

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 85 Form: Aria (B) - Aria (A) - Chorale (S) - Recit (T) - Aria (T) - Chorale.

Of the first movement, Alfred Dürr writes, "The opening movement is one of those settings of Jesus's words for bass voice whose form lies somewhere between aria and arioso. Framed and articulated by a six-bar instrumental ritornello, this dictum is heard in two corresponding vocal sections, A and A'. The vocal head-motive has already been quoted four times by the continuo during the ritornello before it is taken up by the bass as a 'motto.' As a counterpoint to this motive we hear descending semiquaver runs, which, however, do not consolidate thematically to the same extent. The oboe repeatedly comes to the fore in concertante style, so that at times the movement resembles the middle movement of an oboe concerto. See Alfred Dürr, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, translated by Richard Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 302.

A lyrical cantata expounding the pastoral theme of Jesus as Good Shepherd.

Cantata No. 85 Ich bin ein guter Hirt

1. Arioso

85/1. **Largo** (♩ = 92)

•Vox Christi: I am the good shepherd: John 10:12 (85/1).

Jesus speaks (biblical dictum)

Th 2 The vocal style lies between aria and arioso; the form is A-A'.

Instrumentation:

Ob I, II
Vln I, II
Vla
Violoncello piccolo (see notes)
SATB
Continuo

Some 2 weeks before (30 March), Bach had performed the second version of the St. John Passion (the first version was performed the year prior).

C minor (for significance, see note). The first 3 notes may be derived from the closing chorale.

The theme of God as the shepherd of his people echoes throughout the bible and so it permeates Bach's structure creating a thematic and formal density, appropriate to the gravitas of the text.

This type of aria is called a "Devisenarie" (a term coined by Hugo Riemann) or "motto aria." After the ritornello, the singer presents the first phrase of the aria as a kind of motto. This is followed by a short instrumental bridge before the aria proper begins. The motto sets the tone (and the literary perspective) for the movement.

Bach reveals which aspect of Jesus' statement is to receive the greatest rhetorical weight by lengthening and ornamenting the final 3 syllables of the head motive: "Ich bin ein **gu-ter Hirt**" ("I am a GOOD SHEPHERD"). He further emphasizes the statement through repetition and contrapuntal artifice.

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10 *mf* *mp* *tr*

ich bin ein gu - ter Hirt. Ein gu - ter Hirt läßt sein

life his life for the sheep good shepherd gives-up his

mp *p* *C minor* *C minor*

12II *poco cresc.* *mf* *tr*

Le - ben, sein Le - ben für die Scha - fe. Ich bin ein gu - ter

life his life for the sheep Ob Str

B-flat 7 *E-flat major* *B-flat 7* *??*

15 *Rhetorical pause* *tr* *cresc.*

Hirt. Ein gu - ter Hirt läßt sein Leben, sein Le - ben für die

B-flat major *E-flat major* *F# dim.7*

espr. *cresc.*

17II *poco a poco* *rit.* *B*

Schafe, ein gu - ter Hirt läßt sein Leben für die Scha - fe.

mf *Continuo alone for reflection.* *rit.* *Ob* *a tempo* *Str*

G minor *G minor*

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20

cresc. poco a poco

F# dim.7 G7

22II

G7 C minor (B-flat 7) C minor D7 G minor

25 C *mf*

Ich bin ein gu - ter Hirt, ich bin ein

G minor B-flat major G major

27II

gu - ter Hirt, ich bin ein gu - ter Hirt. Ein gu - ter

C minor C major C7

30

Hirt läßt sein Le - ben, sein Le - ben für die Schafe, ein

F minor B-flat 7 C minor *poco cresc.*

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32 *cresc. poco a poco*

gu - ter Hirt läßt sein Le - ben für die Scha - fe,

f

mf

C minor C minor C major F minor

34II *mf*

ein gu - ter Hirt läßt sein Le - ben, sein Le - ben für die Schafe, ein

p *poco cresc.* *cresc.*

F minor G7 C minor *mf*

37 ~~Breiter~~ *rit.* **D** *a tempo*

gu - ter Hirt läßt sein Le - ben für die Scha - fe.

cresc. *f* *p*

C minor C minor C minor *tr*

39II *tr* *tr* *(tr)* *mf*

cresc. poco a poco

C7

42 *cresc. molto* *rit. tr* *f* *ff*

F minor *tr* A-flat major F minor G7 *tr* C minor C major

2. Arie

85/2. Moderato (♩ = 80) • Jesus identified as the good shepherd: he gave his life for sheep (85/2).

Regarding the violoncello piccolo, see notes above at instrumentation.

Form:
Ritornello (mm. 1-9) Gm
A. Lines 1-4 (9-22) Gm-Dm
Rit (22-27) Dm
B. Lines 1-4 (27-40) Dm-Cm
A'. Lines 1-4 (41-53) Gm
Rit (53-61) Gm

1.

Violoncello piccolo

Ritornello *f*

mf cresc.

G minor

G minor

3II

poco a poco

f

G7

C minor

C minor

6

B-flat (7)

E-flat M7

D7

G minor

9 **A** *Alt* *mp* Alto is often the voice of faith. The text (given in full three times), alludes to Jesus' own words in the Gospel reading (see note). *mf*

A Section (entire text).

Je - sus ist ein gu - ter Hirt, Je - sus ist ein

fp

p

mf

G minor

G minor

12

f

p *cresc. poco a poco*

gu - ter Hirt, denn er hat be - reits sein Le - ben

p

cresc. poco a poco

G minor

B-flat 7

E-flat major

B-flat major

F7

B-flat major

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15 B
, mf

für die Scha - fe hin - ge - ge - ben, die ihm
which from-him

B-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major B-flat major F7 B-flat major D7

The vocal line becomes increasingly virtuose for the last line ("no one will steal them from him").

17II

Nie - mand rau - ben wird, die ihm Niemand, Niemand rau
no one rob will

G minor C# dim.7 A7 D minor

20

ben, rau - ben

Word painting: Long melisma for "rob/steal."

D minor D minor

22II a tempo

wird.

Ritornello

D minor C7 F major

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B Section (same text).

25

Je - sus ist - ein

A7 D minor D minor B dim.7

28

gu - terHirt, Je - sus ist - ein gu - terHirt,

C minor C minor C minor F7pp B-flat major

31

denn er hat - be - reits sein Le - ben - für - die -

cresc. poco a poco

F# dim.7 D7 G minor C7

33II

Scha - fe hin - ge - ge - ben, die - ihm Nie - mand

B-flat major C7 F major B dim.7 G7

7

36

rau - ben, Niemand rau - ben, Niemand rau

mf Word painting: Long melismas for "rob/steal."

dim.

C minor C minor

39

- ben, rau-ben wird. Je - sus ist ein

rit. *f* **A' Section. E a tempo** *p*

p *mf* *rit.* *f* *pp*

C minor C minor C minor G minor

42

gu - ter Hirt, Je - sus ist ein gu - ter Hirt, denn

mp

G minor

45

er hat be-reits sein Leben für die Schafe hinge - geben, die ihm Nie - mand

p *poco cresc.* *mf*

pp *cresc. poco a poco*

G minor G7 C minor C minor F7

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48

rau
Word painting: Even longer melisma for "rob/steal."
cresc. poco a poco
B-flat major
D7

51

ben wird, Je sus, Je sus ist ein gu ter Hirt.
f breiter rit. a tempo
G minor
Ritornello
G minor

54

mf
cresc. poco a poco
G minor G7 C minor

56II

f
C minor F7 B-flat major

59

D7 G minor G minor

(See also 104/6.) •Shepherd Psalm: Paraphrase of Psalm 23:1-2 (85/3). This is the first stanza of three in the 1598 chorale of the same name by Cornelius Becker (1561-1604). Its associated tune is also associated with the words "Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr."

3. Choral (♩ = 84)

85/3. Chorale phrase
Ob I

mf *p* *mf* *p* *Figura corta* (see note).

B-flat major B-flat major (C7)



The primary theme (introduced by pastoral oboes) is treated imitatively, presumably to depict the shepherd leading his flock (see m. 61/84).

/39

5 (86)

mf *p* *mf* *p*

F major F major (G7)

/43

9 (90)

p *cresc poco a poco* *p*

C minor D7 G minor F7

/47

13 (94)

B-flat major B-flat major

/51

17 (98)

A Sopran Chorale tune lightly ornamented...

mf *f > p* *p*

Der Herr ist mein ge-treu-er
Zur Weid' er mich, sein Schäflein,

Ob I Ob II

B-flat major D7 G minor F7

B-flat major

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21/55

Hirt,
führt,

mf

B-flat major D7 G minor G7 C minor F7 B-flat major D7

25/59

dem ich mich
auf schön-er,

cresc. *f* *p*

D7 G minor G minor

Text painting: The phrase is stretched to emphasize the words (especially appropriate for Stollen 1: "completely entrust myself"). In contrast to the performing part, the autograph score shows that Bach originally wrote a shorter version of the phrase.

29/63

ganz grü-ver-trau-ner Au

p *cresc.*

C minor F7 B-flat major F# dim.7 G minor B-flat major F7

33/67

e:
e.

f *cresc.* *mf* *mf*

B-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major F7 B-flat major B-flat major G7

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37/70

Ob I
Ob II

p *mf*

C minor B-flat 7 E-flat major F7 B-flat major D7

41/74

p *mf* *cresc. poco*

G minor F7 B-flat major B-flat major

45/78

a poco *mf*

B-flat 7 E-flat major F7 B-flat major (C7) F minor

49/82

Zum fri - schen

cresc. *f* *p*

E-flat major E-flat major E-flat major F7 G minor

53/86

Was - ser leit't er - mich,

mf

C minor C minor C7 F minor F minor F7

57/90

cresc.

B-flat minor E-flat 7 F minor C7 F minor

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61/94

mein Seele zu la-ben

F minor F7 B-flat major B-flat major

65/98

kräftig lich

B-flat major D7 G minor C7

69/102

a poco

D minor D minor D minor

73/106

durch's sel' - ge Wort der

NBA: selig

D7 G minor B-flat 7 C minor G7 C minor F7 (G minor)

78/111

Gna - den.

G minor B-flat major B-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major F7 B-flat major

p Dal Segno

The text alludes to Jesus' words in the Gospel reading (see note). However, the Gospel says the hirelings flee rather than sleep.

85/4. **4. Recitativ** • Shepherd watches sheep when hirelings sleep (85/4).

Tenor *mp*
 Wenn die Miet - lin - ge schla - fen, da wa - chet die - ser
 When the hirelings sleep, then keeps-watch this

fp dolce Strings
 Text painting: Sustained strings in low register for the sleeping hirelings.

E-flat (7) A-flat major (B-flat 7)

3
 Hirt bei sei - nen Scha - fen, so, daß ein Je - des
 shepherd by his sheep, so so that each-one

stacc. *fp*
 Text painting: Fast triplets presumably depict agitation.

E-flat major B dim.

5
 in gewünschter Ruh die Trift und Wei - de kann ge - nie - ßen, in wel - cher
 in welcome rest the meadow and pasture can enjoy, in which

B dim. 7 C minor

7
 Lebensströme fließen. Denn, sucht der Höllen - wolf gleich ein - zu - dringen, die
 streams-of-life do-flow. For, seeks the wolf-of-hell (indeed) to-break-through, the

mp *poco accel. e cresc.*
 Flowing figure *mf* *p*

D7 G minor G minor E-flat dim. 7 F minor

10
 Scha - fe zu verschlingen, so hält ihm die - ser Hirt doch sei - nen Ra - chen zu.
 sheep to devour, then holds - this shepherd indeed his jaws shut.

cresc. *mf* *p*
 Sweet modulation to A-flat major to depict God's intervening protection from the menacing jaws of the devil.

D-flat major E-flat major A-flat major A-flat major

The reference to streams of life allude to Jesus' words (see note).

The reference to the devil as a "wolf of hell" suggests several biblical passages referring to adversarial lions. 1 Peter 5:8: Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour. Daniel 6:22: My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me. 2 Timothy 4:17: The Lord stood by me and gave me strength... So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. (See also Psalm 22:21, 1 Samuel 17:34-35, Hebrews 11:33.)

Alfred Dürr writes, "The instrumental texture radiates a powerful warmth and intimacy, which is achieved by frequent parallel thirds and sixths between the obbligato part (for unison violins and violas) and the continuo, by the deep pitch of the string part, and by the simple harmony, which on several occasions touches upon the subdominant. The highly text-engendered singing of the tenor stands out against this instrumental background." See Alfred Dürr, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, translated by Richard Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 302.

85/5. **5. Arie** • Jesus as shepherd shows his love by dying for sheep (85/5).

1. **Larghetto** (♩ = 66)

Strings unison

Ritornello unrelated to vocal beginning.

p *cresc. sempre*

E-flat major B-flat 7

Form (Rhyme: AABBA)
 Ritornello (mm. 1-9) E M
 A. Lines 1-3 (9-27) E M-B M
 Rit (27-33) B M
 B. Lines 4-5 (33-49) B M-Gm
 Line 1 (50-57) E M
 Rit (57-65) E M

5 **Tenor**

The 9/8 meter underscores the pastoral context (even though the aria is the only movement with no mention of the shepherd), while parallel 3rds and 6ths between strings and continuo suggest sweetness. Peter Wollny suggests that triplets in 9/8 meter were a new phenomenon when Bach began to employ them in his Leipzig period. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yw7VdgR6q0>, accessed 26 July 2024.

poco rit. **A** *a tempo* Lines 1-3. Exclamatio (3x)

Seht!

poco rit. *a tempo*

E-flat major E-flat major

10

The tenor's part is often above the instruments...

mf

Seht! Seht, was die Lie.be tut! Seht, was die Lie.be

poco cresc. *mp*

E-flat major E-flat major

14

tut, was die Liebe tut, seht, was die Liebe tut!

p *mf* *mf* *p*

cresc. *mf*

Rhetorical pause

B *mf*

Mein Je . sus hält

Text painting: Repeated notes for "My Jesus holds."

B-flat major B-flat major

19

in zar . ter Hut die Sei . nen fe - ste ein . ge . schlos - sen, mein Je . sus

NBA: guter (each time)

p espr.

B-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major

Text painting: "hält in guter Hut" ("holds in good keeping"). The statement represents a positive version of Jesus' words in the Gospel reading, "No one shall snatch them out of my hand."

23 *guter* *ritard. mf*
 hält in **zar-ter** Hut die Sei-nenfe - ste ein-geschlos-
cresc. rit.

27 *sen. a tempo* *cresc. poco a poco*
mf Ritornello p
 B-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major F(7)

32 *D mf* Lines 4-5 (Mm. 33-49 are an extended variation of mm. 17-27.)
 In the second vocal block, the two themes are presented in reverse order.
 und ~~Er~~ hat am Kreu - - - zesstamm ver -
 B-flat major B-flat major D7 G minor

36 *p cresc. mf* *espr.*
 gos *Word painting: Melisma in triplets for "vergossen" ("poured out")* - sen für sie - sein teu-res Blut,
 G minor G major G7

40 *cresc. poco a poco*
 er hat am Kreuzes-stamm vergos - - - sen für
 C minor D7 G minor G minor

44 *f* *mf*
 sie seinteu-res Blut, sein teu-res Blut, am Kreuzesstamm für

G minor G7 C minor G minor

48 *rit.* **E** *a tempo* *mp*
 sie seinteu-res Blut. Seht! Seht! Seht, was die Liebe
 a tempo

G minor G minor E-flat major

53 *mf* *p* **Breit**
 tut! Seht, was die Liebe tut, was die Liebe tut, seht, was die Liebe
 Breit

E-flat major

57 **F**
 tut!
 a tempo

E-flat major

61 *molto rit.*
 E-flat major E-flat major

85/6. **6. Choral** • God as shepherd: I need not fear anything (85/6).

Sopran
+Ob I, II
+Vln I

Alt
+Vln II

Tenor
+Vla

Baß

mf

1. Ist Gott mein Schutz und treu - er Hirt, kein Unglück mich be - rüh - ren wird; weicht,

Ist Gott mein Schutz und treuer Hirt, kein Unglück mich be - rüh - ren wird; weicht,

Ist Gott mein Schutz und treuer Hirt, kein Unglück mich be - rüh - ren wird; weicht,

Ist Gott mein Schutz und treuer Hirt, kein Unglück mich be - rüh - ren wird; weicht,

5

C minor B-flat (7) E-flat major G major C minor

al - le mei - ne Fein - de, die ihr mir stif - tet Angst und Pein, es wird zu eu - rem

al - le mei - ne Fein - de, die ihr mir stif - tet Angst und Pein, es wird zu eu - rem

al - le mei - ne Fein - de, die ihr mir stif - tet Angst und Pein, es wird zu eu - rem

al - le mei - ne Fein - de, die ihr mir stif - tet Angst und Pein, es wird zu eu - rem

10

B-flat 7 E-flat major E-flat major E-flat major B-flat 7 G7 C minor

mf *p* *cresc. molto* *rit. f.*

Scha - den sein; ich ha - be Gott zum Freun - de, ich ha - be Gott zum Freun - de.

Scha - den sein; ich ha - be Gott zum Freun - de, ich ha - be Gott zum Freun - de.

Scha - den sein; ich ha - be Gott zum Freun - de, ich ha - be Gott zum Freun - de.

Scha - den sein; ich ha - be Gott zum Freun - de, ich ha - be Gott zum Freun - de.

mf *rit.*

G major C minor A-flat major *cresc. molto* C minor C major

The final line alludes to Jesus' words, "No longer do I call you servants...but I have called you friends..." (John 15:15).