

Cantata BWV 30 Freue dich, erlöste Schar

Part I

1. Coro SATB Fl I/II, Ob I/II, Str, BC

Freue dich, erlöste Schar,
 Freue dich in Sions Hütten.
 Dein Gedeihen hat itzund
 Einen rechten festen Grund,
 Dich mit Wohl zu überschütten.

Rejoice, redeemed throng,
 rejoice within the dwellings of Zion.
 Your future prosperity has now
 a true and firm foundation
 to cover you with blessings.

2. Recitativo B BC

Wir haben Rast,
 und des Gesetzes Last ist abgetan.
 Nichts soll uns diese Ruhe stören,
 Die unsre liebe Väter oft Gewünscht, verlanget
 und gehofft.
 Wohlan,
 Es freue sich, wer immer kann,
 Und stimme seinem Gott zu Ehren
 Ein Loblied an,
 Und das im höhern Chor, Ja,
 singt einander vor!

We pause—
 and burden of the law is abolished.
 Nothing shall disturb this peace
 for which our dear forefathers often wished,
 longed and hoped.
 Well then,
 rejoice, whoever can,
 and strike up in God's honor
 a song of praise,
 and in the heavenly choir, Yes!
 sing to each other!

Explicatio: The birth of John the Baptist begins the change from the Old Testament (Law) and the New (Gospel)

3. Aria B Str, BC

Gelobet sei Gott, gelobet sein Name,
 Der treulich gehalten Versprechen und Eid!
 Sein treuer Diener ist geboren,
 Der längstens darzu auserkoren,
 Dass er den Weg dem Herrn bereit'.

Praised be to God, praised be his name,
 He who has faithfully kept his promise and oath!
 His faithful servant has been born
 he who long ago was chosen for this:
 to prepare the way for the Lord.

Dicta: Luke 1:68, 76, voice of Zacharias, John's father (*Benedictus*)

4. Recitativo A, BC

Der Herold kömmt und meldt den König an.
 Er ruft; drum säumet nicht
 Und macht euch auf
 Mit einem schnellen Lauf,
 Eilt dieser Stimme nach!
 Sie zeigt den Weg, sie zeigt das Licht,
 Wodurch wir jene selge Auen
 Dereinst gewisslich können schauen.

The herald comes and announces the king.
 He calls; therefore do not tarry,
 but get up
 and swiftly run,
 hurry after this voice!
 It shows the way, it shows the light,
 Whereby one day we shall surely
 Be able to see those blessed pastures.

Applicatio: The Faithful should heed the call

5. Aria A

Kommt, ihr angefochnen Sünder,
 Eilt und lauft, ihr Adamskinder,
 Euer Heiland ruft und schreit!
 Kommet, ihr verirrtten Schafe,
 Stehet auf vom Sündenschlafe,
 Denn itzt ist die Gnadenzeit!

Come, you sorely troubled sinners,
 hurry and run, you children of Adam,
 your Saviour calls and cries out!
 Come, you straying sheep,
 rise up out of sin's sleep,
 for now is the time of grace!

Meditation on heeding the call

6. Choral

Eine Stimme lässt sich hören
 In der Wüste weit und breit,
 Alle Menschen zu bekehren:
 Macht dem Herrn den Weg bereit,
 Machtet Gott ein ebne Bahn,
 Alle Welt soll heben an,
 Alle Täler zu erhöhen,
 Dass die Berge niedrig stehen.

A voice is heard
 far and wide in the wilderness
 to convert all mankind:
 prepare the way for the Lord,
 make a straight path for God,
 all the world should begin
 to exalt all the valleys
 that the mountains may be brought low.

Dicta: Is 40.3-4, and affirmation Chorale text by Johann Olearius set to melody from the Geneva Psalter

Part II*7. Recitativo B Ob I/II, BC*

So bist du denn, mein Heil, bedacht,
Den Bund, den du gemacht
Mit unsern Vätern, treu zu halten
Und in Genaden über uns zu walten;
Drum will ich mich mit allem Fleiß
Dahin bestreben,
Dir, treuer Gott, auf dein Geheiß
In Heiligkeit und Gottesfurcht zu leben.

8. Aria B Obda, V solo, Str, BC

Ich will nun hassen
Und alles lassen,
Was dir, mein Gott, zuwider ist.
Ich will dich nicht betrüben,
Hingegen herzlich lieben,
Weil du mir so genädig bist.

9. Recitativo S BC

Und obwohl sonst der Unbestand
Den schwachen Menschen ist verwandt,
So sei hiermit doch zugesagt:
Sooft die Morgenröte tagt,
Solang ein Tag den andern folgen läßt,
So lange will ich steif und fest,
Mein Gott, durch deinen Geist
Dir ganz und gar zu Ehren leben.
Dich soll sowohl mein Herz als Mund
Nach dem mit dir gemachten Bund
Mit wohlverdientem Lob erheben.

10. Aria S Violini all' unisono, BC

Eilt, ihr Stunden, kommt herbei,
Bringt mich bald in jene Auen!
Ich will mit der heiligen Schar
Meinem Gott ein' Dankaltar
In den Hütten Kedar bauen,
Bis ich ewig dankbar sei.

11. Recitativeo Tenor, BC

Geduld, der angenehme Tag
Kann nicht mehr weit und lange sein,
Da du von aller Plag
Der Unvollkommenheit der Erden,
Die dich, mein Herz, gefangen hält,
Vollkommen wirst befreiet werden.
Der Wunsch trifft endlich ein,
Da du mit den erlösten Seelen
In der Vollkommenheit
Von diesem Tod des Leibes bist befreit,
Da wird dich keine Not mehr quälen.

Coro Fl I/II, Ob I/II, Str, BC

Freude dich, geheiligte Schar,
Freue dich in Sions Auen!
Deiner Freude Herrlichkeit,
Deiner Selbstzufriedenheit
Wird die Zeit kein Ende schauen.

Since you, my Saviour, are intent on faithfully
keeping the covenant
you made with our fathers
and on ruling over us in grace,
I then, with all diligence,
shall strive to live for you,
faithful God, at your bidding,
in holiness and fear of God.

I will now hate
and forsake everything
that is offensive to you, my God.
I will not grieve you
but instead heartily love you
since you are so gracious to me.

And although usually inconstancy
is part of human weakness,
let a promise be now made:
As often as dawn becomes day,
as long as one day follows another,
so long will I, steadfast and firm,
my God, through your Spirit,
live completely for your honour.
Both my heart and mouth,
according to the covenant,
shall extol you with well deserved praise.

Hurry, you hours, come here,
bring me soon to yonder pastures!
With the sacred host I will
build an altar of thanks for my God
in the tents of Kedar
so that I may always be grateful.

Patience! the delightful day
can no longer be far and distant,
when, from all the troubles
of the earth's imperfection which holds you
captive, my heart,
you will be set completely free.
Your wish at last will come true
When you, with the redeemed souls
in perfection,
are freed from this death of the body,
When misery can no longer torment you.

Rejoice, sacred host,
rejoice in Zion's pastures!
The glory of your joy,
your perfect contentment
will, in its time, see no end.

Gen 9:9 And behold, I
establish my covenant
with you, and with
your seed after you

Kedar, one of 12 Arab
tribes descended from
Ishmail. See Gen
12:25; In Is 60.7 & Ez
27.21, wealthy Arab
traders

Conductor's Notes

BWV 30 *Freu dich, erlöste Schar*, a cantata for the feast of St. John the Baptist, was first performed on June 24, in 1738 or 1739. The music for the chorus and the four arias are parodies from BWV 30a *Angenehmes Wiederau*, a laudatory serenata first performed on September 18, 1737, to celebrate one of Leipzig's town officials on his appointment as feudal lord of an estate just outside Leipzig.

Theological foundation

Bach and his librettist (likely Picander) focus on the birth of John the Baptist as the first step in the process of salvation. The church views this as the turning point at which the Law of the Old Testament begins to give way to the Gospel of the New. In the first recitative (#2), the bass announces:

We pause—and the burden of the Law is abolished.

The first lesson of the day is Isaiah 40:1–5, the Old Testament reference that establishes John as herald for the messiah:

3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. (KJV)

The gospel of the day is Luke 1:57–80, the *benedictus* sung by Zacharias, father of John the Baptist, at the birth of his son. Two verses of the latter are paraphrased in the first bass aria (#3); the text for the chorale (#6) is a versification by Johann Olearius (1611–1684) of the Isaiah text.

The four stages of Lutheran worship, common to the 17th and 18th century religious study, are integrated into Part I, although not in the prescribed order.

Stage 1. Scripture	#3 bass aria (Luke 1:68 & 76) and #6 chorale (Isaiah 40:2-3)
Stage 2. Interpretation	#2 bass recitative, the pause between Old Testament and New
Stage 3. Application	#4 and 5, alto recitative and aria, the Faithful should heed the call
Stage 4. Affirmation	#6 chorale, the prophecy fulfilled

I think that Bach intended Part I as a call to the Faithful to heed the lessons of Scripture—and that Part II is the response of the Faithful to that call. The bass recitative (#7) cites the Old Testament covenant that God made with humanity after the Flood (Gen 9:9) with a pledge to “strive to live for” God; the promise becomes more specific in the bass aria (#8), “I will forsake everything that offends you,” and in the soprano recitative (#9), “I will live completely for your honor.” In the soprano aria (#10), Bach offers a meditation on salvation in which the Faithful yearn for death and the ensuing freedom for the soul; in the tenor recitative (#11), the soul is promised that death and salvation will come.

With the cantata opening and closing with the same joyful chorus, the structure of the whole can be represented as follows:

PART I Scripture, Interpretation, application, affirmation					PART II Faithful response		
1	2	3	4, 5	6	7, 8, 9	10, 11	12
Chorus	Bass recit	Bass aria	Alto recit and aria	Chorale	Bass recit and aria, Soprano aria	Soprano aria, Tenor recit	Chorus
Rejoice	Pause between OT & NT	Zacharias <i>Benedictus</i> (Luke)	Call to Faithful to heed cry	Church: affirmation (Isaiah)	Resolve to keep Covenant	Meditation on and assurance of salvation	Rejoice

Music Notes

Dance meters. Clearly Bach considered dance music to be wholly appropriate in Lutheran worship. This cantata could even be called a dance suite. The opening and closing chorus is a gavotte-like rondo (ABAB'A) with syncopated rhythms. The first bass aria is a lively *passpied* in triple meter with rolling triplet roulades that pass from voice to upper strings to continuo. The alto aria, like the chorus, is gavotte-like; here Bach combines syncopations similar to those of the chorus with triplet roulades that echo the bass aria. The second bass aria is a lively *gigue*, and the soprano aria, in 9/8, is *bouree*-like.

Affects. The cantata moves from the joyful D major of the chorus through its related keys (G major, A major, b minor, e minor). In the terms of 17th and 18th century tonal allegory, the number of sharps in a signature, rather than the signature itself, points to whether the affect of the aria tends toward the human (fewer sharps) or the divine (more sharps). The first bass aria (#3 in G major, one sharp) is sung in the voice of Zacharias, a human praising God. The alto aria (#5 in A major, three sharps) is a divine voice calling the Faithful to follow. In the bass aria of Part II (#8 in B minor, two sharps), the human voice is striving toward the divine, while in the soprano aria (#10 in E minor, one sharp), the yearning of the human voice seems to be measuring the distance between the heaven of the future and the earth of the present. So I see the tonality of the whole as a clearly thought-out scheme of descent and ascent from the celebratory D major

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
###					Aria (divine)	Chorale						
##	Cho	Recit		Recit				Aria (human)	Recit		Recit	Cho
#			Aria (human)				Recit			Aria (human)		

Specific affects. I am always interested in which words of any given movement Bach chooses to emphasize and what musical devices he uses to make that emphasis. Here are some of the most noteworthy in this cantata.

#2, bass recitative. Bach interprets the pause between the Old Testament (Law) and the New Testament (Gospel) by contrasting long held notes in the continuo followed by 16th-note arpeggios that march steadily forward.

#3, bass aria. Bach uses a mid-phrase fermata to emphasize “schreit/cries out” (m 93); for the phrase “The way of the Lord,” Bach creates increasingly challenging melismas for “weg/way” (mm 82–84, 106–109, 113–116), followed by an *adagio* melisma for “Herrn/Lord.”

#5, alto aria. Bach has the alto hold “Screit/cries out” with the instruments continuing movement (mm 42–48) and then calls for a fermata hold (m 108) on the word just before the final cadence.

#8, bass aria. In the A section, Bach uses a long held note for “lassen/abandon” (mm 46–48) and in the B section, the same held note for “gnadig/gracious” (mm 137–138).

#10, soprano aria. Bach uses another mid-phrase fermata to emphasize “Auen/pastures,” the metaphor for the heaven that will come after death. He also sets “eilt/hurry” in smaller and smaller mensural units; *i.e.*, quarter notes separated by rests (mm 13–14), eighth-note arpeggios (mm 15 and 19), ascending eighth-note runs (mm 20–21), and finally ascending sixteenth-note runs (mm 35–39) to subtly convey urgency as the Faithful call for the hours to hurry by. As Phil reminded us, the final series of sixteenth note runs echoes the ascending runs that Bach used in the St. John Passion for the bass aria “Hurry to Golgotha.”