

ARCHIVE
PRODUCTION

ARC 3067

14028 APM

ARCHIVE PRODUCTION

HISTORY OF MUSIC DIVISION OF THE DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON GESELLSCHAFT

IX. RESEARCH PERIOD

The Works of Johann Sebastian Bach

SERIES A: CANTATAS

“Vergnügte Ruh’, beliebte Seelenlust“

Cantata for the 6th Sunday after Trinity, BWV 170

Elisabeth Höngen, Alto
Heinz Schnauffer, Organ
Bayerisches Staatsorchester München
Conductor: Fritz Lehmann

“Meine Seele rühmt und preist“

Cantata BWV 189

Walther Ludwig, Tenor
Ilse Brix-Meinert, Violin · Gustav Scheck, Recorder
Hermann Töttcher, Oboe · August Wenzinger, Violoncello
Renate Noll, Harpsichord
Conductor: Fritz Lehmann

INSPECTION
TECHNICAL PERFORMANCE

IX. RESEARCH PERIOD

THE WORKS OF JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

SERIES A: CANTATAS

"Vergnügte Ruh', beliebte Seelenlust"

Cantata for the 6th Sunday after Trinity, BWV 170

"Meine Seele rühmt und preist"

Cantata BWV 189

Bach's cantatas form the nucleus of his creative work. The 220 individual numbers occupy more than half the complete edition of his works. They stand in a significantly reciprocal relationship to the other groups of works, for they either adopt their achievements (instrumental concerto, orchestral suite, fugue, organ chorale) or impose on them their own structural laws (oratorio, passion, mass). Bach worked on the cantata for more than 40 years, rhythm and creative intensity depending in each case on the commission and the occasion. Thus the Weimar cantatas blossomed from the newly-appointed orchestra leader's obligation to perform new pieces every month at the ducal chapel, and the official contract of the cantor at St Thomas' and municipal musical director led to the abundance of the Leipzig cantatas. But Arnstadt, Mühlhausen and Cöthen also contributed important works. It was at that time a modern form which Bach chose. In contrast to the motet, which was dying out and had been forced into the background, the cantata enjoyed a highly favoured position with poets, composers, performers, and audience. On the secular side the festivals and everyday life of town, court, and academic society liberally provided joyful and serious occasions; on the ecclesiastical side there was the permanent task of supplementing the clergyman's sermon in words by a sermon in music in the same spirit. Bach has performed this immense number of tasks, which are often most similar to one another, with a unique wealth of imagination. The diversity of musical characters, pictures, forms, tone-colours, and moods defies comprehension. We are continually rewarded by new joys of discovery if we penetrate into the world of the cantatas, parts of which are still little explored. The first classification into *sacred* and *secular* provides a convenient landmark by which we can find our bearings, though this is more in accordance with the textual than with the musical problems, for it is especially the unity of style in the musical forms, the precondition for the well known process of parody, which enabled the composer to translate music of secular origin to the sacred sphere merely by changing the text. The only fundamental difference between the two neighbouring types is their attitude to the chorale. If we consider the classification into *choir cantata* and *solo*

cantata, we find that the majority mixes the two forms of setting in varying proportions which, moreover, in Bach's time did not contrast one another as they do today, but constantly took one another's places. A relatively clear distinction may be found between an *older* and a *newer* type of cantata, the former consisting of a series of Bible texts set in the form of arias and choruses and linked with choral verses, while the latter introduces the modern operatic forms of recitativo secco and the da capo aria into church music.

The solo cantata for alto "Vergnügte Ruh', beliebte Seelenlust", written for the sixth Sunday after Trinity, takes as its subject some portions of the gospel (St Matthew V, 20-26) and the corresponding epistle (Romans VI, 3-11), but concerns itself mainly with sentiments of worldly scorn and longing for death. In that respect it is related to the cantata "Ich habe genug", with the similarity also extending to the structure. Frequently Bach's composition transcends the rather mediocre textual pattern. To start with, the first aria (D major) displays a perfect co-ordination of deep musical understanding and melodic beauty. Using a $12/8$ metre, Bach has an exquisite melody soar upwards over the descending ground basses, and continue in new configurations. It is a picture of content and peace of mind, with some fine colouring provided by the oboe d'amore, which has been added to the violin. The instrumental ritornello of eight bars forms the basic structure of the aria. The expressive declamatory voice part provides either a free melody in contrary motion, or is at times led by the instruments. The aria, built on the foundations of simple cadences, is rounded off by a free da capo. A passionately declaiming recitative, ending in a restrained revelation of devoutness, carries the action to the next aria in F sharp minor, where Bach, instead of the usual instruments employs only an organ with two manuals, which commonly plays only an accompanying part (in our recording the lowest part is played by an oboe d'amore). The bass proper is provided by the violins, which assert themselves with the basic theme in ostinato. The organ duet with its chromatically descending main motive shows a remarkable resemblance to the pair of

violins in the "Et incarnatus" of the Mass in B minor, the idea of divine mercy providing the spiritual link. — The softly played strings confer that refulgent celestial bliss implicit in the compassionate text to the subsequent recitative. — The main theme of the concluding aria in D major, obviously influenced by the words "Mir ekelt", confronts us with an audacious tritone (d-g sharp). Once again the organ stands out in solo performance, but is this time confined to a one-voice melody and sustained by all instruments, with which it later enters into a charming play of echo-effects. Within the diffused da-capo-form a touching climax of expression is presented by the solemn conclusion of the central section with a peacefully abating succession of tones ("woselbst ich ruhig bin").

Although the tenor solo cantata "Meine Seele rühmt und preist" has been incorporated as No. 189 in the complete Bach-edition certain doubts have arisen after careful research as to its authenticity. These are mainly based on the unsatisfactory state in which the work has been handed down to us; only a 19th century copy is available. True, the first tenor aria with its graceful instrumental arrangements (recorder, oboe, violin) charms because of its light and happy mood, yet it does not possess thematic uniformity in the vocal parts. But more than anything else it is the lack of declamatory tension and harmonic concentration in the recitatives which is particularly noticeable, while Bach displays his incomparable power of expression in those parts. The first of the two remaining arias (G minor) employs ostinato bass figures, a common device of the baroque, but in this case the possibilities of contrapuntal expression in the counter voice are scarcely exploited. The other in B flat major is scored for the same instruments as the introductory aria. Its style is conventional and it displays successions of monotonous sequences. It is therefore difficult to accept this modest cantata as a full blooded creation of Bach, although it may easily have originated near, or even under the influence of the master. The text seems to be based on the Magnificat, and it is believed that the cantata has been written for the feast of the visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Werner Neumann

This Long Play Microgroove Record can be played only on 33 RPM instruments.

For maximum enjoyment it should always be kept in this protective envelope, away from heat.