mich in deine Hände* (Then am I held in thy hands), with the two groups of voices now together in four parts.

Lobet den Herrn is for four-part choir and has a given instrumental bass part, suggesting how this and other motets might be performed. In C major, it opens with a fugal section, with voices entering in descending order. A second subject is introduced for the words *und preiset ihn, alle Völker* (praise him all ye people), again imitated by voices entering in descending order. A more homophonic texture is used at the words *Denn seine Gnade und Wahrheit waltet über uns* (for his mercy and truth is great towards us), giving way to a more contrapuntal treatment. The *Alleluja* moves into triple metre with a new subject, imitated in successive entries as before, and this brings the work to a triumphant conclusion.

Keith Anderson

About this recording

Whilst there is some evidence that larger forces were sometimes employed, it is not known what Bach's ideal was when he wrote these six *Motets*. We do know, however, that as general rule only keyboard and string bass were used for accompaniment and this fits in very well with The Scholars Baroque Ensemble's smaller-scale, chamber music approach with no director.

Only one "Generalis Bass" part is extant (that for *Lobert de Herrn*) and this offers little help in deciding what to do with the continuo in the *Motets* for double choir. The Scholars Baroque Ensemble follow the idea that it must have been Bach's intention, even in the double choir motets, to have a single continuous string bass part always following the lower bass line and never ascending above the tenor line. This means that for this recording, as in concert performances, the single continuo section is centrally placed with the singers close to the instruments on either side. The result is a relatively intimate, homogeneous sound with no exaggerated stereo separation.

David van Asch

8.553823

1 Singel dem Herrn

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied,
Die Gemeine der Heiligen sollen ihn loben.
Israel freue sich des, der ihn gemacht hat.
Die Kinder Zion sei'n fröhlich über ihrem Könige.
Sie sollen loben seinen Namen im Reichen;
mit Pauken und mit Harfen sollen sie ihn spielen.
(Psalm 149, 1-3)

1. Chor (Aria)

Gott, nimm dich ferner unser an!
Denn ohne dich ist nichts getan
mit allen unsern Sachen.
Drum sei du unser Schirm und Licht,
und trügi uns unsre Hoffnung nicht,
so wirst du's ferner machen.
Wohl dem, der sich nur steif und fest
auf dich und deine Huld verlässt.

2. Chor (Choral)

Wie sich ein Vater erbarmet
über seine jungen Kinderlein,
so tut der Herr uns Armen,
so wir ihn kindlich fürchten rein.
Er kennt das arm Gemächie,
Gott weiß, wir sind nur Staub,
gleichwie das Gras vom Rechen,
ein Blum und fallend Laub!
Der Wind nur drüber wehet,
so ist es nicht mehr da,
also der Mensch vergehet,
sein End das ist ihm nah.
(Johann Gramann, 1530)

Lobet den Herrn in seinen Taten,
lobet ihn in seiner großen Herrlichkeit.
Alles, was Odem hat, lobe den Herrn.
Halleluja!
(Psalm 150: 2,6)

2 Der Geist hilft unsrer Schwachheit auf

Der Geist hilft unsrer Schwachheit auf,
denn wir wissen nicht, was wir beten sollen,
wie sich's gebühret; sondern der Geist selbst vertritt
uns aufs beste mit unaussprechlichen Seufzen.
Dear aber die Herzen forschet, der weiss,
was des Geistes Sinn sei,

Sing unto the Lord

Sing unto the Lord a new song,
and his praise in the congregation of saints.
Let Israel rejoice in him that made him:
let the children of Zion be joyful in their king.
Let them praise his name in the dance:
let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.

Chorus 1 (Aria)

God, keep us closer to thee!
For without thee nothing is accomplished
in all our affairs.
Be to us our shield and light,
and do not betray our hope,
so wilt thou do more for us.
Well be he who only steadfastly
trusts in thee and thy grace.

Chorus 2 (Chorale)

As a father shows mercy
to his little child,
so doth the Lord hold us in his arms,
so we like children fear him.
He knows the poor creature,
God knows we are only dust,
just as the grass from the rake,
a flower and falling leaf!
The wind only blows over it
and it is no more,
so man passes away,
his end is upon him.

Praise him for his mighty acts,
praise him according to his excellent greatness.
Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.
Alleluia.

The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities

The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities:
for we know not what we should pray
for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh
intercession for us with groanings which
cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts
knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit,

denn er vertritt die Heiligen nach dem,
das Gott gefällt.

(Romans 8: 26 - 27)

Choral

Du heilige Brunst, süßer Trost,
nun hilf uns, fröhlich und getrost
in deinem Dienst beständig bleiben,
die Trübsal uns nicht abtreiben.
O Herr, durch dein Kraft uns bereit
und stärk des Fleisches Blödigkeit,
daß wir hier kühnlich ringen,
durch Tod und Leben zu dir dringen.
Halleluja, Hallelujah!
(Martin Luther, 1524)

③ Jesu, meine Freude

Choral

Jesu, meine Freude,
meines Herzens Weide,
Jesu, meine Zier!
Ach wie lang, ach lange
ist dem Herzen bange
und verlangt nach dir!
Gottes Lamm, mein Bräutigam,
außer dir soll mir auf Erden
nichts sonst Liebess werden.
(Martin Luther, 1524)

Es ist nun nichts Verdammliches an denen,
die in Christo Jesu sind, die nicht nach dem
Fleische wandeln, sondern nach dem Geist.
(Romans 8: 1, 4)

Choral

Unter deinem Schirmen
bin ich vor den Stürmen
aller Feinde frei.
Laß den Satan wüthen,
laß den Feind erbittern,
mir steh Jesus bei!
Ob es iltz gleich krafft und blitzt,
ob gleich Sünd und Hölle schrecken:
Jesu will mich decken

because he maketh intercession for the saints
according to the will of God.

Chorale

Thou holy warmth, sweet comfort,
now help us, cheerful and confident
remaining steadfast in thy service,
from which affliction drives us not away.
O Lord, through thy might prepare us
and strengthen the weakness of the flesh
that we may fight bravely
through death and life to come to you.
Alleluia, alleluia!

Jesu, my joy

Chorale

Jesu, my joy,
my heart's pasture,
Jesu, my pride!
Ah, how long, ah long
in fear my heart
seeks for thee!
Lamb of God, my bridegroom,
beside thee on earth is nothing
for me but thy love.

There is therefore now no condemnation to
them which are in Christ Jesus,
who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Chorale

Under thy shield
I am from the attacks
of every enemy free.
Let Satan sense it,
the enemy rage,
Jesus is with me!
Whether it thunders and lightens
or sin and Hell bring fear,
Jesus will protect me.

Denn das Gesetz des Geistes, der da lebendig
machet in Christo Jesu, hat mich frei gemacht
von dem Gesetz der Sünde und des Todes.
(Romans 8: 2)

Choral

Trotz dem alten Drachen,
trotz des Todes Rachen,
trotz der Furcht darzu!
Tobe, Welt, und springe;
ich steh hier und singe
in gar sicherer Ruh.
Gottes Macht hält mich in acht;
Erd und Abgrund muß verstummen,
ob sie noch so brummen.

Ihr aber seid nicht fleischlich, sondern geistlich,
so anders Gottes Geist in euch wohnt.
Wer aber Christi Geist nicht hat,
der ist nicht sein.
(Romans 8: 9)

Choral

Weg mit allen Schätzen!
Du bist mein Ergötzen,
Jesu, meine Lust!
Weg, ihr eilen Ehren,
ich mag euch nicht hören,
bleibt mir unbewußt!
Elend, Not, Kreuz, Schmach und Tod
Soll mich, ob ich viel muss leiden,
nicht von Jesu scheiden.

So aber Christus in euch ist,
so ist der Leib zwar
tot um der Sünde willen;
der Geist aber ist das Leben
um der Gerechtigkeit willen.
(Romans 8: 10)

Choral (Variation)

Gute Nacht, o Wesen,
das die Welt erlesen,
mir gefällst du nicht.
Gute Nacht, ihr Sünden,
bleibet weit dehinen,
kommt nicht mehr ans Licht!

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus
hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

Chorale

Despite the ancient dragon,
despite the revenge of death,
despite the fear of it,
rage, world, and leap,
I stand here and sing
in surer peace.
God's might cares for me,
earth and the abyss must fall silent,
however they may complain.

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit,
if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.
Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ,
he is none of his.

Chorale

Away with all treasures!
Thou art my delight,
Jesu, my pleasure!
Away, ye idle honours,
I hear you not,
stay only unknown to me!
Misery, wretchedness, cross, shame and death,
if I must grieve greatly,
should not part me from Jesus.

And if Christ be in you,
the body is dead because of sin;
but the Spirit is life
because of righteousness.

Chorale (Variation)

Good night, O being
that the world chooseth,
thou pleasest me not.
Good night, ye sins,
stay far away,
come no more to the light!

Gute Nacht, du Stolz und Pracht!
Dir sei ganz, du Lasterleben,
Gute Nacht! gegeben.

So nun der Geist des,
der Jesum von den Toten auferwecket hat,
in euch wohnet, so wird auch derselbige,
der Christum von den Toten auferwecket hat,
eure sterblichen Leiber lebendig machen um des willen,
dass sein Geist in euch wohnet.
(Romans 8: 11)

Choral

Weicht, ihr Trauergeister,
denn mein Freudenmeister,
Jesus, tritt herein.
Denen, die Gott lieben,
muß auch ihr Belüben
lauter Zucker sein.
Duld ich schon hier Spott und Hohn,
dennoch bleibst du auch im Leide,
Jesu, meine Freude.
(Johann Franck: 1650)

[4]

Fürchte dich nicht

Fürchte dich nicht, ich bin dir;
weiche nicht, dem ich bin dein Gott;
ich stärke dich, ich helfe dir auch,
ich erhalte dich durch
die rechte Hand
meiner Gerechtigkeit.
(Isaiah 41: 10)

Fürchte dich nicht, denn ich habe dich erlöst;
ich habe dich bei deinen Namen gerufen,
du bist mein.
(Isaiah 43: 1)

Choral

Herr, mein Hirt, Brunn aller Freuden,
du bist mein,
ich bin dein,
niemand kann uns scheiden.
Ich bin dein, weil du dein Leben
und dein Blut
mir zugut
in den Tod gegeben.

Good night, thou pride and glory.
Good night to thee for ever,
thou life of wickedness.

But if the Spirit of him
that raised up Jesus
from the dead dwell in you,
he that raised up Christ from the dead
shall also quicken your mortal bodies
by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Chorale

Give way, ye spirits of mourning,
for the master of my joy,
Jesus, comes.
To those that God loves
there must also be for their grieving
greater consolation.
Here I endure scorn and derision,
yet thou too remainest in sorrow,
Jesu, my joy.

Fear thou not

Fear thou not, for I am with thee:
be not dismayed, for I am thy God:
I will strengthen thee;
yea, I will help thee;
yea, I will uphold thee
with the right hand of my righteousness.

Fear not, for I have redeemed thee,
I have called thee by thy name;
thou art mine.

Chorale

Lord, my shepherd, source of all joys,
thou art mine,
I am thine,
no one can part us.
I am thine, for thou thy life
and thy blood
for me
gavest in death.

Du bist mein, weil ich dich fasse
und dich nicht,
o mein Licht,
aus dem Herzen lasse.
Laß mich, laß mich hingelangen,
da du mich
und ich dich lieblich werd umfangen.
(Paul Gerhardt. 1653)

Fürchte dich nicht, du bist mein.

5 Komm, Jesu, komm

Komm, Jesu, komm, mein Leib ist müde,
die Kraft verschwindt je mehr und mehr,
ich sehne mich nach deinem Friede;
der saure Weg wird mir zu schwer!
Komm, komm, ich will mich dir ergeben,
du bist rechte Weg,
die Wahrheit und das Leben.

Drum schließ ich mich in deine Hände
und sage, Welt, zu guter Nacht!
Eilt gleich mein Lebenslauf zu Ende,
ist doch der Geist wohl angebracht.
Er soll bei seinem Schöpfer schweben,
weil Jesus ist und bleibt
der wahre Weg zum Leben.
(Paul Thymich. 1684/1697)

6 Lobet den Herrn

Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden,
und preiset ihn, alle Völker!
Denn seine Gnade und Wahrheit
waltet über uns in Ewigkeit.
Hallelujah!
(Psalm 117)

Thou art mine, for I hold thee
and do not,
O my light,
let thee leave my heart.
Let me, let me come to thee,
that thou and I
may embrace in love.

Fear not, thou art mine.

Come, Jesu, come

Come, Jesu, come, my body is weary,
my strength fades yet more and more,
I long for thy peace:
the bitter way will be too hard for me.
Come, come, I will give myself to thee,
thou art the true way,
the truth and life.

Then am I held in thy hands
and bid the world good night.
My life-span hurries to its end,
yet is my spirit ready.
It must soar with its Creator,
for Jesus is now and always
the true way to life.

Praise the Lord

Praise the Lord, all ye nations:
praise him, all ye people.
For his merciful kindness is great towards us:
and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever.
Alleluia!

(English chorale versions by Keith Anderson)

The Scholars Baroque Ensemble

Anna Crookes (soprano) • Kym Amps (soprano)
Angus Davidson (counter tenor) • David Gould (counter tenor)
Robin Doveton (tenor) • Julian Podger (tenor)
Matthew Brook (bass) • David van Asch (bass)
Terence Charlston (organ)
Pal Banda (cello)
Jan Spencer (violin)
(Artistic Coordinator: David van Asch)

The Scholars Baroque Ensemble was founded in 1987 by David van Asch with the idea of complementing the “a capella” work of the vocal ensemble The Scholars. This group, consisting also of the soprano Kym Amps, counter tenor Angus Davidson and tenor Robin Doveton, has had worldwide success during the last twenty years. The members of The Scholars Baroque Ensemble are all specialists in the field of Baroque music and play original instruments (or copies) using contemporary techniques. Singers and players work together without a director to produce their own versions of great masterpieces such as the *St. John Passion* by Bach, the 1610 *Vespers* by Monteverdi, *Dido and Aeneas* and *The Fairy Queen* by Purcell, the *Messiah* and *Acis and Galatea* by Handel, all of which are being released by Naxos. Concert performances by the ensemble have been highly praised by critics and audiences alike. The artistic aim of the ensemble goes far beyond that of so-called “authenticity”; more important is the clarity and vitality achieved by the use of a minimum number of players and singers per part, normally only one (as in this recording), which was common practice in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

①	Chorus 1:	Kym Amps Robin Doveton	Angus Davidson David van Asch	
	Chorus 2:	Anna Crookes Julian Podger	David Gould Matthew Brook	
②	Chorus 1:	Anna Crookes Robin Doveton	David Gould David van Asch	
	Chorus 2:	Kym Amps Julian Podger	Angus Davidson Matthew Brook	
③		Anna Crookes Robin Doveton	Kym Amps David van Asch	Angus Davidson
④	Chorus 1:	Anna Crookes Robin Doveton	David Gould David van Asch	
	Chorus 2:	Kym Amps Julian Podger	Angus Davidson Matthew Brook	
⑤	Chorus 1:	Kym Amps Julian Podger	Angus Davidson Matthew Brook	
	Chorus 2:	Anna Crookes Robin Doveton	David Gould David van Asch	
⑥		Kym Amps David Gould Matthew Brook	Anna Crookes Robin Doveton David van Asch	Angus Davidson Julian Podger

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J. S. BACH: Motets

NAXOS



8.553823

STEREO

Johann Sebastian

BACH

(1685 - 1750)

Motets

The Scholars Baroque Ensemble

(Soloists, Chorus and Ensemble on original instruments)

DDD

 Playing
Time:
63'09"

NAXOS

J. S. BACH: Motets

8.553823

- | | | |
|----------|--|----------------|
| 1 | Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied, BWV 225 | (12:21) |
| 2 | Der Geist hilft unsrer Schwachheit auf, BWV 226 | (7:43) |
| 3 | Jesu, meine Freude, BWV 227 | (19:52) |
| 4 | Fürchte dich nicht, BWV 228 | (7:45) |
| 5 | Komm, Jesu, komm, BWV 229 | (8:52) |
| 6 | Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden, BWV 230 | (6:35) |

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from 5th to 7th February, 1996.

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