

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 90

Form: Aria (T) - Recit (A) - Aria (B) - Recit (T) - Chorale.

The cantata is in chiasmic form. Bach often used chiasmic (x-shaped/symmetrical) forms, in which center movements (where the mirror image begins) provide the crux of the matter. There antithetical elements meet or are paradoxically inverted (formal inversion reflects an aspect of reversal or turning in the text).

J.S. Bach

Cantata No. 90

Es reißet euch ein schrecklich Ende

In dramatic terms, the cantata warns the *corpus mixtum* (Augustine's term for the Christian community—which includes both good and evil persons) that the end of the world will involve terrifying judgment but that those who repent (the "elect") will be spared. See Petzoldt, *Bach Kommentar* 1:673.

Introduction & updates at melvinunger.com.

NBA 1/27; BC A163

25. S. after Trinity (BWV 90, 116)

*1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 (Christ will return with the archangel's call and the sound of the trumpet)

*Matthew 24:15–28 (There will be great tribulation at the end of the world)

Librettist: Unknown

FP: 14 November 1723 (Leipzig: St. Thomas). This cantata is part of Bach's first Leipzig cantata cycle (see note).

1. Aria

• Judgment is imminent yet sinners disregard judge (90/1).

Possible Instrumentation: 90/1.

Tromba
Vln I, II
Vla
SATB
Continuo

Unfortunately, the autograph score (the sole original source) gives no indication regarding instrumentation, presumably strings perhaps with doubling oboes and trumpet..

Viol. I
Viol. II
Ritornello
Va.

D minor (for significance, see note). D minor

Form (Rhyme: ABCBC)

Ritornello (1-25) Dm

Lines 1-2 (3x: 25-69) Dm-Am

Rit (69-73) AM

Lines 1-2 (2x: 74-106) Am-Dm

Rit (107-129) Dm [Fine]

Line 3 (2x: 130-133) (Dm)-B M

Rit (133-138) B M

Line 3 (139-142) (B M)-Cm

Rit (142-147) Cm

Lines 4-5 (148-161) (Cm)-Gm

Rit (161-165) Gm

Lines 3-5 (165-186) Gm-B M

da capo



The threat of a frightening judgment is described in the Gospel reading. See Matthew 24:21: Then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.

D# dim.7 D7 G minor D minor (A7) D minor N6 A7...

Alfred Dürr writes, "The opening movement is an impassioned tenor aria, rich in coloraturas, in which the lively figuration and rapid scale passages of the first violin (the second violin and viola have an accompanying function) illustrate the threat of punishment for sinners. See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, p. 639.

D minor A7 B-flat major (deceptive) A7

D(7) G minor G minor D minor A7 D minor A7

Lines 1–2. (3x).

Word painting: "Reißen" literally means "to tear [apart or away," so the line could be translated:

"A terrible end will tear you away." This "tearing" is depicted with fast passagework in tenor and Vln I.

NBA: reiße

24 A Tenore

Tenor is often the voice of the herald

or narrator. Here he provides an

exegesis of the Gospel reading's account of "the end," which is p...ed by Jesu's promise that "he who endures to the end will be saved."

-fet

Strings unison. (P) "Reißen" theme with punctuating orchestra. Cont.

D minor A7 D minor D pedal...

This type of aria is called a "Devisenarie" (a term coined by Hugo Riemann) or "motto aria." After the ritonello, 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.

30

euch ein schrecklich Ende,

The suffix "hin" for "hinreißen" (i.e., tear away") does not appear until m. 50, where the upward sweep of 32nd notes depicts tearing or sweeping sinners away.

Word painting: "Schrecklich" ("frightful") is set with faltering declamation, accompanied by continuo alone.

Viol.I
Viol.II
Va.

A major...

35

es reifet

Cont.

D minor B-flat major D minor

For comments by Konrad Küster with translation, see note.

41

euch ein schrecklich Ende, ein schrecklich Ende, ihr

Vocal line is embedded in ritonello, with somewhat modified accompanying parts.

Viol.I
Viol.II
Va.

D minor D minor D minor

The suffix "hin" for "hinreißen" (i.e., tear away") does not appear until m. 50, where the upward sweep of 32nd notes depicts tearing or sweeping sinners away.

47

sündlichen Verächter, hin; es reifet

The ritonello's "tearing away" figure is overlaid...

[= m. 7.] [= m. 8.] [= m. 9.] [= m. 10.]

F# dim.7 G minor D7 G minor A7 D7

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52
8 euch ein-schreck - - lich En - de, ihr sündlichen Veräch-ter, ihr

G minor CY A7 D minor E7

57
8 sünd - - li-chen Ver-äch-ter, hin; es

Descending chromatic fourth, traditional symbol of lament for "sinful scorers." [= m. 10-17 transposed.]

hemiola

A minor A minor

62
8 rei - - fet euch ein schrecklich En - de, ihr sünd - - li-chen

Ascending chromatic fourth suggests the sinful scorers' sin is rising to full measure as referenced in the text.

A minor

68
8 Ver-äch-ter, hin; es

Ritornello

A minor

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74 Lines 1-2 (2x).

rei - - - - -

A minor F major G major C major A(7)

80

- - fet euch ein schrecklich Ende,

The ritornello's "tearing" figure is overlaid...

The fermata on a half cadence suggests the judgment is delayed (NBA has fermata over the last chord).

D minor D7 G minor A7

85

Vocal line is embedded in ritornello, with somewhat modified accompanying parts.

D es rei-fet euch ein schrecklich Ende, ein schrecklich Ende, ihr

= m. 1. = m. 2. = m. 3. = m. 4. [= m. 5.] [= m. 6.]

D minor D minor

91

sündlichen Verächter, hin; es rei-

[= m. 7.] [= m. 8.] [= m. 9.] [= m. 10.] [= m. 11.]

G minor G minor A7...

F# dim.7 D7

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96

hemiola

fet euch ein schrecklich En - de, ihr sünd - li - chen Veräch - ter,

[= m. 12.] [= m. 13.] [= m. 14.] [= m. 15.] [= m. 16.] [= m. 17.]

D minor D minor

102

hemiola

hin, ihr sünd - li - chen Veräch - ter, hin.

Singer finishes with continuo alone, like a cadenza.

Ritornello

Cont. Viol. I Viol. II Va.

B-flat major deceptive C7 F major D minor

108

D minor G minor G minor A7

F# dim.7 D7

114

D minor

119

D minor D7 G minor

125

Der Sün-den Maß ist

G minor D minor D minor G major F7 See NBA.

132

voll ge-messen, der

Biblical allusions are identified. The many allusions suggest that the librettist may have been a theologian.

Matthew 23:32-33 [Jesus]: Fill up, then, the measure (Luther 1545: Maß) of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? (Also 1 Thessalonians 2:16.)

Ritornello

F7 B-flat major B-flat major

139

Line 3.

Sün - den Maß ist voll ge - messen,

Ritornello

B dim.7 G7 C minor

145

G

Lines 4-5.

doch eu - er - ganz ver - stock - ter

C minor A7 D minor N6

151

Sinn hat sei - nes Rich - ters ganz ver - ges - sen, hat sei - nes

Viol. I
Viol. II
Va

D7 G minor G minor G7 C minor

157

Rich - ters ganz verges - sen.

hemiola

Ritornello

D major G minor D7 G minor G minor

163

H Lines 3-5.

Der Sün - den Maß ist voll - ge - mes - sen, doch

Bach emphasizes the enormity of the sin by going back to line 3 before repeating lines 4 & 5.

Cont (p)

G minor (A7) D minor

Text painting: The instruments are "forgotten" to symbolize that the impending judgment has been completely forgotten despite the enormity of the sin.

169

eu - er ganz ver - stock - ter Sinn hat sei - nes Rich - ters

E7 A minor A minor

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175

ganz ver-ges-sen, sei-nes Richters ganz ver-ges-

F7 B-flat major B-flat major

181

sen, ganz ver-ges-sen.

hemiola

B-flat major B-flat major da capo

2. Recitativo • God's kindness is in vain: no repentance produced (90/2).

90/2. 1. Alto F B-flat A D C E-flat G A-flat

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 16 mm.

Alto is often the voice of introspective faith.

Des Höchsten Güte wird von Tag zu Tage neu, der Undank aber sündigt stets auf
The Most-High's kindness is from day to day new, - Ingratitude, however, sins constantly upon

Biblical allusions are identified.

Lamentations 3:22-23. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness.

Bc. Cont.

B-flat major (F7) B-flat major B dim.7 G7

1 4. D-flat F#

Gnade. O, ein ver-zweifelt böser Schade, so dich in dein Verderben führt.
grace. Oh, a desperately bad injury, which you to your ruin leads.

C minor E dim.7 F# dim.7 G minor G minor

Jeremiah 30:12-13. Thus says the Lord: Your hurt (Luther 1545: Schade) is incurable (Luther: verzweifelt böse), and your wound is grievous.

7 E

Ach! wird dein Herze nicht ge-rührt, daß Gottes Güte dich zur wahren Buße leitet? Sein
Ah! Is your heart not stirred? That God's goodness you to true repentance leads? His

E-flat 7 C major F minor

Romans 2:4. Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Harmonic turning for the "moving of the emotions."

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10

treues Herze lässt sich zu ungezählter Wohlthat schauen: Bald läßt er Tempel aufer-
 faithful heart lets itself in countless benefits be-seen: Now lets he temples be-erected.

Zechariah 6:12-13. Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall grow up in his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord. It is he who shall build the temple of the Lord.

E-flat major E-flat major

13

Psalm 23:1-2. The Lord is my shepherd...he makes me lie down in green pastures.

bauen, bald wird die Aue zube-reitet, auf die des Wortes Manna fällt, so dich er.hält.
 now is the meadow prepared upon which the Word's manna falls, which you sustains.

Deuteronomy . 8:3. [God]...fed you with manna...that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. John 6:48, 51. [Jesus said,] "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died...I am the living bread..."

G major C minor F# dim.7 G minor F# dim.7 G minor

16

B

Jedoch, o Bosheit dieses Lebens, die Wohlthat ist an dir ver-gehens.
 Yet, Oh, (the) wickedness of (human) life, - Good-deeds are (spent) on you in-vain.

G minor G7 E7 A minor C# dim.7 G# dim.7 D minor D minor

This is the central (pivot) movement in the cantata's chastic form, where antithetical elements meet or are paradoxically inverted (formal inversion reflects an aspect of reversal or turning in the text). Because the unrepentant have made holy things into an abomination, God paradoxically judges by extinguishing his own light—the Word.

90/3. 3. Aria • Judgment: Light of Word taken from desecrated temple (90/3).

Form (Rhyme: ABCCB)
 Ritornello (mm. 1-9) B M
 Lines 1-2 (3x: 9-21) B M-FM
 Rit (21-23) FM
 Lines 3-5 (23-28) FM-Gm
 Rit (28-30) Gm
 Lines 3-5 (30-35) Gm-Dm
 Rit (35-38) Dm
 Lines 1-2 (internal repeats: 38-52) Dm-B M
 Rit (mm. 1-9) B M

Ritornello
 Vivaldi-like unison
 Rage aria with triumphant, fanfare motives (symbolic of the "last trumpet").

B-flat major

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.

3(51)

Concerto-like dialogue between trumpet and Vln I.

B-flat major E-flat major C major F major F7

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5 (56)

Trba. Viol. I Trba. Viol. I Trba. Viol. I Trba.

D major G minor B-flat major

7

Viol. I Trba. Viol. I Trba. Viol. I Trba. Viol. I

Stile concitato (see note).

B-flat major



A Basso Lines 1-2. Operatic, syllabic declamation.

Bass is often the voice of authority.

9 (60)

So löscht im Ei-fer der rä - chende Richter,

Tenor sings military fanfare motives...

Revelation 2:5 [Christ]: I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place (Luther 1545: Leuchter wegstoßen von seiner Stätte), unless you repent.

Trba. Viol. Va.

B-flat major

Sweeping 32nd notes may again symbolize the sweep of God's arm, depicting the action of Christ throwing down the lampstand (as referenced in the text here), or of Jesus driving the money traders out of the temple as referenced by an allusion to his words in mm. 26-28 (see note).

11

so lö - schet im Ei - fer der rä - chende Richter den Leuch - ter des Wor - tes zur Stra - fe doch

Psalm 119:105. Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Stile concitato

Viol. I Trba. Viol. I

B-flat major F major



13

aus, den Leuch - - ter des Wor - tes zur Stra - - - - - fe doch

F major C7

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15

aus, so lö_schet im Ei - fer der rä - chende Richter den Leuchter des Wortes zur Strafe doch

The descending judgment (extinguishing the light) is visually represented with cascading 32nd notes.

F major Stile concitato... B-flat major G major

17

aus: so lö_schet im

Rhetorical climax: As the light is extinguished, the declamatory line ends with a sudden melisma on "aus" ("out"), punctuated by the continuo, leading to a fermata.

Dramatic pause (the light is out).

C minor F major B-flat major F7 B-flat major Stile concitato...

19

Ei - fer der rä - chende Richter den Leuchter des Wortes zur Stra - fe doch aus.

C(7) F major F major

21II

Ihr müsset, o

Middle Section Lines 3-5.

F major F major

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Chromatic inflection for "Greuel" ("abomination").

24
Sünder, durch euer Verschulden den Greu - - - el an heiliger Stätte erdulden. ihr

*Matthew. 24:15-17 [Jesus]: When you see the desolating sacrilege (Luther 1545: Greuel der Verwüstung) spoken of by the prophet Daniel standing in the holy place...

Viol., Va. Cont. Viol., Va. Cont.

F# dim.7 G minor B dim.7 C minor D major

Dramatic leaps for "mörderisch" ("murderous").

26II
machtet aus Tempeln ein mörderisch Haus, ein mör - derisch Haus.

Matthew 21:13. [Jesus] said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you make it a den of robbers." (Also Mark 11:17, Luke 19:46, John 2:15, Isaiah 56:7, Jeremiah 7:11.)

G minor G minor Tutti Ritornello Stile concitato...

29
Ihr müsset, o

Lines 3-5. C

G minor G minor

Dramatic leap for "Greuel" ("abomination").

31
Sün - der, durch eu - er Verschulden den Greu - - - el an hei - liger

Viol., Va. Cont. Viol., Va. Cont.

B dim.7 C minor E dim.7 C7

33

Stätte erdulden, ihr macht aus Tempeln ein mörderisch Haus, ein mörderisch

F minor G7 C minor G minor C# dim.7 D minor A(7)

35

Haus.

Ritornello Tutti

Stile concitato...

D minor D major G minor A7 D pedal...

38

Lines 1-2. **D** Modified da capo

So löschet im Eifer der rächende Richter, im Eifer

The opening text is repeated with modified melody embedded in the ritornello.

Viol. Va. Trba.

D minor D minor Stile concitato... G7

40

der rächende Richter, so löschet im Eifer der rächende Richter, im Eifer

Viol. Trba.

C minor F7

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42

der rä - chende Richter, so löschet im Ei - fer der rä - chende Richter,

Trba.

Viol. Va.

B-flat major

44

so lö - schet im Ei - fer der rä - chende

Viol. I

Trba.

Stile concitato...

B-flat 7

E-flat 7

C7

46

Rich - ter den Leuch - ter des Wor - tes

Viol. I

Trba.

Viol. I

ZUR Trba.

F7

D major

G minor

B-flat major

47II

Stra - fe doch aus, den Leuch - ter des Wor - tes zur Stra - fe doch

Viol. I

Trba.

Viol. I

Trba.

Viol. I

Trba.

B-flat major

Singer finishes with continuo alone (like a coda), the opening reveille motive now beginning on the dominant.

49

Dramatic pause. The singer reaches the fermata before the orchestra, as giving up first.

aus; Viol. I

so löschet im Ei-fer der rä-chende

Trba.

Cont.

Stile concitato...

F7

B-flat major

51

Richter den Leuchter des Wortes zur Stra-fe doch aus.

Trba.

Viol. Va.

B-flat major

dal segno

4. Recitativo
90/4. Tenore

•Elect protected by God & Word in time of judgment (90/4).

??bookmark

1.

Doch Gottes Auge sieht auf uns als Auserwählte; und wenn kein Mensch der Feinde Menge

Yet God's eye looks on us as chosen-ones; and though no person the foe's number

Cont.

Matthew 24:22. For the sake of the elect (Luther 1545: Auserwählten) those days [of tribulation] will be shortened.

D7

G minor

A minor

F7

B-flat major

B dim.7

E-flat major

4

zählte, so schützt uns doch der Held in Israel, es hemmt sein Arm der Feinde Lauf und hilft uns

could-count, yet protects us nevertheless the champion in Israel, (now) checks his arm the foe's course and helps us

C minor

C7

F major

D7

F# dim.7

Text painting: A gradually rising line depicts the idea that "God helping us up" becomes increasingly clear in perilous times.

7

auf; des Wortes Kraft wird in Ge-fahr um soviel mehr er-kannt und offen-bar.

up; the Word's power will in peril (just) that-much more recognized and manifested (be).

G minor

C# dim.7

G# dim.7

A7

D minor

D minor

This is the last stanza of seven in the 1584 chorale "Nimm von uns Herr, du treuer Gott" by Martin Moller (1547-1606). Its references to the right hand of God and God's holy Word connect it to lines in the previous movement. The prayer to "bless and keep" is formulated on the Aaronic blessing (Deuteronomy 6:24).

The melody is the one commonly associated with Luther's 1539 vernacular versification of the "Vater unser" (Lord's Prayer).

90/5. **5. Choral** (See also 101/7.) • Prayer for blessing & spiritual protection on nation (90/5).

Note:
Autograph
score does
not indicate
instrumentation.

Soprano 1.
Leit uns mit dei-ner rechten Hand und seg-ne un-ser Stadt und Land, gib
Lead us with thy right hand and bless our city and land, give

Tenore
Leit uns mit dei-ner rechten Hand und seg - ne un - ser Stadt und Land, gib

Basso
Leit uns mit dei - ner rech - ten Hand und seg - ne un - ser Stadt und Land, gib

Text painting: Ascending scale in bass for "lead us with thy right hand," descending scale at request for blessing.

5
uns all - zeit dein heil-ges Wort, be - hüt vor Teu-fels List und Mord, ver-
us always thy holy Word, protect from the-devil's cunning and murder grant

uns all - zeit dein heil-ges Wort, be - hüt vor Teu-fels List und Mord, ver-
uns all - zeit dein heil-ges Wort, be - hüt vor Teu-fels List und Mord, ver-
uns all - zeit dein heil-ges Wort, be - hüt vor Teu-fels List und Mord, ver-

9
leih ein sel-ges Stün-de - lein, auf daß wir e - wig bei dir sein!
a blessed little-hour, so that we eternally with thee might-be

leih ein sel-ges Stün - delein, auf daß wir e - wig bei dir sein!
leih ein sel - ges Stün - delein, auf daß wir e - - - wig bei dir sein!
leih ein sel - ges Stün-de - lein, auf daß wir e - wig bei dir sein!

The surprising modulation to D-flat major for "a blessed little hour" suggests that the moment of entering God's presence is unexpected. Presumably the words refer to one's death. Martin Petzoldt suggests that it applies to the unexpected return of Christ (see *Bach Kommentar* 1:677). In this regard, it is noteworthy that Christ's return is the subject of the day's Epistle reading and serves as the background for Gospel reading.