

Cantata “*Jesu, der du meine Seele*”, BWV 78 by Johann Sebastian Bach: structural, symbolic, and harmonic aspects

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Johann Sebastian Bach left us a body of works that are up until this day unequalled in their depth of thought, perfection of form, hidden symbolism, harmonic colour, and contrapuntal complexity. In comparison with the other works of Bach, relatively little research has been conducted in regard to his many cantatas. Unfortunately, about 2/3 of his output in that genre are lost. After being appointed in Leipzig as the Cantor and Music Director in 1723, J. S. Bach sought to realize his idea which he referred to as “the ultimate goal of regulated church music”. For Bach, “regulated church music” meant that no one could interfere with his musical ambitions and projects. From the Obituary it appears to be true that in the 1720s Bach wrote as many as five annual cantata cycles. Moreover, he was determined to supply a cantata every week for the service at St. Thomas church. This duty not only meant to compose a major work every week (and sometimes even more often) but also be able to copy it, rehearse it and prepare for performance. The cantatas were sung after the Gospel reading before the sermon; sometimes a second cantata, or more commonly the second part of the one, could follow the sermon. This article is focused on in many respects one of the most extraordinary Bach’s cantatas, “*Jesu, der du meine Seele*”, BWV 78. The aim of the research is to provide comprehensive analysis of the cantata and to reveal the composer’s structural, symbolic, and harmonic principles. This article also shows that a traditional Bach cantata in Leipzig was like a musical sermon, which was performed before the real sermon of the pastor. Each of the seven movements of the cantata is analyzed to provide a glimpse to Bach’s compositional techniques, formal procedures, prolific text painting elements, and harmonic aspects.

KEY WORDS: baroque music, Bach, vocal works, cantata, BWV 78, *Jesu, der du meine Seele*, form, Leipzig works, musical analysis, text painting, harmony, figura cotta, cantus firmus, chaconne, lament, ritornello, musical sermon, aria, chorus, recitative, chorale, basso ostinato, musical proportions, musical symmetry

Johann Sebastian Bach left us a body of works that are up until this day unequalled in their depth of thought, perfection of form, hidden symbolism, harmonic colour, and contrapuntal complexity. Already in his Obituary, his son Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and his student Johann Friedrich Agricola wrote that “no one showed so many ingenious and unusual ideas as he in elaborate pieces such as ordinarily seem dry exercises in craftsmanship. His melodies are strange, but always varied, rich in invention, and resembling those of no other composer”¹. In 1784, Christian Friedrich Schubart stated even stronger: “Sebastian Bach was a genius of highest order. His spirit was so original, so vast, that centuries would be needed to measure up to it”².

Among the works of J. S. Bach, some of the biggest contributions to the history of music are his many wonderful cantatas. Unfortunately, about 2/3 of his output in that genre are lost but what remains are undoubtedly pearls of Bach’s musical genius. After being appointed in Leipzig as the Cantor and Music Director in 1723, J. S. Bach sought to realize his idea which he referred to as “the ultimate goal of regulated church music”³. This idea was Bach’s motivation for a long time – from 1708 when he articulated it before the Mühlhausen Town Council. Finally, in Leipzig, being a composer of high esteem and reputation, he was able to make it happen. For Bach, “regulated church music” meant

1 David and Mendel 1998: 305.

2 David and Mendel 1998: 369.

3 Wolff 2000: 253.

that no one could interfere with his musical ambitions and projects. In addition, he was determined to supply a cantata every week for the service at St. Thomas church. This duty not only meant to compose a major work every week (and sometimes even more often) but also be able to copy it, rehearse it and prepare for performance. According to Christoph Wolff, Bach "...planned on providing for many Sundays either two-part cantatas or two different but complimentary works for performance before and after the hour-long sermon".⁴

From the Obituary, it appears to be true that Bach wrote as many as five annual cantata cycles⁵. Since much of his music did not survive, this is even more surprising if one bears in mind that most of them were written during years in the 1720s. The number of surviving cantatas is around 200, the other part was scattered in the passing of time. In fact, Johann Sebastian's eldest son Wilhelm Friedemann was least careful with his share of his father's heritage, when the estate was split up among Bach's widow Anna Magdalena and four musician's sons. Because by the end of the 1720s Bach had already created five complete annual cycles of cantatas, in the 1730s and 1740s his main liturgical activity mainly focused on the repeat performances of the earlier cantatas⁶.

This article will reveal that a traditional Bach cantata in Leipzig was like a musical sermon⁷, which was performed before the real sermon of the pastor. Incidentally, the Lutheran liturgy of that time lasted three hours: one hour before the sermon, one-hour sermon, and one hour after the sermon. This was largely due to the length of the concerted music performed at the services. The texts of the cantatas were taken from three main sources: the Bible, original poetry of the time, and strophic Lutheran chorales. The music of the cantatas encompassed five main genres: arias, recitatives, choruses, chorales, and instrumental sinfonias occasionally added for festive cantatas.

This article focuses on in many respects one of the most extraordinary Bach's cantata, "*Jesu, der du meine Seele*", BWV 78. The aim of the research is to provide comprehensive analysis of the cantata and reveal the composer's structural, symbolic, and harmonic principles.

Bach wrote this Cantata for the 14th Sunday after Trinity in 1724. Its first performance was held on September 10, 1724. The Cantata belongs to the Second Annual Cycle, which was composed in 1724–1725. The work is scored for soprano, alto, tenor, and bass with an instrumental ensemble. The ensemble consists of corno, flauto traverso, two oboes, two violins, viola, and continuo.

The text of the Cantata is based on the chorale by Johann Rist "*Jesu, der du meine Seele*" from 1641. Bach quotes the first and last stanzas of the chorale directly while others are freely paraphrased. However, the author of the free poetry is unknown. As W. Murray Young reports, in the Cantata "the Gospel of the day, Luke 17 (11–19), the healing of the ten lepers, is reflected in all verses of the hymn by the thought that sin is a leprosy that blights the conscience and the soul"⁸. This work survives in several copies;

4 Wolff 2000: 269.

5 David and Mendel 1998: 304.

6 Wolff 1995: 5.

7 Dürr 2006: 29.

8 Young 1989: 208.

among the most important ones is the original manuscript dated ca. 1750⁹.

The general structure of the work is similar to other cantatas of the same cycle and has seven movements. It starts with a *Coro* (*Choral*) which is followed by *Aria*, *Duetto* for soprano and alto. The third and fourth movements are for tenor and called *Recitativo* and *Aria*, respectively. Similarly, the fifth and sixth movements are *Recitativo* and *Aria* for bass. The Cantata concludes with a harmonized *Choral* (the symmetry of Bach's organization can be seen in Table 1).

Table 1. Overall plan of the Cantata

<i>Coro</i> (<i>Choral</i>)	<i>Aria</i> (<i>Duetto</i>)	<i>Recitativo</i>	<i>Aria</i>	<i>Recitativo</i>	<i>Aria</i>	<i>Choral</i>
Chorus	Soprano and Alto	Tenor	Tenor	Bass	Bass	Chorus

MOVEMENT I: CORO (CHORAL)

In this movement, Bach treats the first stanza of the chorale tune (for the chorale tune see Fig. 1). This tune is in the usual Bar form and has eight phrases altogether. Phrases 1 and 3 as well as 2 and 4 correspond to one another. Therefore, the overall form of the chorale tune is ABAB (*Stollen*) and CDEF (*Abgesang*).



Fig. 1. Chorale tune

Performance forces for this movement are the *Tutti*. The *corno* doubles the cantus firmus, which is sung by the sopranos. The transverse flute also doubles the sopranos but at the octave pitch. The main idea of the text is "Jesus' passion tore my soul from darkness"¹⁰.

W. Gillies Whittaker thinks that "the fantasia is one of the most superb specimens of Bach's art. No description can convey the idea of its great power, of intense brooding consciousness of sin, of its arresting significance. No technical analysis can do justice to the consummate skill of its use of themes, to the magical way in which its diverse elements are forged into a united structure"¹¹.

There are several main musical ideas in the piece. First of all, the most significant theme is descending the chromatic lament (G-F#-F-E-E flat-D) (*passus duriusculus*) which gives the movement a tragic feeling right from the beginning. This and the ritornello, which is harmonically based on the lament, are the two main musical ideas in the work (Fig. 2).

⁹ Schulze and Wolff 1987: 559.

¹⁰ Unger 1996: 273.

¹¹ Whittaker 1959: 379.

The image displays two systems of a musical score for a chorus. The first system includes parts for Flauto traverso, Oboe I, Oboe II, Violino I, Violino II, Viola, Soprano, Alto, Tenore, Basso, and Continuo. The dynamics are marked as 'piano'. The second system shows the same instruments playing in a 'forte' dynamic. The score is identified as 'B. W. XVIII.' at the bottom.

Fig. 2. Movement I: Chorus, BWV 78/1 (mm. 1–14). The Lament theme and the Ritornello are in mm. 1–8. The excerpts from the score in this article are taken from Bach, Johann Sebastian. Jesu, der du meine Seele, BWV 78, In: *Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe*, Band 18 ed. Wilhelm Rust. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1870

A brilliant discovery Bach would have made from the initial stages of composition is that all the lines of the chorale tune work contrapuntally, with or without modifications and transpositions, with the lament¹². This lament is in triple meter and serves as a basis for the movement and forms a tragic chaconne, directly derived from the French ballet.

12 Dreyfus 1997: 185–86.

For instance, compare this movement with the chaconnes by Jean Baptiste-Lully ("Ballet d'Alcidiane", "L'Amour Medicin", "Ballet de Flore") and Jean-Phillipe Rameau ("Les Indes galantes", "Dardanus", "Zephire" among many others). Incidentally, Bach uses this type of chromatic lament in his other compositions too, most importantly in the cantata "Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen", BWV 12 and in the "Crucifixus" part of the B minor Mass. The ostinato in the first movement of the cantata BWV 78 is used 27 times in total. Sometimes it appears in other keys and voices and once in an inversion¹³.

Significantly, the ritornello, besides its own instrumental statements, always appears with the cantus in the soprano. This ritornello, because of its triple meter and emphasis on the second beat, is a perfect example of a *Sarabande*. The structure of the ritornello is two statements of the lament motive, four measures each (a total of 8 measures). As a chaconne, the structure of the piece is somewhat modified since the lament is not always heard in the bass part. Furthermore, there are episodes when the lament does not appear altogether. Thinking about the piece as a whole, Laurence Dreyfus rightly points out that "this particular movement, surely one of the best known and loved opening movements among the sacred vocal works, is indeed remarkable for its integration of cantus firmus, ritornello, and fugal points of imitation"¹⁴.

Another interesting musical idea used in the piece with some consistency is what Whittaker calls a joy-motive¹⁵. It first appears in the orchestral bass part and consists of series of dactylic rhythm having eighth and two sixteenth notes (*figura corta*). In the Baroque time, this motive was often used to depict joy¹⁶. Here it works contrapuntally with the lament (Fig. 3).

The image displays a page of a musical score for the Chorus of the Cantata BWV 78/1. It features five systems of staves. The top two systems are for the vocal parts: Soprano (Soprano) and Alto (Alto). The middle two systems are for the instrumental parts: Violin I (Violin I) and Violin II (Violin II). The bottom system is for the Double Bass (Bass). The score includes lyrics: "Je - su, der du mei - ne See -" and "Je - su, der du mei - ne". The word "piano" is written above the vocal staves in measures 17 and 18. At the bottom of the page, there are figured bass symbols: "u u f u 7 u 5 u 5".

Fig. 3. Movement I: Chorus, BWV 78/1 (mm. 15–20). The joy motive with *figura corta* is in mm. 17–20

13 Geck 2006: 375.

14 Dreyfus 1997: 184.

15 Whittaker 1959: 380.

16 Ruiter-Feenstra 2011: 134.

The third invention is used for episodes and is based on the joy motive. It appears three times in the Chorus and is a series of sequences based on a circle of fifths. Besides this rhythmic idea of the joy motive, it also includes a series of repeated notes which first appear in the beginning of chorale line 6 (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Movement I: Chorus, BWV 78/1 (mm. 84–90). Repeated notes and joy motive combined are in mm. 89–90

Table 2. Structural diagram of the Chorus

The structural diagram of the opening movement can be seen in Table 2. R corresponds to Ritornello, L – Lament, Ch – Chorus, and E – Episode.

Measure Nos.	1–16	17–32	33–48	49–64	65–72	73–84	85–88	89–98	99–102	103–106	107–117	118–124	125–128	129–144
Musical Idea	R, L	Ch A (R) L	Ch B, R L	Ch A (R) L	Ch B (R), L	Ch C L	R L	Ch (E) D L	R L	E	Ch L	Ch E L	E L	Ch F, R L
Length	16	16	16	16	8	12	4	10	4	4	11	7	4	16
Key Area	g-g	g-c-g	g-g	g-c-g	g-d	d-F	F-F	F-B flat	B flat-B flat	B flat-g	g-c-B flat-g	g-g	g-g	g-g

From the diagram it is clear that the tonic key of the G minor stays until m. 68. The other keys used in the piece (all are associated with the harmonies of the chorale tune) are D minor, F major, and B flat major. The first section consists of the two statements of the 8 m. ritornello (the second being embellished) and two statements of the 8 m. la-

ment theme. The choral section (mm. 17–32) is also 16 measures long. Here the lament motive is heard first in the altos, then in the tenors, and finally, in the basses (together with the cantus firmus in the sopranos). This section continues with an inverted lament (rising) using the text of the second line and sung in the same order as the previous line. Interestingly, the appearance of the second line of the text structurally does not start a new section.

The new section begins in m. 33 and is also 16 measures long. In the beginning, the cantus firmus in the Soprano joins the choir with the second line of the text. Since lines 3 and 4 are repeats of lines 1 and 2, Bach chose to repeat all the music from mm. 5–36. Consequently, the section from mm. 49–64 is a repeat of mm. 17–32 and mm. 65–68 are the same as mm. 33–36. Measures 69–72 are new, use the lament in D minor and serve as a transition to phrase 5 of the cantus firmus.

Measure 73 marks an important turning point not only because it starts with the joy motive (not heard for quite a while) or includes phrase 5 of the chorale tune. It is also significant architecturally because it is the exact halfway point of the piece. The order of voice entrances now is tenor, alto, and bass which sing not the lament (which is heard in the orchestra), but a stepwise rising motive. Measures 81–83 have a powerful text painting element – a falling sixteenth-note motive on part, *heraus*, of the word *herausgerissen* (torn out). This motive is sung by tenors and altos imitatively. This section ends in m. 84 with the soprano cantus firmus and is 12 measures long. The key now is F major. The four measures (mm. 85–88) are the ritornello in F major over the lament. Measures 89–98 are introduction and phrase 6 of the chorale (10 measures long). The order of voice entrances is alto, tenor, and bass. Before the soprano joins with the cantus firmus in m. 95 (B flat major), this episode forms a series of sequences seen in Example 4. Measures 89–94 are the first of three places where no version of the lament appears.

The next to the longest section structurally can be considered to be mm. 99–117 consisting of four measures of ritornello in B flat major, four measures of sequential episode, and 11 measures of choral introduction to the phrase 7 of the chorale. The order of voice entrances is tenor, alto, and bass. They all sing the lament imitatively while the orchestra is elaborating an idea of *figura corta*.

Measures 118–121 mark the appearance of the soprano cantus firmus superimposed with the lament and ritornello in G minor. In order to conclude this section, Bach writes another four measures of lament which are followed by the new short section (mm. 125–128) of sequential episode, in which the flutes play an embellished version of the lament theme. The last section begins in m. 129 with the tenor, alto, and bass entrances of the last line of the chorale text with a new idea not based on the lament. This is an eighth-note motive on words *sei doch itzt, o Gott, mein Hort* ("be indeed now, O God my refuge"). These vocal entrances are contrasted by a series of sequences with the *figurae corta* and leaping motives from the ritornello. The last eight measures of the Chorus (mm. 136–144) conclude with the ritornello. Interestingly, the last line of the chorale comes in not together with the ritornello but one measure later.

Proportionally, as can be seen in the diagram, although the second part includes such asymmetrical structures such as 11 and 7 measures, there are various significant proportions. For instance, m. 36 marks $1/4$ of the piece and is a turning point where Bach repeats previous material. Measure 48 is $1/3$ of the piece and marks the beginning

of choral entrances of line 3 of the chorale. After the halfway point (m. 72), the most important point proportionally is $\frac{3}{4}$ of the piece (m. 108), which is almost exactly the place where phrase 7 of the chorale is sung by the tenor, alto, and bass. This section could be considered the climax of the entire movement because of its intense rhythmic pulse and sequential episode with imitative entries of the lament based on a circle of fifths. In addition, four sections of 16 measures each in the beginning of the piece and the closing 16 measures are significant proportionally.

One more important point about this movement to consider is that the lament, ritornello, and cantus firmus sections do not always coincide. This feature shows Bach's mastery of a large scale form and gives the music a very unpredictable and human image. In addition, throughout the Chorus, Bach used all possibilities of canonic treatment of the lament, including intervals of the upper and lower fifths and fourths. In addition, the composer created a chain of sequences from the canonic lament based on a circle of fifths. Two features, imitative entrances of the voices from the bass upward and tenor, bass, and alto, however, do not appear in the piece. Finally, although verbal symbols in the music are not always apparent, the overall feeling and nature of the Chorus is, thanks to the combining of the tragic lament and chaconne, very dramatic. This feature corresponds with the text in a more general image, especially when the text is about *Tod* (death), *Teufel* (devil) or metaphoric allusion to the Gospel of the day, the healing of ten lepers.

As the analysis of this movement revealed, harmonic and tonal procedures are rather typical of the mature Bach's style. Many instances of text painting are witnesses of the composer's preoccupation with relationship between music and word. Since the composer was interested in depicting the meaning of the text with musical means, we can firmly assert this fantasia became a musical sermon. Finally, perhaps the most unique achievement in this movement is in the field of counterpoint and form: three distinct elements, such as ritornello, cantus firmus and imitative counterpoint, are seamlessly integrated to form a highly cohesive yet complex musical form.

MOVEMENT II: *ARIA (DUETTO)*

This Duet is for soprano and alto with basso continuo in B flat major. The piece is in da capo form (ABA). The A section basically stays entirely in B flat major (50 measures) and the B section (48 measures) modulates to various keys, including G minor, C major, C minor, D minor, and F major (for the detailed structural analysis of the Duet, refer to Table 3). The text is based on the Chorale stanza 2 and the main idea is "hastening to Jesus for healing with feeble steps"¹⁷. One of the most important musical ideas in the Duet is the ritornello, which is 8 measures long. It can be divided into 4 phrases (ABCD), 2 measures each. A is a leaping motive of eighth-notes performed by continuo basses; B is a sequence based on A; C is a leaping motive which emphasizes IV–I harmony; and D is concluding cadential material (Fig. 5).

¹⁷ Unger 1996: 273.

ARIA. DUETTO.

The image shows a musical score for the Aria Duetto, BWV 78/2. It is in G minor, 3/4 time, and consists of two systems. The first system shows the vocal parts (Soprano and Alto) and the instrumental parts (Organo e Violoncello and Violonc.). The second system shows the vocal parts with lyrics and the instrumental parts. The lyrics are 'Wir eilen mit' and 'Wir'. The instrumental parts are marked 'staccato e pizzicato' and 'piano'.

Fig. 5. Movement II: Aria. Duetto, BWV 78/2 (mm. 1–10). The Ritornello is in mm. 1–8

Table 3. Structural diagram of the Duet (R – Ritornello, D – Duet)

Measure Nos.	A 1–8	9–15	16–19	20–27	28–35	36–42	43–50	B 51–60	61–64	65–68	69–80	81–90	91–98	A Da Capo 1–50
Musical Idea	R	D	D	D	D	D	R	D	R	D	D	R, D	D	
Length	8	7	4	8	8	7	8	10	4	4	12	10	8	
Key Area	B flat	B flat- F-B flat	B flat	B flat, E flat	B flat	B flat	B flat	g-c	C	B flat-g	g-d	d-F- C-F	F-F	

After the initial ritornello, the soprano enters with a melismatic phrase which is followed by the alto in canon at the interval of the upper fifth (mm. 9–15). At m. 15, both voices join in singing sweet-sounding parallel sixths. One possible explanation about the relationship between the text and music might be that these melismas and the eighth leaping notes in the ritornello portray rushing and eager steps of the lepers (*Wir eilen mit schwachen doch emsiger Schritten*, “we hasten with weak, yet eager steps”). The next section (mm. 16–19) features dialogues between the alto and soprano (*o Jesu, o Meister*) and a melismatic motive. In mm. 20–31 Bach explores his so loved idea of invertible counterpoint and repeats the music from mm. 9–19 with the voices inverted and transposed up a fourth. In this section, the thirds become sixths and vice versa. Measures 27–35 form another section with melismas on the word *eilen* (hasten) and parallel sixths.

The next section (mm. 36–42) features acclamations in dialogue on the words *zu Dir* (to you) and the same repeated idea of parallel sixths. Proportionally, the beginning of this section, mm. 36, corresponds almost exactly with the 1/4 point of the piece. Section A ends with a repeat of the full 8 measures of the ritornello, the ending of which (m. 50) corresponds to the 1/3 point of the piece.

Section B (m. 51) starts with soprano and alto imitative entries in G minor and C minor which are suitable keys for that part of the text, which talks about how God faithfully seeks the sick and the erring. This section continues until the cadence in C minor (m. 60). Following the cadence, Bach writes the ritornello in C minor, using only its last four measures (mm. 61–64). The next four measures feature acclamations of both voices in parallel thirds. This is a perfect example how Bach portrays the meaning of the text: on the words *Ach höre* (O hear) he separates *Ach* from *höre* with rests and adds a sigh motive.

The next section (mm. 69–80) also includes text painting. Here the composer uses the ascending turns (*gropo*) from section A, but now to imitate raising voices on the word *erheben*. The major key areas are G minor and D minor. Measure 74 is the halfway point of the piece (if one counts the repeat of section A). Until now in section B the text has been about the sick, the erring and asking for help. However, mm. 81–98 feature a more joyful text: *Es sei uns dein gnädiges Antlitz erfreulich* (“may thy gracious countenance smile upon us”). To portray the text, Bach changes the mode to C major and F major (cadence in m. 90) as well as adding very melismatic passages with the rhythms of *figura corta* on the word *erfreulich* (gratifying) which can be considered a climactic point of the piece. In measures 93–94 Bach again uses invertible counterpoint, transposing up a fourth and switching the voices from mm. 85–86. The end of section B marks the 2/3 point of the piece and is significant proportionally. The following da capo section gives the Duet the feeling of symmetry. However, there are also more symmetrical features. For instance, section A can also be subdivided as 15-20-15 and section B as 18-12-18 measures in length.

From the above analysis we can see the importance of the ritornello form in construction of this work, a technique which Bach especially adhered to in his Leipzig period. As in the previous movement, here the composer carefully portrayed the meaning of the text through text painting techniques. Finally, Bach’s mastery of invertible counterpoint is also evident in this movement.

MOVEMENT III: RECITATIVO

The recitative is written for tenor and basso continuo. The text is based on stanzas 3–5 of the Chorale and the main idea is “confession of sinful nature: it makes me transgress”¹⁸. Since the text is so colourful and dramatic, the music contains many instances of text painting. For instance, the opening eight measures cannot be analyzed easily in any particular key because it has a chain of diminished seventh chords (see Fig. 6) which symbolize the sinful nature of man and mortality (for the structural diagram of the Recitativo, refer to Table 4).

Table 4. Structural diagram of the Recitativo

Measure Nos.	1–12	13–15	16–20	21–24
Musical Idea	Recitativo	Recitativo	Recitativo	Recitativo
Length	12	3	5	4
Key Area	Key unstable (chains of 7° chords)-c	F	F	f-c

¹⁸ Unger, 274.

RECITATIVO.

Tenore. Ach! ich bin ein Kind der Sünden. ach! ich ir-re weit und breit. Der Sünden Aussatz,

Continuo. *piano*

so an mir zu fin-den. ver-lässt mich nicht in die-ser Sterblich-keit. Mein Wil-le trach-tet nur nach

Bösem. Der Geist zwar spricht: ach! wer wird mich er-lö-sen? A-ber, Fleisch und Blut zu

Fig. 6. Movement III: Recitativo, BWV 78/3. Chains of diminished seventh chords (mm. 1–9)

In addition to the text painting mentioned above, m. 2 contains two large leaps (*salti composti*), one to describe an acclamation *Ach* and the other for *weit* (“wide”, *a'* – the highest note in the tenor part). In mm. 5–6, a descending melodic line (*descensus*) is used for word *Sterblichkeit* (“mortality”) and chromatic alteration from C to C# in the accompaniment symbolizes striving after evil. In m. 7, again a large leap of a diminished seventh (*saltus duriusculus*) is used for the acclamation *Ach!* In m. 8, the first resolution of the diminished seventh chord into an A major triad on the word *erlösen* indeed leaves an impression of spiritual resolution. This measure significantly is 1/3 of the piece. In m. 11, the melodic line jumps to *a'* flat (*saltus duriusculus*) to depict the meaning of *über meine Kraft* (“above my strength”). Measure 12 is proportionally important because it is the halfway point of the piece and the first cadence in C minor. In mm. 15–16 one encounters the cadence in F minor which marks the 2/3 point of the piece. In addition, m. 16 contains the words *Sünden, Schmerz und Pein* (“sinn’s suffering and pain”), which sound very dramatic with the harmony underneath them (two different inversions of the same diminished seventh chord). Finally, in mm. 20–24 Bach changes the texture – instead of long chords, he uses repeated dramatic chords (Neopolitan and altered dominant chords) as well as a chromatic melisma with wide leaps on the word *erzürnet* (“angered”).

As the analysis of this movement reveals, Bach’s the most evident feature employed in this recitativo is text painting. Regardless of the short length (only 24 measures), it is packed with instances of this technique. Virtually every chord in the accompaniment and every melodic note in the solo part are connected with words that go with them.

MOVEMENT IV: ARIA

This movement is in G minor for tenor solo, transverse flute and basso continuo. The total length of the Aria is 73 measures (for the detailed structural diagram of the piece, refer to Table 5). Significantly, the basses play pizzicato throughout, just as they did in movement II. The text is based on stanzas 6–7 of the Chorale, the main idea of which is “Christ’s blood cancels guilt and makes us victorious”¹⁹.

Table 5. Structural diagram of the Aria (R – Ritornello, S – Solo)

Measure Nos.	1–12	13–18	19–26	27–30	31–42	43–61	62–73
Musical Idea	R	S, R	S	R	S	R, S	R
Length	12	6	8	4	12	19	12
Key Area	g-g	g-g	g-B flat	B flat-B flat	B flat-c-E flat	c-g	g-g

The main musical idea is the ritornello (12 measures) which can be divided into parts A, B, and C. Part A is four measures long and emphasizes I–V harmony whereas Part B is three measures long and includes a downward sequence and a leaping bass line. Part C is five measures long and is created from the running sixteenth notes in the flute part with the staccato and legato markings (for a complete ritornello, see Fig. 7). In general, the Aria is in 6/8 meter and is similar to a gigue.

The image shows a musical score for Movement IV: Aria, BWV 78/4. It is written for Flauto traverso (flute), Tenore (tenor), and Continuo (basso continuo). The score is in G minor, 6/8 time, and consists of three systems. The first system is the Ritornello (measures 1-12), featuring a Flauto traverso (flute) part with a 'Solo' marking and a 'pizzicato' marking on the basso continuo part. The second system continues the flute and continuo parts. The third system includes the vocal line for the Tenore (tenor) with the lyrics 'Dein Blut, so mei - ne'.

Fig. 7. Movement IV: Aria, BWV 78/4 (mm. 1–13). The Ritornello is in mm. 1–12

19 Unger 1996: 575.

The next section (mm. 13–18) features the tenor entry (part A of the ritornello) and an instrumental episode from part C of the ritornello. Measure 18 is significant proportionally because it not only marks the end of this section but also one fourth of the piece. Measures 19–26 form the next section, which consists of a repeat of the previous tenor entry (part A of the ritornello) as well as of material based on part C. At this point, the text states that the blood which strikes out the guilt makes the heart light again. On the words *wieder leicht* ("again light"), the flute plays the C part of the ritornello and the staccato sixteenth notes along with the pizzicato bass notes can symbolize that lightness. In addition, here the key area moves from G minor to B flat major. Measures 27–30 feature a ritornello which includes motives from all three parts of the original ritornello.

The next section (mm. 31–42) is the central point of the piece in several aspects. First, the middle of this section (m. 37) marks the halfway point of the piece. Second, the words state that if the armies of hell would call the soul into the battle, it will be victorious because Jesus will stand at its side. In addition, on the word *Höllen* (m. 31), the tenor sings a large leap downwards (*saltus duriusculus*), which cannot be coincidence in terms of text painting. On the repeated word *Streite* ("battle") (mm. 33–36), Bach writes octave leaps (*salto semplice*) in the tenor part as well as a long melisma with running sixteenths which would definitely strengthen the meaning of the battle because of the vigorous movement associated with it. In addition, several instances of text painting can be seen in mm. 39–41, which include syncopated leaps up a sixth (*salti semplici*) on the word *beherzt* ("encouraged") and an upward running scale (*tirata*) on the word *sieghaft* ("victorious").

The next section (mm. 43–61) features the same words as in the previous section. However, Bach adds another feature in addition to the return to G minor – mm. 53–56 have a 3.5 measures long sustained d" in the tenor part on the word *steht* (stands) which is definitely an instance of the literal text painting Bach used so often. The Aria ends with a full ritornello (mm. 62–73).

Proportionally, from Table 5 it is clear that the beginning and closing the 12 measure long ritornello as well as the central 12 measure section (mm. 31–42) is the framework of the composition. In addition, the 19 measure long section (mm. 43–61) can correspond to the combined 6, 8, and 4 measure sections which together make 18 measures. Finally, the central 12 measures because of various dramatic elements can be considered the climax of the piece.

From the above analysis we can see that the structural procedures are typical of Bach's style. Additionally, the instances of text painting are also quite characteristic of him. Finally, the overall tonal design and harmonic techniques that Bach uses in this aria could be found in many of his compositions as well.

MOVEMENT V: RECITATIVO

This movement is an accompanied recitative for the bass, in which accompaniment is supplied by the strings. The text is based on Stanzas 8–10 of the Chorale with the main idea that "Christ's passion led to blessing; I offer my heart"²⁰. The recitative is 27 measures long and can be divided into four main sections. The movement starts in E flat major and ends in F minor (for the detailed diagram of the Recitative, refer to Table 6).

20 Unger 1996: 275.

Table 6. Structural diagram of the Recitative

Measure Nos.	1–7	8–9	10–16	17–27
Musical Idea	Recitativo	Vivace, con ardore	Lente (voice), Adagio (strings)	Andante (Arioso)
Length	7	2	7	11
Key Area	E flat-f	g-g	f-E flat-B flat-A flat	f-c-f-A flat-f

The piece is remarkable for its text painting. For example, in mm. 3–4 the bass part ascends to d' on the word *Kron* (“crown”) and descends to G (lowest note of the piece) on the word *Grab* (“grave”). By the way, at this moment the bass makes a leap of augmented 11th downward (*saltus duriusculus*), which is quite uncomfortable to sing. After this leap follow several diminished seventh chords depicting the suffering on the cross, after which there is a modulation to the key of E flat major, significantly at the words “Siegeszeichen” – a sign of triumph²¹.

In addition, on the word *Schläge* (“blows”), the accompaniment plays an E second inversion diminished seventh chord. In mm. 7–8, a sudden change in tempo (*vivace, con ardore*) and texture (repeated chords in sixteenths – *bomba*) make an unexpected mood change very dramatic. The text is about the dreadful court of justice in the end time. On the words *erschreckliches* (“dreadful”) and *den Fluch* (“curse”) Bach writes leaps of diminished and minor sevenths (*saltus duriusculus*) (see Fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Movement V: Recitative, BWV 78/5. Vivace section of the Recitative followed by the sudden Adagio (mm. 8–10)

The next section, mm. 10–16, is significant not only because of the tempo change (*Lento* for the bass, *Adagio* for strings) but also because of the change of the text. Here the main idea is about the Christ’s blessing, love and giving in return. This section features at least three evident places with text painting. First, in m. 11 on the words *kein Schmerz* (“no suffering”) Bach writes a leap of the diminished seventh (*saltus duriusculus*). Second, in m. 12 on the word *Heiland* (“Savior”) the composer embellishes the note with

21 Stokes 2004: xii.

ornament. Third, in mm. 16–17 on the word *nieder* ("down") the bass part descends to the lower A flat.

The last section of the recitative (Andante, mm. 17–27) is in arioso style. Here the accompaniment changes to constant flowing eighth notes with a fast harmonic rhythm. Interestingly, the section contains many slurred paired eighth notes (the sigh figure) which might portray the sorrow of the heart which the soul gives to Jesus. Traditionally this figure depicts heaviness, suffering or burden²². It is also important to point out that in m. 19 on the word *vermenget* ("mixed") and in m. 21 on the word *besprenget* ("sprinkles") Bach uses a melisma to emphasize the meaning of the word. Proportionally, this movement can be divided into three sections of nine measures each, each section almost exactly corresponding to the tempo and texture changes in the Recitative.

As we have discovered from the analysis of this movement, what separates it from the similar recitatives of Bach is a complex form with four different characteristic episodes. Presumably, the composer's choice was dictated by the colourful text of this movement. The tonal design and harmonic techniques are similar to other Bach's compositions of this genre.

MOVEMENT VI: ARIA

This Aria is written for solo bass with oboe 1 and strings. The movement is 61 measures long and is structurally influenced by the Italian concerto practice. The text is based on the stanza 11 of the Chorale and the main idea is "Christ calms our accusing conscience and gives hope"²³.

The main musical idea is the ritornello in C minor which features Tutti section A, solo oboe B, Tutti A, and modified solo oboe B'. The ritornello is 8 measures long (see Fig. 9).

As in the previous Aria for tenor, here the bass also comes in with the idea of the ritornello (mm. 9–11) which is followed by the five measures of the orchestral ritornello (mm. 12–16). In mm. 17–19 the bass repeats his first entrance and continues to sing further in C minor. Interestingly, on the word *Hoffnung* ("hope", mm. 22, 24) Bach writes a long melismatic running sixteenth note line (*passagio*). In mm. 20–21, the ritornello enters E flat major (relative major) (refer to Table 7). In the Baroque period, the first modulation to the key of relative major is typical of many compositions written in a minor mode.

The next important section is eight measures of the ritornello in the dominant (G minor, mm. 25–32). In mm. 33–42 the bass again alternates between the A part of the ritornello and other material which is superimposed with the B part of the ritornello. In mm. 37–38, Bach uses a simple but remarkable way to portray the meaning of the word *Ewigkeit* ("eternity") – on that word he writes a long sustained c' for 1 ½ measures. One measure later, he employs a melismatic line of running sixteenths (*passagio*) on the word *rauben* ("steal").

Until now the key area has been constantly changing (E flat major, G minor, B flat major, and F minor). In m. 43 the tonic key returns and stays until the end (see Table 6). In this section Bach again uses melismas on the word *rauben* as well as a long note on the word *Ewigkeit*. The Aria concludes with the 8 measures of the original ritornello.

²² Ruiters-Feenstra 2011: 135.

²³ Unger 1996: 276.

ARIA.

The image displays a page of a musical score for an aria. It features six staves for instruments: Oboe I, Violino I, Violino II, Viola, Basso, and Continuo. The music is in a minor key and 3/4 time. The first system shows the beginning of the piece, with a Ritornello section. The second system continues the instrumental parts, with dynamics like *piano* and *forte* indicated. The third system introduces a vocal line with the German lyrics: "Num, du wirst mein Ge-wis-sen stil-len, so wi-der mich um". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Fig. 9. Movement VI: Aria, BWV 78/6 (mm. 1–10). The Ritornello is in mm. 1–8

Proportionally, the beginning, closing and middle ritornelli are the main structural pillars of the piece. Other combined sections around them are of more or less similar length – 16 and 21 measures. Other proportionally important places are m. 20 (1/3 of the piece) and m. 45 (3/4 of the piece).

Table 7. Structural diagram of the Aria

Measure Nos.	1–8	9–11	12–16	17–19	20–24	25–32	33–35	36–42	43–47	48–53	54–61
Musical Idea	R	S	R	S	S	R	S	S	R, S	S	R
Length	8	3	5	3	5	8	3	7	5	6	8
Key Area	c-c	c-c	c-c	c-c	E flat-g	g-g	g-B flat-f	f-c	c-c	c-c	c-c

This aria is similar to other compositions of this genre by Bach in the use of the ritornello form which is the main unifying element of this movement. From the tonal plan with modulations to closely related keys it is clear that Bach did not want to depart from the conventional writing style of his time. The same could be said about the text painting in this aria.

MOVEMENT VII: CHORAL

The closing movement of the Cantata is 16 measures long and is a simple harmonized Choral. The ending of the cantata with the four-part harmonized chorale is a signature of Bach's cantatas in the Leipzig period. The text is stanza 12 of the chorale and talks about "prayer of faith in face of sin and death"²⁴. Since the structure of the Chorale was discussed earlier, refer to Table 8.

Table 8. Structural diagram of the Choral

Measure Nos.	1–2	3–4	5–6	7–8	9–10	11–12	13–14	15–16
Musical Idea	A (Stollen)	B	A	B	C (Abgesang)	D	E	F
Length	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Key Area	g i-i	i-V	i-i	i-V	V-F (i)	B flat	B flat-g (V)	i-i

Although the harmonization is plain and simple, a possible text painting place is at m. 8 on the word *Tod* ("death", sudden diminished sixth chord). Since the harmonization of the *Stollen* section is repeated, this particular chord is found on the word *verzagen* ("despair"). In addition, the *Abgesang* mode switch to F major and B flat major corresponds well with the text ("Thy kindness shall I trust / till I joyfully behold"). Differently from the first movement, the chorale melody now moves in quarter notes.

²⁴ Unger 1996: 277.

BWV 78/7 Jesu, der du meine Seele

12th & Last Verse
Herr, ich glaube, hilf mir Schwachen

Fig. 10. Movement VII: The Choral, BWV 78/7. Only the chorale melody is represented here

Conclusions

In conclusion, the analysis of this composition reveals that it is one of the most remarkable cantatas in several aspects – structural, symbolic, harmonic and contrapuntal. First, from the structural context it is clear that Bach as a musical architect was able to achieve remarkable places of symmetry and proportions. These proportions signify the importance of the classical worldview to Bach. As Wolff points out, “for Bach, schooled in seventeenth-century thought, the concept that music formed a branch of the liberal arts *quadrivium* was still as valid as it had been for Johannes Kepler, who promoted the view that music mirrored the harmony of the universe”²⁵.

In addition, the countless instances of literal text painting show that the text to Bach was of utmost importance. According to Wolff, “all of Bach’s Leipzig cantata texts follow a standard pattern firmly grounded in the bifocal homiletic structure of a Lutheran sermon: *explicatio* and *applicatio*, biblical exegesis and theological instruction succeeded by practical and moral advise”²⁶. This feature shows that Bach used his cantatas as a “musical sermon” which illustrated and reflected on the Gospel of the day.

Finally, Bach’s mastery of the counterpoint as well as harmony makes this Cantata a supreme example of the genre. By composing such a work, Bach tried to achieve the goal of all music, which is “the glory of God and the recreation of the soul”²⁷. As Forkel wrote in 1802: “to this genuine spirit of art it is owing that Bach united with his great and lofty style the most refined elegance and the greatest precision in the single parts that compose the great whole. He thought that the whole could not be perfect if anything were wanting to the perfect precision of the single parts. Lastly, that if, notwithstanding the main tendency of his genius to the great and sublime, he sometimes composed and performed something gay and even jocose, his cheerfulness and joking were those of a sage. It was only through this union of the greatest genius with the most indefatigable study that Johann Sebastian Bach, whichever way he turned, so greatly to extend the bounds of his art that his successors have not even been able to maintain this enlarged domain in its whole extend; and this alone enabled him to produce such numerous and perfect works, all of which are, and ever will remain, true ideals and imperishable models of art”²⁸.

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²⁵ Wolff 2000: 7.

²⁶ Wolff 2000: 255.

²⁷ Cited from Wolff 2000: 309.

²⁸ David and Mendel 1998: 478–479.

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Vidas Pinkevičius

J. S. Bacho kantata „Jesu, der du meine Seele“, BWV 78: struktūrinis, simbolistinis ir harmoninis aspektai

Santrauka

Johannas Sebastianas Bachas mums paliko tokią daugybę kūrinių, kurie iki šios dienos yra neprilygtami minties gilumo, formos tobulumo, paslėpto simbolizmo, harmoninio spalvingumo ir kontrapunktinio sudėtingumo pavyzdžiai. Kantatos vis dar yra mažai ištyrinėtos, palyginti su kitais jo kūriniais, o apie du trečdalius šio žanro jo kūrybos yra iš viso dingę. Bachas yra parašęs penkis pilnus metinius kantatų ciklus. Kompozitorius buvo pasiryžęs sukurti kiekvieną savaitę po kantatą šv. Tomo bažnyčios pamaldų liturgijai. Tai reiškė, kad kiekvieną savaitę (kartais dar dažniau) jis ne tik turi parašyti didelės apimties veikalą, bet ir suspėti jį nukopijuoti, repetuoti ir paruošti atlikti. Kantatos buvo atliekamos po Evangelijos skaitymo prieš pamokslą. Kartais antroji kantata (dažniausiai antroji dalis) buvo atliekama po pamokslo. Straipsnyje daugeliu aspektų aptariama viena labiausiai įspūdingų Bacho kantatų „Jesu, der du meine Seele“, BWV 78. Straipsnio tikslas yra pateikti išsamią kantatos analizę ir atskleisti kompozitoriaus struktūrinius, simbolinius ir harmoninius komponavimo aspektus. Straipsniu taip pat yra parodoma, kad tradicinės Bacho Leipzigo kantatos funkcija buvo tarsi muzikinis pamokslas, kuriuo būtų paryškintos tos dienos Evangelijoje girdėtos mintys. Straipsnyje analizuojama kiekviena iš septynių dalių, siekiama pateikti raktą į Bacho kompozicines technikas, formos sudarymo principus, gausius muzikinio simbolizmo elementus ir harmoninius aspektus.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: baroko muzika, Bachas, vokaliniai kūriniai, choriniai kūriniai, kantata, BWV 78, *Jesu, der du meine Seele*, muzikinė forma, Leipzigo kūriniai, muzikinė analizė, muzikos simbolizmas, harmonija, figura corta, cantus firmus, chaconne, lamento, ritornello muzikinis pamokslas, arija, recitatyvas, choralas, basso ostinato, muzikinės proporcijos, muzikinė simetrija