INTERPRETING BACH:
SONATA NO. 3 IN C MAJOR FOR SOLO VIOLIN

A Thesis
Presented to
The Graduate Faculty of The University of Akron

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Music

Hannah Kreutzfeldt
August, 2014
INTERPRETING BACH:

SONATA NO. 3 IN C MAJOR FOR SOLO VIOLIN

Hannah Kreutzfeldt

Thesis

Approved:      Accepted:
Dr. Brooks Toliver     Dr. Chand Midha

Dean of the College

Dean of the Graduate School

Mr. Alan Bodman     Dr. George R. Newkome

School Director
Dr. Ann Usher

Date
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF CONTENTS</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Luther and Music</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Luther, Bach, and the Baroque</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Baroque Rhetoric and Affect</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Rhetoric, Affect, and Bach</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. UNACCOMPANIED BACH</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Six Sonatas and Partitas for Unaccompanied Violin</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Sonata No. 3 in C Major, S.1005</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Chorale melody: Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Cantata</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Cantata in the Lutheran Church</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Chorale Melody in Bach’s Compositions</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Vocal Works</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Instrumental Works</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. THEOLOGY AND SYMBOLISM IN BACH’S MUSIC</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Rhythm and Form</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Pattern of Tonal Ascent and Descent in the Six Sonatas and Partitas</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Sonata No. 3, Fugue, S. 1005</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Organ Canzona, BWV 588</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Cantata 59, BWV 59</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Sonata No. 3, Fugue, S. 1005</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Sonata No. 3, Fugue, S. 1005</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Cantata 59, BWV 59</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Helga Thoene, Tonal Structure of the Six Sonatas and Partitas</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>St. Matthew Passion, S. 244</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The unaccompanied instrumental music of Bach is often regarded as a mere pedagogical exercise rather something of theological importance. Modern musicians tend to classify works as either “secular” or “sacred,” attributing little if any religious meaning to works lacking an overtly religious text. In recent years, historically informed performers have sought to recreate the spirit of the music and convey a sense of its original intent. However, this is often done without regard for Bach’s theological context. A proper understanding of Bach’s belief system and its manifestation in his sacred vocal compositions is crucial for interpreting the instrumental works. Consequently, this thesis evaluates relevant vocal works and their interpretive application for performing the \textit{Sonata no. 3} in C major for solo violin, S. 1005. Ultimately it suggests that Bach’s unaccompanied instrumental music contains deliberately chosen theological themes and is fundamentally sacred in nature.
Luther’s philosophy of music was based upon the scripture “Let everything that has breath, praise the Lord.” He intended for every talent, gift and ability to be fully cultivated and employed in worshipping God and bringing Him glory. This philosophy is especially apparent in Luther’s composition and dissemination of hymns. Luther often expounded on the proclamatory role of music:

The Word should be read, sung, preached, written and set in poetry. Wherever it may be helpful and beneficial, I should gladly have it rung out by all bells and played on all organ pipes and proclaimed by everything that makes a sound.

Luther believed that music had the ability to reveal the character and nature of God through its structure, content and performance. As a revelation of God’s character and nature it was able to affect change in the minds and hearts of its hearers, drawing them closer to their Savior. In his letter to Ludwig Senfl in 1530, Luther reasoned that the psalmists themselves had understood this principle, and their musical worship was an outward manifestation of their relationship with God and their knowledge of Him. Luther stated that the psalmists “attached their theology not to geometry, nor to

---

1 Loewe, Andreas. *Why do Lutheran’s Sing?* 27. WA 19: 73, 22-25: ‘Umb solcher willen mus man lessen, singen, predigen, schreyben undtichen, und wo es hulfflich und fodderlich dazu were, wolt ich lassen mit allen glocken dazuleutten und mit allen orgeln pfeyffen und alles klingen lassen, was klingen kunde.’
arithmetic, nor astronomy, but to music, speaking truth through psalms and hymns.”² As such, music was to be “accorded the greatest honor and a place next to theology.”³ This philosophy made the responsibility of composers and poets equal to that of the theologian.⁴ Music was designed to convey biblical truths, for “God has preached the Gospel also through music.”⁵ Thus, those employed in creating and performing music were to use their gifts for the purpose of glorifying God, proclaiming His grace and mercy. In so doing, composers enabled the listener to “obtain a glimpse of the beauty of God’s kingdom.”⁶ They were to embellish and ornament their tunes “in wonderful ways and sounds, and so to lead others...into a heavenly dance.”⁷

In addition to declaring the Word of God, Luther valued the emotional and aesthetic qualities of music. “Like no other art or academic discipline, music was able to sway human emotions and ‘rule over the feelings of the human heart.’”⁸ It was a means

² Loewe, Andreas. *Why do Lutherans Sing?* 2. Quotes Luther to Ludwig Senfl, 1 October 1530, WA Br 5: 639, 17-20, no. 1727: ‘Hinc factum est, ut prophetae [Luther consistently referred to psalm writers as prophets], nulla sic arte sint usiut musica, dum suam theologiam non in geometriam, non in arithmeticam, non in astronomiam, sed in musicam digesserunt.’


We later see the outward manifestation of this injunctive in the music of Bach, the ornamentation King.

of cheering the “sad or sluggish spirit” and thereby inspiring devotion.\textsuperscript{9} Luther stated: “Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world. It controls our thoughts, minds, hearts, and spirits...”\textsuperscript{10} He commented that music had been effectual in motivating him to preach.\textsuperscript{11} In this way, music was “powerful and mighty,” able to “overcome and rule human beings in the same way that their masters do.”\textsuperscript{12}

This ideology was espoused by later German writers who praised music’s ability to “appeal to the emotions.”\textsuperscript{13} The German theologian Johann Conrad Dannhawer lauded music’s ability to “awaken the spirit, encourage devotion, divert the mind and emotions from worldly cares, [and] make the heart calm and capable of receiving the divine afflatus and movement through the accompaniment of the Word.”\textsuperscript{14} In the pulpit, preachers such as Conrad Dietrerich (1624) sought to justify the presence of instrumental music within the liturgy. Dietrerich argued that instrumental music had the power to change the minds and hearts of men. The use of different modes could alter the congregation’s emotions and change their attitude toward the message. Music could “awaken Christian devotion, drive away melancholy, calm the restless spirit, and thereby

\textsuperscript{9} Irwin, Joyce. "So Faith Comes from What Is Heard": The Relationship between Music and God's Word in the First Two Centuries of German Lutheranism.” \textit{Resonant Witness: Conversations between Music and Theology}. 68-69.

\textsuperscript{10} Harrell, Robert D. \textit{Martin Luther, His Music, His Message}. 5. Cites Martin Luther’s Forward to George Rhau’s \textit{Symphoniae} (1538).


\textsuperscript{12} Loewe, Andreas. \textit{Why do Lutherans Sing}? 3. WA 50: 371, 16-8: ‘Ein Regiererin, jr mechtig vnd gewaltig ist, durch welche doch oftmalsdie Menschen, gleich als von jrem Herren, regiert vnd vberwunden werden’.

\textsuperscript{13} Irwin, Joyce. \textit{Resonant Witness: Conversations between Music and Theology}. 69.

\textsuperscript{14} Irwin, Joyce. \textit{Resonant Witness: Conversations between Music and Theology}. 70. Cites Johann Conrad Dannhawer, \textit{Catechismusmilch, oder Der Erklärung deß Christlichen Catechismi} (Strassburg, 1642-72), VIII: 547
prepare a person to praise God joyfully.”¹⁵ In this manner, music participated in a threefold purpose. First, music communicated doctrinal truths. Second, it fixed them securely in the minds of the hearers. Third, music combined the “emotional power of sound with the spiritual power of God’s Word in such a way as to affect the soul.”¹⁶

Within the Lutheran tradition, music was not restricted to a liturgical function. Rather, Luther “regarded all music, both religious and secular, as God’s creature.”¹⁷ This philosophy eventually lead to the inclusion of “secular-style” music within the liturgy. Luther himself wrote many hymns using popular secular tunes and it was a common practice in the sixteenth century.¹⁸ Set to popular melodies, Luther’s hymns were accessible to the general public and overcame social, educational, and economic divides.¹⁹ Furthermore, combining sacred words with secular melodies facilitated memorization and the congregation could quickly learn new texts. In setting sacred text to secular music, Luther sought to redeem bawdy tunes from their service to Satan like Christ redeemed the Church from its slavery to sin.²⁰

In an age of rampant illiteracy, popular songs were an effective way to broadcast Luther’s message of salvation by grace to the masses. The hymns spread rapidly by

---


¹⁶ Irwin, Joyce. Resonant Witness: Conversations between Music and Theology. 71.


¹⁸ Harrell, Robert D. Martin Luther, His Music, His Message. 34-36.

¹⁹ Loewe, Andreas. Why do Lutherans Sing? 6

²⁰ Ephesians 2:1-5
“word of mouth, letter and broadsheet” throughout Germany and Europe, even to Catholic provinces where the writings of Luther had been banned.21

Since his sacred songs were carried to people in far-away places by letter, as well as in the souls and minds of pious Christians, it was not as easy to block their progress as [it was to intercept Luther’s] books and writings.22

Ultimately, Luther’s hymns enabled him to reach Catholic communities with his reformed message. For example, the town of Magdeburg was staunchly Catholic prior to the appearance of Luther’s hymns Aus tiefer Not and Es woll uns Gott in 1524. Brought by a traveling peddler, the hymns were immediately popular and spread rapidly. The town records of May 1524 state:

Husband and wife, young women and men, so many people learnt [Luther’s hymns] that his German hymns and psalms became so well known that they were sung by the people daily in all churches before the sermons commenced, publicly, over and over again.23

The invasion of Luther’s hymns and their ever-increasing popularity did a yeoman’s work for the reformation, effectively preparing the minds and hearts of men before Luther arrived in the city.24

---


During the second half of the sixteenth century, educational reforms in the Lutheran school system made music education an integral part of the curriculum. Children from every societal sphere were taught to sing psalms as part of their daily routine. School ordinances from Württemberg in 1559 indicate that “even working children” were taught “…to read and write for their own benefit and the benefit of others and, so that they may be better educated and brought up as Christians, and be taught the singing of psalms at the same time.” Thus, the Lutheran educational system was grounded in biblical principles and used music to further its ideology. The system’s purpose was to transform German society through the education of its children. Having taught the children, the children would in turn teach the parents. Within one generation, the local culture would be transformed to view the world through Protestant eyes.

B. Luther, Bach, and the Baroque

By the time of Bach’s birth, northern Germanic culture possessed a distinctly Lutheran heritage and Reformation ideology permeated every area of society. This was particularly true of the province of Thuringia, Luther’s birthplace. According to Malcolm Boyd, the spiritual influence of Luther remained present throughout Thuringia even into Bach’s era. It was in Thuringia, “The heart of Luther country,” that Bach was raised

---


26 Loewe, Andreas. Why do Lutherans Sing? 16-17.

two centuries later. Bach even attended Luther’s alma mater, the Lateinschule in Eisenach.

Just as Bach’s culture was saturated with the religious legacy of Luther, his education also emphasized the importance of a biblical foundation. According to Charles Terry, Bach’s education consisted of both academic and religious subjects:

In Quinta he studied the Catechisms, Psalms, and Bible, history, writing, and reading, particularly the Gospels and Epistles in German and Latin...In Quarta Sebastian studied the German Catechism and Psalter, Latin declensions, conjugations, and vocabulary.

It was here that Bach was introduced to the writings of Leonhard Hutter (1563-1616), the “Stout champion of Lutheran orthodoxy.” Hutter’s writings formed the basis for much of the school curriculum and through them Bach “became intimately acquainted with the most essential details of orthodox Lutheran theology.” Thus, Bach’s early education provided the theological foundation for his musical achievements.

While the outward facts of Bach’s life are relatively clear, his faith has been the subject of much controversy. Scholars have sought to determine the motivation behind Bach’s compositions, and their scholarly discussion can be broken into two primary arguments. The first argument holds that Bach’s role as a composer was subordinate to his identity as a Christian. Proponents of this viewpoint contend that Bach’s employment

---

28 Stapert, Calvin. My Only Comfort: Death Deliverence, and Discipleship in the Music of Bach. 7.


30 Terry, Charles Sanford. Bach: A Biography. 28.

31 Stapert, Calvin. My Only Comfort: Death, Deliverance, and Discipleship in the Music of Bach. 9.

was simply a vehicle through which to expound the tenets of his faith. The second argument provides a more integrated and balanced view of the composer’s beliefs and his employment as a musician. It neither neglects the importance of Bach’s faith nor does it place his vocation in a subordinate role. This argument finds full support in evidence drawn from primary sources, and its validity can be illustrated in Bach’s treatment of the unaccompanied sonatas and partitas. Centuries later, Paul Hindemith would acknowledge the presence of faith intertwined with music in the compositions of J.S. Bach.

And the art of composing itself? To devout musicians it was a means of praising God and letting the congregation of listeners participate in the praise. That the work is created to the honor of the highest being we sense with many composers, but seldom so forcefully as with Bach, to whom the “Jesu juva” in his partiturs was no empty formula.33

It was this inclusion of faith in the daily task that could transform a lowly work into the fulfillment of a higher calling. To the Lutheran mind, work was not separated into sacred or secular context. All work was sacred because it was the work for which the saint had been called, ordained, and prepared. As such, even the task of composing secular music could become a sanctified work, a “good work,” prepared in advance for the composer to do.34 In this way, even secular music could be composed for the glory of God. An example of this transformational process can be seen in the development of the contrafacta, an early type of chorale. According to Robert Harrell, the contrafacta were “‘parodies’ of secular songs, in which the given melody was retained but the text was


34 Ephesians 2:10 “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”
either replaced by completely new words or else was altered so as to give it a properly spiritual meaning.”35 The famous hymn *O Sacred Head Now Wounded* is one such case, the melody having first originated in Hassler’s Lied *Mein Gmuth ist mir verwirret* (My peace of mind is shattered by a tender maiden’s charms) during the Middle Ages.36

This musical redemption process was opposed vigorously by some. As Erdmann Neumeister articulated in the preface to his first year’s cycle of cantata texts, “Many would be vexed in spirit and ask how sacred music and opera can be reconciled, any more than Christ and Belial, or light and darkness.”37 And yet, he argued, music performed in the service of God went through a refiner’s fire, a purifying process, which cleansed it from the filth of the secular world. Indeed, secular music’s conversion for use in the church was considered a type of sanctification and symbolic of the sinner’s conversion and resultant sanctification.

Thus, devoted Lutherans sought to illustrate and illuminate the grace of God in every aspect of daily living. No task was too secular, small or mean that it could not be done wholeheartedly for the glory of God. For Bach, this purpose is reflected in his inclusion of the text “Soli Deo Gloria” and “Jesu juva” within the manuscripts.38 Albert Schweitzer attributes the use of these Latin phrases to Bach’s Lutheran theology and his understanding of music, declaring them to be the “Credo that runs through all his

35 Harrell, Robert D. *Martin Luther, His Music, His Message*. 34-36.
36 Harrell, Robert D. *Martin Luther, His Music, His Message*. 4
work.” If this was truly the case, music and religion could not coexist independently within Bach’s heart and mind. Instead, one must inevitably color the other. Even in teaching, it is apparent that Bach’s theology prompted his work. In expounding the basic rules of accompaniment for a class of students, Bach opined:

Figured bass is the most perfect foundation of music. It is executed with both hands in such a manner that the left hand plays the notes that are written, while the right adds consonances and dissonances thereto, making an agreeable harmony for the glory of God and the justifiable gratification of the soul. Like all music, the figured bass should have no other end and aim than the glory of God and the recreation of the soul; where this is not kept in mind there is no true music, but only an infernal clamor and ranting.

Here Bach goes straight to the heart of the matter: if the motivation and focus of a composer is anything less than the glory of God and the edification of man, the result must be a failure. He references 1 Corinthians 13:1, “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging symbol.” The heart motive of the man must be right or the work is for naught. No influence can be gained or eternal purpose accomplished unless the work is wrought with the strength of Christ and the focus remains Christ himself.

Bach’s cultural context has set a historical precedent for this interpretation. Furthermore, Bach’s contemporary critics often link his theology and his music, attributing his motivation to religious zeal. They understood and interpreted Bach’s music within a Lutheran context and were heirs to the “ancient tradition of seeing music


41 Fink argues as much in Beyond Structural listening?: Postmodern Modes of Hearing. Chapter 4.
as articulating the divinely gifted order of the cosmos.”

Although the strength of this tradition may have diminished in Bach’s time, it nonetheless remains significant. Therefore it is important that any modern interpretation of Bach’s music also take into consideration its cultural and religious context.

C. Baroque Rhetoric and Affect

Any discussion of cultural context must also take into account the Baroque ideals of rhetoric, affect, and ultimately musical allegory. During the Baroque era, literacy was the exception rather than the rule. According to Joel Lester, formal education was “reserved for the relative few whose social or professional status demanded it.” While Baroque education stressed literacy, it also emphasized the importance and study of rhetoric. Following in the Classical Greek tradition, Baroque culture placed a high priority on an individual’s ability to manipulate and move audiences through the structure and intonation of persuasive speech. This priority was reflected in the education of choir boys within the Lutheran church tradition. German church musicians were often employed in positions that required not only performing and composing, but also teaching. Their teaching duties included music fundamentals, sight-singing, Latin and rhetoric. This joint study of rhetoric and music reflects a Baroque understanding that musical performances were a form of oratory. According to Lester, both orations and


43 Irwin, Joyce. Neither Voice nor Heart Alone. Especially chapters 4, 11.


musical compositions were required to “state and develop an idea; neither should bring in extraneous, unrelated matters.” \(^{46}\) Both the composition and the oration should capture the audience’s interest while spontaneous variation should “strategically reawaken any lagging attention.” \(^{47}\) In music composition, rhetorical figures and affective textures functioned as devices of musical expression. \(^{48}\) In his discussion of Baroque rhetoric and affect, Eggebrecht states that although the two are not dissimilar, “rhetorical figures represent specific concrete sentiments, whereas affective musical textures attempt to portray more general emotional states.” \(^{49}\) Rhetorical figures in music “attempt to portray concrete objects, attitudes, specific matters or circumstances” such as grace, salvation, or the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Affective textures deal with the palette of human emotion. \(^{50}\) Although rhetoric and affect are two separate means of musical representation, affective musical textures occasionally find their origin in musical-rhetorical figures. For example, the rhetorical sigh figure can be used to create the affect of longing. \(^{51}\)

Therefore, composers used rhetorical expression and musical affect to influence the listener. However, this was never done in a mechanical manner. Rather, they treated music as a living organism and developed a musical character using various devices. As


Eggebrecht points out, “the study of affections and their associated musical textures was considered a guide to the way certain musical situations influence a listener’s emotions.” Composers’ use of affective textures was neither regulated nor obligatory. Instead, they could use any compositional device in an attempt to “associate musical passages with particular emotional states.” In manipulating the affection, composers sought to categorize musical figures. This provided a tangible means of altering the intangible, thereby changing the minds and hearts of men.

The composer’s development of affect in composition was simultaneous with their development of Baroque rhetorical devices in music. This was especially true for German Baroque composers who possessed the theological, historical, and practical means necessary for the full development of a musical rhetoric. The composer-rhetorician analyzed and defined his “linguistic source” before forming its musical equivalent. The composer’s job was to depict, elaborate on, and illuminate the text. As Bartel explains:

This process included a search for analogies between text and music, frequently involving complicated and at times obscure exegetical devices. A divinely ordered universe would guarantee the possibility of rationally explaining not only the mathematical and affection-arousing aspects of musical theory but also the rhetorical-linguistic principles of musical composition.

---


Music has existed as a persuasive device throughout the ages. During the Renaissance, word painting became increasingly popular as composers sought to illustrate text with the appropriate musical figure. This popularity would increase in the Baroque era as composers used rhetorical devices and musical affections in their works. Thus the societal emphasis placed on Greek ideals heavily influenced the realm of music composition from the Renaissance through the Baroque era. However, it was during the early Baroque that composers began to concretely define and categorize elements of musical expression according to affect. Compositional practices were increasingly “conformed to aesthetic demands for musical expression that was highly dependent on text.”\textsuperscript{57} Consequently, composers of both secular and sacred music began to develop a systematic method of manipulating listener response. Within the church, the importance of appropriate harmony was emphasized because it had the power to “draw their thoughts to spiritual matters” and move the affections of the listener.\textsuperscript{58} Church leaders valued music’s ability to prepare the congregation to receive the sermon, making them receptive to the message and the Spirit’s influence. This was particularly true of those advocating the Neumeister reforms. Scheibel, a staunch Lutheran around the turn of the eighteenth century, argued that “So long as their affections have been moved just once by well-performed harmony...they can easily last through the sermon because they have already been prepared for it.”\textsuperscript{59}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Eggebrecht, Hans Heinrich. \textit{J.S. Bach's The Art of Fugue: The Work and Its Interpretation.} 74.
\item Irwin, Joyce. \textit{Neither Voice nor Heart Alone.} 134.
\item Irwin, Joyce. \textit{Neither Voice nor Heart Alone.} 134.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Although musical-rhetorical devices were categorized to some extent by Baroque composers, the musical figures were often flexible and could represent more than one affection. The various figures were to be used in conjunction with an “appropriate” tempo indication, thus effectively triggering a certain affect. Often the tempo indication was a Baroque dance. The Baroque dances portrayed affective characteristics in a manner similar to that of a play actor. Hence the Baroque suite became a “series of dance movements ordered and determined by affection.”60 The dance suite and its correlative affections would eventually become a governing force in determining the structure of both sacred and secular, instrumental and vocal music.61 However, rhetorical figures could also be “too closely associated with a specific meaning” as Stapert accuses some early scholars of doing, notably Albert Schweitzer.62 Schweitzer categorized the rhythmic figure of an eighth note plus two sixteenth notes as J.S. Bach’s representation of joy. Although Bach used this figure often in “situations of joy” Stapert asserts that it is “simply a rhythmic figure that could be used for rhetorical effect in a variety of situations.”63 He cites as evidence the St. John Passion where the rhythmic figure is used in the “Let him be crucified choruses.”64 Although Stapert insists that the rhetorical figure must have an alternative meaning here (why would joy be represented in “Let him

be crucified?"), the rhythmic representation of joy is entirely appropriate considering the scriptural context.65

D. Rhetoric, Affect, and Bach

Plantinga has argued that Bach intends to evoke compassion and conviction in the listener, inspiring them to imitate the Christ. Each response illustrates an element of the Christian faith: compassion, through sharing in the sufferings of Christ; conviction, through an acknowledgement of individual sin and the need for redemption; and imitation, through shouldering the cross and following Christ.66 In this way, Bach seeks to the “underscore the cost of human redemption” and “create a keen awareness of what Christ has undertaken on behalf of humanity.”67 This is nowhere more clearly seen than in his composition of the Six Sonatas and Partitas for Unaccompanied Violin.

---

65 Hebrews 12:2. “And yet, for the joy set before him he endured the cross.” Shows Lutheran dichotomy of sorrow and joy, life and death coexisting in the person of Christ. (Emphasis added)


CHAPTER III

UNACCOMPANIED BACH

A. Six Sonatas and Partitas for Unaccompanied Violin

The six sonatas and partitas were composed during Bach’s tenure at Cöthen under the staunch Calvinist Prince Leopold of Anhalt. As Cappelmeister for a Calvinist, Bach’s organ and composition skills were not required for the religious services. Instead, Bach spent his time composing instrumental works such as the Six Sonatas and Partitas (1720), the Brandenburg Concertos (1721) and the first volume of the Well-Tempered Clavier (1722). The year Bach completed the sonatas and partitas is also the year that his wife Maria Barbara died.68

According to Lester, the Six Sonatas and Partitas were intended for both performance and educational purposes.69 They represent the vast scope of possibilities available to the Baroque violinist, demanding the highest level of technical facility and musicianship. The set can be divided into three pairs, each featuring a sonata and partita. The three sonatas were composed in the sonata da chiesa (church-sonata) genre: slow movement, fugue, slow movement, fast finale. The three partitas were composed in the sonata da camera (chamber-sonata) genre: a varied collection of French dance

---


movements. Each work is distinct from the others in a variety of ways, none more so than the third sonata. While the first movements of the first two sonatas are comprised of high ornamented melodies supported by underlying chordal harmonies, the first movement of the third sonata is different. It features chordal repetition driven by a “hypnotically recurring dotted rhythm.”70 The fugues of the three sonatas also provide a contrast. The motivic material of the first two fugues is short and rhythmically driven. The generative material for the third fugue is melodic in nature, derived from the Lutheran chorale Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott. The length of the motivic material is mirrored in the length of the fugues. The fugue from the third sonata spans a massive 354 measures while the previous fugues are 94 and 289 measures respectively. The three slow movements of the sonatas provide additional contrast, featuring a through-composed siciliana and largo, and an andante with two repeated sections.71

B. Sonata No. 3 in C Major, S. 1005

The opening Adagio of the C major Sonata follows directly on the heels of the D minor Ciaccona. In the entire collection, this is the only place that the subsequent sonata or partita is begun on the same page as the previous sonata or partita. As Stroh notes, the result is that “a conjunction of minor and major keys occurs.”72 The Ciaccona ends with a quotation of the Easter chorale melody Christ lag in Todesbanden (“Christ Jesus Lay in


Death’s Bands”) while the Adagio begins with the Pentecost chorale melody Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott in the cantus firmus.73

In the opening Adagio, a small cell generates material for an entire movement.74 The opening figure is a recurring “neighbor-note motive” that advances the harmonic progression measure by measure throughout the movement.75 Similar to the curved structures of baroque architecture, the rhythmic repetition conveys motion and continuity. Whenever repetition occurs, the repeated thematic ideas are intensified by increased harmonic complexity. Within the tonic-dominant-tonic framework of the cantus firmus (Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott) the harmonic complexity of this movement is extraordinary.

After three measures that suggest the opening of the C-major Prelude from the Well-Tempered [Clavier] (I-ii\(^{4/2}\)-V(\(^6/5\)), the inverted half-diminished-seventh chord over B♭ in m. 4 initiates an intense harmonic digression to ii and then a wildly chromatic neighboring motion around that bass D (including an enharmonic change of a diminished-seventh in m. 10 that wrenches the music from E minor to G minor) before D finally turns into the dominant of the dominant and cadences on G-- but only after a rhapsodic interruption of that D dominant.76

The result is a movement more harmonically complex and chromatically intense than others in the Six Sonatas and Partitas.77 However, the harmonic complexity remains rhythmically driven by the repeated dotted-eighth and sixteenth-note figure. This figure


75 Lester, Joel. *Bach’s Works for Solo Violin: Style, Structure, Performance.* 52.


is reminiscent of the French Overture and the entrance of King Louis XIV. The form of the movement also resembles a French Overture. It can be organized into three primary divisions: a slow and majestic entrance, an increasingly contrapuntal middle section, and a final closing section that recalls the opening material. These three sections are like pearls on a string, linked by an ornamented melodic line reminiscent of monody. The occasional chordal harmonies interspersed in the melodic line provide basso continuo accompaniment. Besides the rhythm and form of the movement, the improvisatory-sounding melodic lines are also characteristic of a French Overture. Furthermore, the dissonant suspensions create an underlying harmonic tension and highlight contrasting material. Large sections of four-part chordal voicing are in contrast with shorter sections of a single melodic line. Harmony is in contrast with melody as the generative compositional material, and organized rhythmic repetition is in contrast with improvisatory-sounding melodic sections. Faced with the apparent sameness of the repeating dotted rhythm, the listener becomes increasingly aware of the subtle contrasts and minute differentiation in rhythm and harmony. Slight deviation thus becomes the focal point, drawing the listener’s ear to a musical event like a Baroque artist uses light to draw the observer’s eye to a character’s affect. Contrasts of light and shadow are mimicked musically in subtle harmonic and voicing alterations. The sixteenth note of the rhythmic figure functions as ornamentation, providing dissonance and highlighting the harmonic motion. This was a common practice in the Baroque as ornamentation was often used to stress the dissonance before resolving to consonance. In stressing

78 Music and Theology: Essays in Honor of Robin Leaver. 75.
dissonance, Baroque composers often sought to convey a certain affect. As Quantz writes in his treatise:

> To excite the different passions the dissonances must be struck more strongly than the consonances. Consonances make the spirit peaceful and tranquil; dissonances...disturb it. Just as uninterrupted pleasure...would weaken and exhaust our capacities for remaining sensitive to it..., so a long series of pure consonances would eventually cause the ear distaste and displeasure, if it were not mingled now and then with disagreeable sounds such as those produced by dissonances. The more then, that a dissonance is distinguished and set off from the other notes in playing, the more it affects the ear. But the more displeasing the disturbance of our pleasure, the more agreeable the ensuing pleasure seems to us. Thus the harsher the dissonance, the more pleasing is its resolution. Without this mixture of agreeable and disagreeable sounds, music would no longer be able to arouse the different passions instantly, now to still them again.\(^{79}\)

An example of this can be seen in the opening bars of the Sonata no. 3, *Adagio*. The first three measures feature what seems to be a fairly predictable four-chord pattern (I, II (6/4/2), V (6/5), I). The key of C Major is solidly established until a sudden B♭ in measure 4 lowers the leading tone. The result is a descending bass line “in the manner of the *lamento* bass.”\(^{80}\) This slight alteration in the stately C major exposition transitions the movement into a G minor development of incredible pathos.\(^ {81}\) In this movement, as in the French Overture, the improvisatory sections act as transitions and take the performer from the exposition to the development, and so on. The G minor development cadences on C minor in measure 44, and quickly begins the improvisatory return to C major. The final section of the *Adagio* ends on the dominant and lacks a *fermata*. The *fermata* of the

---


80 Ledbetter, David. *Unaccompanied Bach: Performing the Solo Works.* 146.

81 Ledbetter, David. *Unaccompanied Bach: Performing the Solo Works.* 146.
Adagio and the cut-time signature of the fugue traditionally indicated that the fugue was to begin *attacca.*\(^82\)

The C-major fugue is a massive compositional undertaking comprised of three hundred and fifty-four measures of improvisatory variation on a chorale melody. The inclusion of the chorale melody within this work for solo violin is curious, yet not unexpected. Bach often used the melodies of well-known Lutheran hymns as inspiration for his compositions. Although most common in his cantatas, Bach’s instrumental works also feature the inclusion of chorale melodies. This is especially true regarding the *Six Sonatas and Partitas.*

An evaluation of the chorale tunes included in Bach’s *Six Sonatas and Partitas* will result in several interesting conclusions. First, that the melodic material of the sonatas and partitas is organized according to the Lutheran liturgical calendar. The first sonata and partita are built around chorale melodies from the Christmas season. The second sonata and partita are based on chorale melodies from the Easter season, while the final sonata and partita are based on chorale melodies from Pentecost. It is interesting that the third sonata and partita, representing the coming of the Holy Spirit, are number three in the collection. In numerology, the Holy Spirit is often symbolized by the number three. Within the collection, the tonal patterns of ascent and descent correlate with the liturgical progression of the chorale melodies. Furthermore, the harmonic organization forms a chiasmus (symbolic of the cross), descending to d minor and then ascending to E major.

\(^82\) Ledbetter, David. *Unaccompanied Bach: Performing the Solo Works.* 147.
Figure 3.1, Pattern of Tonal Descent and Ascent in the *Six Sonatas and Partitas*. Such theological symbolism is apparent throughout the collection, but specifically in Bach’s treatment of the chorale melody *Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott*. The chorale melody functions as the central theme of the C major Sonata and appears in several of Bach’s instrumental and chorale works. In every setting, it was used to represent musically what Bach intended to convey theologically. For example, in the fifth movement of Cantata 172 Bach subtly includes the chorale melody in a love duet between the Soul and Holy Spirit. The Soul pleads for the coming of the Spirit while the Spirit comforts the Soul with words of reassurance. The Soul (Soprano) sings:

\[
\begin{align*}
Komm, \text{ laß mich nicht länger warten} \\
Komm, \text{ du sanfter Himmelswind} \\
Wehe durch den Herzensgarten
\end{align*}
\]

Come, let me wait no longer  
Come, thou gentle heavenly wind  
Waft through this heart’s garden

The Spirit (Alto) then enters in measure 5 singing “Ich erquicke dich, mein Kind” (I will revive thee, my child). The Spirit is accompanied by the oboe d’amore playing a more ornamented version of the chorale melody. Although the melody’s presence may not be immediately obvious, it adds another layer of meaning to the message of the Spirit. It is almost as if the chorale melody is offering additional assurance that yes, the Spirit will

---

come to those who call to Him. Thus, Bach used uses the chorale melody to further elucidate and support the meaning of the text. Essentially, Bach is doing more than providing a musical setting for Christian theology; he is also providing theological commentary. Textual painting is commonly seen in Bach’s sacred works and a great deal has been extrapolated from such findings regarding his own personal beliefs. The purpose here, however, is not to comment on the personal beliefs of Bach but to identify spiritual themes within the works for unaccompanied violin and speculate on how these themes might affect performance practice. The investigation of the chorale melody Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott in all of Bach’s musical settings is consequently essential. Along with theoretical analysis, the chorale’s textual setting will inform the interpretation of the unaccompanied fugue. As Eric Chafe observes, “Text setting is a more reliable means of access by virtue of its more direct indication of allegorical associations.”

C. Chorale Melody: Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott

*Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott* originated as a sacred song during the Middle Ages and has been ascribed to King Robert of France (A.D. 991). The Pentecost antiphon featured a Latin text and was known as *Veni sancte spiritus*. The chorale was a favorite of Martin Luther’s, who stated it had been “composed by the Holy Ghost

---

86 John 14:23 “...If a man loves me he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”


88 *The Hymns of Luther set to their original melodies*. Edited by Woolsey Bacon. 26-28

himself, both words and music.”

The hymn was first published in 1524, in the *Erfurt Enchiridion*, the first German hymnal. The compilation of the hymnal has been attributed to Justus Jonas, a friend of Luther. It became exceedingly popular and was “shamelessly pirated everywhere.” Part of its popularity was due in part to the recycled melody. As Schweitzer points out:

> For a new melody to become a true folk-melody, of the kind that would gain immediate acceptance everywhere, was a difficult process, requiring a long period of time. It was much more natural to impress existing melodies into the service of the Church, -- sacred melodies at first, and then, when these did not suffice, secular ones.

Bach effectively imitated this practice, borrowing famous chorale melodies and incorporating them into his sacred and secular, vocal and instrumental works. This practice served a dual purpose. First it was practical, providing Bach with generative compositional material. Second, the incorporation of chorale melodies provided additional layers of meaning for the devout listener. Because such listeners were familiar with the hymns, they would naturally associate a performed melody with its corresponding text, even if that text remained unsung. As Gilles Cantagrel has reasoned, Bach’s inclusion of the Passion chorale *Herzlich tut mich verlangen* in the Christmas Oratorio more than hints at an association of the divine Redemption with the Incarnation. Furthermore, Bach’s rendition of the Lord’s Prayer chorale in *Vater unser im Himmelreich* differs in only one note from the first phrase of the Original Sin chorale,

---

Durch Adams Fall is ganz verdebt. God, the Eternal Father and Adam, the first father, are thus represented and, according to Cantagrel, the likeness “cannot be purely accidental.” In this manner the underlying melodies served as a type of theological commentary, emphasizing, illustrating, and interpreting the text. The chorale melody Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott most often appears in Bach’s vocal works, namely the sacred cantatas. It is here that, with help from the text, the accompanying musical figures can be read extra-musically and Bach’s textual painting more clearly understood. The information gleaned will give additional insight into Bach’s use of the melody in the C-major sonata for unaccompanied violin.

D. Cantata

In the creation of the cantata, composers commandeered a secular genre and transformed it into a vehicle for sacred music. The cantata, or the cantade et arie, as the miniature operas were titled, was initially a Venetian genre from the mid-seventeenth century. The word cantata is of Latin origin, meaning “to sing.” In secular Italian works it denoted a piece for solo voice(s) and continuo. When Neumeister began to champion the incorporation of secular music within the liturgy in the 1700s, the cantata was one of the first secular genres to undergo a spiritual transformation. Neumeister introduced the cantata to the church as “a portion of an opera composed of stylo recitativo and arie

---

94 Cantagrel, Gilles. Foreword to Index of Chorale Melodies in the Works of Johann Sebastian Bach, by André Papillon. 9-10.

95 Cantagrel, Gilles. Foreword to Index of Chorale Melodies in the Works of Johann Sebastian Bach, by André Papillon. 9-10.

together.”97 Thus he “openly embraced an operatic style of music for the church.”98 Rather than fighting the influx of secular style within the church, Neumeister and his colleagues used the secular style to a theological advantage.

Bach’s cantatas have their origin in the Baroque motet of the seventeenth century. The motet was generally defined as a vocal liturgical work, arranged for various pairings of voice and instruments.99 Often the chamber settings for solo, duet, or trio would be written in a contrapuntal style and contain choral texture. These attributes also characterized the later cantata. Loosely defined as “a piece to be sung,” the cantatas featured a variety of vocal and instrumental combinations. Most commonly the cantatas contained at least one movement for solo voice. By the end of the seventeenth century, the cantata’s form had been standardized to contain elements of recitative, aria, chorus, and instrumental ensemble. Although secular and sacred cantatas remained distinct from one another, the separation between solo and chorale cantata was eliminated by Bach. In developing a new framework for the sacred cantata, Bach combined the solo recitatives and arias with movements based on chorale text. The result was an effective vehicle for preaching the word of God.

---

97 Irwin, Joyce. *Neither Voice nor Heart Alone*. 125.
98 Irwin, Joyce. *Neither Voice nor Heart Alone*. 125.

---

28
E. Cantata in the Lutheran Church

Within the Lutheran liturgy, cantatas were sung after the Gospel reading and before the sermon.\textsuperscript{100} Their texts were derived from scripture, chorales, and contemporary sacred poetry.\textsuperscript{101} The cantata itself was comprised of three elements: recitatives, arias or ariosos, and chorales. The recitatives were chanted scriptural or poetic texts based on the Lutheran translation of the Bible. The arias or ariosos were “virtuosic settings of contemporary poetry that comment on the Biblical narrative,” and the chorales were short segments of popular rhymes that connected scriptural passages with personal application.\textsuperscript{102} Through these forms Bach was “able to convey as distinct a message as a contemporary Lutheran expository sermon.” As Loewe points out, Bach’s compositions did not employ merely pleasing rhetoric but rhetoric that “first invited the listener to contemplation and then to conversion.”\textsuperscript{103}

Thus Bach’s church cantatas were “fundamentally liturgical in both concept and usage.”\textsuperscript{104} They were synchronized with the Lutheran liturgical calendar and correlated directly to the scriptural passage for each Sunday. The cantatas functioned in an expository manner, effectively preaching the assigned scriptural passages in a musical

\textsuperscript{100} Gingrich, Linda. Hidden Allegory in J.S. Bach’s 1724 Trinity Season Chorale Cantata. \textit{Choral Journal} 51:1. 8

\textsuperscript{101} Stapert, Calvin. \textit{My Only Comfort: Death, Deliverance, and Discipleship in the Music of Bach}. 20-1.


\textsuperscript{104} Leaver, Robin A. Preface to Meyer, Ulrich. \textit{Biblical quotation and allusion in the cantata libretti of Johann Sebastian Bach}. v.
As Leaver indicates, “The cantata...formed the musical counterpart of the preaching of the day.” Within the cantatas, Bach used over 170 chorale melodies and texts. Outside of cantatas, the Lutheran material seems to have been a springboard for Bach’s creativity, often appearing in his instrumental compositions. The chorale melody Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott is an example of this, occurring multiple times in both sacred vocal and “secular” instrumental works.

F. Chorale melody in Bach’s Compositions

a. Vocal Works

Bach’s first setting of Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott was in the third movement of his sacred cantata BWV 59. The cantata, Wer mich liebet, der wird mein Wort halten (Who loves me will keep my word), was composed c. 1723 for the first Sunday of Pentecost, Whitsunday, and was performed twice at Leipzig. The cantata’s libretti corresponds to the Church calendar and is based on Acts 2:1-13 (referring to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit) and John 14:23-31 (referring to Christ’s farewell and promise to send the Holy Spirit). This theological emphasis is clearly seen in Bach’s construction of the third movement, which directly quotes the first verse of Luther’s hymn, Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott.


Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott,  
Erfüll mit deiner Gnaden Gut  
Deiner Gläuben Herz, Mut und Sinn.  
Dein brünstig Lieb entzünd in ihn’n.  
O Herr, durch deines Lichtes Glanz  
Zu dem Glauben versammlet hast  
Das Volk aus aller Welt Zungen;  
Das sei dir, Herr; zu Lob gesungen.  
Alleluja, alleluja.

Come, Holy Ghost, Lord God,  
Fill with thy grace’s blessing  
Thy believers in heart, will, and mind  
Kindle thy ardent love within them  
O Lord, by thy light’s lustre thou  
Hast gathered to faith  
People of every tongue in the world;  
May that be sung to thy praise, Lord.  
Alleluja, alleluja.  

This movement features soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, accompanied by violin I and II, viola, and continuo. It is a typical chorale and features a four-part harmonization of the chorale melody with homophonic rhythms between the vocal and instrumental lines. The melody is sung without ornamentation and in the original key of G major.  

Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott is also featured in the seventh (and final) movement of BWV 175, and is entitled Er rufet seinen Schafen mit Namen (He calls His sheep by name). The text of the final movement was composed in 1651 by Johann Rist as the ninth verse of his choral composition, O Gottes Geist, mein Trost and Rat (O  

110 Unger, Melvin P. *Handbook to Analyzing Bach’s Sacred Cantata Texts*. 200-1.  

111 See *The Hymns of Luther set to their original melodies*. Edited by Woolsey Bacon. 26-28.  


Spirit of God, my consolation and advice.)\textsuperscript{114} This movement encapsulates the overall theological emphasis of the cantata, contrasting the wisdom of Christ with the limited understanding and imperfect reasoning of man.\textsuperscript{115} Corresponding scriptural passage from the Church calendar comes from John 10:1-11, and provides much of the Cantata’s text. The text pictures Christ as the Good Shepherd leading his sheep: “his sheep follow him because they know his voice.”\textsuperscript{116} The contrasting voices of Christ and of human reason are thus thrown into relief.

This cantata is unique in its representation of faith and the absence of traditional themes, such as tribulation and suffering, as symbolized by the cross. Instead, the triumph of good over evil is repeatedly emphasized. The final aria, Öffnet euch, ihr beiden Ohren, is an example of this. The aria focuses on the cross as a symbol of “Christ’s victory and mankind’s participation in Jesus’ glorification.”\textsuperscript{117} Furthermore, the instrumentation lends itself to a theological understanding; the strings represent “the idea of immediacy and suggests personal contact, Christ within us.”\textsuperscript{118} While Cantata 59 was accompanied by strings and continuo, Cantata 175 features strings, continuo, and three recorders or flutes. It is the inclusion of flutes that is unique, and symbolically portrays the descent of the Holy Spirit. A similar instance can be found in BWV 46, \textit{O grosser Gott von treu}, when the “ethereal descending flutes...are illustrative of the Holy Ghost

\begin{flushleft} 
\textsuperscript{115} Chafe, Eric. \textit{Tonal Allegory in the Vocal Music of J. S. Bach}. 239. \\
\textsuperscript{116} John 10:1-11. \\
\textsuperscript{117} Chafe, Eric. \textit{Tonal Allegory in the Vocal Music of J. S. Bach}. 242. \\
\end{flushleft}
proceeding...from the Father and Son. The ascending motifs can be viewed as symbolic of the plea for the Holy Spirit while the descending motifs can be seen as the Holy Spirit’s descent. For example, the opening phrase Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott begins on the tonic (G) and descends to the dominant (D). This symbolic usage of tonal ascent and descent is also visible in the fugue movement of Sonata no. 3 for solo violin.

As previously mentioned, Cantata 172 indirectly quotes the melody of Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott in the instrumental accompaniment of the fifth movement. The Cantata was initially composed and 1714, during Bach’s employment at Weimar. First performed in 1714, it was also a favorite of Bach’s during his tenure at Leipzig, receiving several modifications and the occasional transposition. The Cantata cycle for 1714 focused on the “dynamic side of faith” through Bach’s treatment of antithesis. The result was a new cantata type that emphasized the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas, sentiments, textures, instrumentation, characterization, etc. Before this time, the guiding structural element of Bach’s composition had been symmetry.

The primary theological emphasis of Cantata 172 is on the abiding relationship of the God of the Father and God the Son with the individual, through the power of the Holy Spirit. The first three movements, composed in C major, represent and elaborate on this relationship. According to Eric Chafe, the movements reflect the character and nature of God, his “greatness and majesty,” while the recitative sections impart a sense of

---


God’s humanity. He argues that the descending sequences and final low C represent Christ’s humility, descending to earth to dwell as a man. Others have suggested that the descent symbolizes harmonically the coming of the Holy Spirit. The F major duetto expresses the love between Soul and Spirit while the Chorale expresses longing for the Spirit. The Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott melody is featured in the oboe line, but undergoes such a transformation as to make it almost unrecognizable. The oboe’s highly ornamented chorale tune is accompanied by an obbligato cello line derived from the first line of the chorale. It is this almost “hidden” presence of the chorale tune within the movement that can be regarded as allegorical, symbolizing the unseen yet very real presence of the Spirit within. Furthermore, Bach’s use of F major conveys a “soft, loving tone of expression” consistent with the key’s affect as defined by Johann Mattheson in 1713. Mattheson described F major as “capable of expressing the most beautiful sentiments in the world in a natural way and with incomparable facility, politeness, and cleverness.” Luther had advocated the use of F major for singing the Gospel in his Deutsche Messe for precisely this sort of purpose, saying, “Christ is a

128 Chafe, Eric. Tonal Allegory in the Vocal Music of J. S. Bach. 146
129 Chafe, Eric. Tonal Allegory in the Vocal Music of J. S. Bach. 146
130 Cyr, Mary. Performing Baroque Music. 32.
friendly Lord and His Sayings are dear.”\textsuperscript{131} Bach’s use of modulation can also be viewed as allegorical. As the relationship between God and man changes with the coming of the Spirit, the accompanying harmonic material also undergoes a transformation. The modulations are effectively determined by the relationship depicted in the text.\textsuperscript{132}

b. Instrumental Works

In addition to the Cantatas, the chorale melody *Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott* appears in three of Bach’s organ chorales, BWV 651, 652 and 653. The two chorale preludes form a part of the *Orgelbüchlein* collection and were composed between 1708 and 1717. BWV 651a is an earlier three-part invention on the chorale melody, composed during Bach’s Weimar period. It is a mere 48 measures long and only sets half of the chorale melody. BWV 651 is a later version written during Bach’s time at Leipzig. In contrast to BWV 651a, it contains 106 measures and a full setting of the chorale melody.\textsuperscript{133} BWV 652 is a fugue based on the chorale melody, “cast in the rhythm of a sarabande.”\textsuperscript{134} This organ prelude also appears in two forms, an earlier Weimar version and a later Leipzig version. BWV 653, *An Wasserflüssen Babylon* (By the streams of Babylon), is one of the organ chorales which Bach performed while applying for employment in Hamburg in December 1720. Although BWV 653 is not based on *Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott* but rather *An Wasserflüssen Babylon*, the first seven notes are


identical. The G major setting of the chorale tune also increases the resemblance between the two melodies.\textsuperscript{135}

These preludes were intended as a comprehensive collection of 164 preludes correlating to the Lutheran liturgical calendar. Like the cantatas, they were to provide a musical exposition of the Church’s assigned scripture readings. The works were to correspond with the liturgical season and convey the meaning of the text.\textsuperscript{136} The chorale melody provided unity within the liturgy, appearing in a “various contexts and forms” throughout the service.\textsuperscript{137} According to Jones, “The more recognizable the melody, the more unified the service.”\textsuperscript{138} Although never fully completed, the \textit{Orgelbüchlein} manuscript lists the chorale melodies designated for the unfinished preludes.\textsuperscript{139} Many similarities exist between the \textit{Orgelbüchlein} and the cantatas, but the greatest is their similarity of purpose and function.

Within the \textit{Orgelbüchlein}, Bach intended each prelude to convey a particular affect. This was part of his methodology in “preaching the Gospel” through musical composition.\textsuperscript{140} Bach instructed his organ students to “play the meaning of the chorale

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{135} Leahy, Anne. \textit{J.S. Bach’s ‘Leipzig’ Chorale Preludes: Music, Text, Theology}. 38.


\textsuperscript{139} An interesting project is currently underway, with composers and performers attempting to complete Bach’s \textit{Orgelbüchlein} chorale preludes. See http://www.orgelbuechlein.co.uk/the-chorales/

\end{footnotesize}
when playing hymns.” This meant conveying the appropriate affect along with “proper stress of the word patterns or meanings,” and was done primarily through voicing, rubato, dynamic, etc.

Within the preludes, the chorale melody functioned as a cantus firmus. It was accompanied by an “independently conceived motive” which served to illustrate the text. The canonic writing style also lent itself to an eloquent exposition of the “unsung” text. As Schweitzer comments:

The organist should not worry either himself or his hearers too much with the working-out of a canonic passage. The piece is not there for the sake of the canon, but the canon for the sake of the piece, especially in the canons of the Orgelbüchlein. If we hear properly the melody of the cantus firmus, the other parts can be so far kept in the background that the uninitiated need not even suspect there is a canon in progress.

Conveying the chorale melody and its meaning was the most important job of the organist. Everything else became secondary. In this manner, Bach’s Orgelbüchlein functioned not only as a fundamental performance resource but as a “basic hymn book, a hymn book as seen by Johann Sebastian Bach.” Thus it is apparent that the chorale preludes were closely associated with the corresponding cantatas.

---


CHAPTER IV
THEOLOGY AND SYMBOLISM IN BACH’S MUSIC

A. Rhythm and Form

The Baroque era was characterized by an awareness of metrical hierarchy and freedom within traditional formal structures. This Baroque balance of freedom and structure is clearly seen in the C major Sonata, illustrating what it means to be “led by the Spirit” rather than bound by the Law.\(^\text{145}\) And yet, even within freedom, order is still present. As grace does not lead to licentiousness,\(^\text{146}\) so freedom of form does not lead to musical anarchy and disorder.

In the Baroque era, the form of a work often symbolized an underlying theological principle. For example, liturgical texts dealing with the Law of God were often set to a musical canon. Canon means “rule” or “law.”\(^\text{147}\) Thus, the form of the work functioned as a musical illustration of the theological content of the text.\(^\text{148}\) Based on antithesis, Bach’s canons connect basic tonal material with a “broader sense of

\(^{145}\) Galatians 5:16-18.

\(^{146}\) Romans 6:1-4, 15-18.

\(^{147}\) Stapert, Calvin.  My Only Comfort: Death, Deliverance, and Discipleship in the Music of Bach. 15.

\(^{148}\) Stapert, Calvin.  My Only Comfort: Death, Deliverance, and Discipleship in the Music of Bach. 15.
theological meaning.” Using compositional devices such as inversion, contrary motion and retrograde, the canons often demonstrate the theology of the cross.

In the Baroque era, the term “canon” was closely identified with the fugue and held a nearly identical meaning. Johann Gottfried Walther, a Baroque theorist and composer, proffered this definition of the canon: “a type of fugue”; that is, a ‘strict or bound fugue,’’ also known as Fuga ligata. This type of fugue is distinct from that most familiar to the modern listener, known as the Fuga libera oder particularis (“free or specific fugue”). The fugue was accorded a great deal of respect early in Bach’s life, and the quality of a composer was often determined by his handling of the genre. In this test, Bach “stands quite alone, and so alone that far and wide around him, all is, as it were, desert and void.” Writing fifty years after Bach’s death, Johann Nicolaus Forkel declared:

Never has a fugue been made by any composer which could be compared with one of his. He who is not acquainted with Bach’s fugues cannot even form an idea of what a true fugue is and ought to be.

---


Within the symmetrical structure of a work, Bach commonly places the fugue at the center. This happens in several famous settings, including the *St. John Passion* and Cantata 106. In the *St. John Passion* (BWV 245), the uncompromisingly structured counterpoint represents the demand and rigor of the Law. This is evident in the meticulous counterpoint of *Wir haben ein Gestz*. In *Ich fuge dir gleichfalls*, the grace and freedom of the Gospel are represented by “freer imitative counterpoint.” Another example of this principle can be seen in the Cantata 106, *Gottes Zeit*. As Leaver notes:

> The demand of the Law, expressed frugally by *Es ist der alte Bund*, is contrasted by the freedom of the Gospel, *Ja, komm, Herr Jesu* in which the soprano floats freely away, unencumbered by the basso continuo.

In these contexts the rigidity and stricture of the Law is contrasted with the freedom of the Gospel, the work of the Flesh with that of the Spirit.\(^{157}\)

Such theological understanding is also visible in Bach’s fugal setting of *Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott*, which juxtaposes Law and Grace. While the tutti sections of the fugue cycle through obvious variations on the chorale melody, the solo sections present an obscured form of the chorale. In this way, the tutti sections represent the demands of the Law and the necessity of fulfilling them. Just as fugal structure requires the composer’s adherence to a strict set of compositional rules, so the Law demands compliance to a set of rules. In contrast, the solo sections convey an improvisatory affect and portray the dichotomy that exists between the demands of the Law and the freedom of Grace. Although apparently lacking the restraint of the Law, these improvisatory

---


sections fulfill the requirements of fugal composition and depict life in the Spirit. The freedom of the solo material exists within the melodic boundaries of the chorale melody and yet the creativity of the material seems to overflow from the supply found in the Spirit (represented in the chorale melody). This abundant supply is symbolic of the Spirit’s provision which enables believers to live in a manner worthy of their calling.\textsuperscript{158} Thus the two sections, tutti and solo, are unified by the generative material of the chorale melody (a.k.a the Spirit). The result is a fulfillment of the fugal compositional demands (a.k.a. the Law). In this manner Bach illustrates the role and function of the Spirit in the life of the believer. The Spirit continually pours the life of Christ into the believer, freeing believers from the law of sin and death and bringing them into fellowship with the Father and the Son.\textsuperscript{159} The Law demands while Grace supplies. In the fugue, the coexistence of the Law and Spirit illustrates the Gospel message. Life in the Spirit is not separate from the Law, but rather the fulfillment of the Law.

In his discussion of fugal structure, Eggebrecht makes several key observations. The first is that “all musical activity in a fugue proceeds from a single source...each voice of a fugue is initiated by and carried forward from a statement of the subject.” This correlates with the doctrine of creation:

\begin{quote}
In the beginning was the Word (Christ), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God Himself. He was originally present with God. All things were made and came into existence through Him; and without Him
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{158} Ephesians 4:1 “...I urge you to life a life worthy of the calling you have received.”

\textsuperscript{159} Romans 8:1-2 “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.”

Colossians 1:13 “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”
was not even one thing made that has come into being. In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men.160

Just as Christ is the generative life force of the world, so the fugal subject is the generative material for the fugue. Thus, the fugal subject becomes symbolic of Christ. The chorale melody woven throughout the fugue provides structural clarity and cohesion in a manner similar to that of Christ:

For by Him all things were created...all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.161

Eggebrecht’s second observation concerning fugal structure concerns the equality of the voices: “all voices in a fugue are equal carriers of the theme.” The voices function as equals but in different roles, much like the Trinity. In BWV 36, movement 6, Bach uses canonic writing to convey the equality of the Father and Son. The Father and Son are equal, yet functioning in different roles.162 Ideally, the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is duplicated in the Church, the body of Christ. Throughout scripture the Church is identified as the body of Christ, with each member fulfilling a separate role and function.163 Although different, each member’s role is equally important.164 Unity rather than sameness becomes the goal. Just as Christ prayed:

\[
\text{42}
\]

160 John 1:1-4
161 Colossians 1:16-17
162 Music and Theology: Essays in Honor of Robin Leaver. 87.
163 See Colossians 1:24 and Ephesians 5:30
164 1 Corinthians 12:12 “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ...If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body...If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts but one body.”
...that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.¹⁶⁵

This correlates directly with Eggebrecht’s third observation. He states that the linear quality of the music is a direct result of the equality between voices. And yet, the “polyphonic, independent character of each voice is imprinted with and characterized by the subject.”¹⁶⁶ Although distinct from each other, the contrasting voices are unified in that they possess defining characteristics from the generative subject material. Partaking of Christ results in an inward and outward transformation, much like the transformation of the subject melody throughout the fugue. Yet, even in the transformation process, the subject does not lose its identity. The Spirit brings unity and freedom, enabling things to fully become what they were created to be. However, this unity is “not one of homogenized harmony or bland replication” but rather one “in which the unique particularity of things is enabled and promoted.”¹⁶⁷ The Spirit brings the individual, through Christ, into a relationship with God the Father. The result is not “monadic sameness or undifferentiated oneness” but a life of fullness and completion.¹⁶⁸

Translated into fugal terms, the repetition and transformation of the subject provides unity throughout the variations. And yet, the subject is not without novelty in its

¹⁶⁵ John 17:20-23


numerous repetitions. Identical repetitions of subject material will be experienced differently because of the change in underlying metrical tension and resolution, and the subject’s interaction with it.\textsuperscript{169} Looking at the subject within the context of metrical hierarchy brings us to the conclusion that although the subject may experience an exact repetition, our initial experience of that repetition can never be duplicated.\textsuperscript{170} As Begbie has stated:

\begin{quote}
[I]n music where the repeated theme is elaborated, we will never hear the original theme in the same way after we have heard its elaborations.
\end{quote}

Therefore, the subject material is always new in personal experience. As a result, “Repetition...becomes regeneration rather than reiteration.”\textsuperscript{171} The variety and interest comes from the ever-increasing complexity of the variations. The growth of contrapuntal complexity surrounding the chorale melody evidences Bach’s creativity and points to the inexhaustibility of God the Creator and freedom of life in the Spirit\textsuperscript{172} In the fugue, this continual regeneration process is facilitated through Bach’s structuring of the cadences. Compared to the chorales, the fugue lacks the obvious harmonic progression common to chorales. In the chorales, the statement of the text always ends on a strong or weak cadence. The verse structure and its harmonic accompaniment naturally results in clear structural divisions. In the fugue, however, elisions frequently link statements of the melodic material, masking the cadence and providing continuity to the unsung text. For

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{169} Begbie, Jeremey S. \textit{Theology, Music, and Time}. 162.
\end{flushright}\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{170} Begbie, Jeremey S. \textit{Theology, Music, and Time}. 162.
\end{flushright}\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{172} Begbie, Jeremey S. \textit{Theology, Music, and Time}. 124.
\end{flushright}
example, measures 24 to 30 feature the chorale melody played primarily by the bass. The tenor interjects various snippets of the melody and provides contrapuntal accompaniment. In measure 30 the voices cadence on the second half of the measure. However, the cadence features an elision and simply provides new impetus to the chorale melody which is now played by the tenor. The alto also enters in measure 30 enters playing the *lamento* bass line while the bass returns to playing a IV-V-I chord progression in the style of basso continuo.

![Musical notation](image)

Figure 4.1, Sonata no. 3, *fugue*, S. 1005

Intriguingly, Bach’s organ Canzona in d minor features a similar setting of the chorale melody.

---

173 This example is taken from the violin Sonata no. 3 in C major. For the sake of clarity, I have divided the violin score into four registers. Each melodic “voice” is titled using its vocal register equivalent.
In addition to form, melodic symbolism and rhythmic figures were often used during the Baroque era as a type of religious symbolism. In Bach’s music, text referencing sleep or eternity was often accompanied by sustained chords. The seemingly insignificant stationary string chords which accompany Christ’s recitative in the Passions actually have powerful associations. In the *ombra* (shadow) scenes of old Venetian opera, these sustained string chords were used whenever the text “depicted death, or passing, the nether world, ghosts, or impending catastrophe.”\(^{174}\)

Theological symbolism is also apparent in the *Largo* movement of the C Major Sonata. While the first, second, and fourth movements of the C-major sonata were written in the key of C-major, the *Largo* was written in the subdominant F-major.

According to Lester, the contrasting key provides “a sense of tonal relief” within the overall harmonic structure of the sonata.\textsuperscript{175} The through-composed \textit{Largo} does not contain an immediately recognizable melody. Instead, lilting pairs of sixteenth notes provide generative material for the movement. The sixteenth note patterns are grouped into ascending and descending lines to form a compositional arch. Three-fold repetition is used and each successive arch highlights a pattern of tonal descent. These patterns consist of a single melodic voice accompanied by a basso continuo line played in the lower register. Although written for solo violin, the movement follows a pattern of traditional polyphonic voicing.

In contrast with the \textit{fugue} which contained countless elisions, the \textit{Largo} features definite divisions of melodic material. Cadences are often followed by a sixteenth-note rest that provides musical space and breath. This causes the subsequent entrance to appear as if springing from a hidden source.\textsuperscript{176} The melodic material seems to be spontaneously generated and ornamentation adds to the melody’s improvisatory quality. A peaceful, meandering nature is conveyed as a result.

Along with melodic structure, the predictable harmonic progression also conveys an affect of repose. Appoggiaturas create brief moments of dissonance before quickly resolve into chord tones. This conservative treatment of dissonance in conjunction with the lilting rhythms, improvisatory melodic material, and patterns of tonal descent lend

\textsuperscript{175} Lester, Joel. \textit{Bach's Works for Solo Violin: Style, Structure, Performance}. 87.

\textsuperscript{176} John 7:37-38 “Jesus said...‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.’ By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.”

John 4:13-14 “Jesus answered, ‘...but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’”
themselves to a theological interpretation. Immediately following the fugal setting of *Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott*, the Largo can be interpreted as the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. The pairs of lilting sixteenth notes in their patterns of tonal descent support this interpretation. One can almost imagine the soft flapping of wings as the Spirit descends on Jesus in the form of a dove at His Baptism. Finally, the improvisatory nature of the movement and its peaceful affect combine to illustrate the freedom and grace found in the Spirit’s presence.

The *Allegro Assai* also features a musical representation of the Holy Spirit, or rather of Joy, which is a result of the Spirit’s presence. During the Baroque, running lines of sixteenth notes in 3/4 time were often symbolic of the Spirit. The joyful affect of the circular sixteenth-note motion is undeniable, and this figure is often used by Bach to represent the Holy Spirit (e.g. the violin parts of the first movement of *St. John Passion*; the first movement of the Pentacost cantata *O ewiges Feurer, Ursprung der Liebe* (BWV 34); and the chorale, *Komm Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott* [BWV 651]). In the *Allegro Assai*, the tempo contributes to the affect but it is really the faster-paced harmonic motion propelled by sixteenth notes that conveys the character of unbounded freedom and happiness. Contrasting patterns of slurred and separate sixteenth notes give the movement a dance-like feeling, and one can almost hear the Baroque fiddler playing, oblivious and happy. The lively string crossing passages contribute to this feeling of enjoyment.

---

It is here in the *Allegro Assai* that Bach’s choice of C major most clearly portrays its corresponding affect. Various Baroque treatises attributed a joyful affect to C major, and it is natural that Bach’s representation of the Spirit should be in C major. The key has been described as “gay and warlike,”\(^ {178} \) having a “rude and impudent character; suited to rejoicing.”\(^ {179} \) In 1722, two years after the known completion of the *Six Sonatas and Partitas*, Jean-Phillipe Rameau published a treatise categorizing the various keys with their corresponding affect. He qualified C major as appropriate for “songs of mirth and rejoicing.”\(^ {180} \)

The exposition of the Allegro Assai is solidly in major with a subtle harmonic pull toward its relative minor. The second half starts in G major and begins a modulatory trek toward g minor. This downward harmonic progression is facilitated by repeated patterns of descending sixteenth notes. In measure 76, the violin begins a pattern of tonal ascent through repeated patterns of sixteenth notes, rising out of the depths of various minor keys and into the glorious sunshine of C major. The melodic ascent in measure 88 of the “sunshine” passage remarkably foreshadows the following movement in the Six Sonatas and Partitas: the triumphant E major Preludio.

---


\(^ {179} \) Mattheson, *Das neu-eröffnete Orchestre* (1713).

B. Mathematics and Numerology

Along with rhythmic and metric symbolism in music, the use of mathematical and numerical symbolism by Bach has also been examined. Mathematical symbolism in music has its roots in Medieval times, when music itself was viewed as a branch of the mathematical sciences. According to Bartel:

Speculative musical theory based on the numerical proportions of musical intervals did not become irrelevant conjecture, as it did for the more humanistically minded, but rather was germane to understanding music’s divinely ordained power. This belief proposed that the very essence of God is revealed in and through the musical proportions. Through music the invisible becomes audible.

Since antiquity, music had been taught as one of the mathematical sciences, and “the universe was considered structurally identical with music.”¹¹⁸¹ The universe was described in musical terms and the German art historian Rudolf Wittkower has proven that “beginning in the fifteenth century, the mathematical theory of music became the source for architectural proportions.”¹¹⁸²

By the turn of the seventeenth century, the view of music as a mathematical science was no longer prevalent in much of the European world. And yet, Baroque Germany remained an exception. Grounded in Lutheran philosophy, many German composers continued to view music as fundamentally mathematical, and thereby sought to derive mathematical symbolism from the music.¹¹⁸³ The connection between musical intervals and their divine origin was a subject explored with much interest and in great


detail. For example, the unison, with its 1:1 ratio, was viewed as the “starting point of all
music.” Its creative properties, and its existence as the origin of all musical life had
surprising similarities to the Godhead. Just as several notes coexist in a unison while
maintaining a single pitch center, so the Trinity is a plurality of persons within a single
Being. Baroque theorists quickly drew parallels between the perfection of the unison
with the perfection of the Godhead.

As Begbie points out, Bach was also greatly interested in numbers and thereby
numerical symbolism.\footnote{Begbie, Jeremy S. "Created Beauty: The Witness of J.S. Bach." Resonant Witness: Conversations between Music and Theology. 99-100.} A clear mathematical structure is evident in Bach’s music, and it has often been given theological meaning.\footnote{Begbie, Jeremy S. "Created Beauty: The Witness of J.S. Bach." Resonant Witness: Conversations between Music and Theology. 99-100.} It is apparent that biblical numerology was commonly practiced and systematically taught by German and Flemish composers in the Baroque era.\footnote{Lang, Paul Henry, Alfred Mann, and George J. Buelow. Musicology and Performance. 235-236.} In Bach’s work, the concealed mathematical symbolism often provides an eloquent illustration of the text. This is especially true in the cantatas.

In the study of the cantatas, the connection between theology and number
symbolism is most obvious in several primary numbers. The number three often
represents the Trinity. Ten is symbolic of the Law (ten commandments), while twelve is
linked with the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve apostles, and consequently the
church.\footnote{Stapert, Calvin. My Only Comfort: Death, Deliverance, and Discipleship in the Music of Bach. 17.} The person of Christ is regularly symbolized by the numbers two, five, and thirty-three. Two represents Christ as the second person of the Trinity, and as having two
natures. Thirty-three was the age of Christ at his death and resurrection. The number seven is most often associated with God the Father, and symbolizes absolute completeness and perfection.\textsuperscript{188} In biblical terms, seven was the “set apart” or “holy” number and thus represented things that were holy and set apart.

The number five is used to symbolize Christ’s five crucifixion wounds (head, hands, feet, and side), and the five mysteries (incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, and second coming).\textsuperscript{189} In Christian numerology, the number five also symbolizes grace.\textsuperscript{190} Besides the fugue’s musical dichotomy representing the doctrines of Law and Grace, the entrance of the chorale melody in the \textit{Fugue} is also significant. Instead of beginning on the tonic, Bach starts the melody on fifth scale degree of C major. As the melody descends from the fifth scale degree to the tonic, the text sings “Fulfill with Grace on us outpoured.”\textsuperscript{191} The number 5 thus links the coming of the Spirit with the outpouring of Grace.

This attention to detail and awareness of mathematical proportion is also evident in his Bach’s chorale setting of \textit{Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott}. For example, in BWV 59, \textit{Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott} is comprised of 48 measures, the same number of words in the text. In his second rendition of the chorale, Bach composed 106 measures of music. There are 103 half notes used in the text, plus three half-note rests to equal a total

\textsuperscript{188} The psalmist, reflecting on the perfection of God, His words and His commands: “To all perfection I see a limit but your commands are boundless.” Psalm 119: 96.

\textsuperscript{189} Stapert, Calvin. \textit{My Only Comfort: Death, Deliverance, and Discipleship in the Music of Bach}. 17.

\textsuperscript{190} John 1:14. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 1:17. “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

\textsuperscript{191} Translation taken from BWV 59, Breitkopf Edition Nr. 7059.
of 106. It is evident that Bach’s understanding of music was essentially mathematical and thus his music provides a glimpse of God’s character through its innate orderliness and infinite nature. Further evidence of this exists in the manuscript of the *Six Sonatas and Partitas*. The number of pages in the manuscript spells out J.S. Bach when using the Gematria method where each letter of the alphabet is represented by a numerical equivalent (A=1, B=2, etc). Using the Gematria method “J.S. Bach” (9+18+14) equals 41, or 41 pages. At times, Bach spells his name using the notes B-A-C-Bb(H). In the C major Sonata this is visible in the *lamento* bass lines of the *Adagio*. Measures 1-5 feature a C-B-Bb-A bass line while measures 18-22 feature a B-C-Bb-A bass line. Such instances of numerology and symbolism, whether planned or accidental, illustrate proportion and order within a work and can be interpreted theologically. As Werkmeister wrote:

> The musical intervals are nothing other than numbers and proportions and since God created and ordered everything in Numbers, Proportion and weighting, so also must the musician, indeed every person, be diligent and study how to reproduce such marvelous Order.

---

192 Introduction to *Resonant Witness*, 129. My own examples of point.


Baroque composers alike deemed a composition’s mode or key to be one of the primary factors effecting musical expression. The key would regularly be directly associated with a specific character, mood, or atmosphere. For example, D major “was often associated with majesty and splendor” while E minor “was often associated with suffering.”\textsuperscript{195} Although generalizations were often made regarding the affects portrayed by a single key, the keys in fact portrayed “many opposing affections.”\textsuperscript{196} It is this flexibility among theorists that makes the portrayal of affect in Baroque music slightly confusing. In the same treatise a Baroque theorist might provide a list of expressive characteristics conveyed by a certain mode while questioning the validity of observing such a list.\textsuperscript{197} The importance here is that such lists were constructed and that similar viewpoints regarding tonal harmony and resulting affect were held amongst various Baroque theorists around Bach’s time. The point is not whether a unified view of generative affect can be found, but that such a view was held by Baroque composers as a whole. Because such is the case we may recognize similar modes of affect in Bach’s music and draw logical conclusions as to how and why they were portrayed. As Andreas Herbst suggested, the text should first be examined for affective meaning before selecting an appropriate mode or key, for not all modes are “suitable for all texts, for some have joyful and others have sad properties and qualities, and are thus perceived.”\textsuperscript{198} Applied to Bach, the same approach regarding affect or meaning in music may be taken. The meaning of

\textsuperscript{195} Stapert, Calvin. \textit{My Only Comfort: Death, Deliverance, and Discipleship in the Music of Bach}. 15.

\textsuperscript{196} Bartel, Dietrich. \textit{Musica Poetica: Musical Rhetorical Figures in German Baroque Music}. 43.

\textsuperscript{197} Bartel, Dietrich. \textit{Musica Poetica: Musical Rhetorical Figures in German Baroque Music}. 43-44.

\textsuperscript{198} Herbst, Johann Andreas. \textit{Musica poetica sive compendium melopoeticum}. Nürnberg, 1643. Cited in Bartel, Dietrich. \textit{Musica Poetica}. 44.
the text should be examined along with its musical context and similarities between works should be noted. This practice is especially relevant as it pertains to our discussion of the fugue from Bach’s Sonata no. 3.

Sometimes even more important than the actual key, however, was the “direction of the movement of the keys.”\textsuperscript{199} The overall harmonic progression of a composition, between movements and not just sections, can provide an additional layer of theological symbolism. As Chafe elucidates in his treatise on tonal allegory, the ascent and descent of the overall harmonic structure is as interpretively important as any other aspect of music symbolism.

This issue of harmonic structure and its connection to emotional affect was a subject of considerable interest to baroque theorists.\textsuperscript{200} Writings from the era indicate a tendency to derive musical interpretation from the structure of the key itself, and not simply the emotional character conveyed by the key. For example, keys with a larger number of flats were considered to be heading in a downward direction. A descent through the circle of fifths would correspond with theological symbolism within the music such as Christ’s death and burial. A subsequent tonal ascent would correspond to Christ’s resurrection and ascent into heaven.\textsuperscript{201} Such themes are often present in Bach’s cantatas and a striking correlation exists between the text’s theological emphasis and the corresponding harmonic progression. As Chafe has noted, this style of tonal planning in

\textsuperscript{199} Stapert, Calvin. \textit{My Only Comfort: Death, Deliverance, and Discipleship in the Music of Bach}. 15.


Bach’s music “bears a conceptual relationship to Luther’s hermeneutic principles.” He continues:

A pattern of descent (through the circle of fifths, modulation in the direction of increasing flats) followed by ascent (modulation toward increasing sharps) often has a unifying effect on the allegorical detail similar to that of Luther’s “analogy of faith” on designative allegory.

Furthermore, when Bach masks the final arrival key through a meandering harmonic progression it can be interpreted to represent the need for individual faith. Although the end is yet unseen, faith enables the music to continue, progressing until it reaches fulfillment in its preordained end. Thus, Bach’s pattern of tonal ascent illustrates the theology of faith as expressed in the phrase “Walk by faith, and not by sight,” the music continually resolves to a new key, typically one higher in the circle of fifths, showing the continual progression and growth of faith.

For Luther, the advancement of faith in an individual’s life was always and only the result of Grace. Just as the sinner had been saved through faith alone, and that by grace, so was his continuing journey in the way of holiness the result of God’s grace and not human effort. This theological principle is musically portrayed by Bach in a manner similar to the theology of faith. As a result, Old Testament texts referencing the Law and human effort are always depicted with an accompanying descending tonal sequence.

Man’s effort and failure results in condemnation and eternal punishment, and ultimately

---


204 2 Corinthians 5:7


the descent into Hell. In contrast, the encounter with Christ and receiving of His grace in replacement of the Law is accompanied by an ascending tonal sequence. Thus representing how Man is reunited with God and brought into fellowship with Him.207

In the circle of fifths, C major and minor historically represented the “fundamental dualism of Christ,” and the cross.208 The contrasting keys musically expressed the dichotomy of the humanity of Christ with his divine nature, death with resurrection, and suffering with ultimate joy.209 According to Chafe, C minor was the key of choice when depicting the “sleep of death” of Lutheran eschatology.210 Not surprising, Bach’s choice of C major and minor naturally ties into the discussion regarding the affections. According to Bartel, the Baroque concept of affection required more consonant and perfect intervals in portraying a joyful affection. These are naturally found in major keys, particularly C major. Furthermore, the rhythm was to be faster with fewer dissonances and syncopations.

As an individual longs and strives for wholeness, that is for God, he strives toward the unison, resulting in joy and contentment. Thus the closer the numerical proportion of an interval is to the unison, the more joyous must be its effect.

The major triad also serves as symbol of God’s time within the doxology. Theorists from the Lutheran metaphysical tradition label this triadic symbolism triunitas, in which the triad becomes a symbol for the Holy Trinity. This was not the first time

---


theorists had drawn connections between the triad and the Trinity. Treatises during the
Reformation expounded on this topic, emphasizing the theological importance of music
to the point that even its most fundamental components served to represent the character
and nature of the living God. Rudolph Schlick, a theologian and theorist writing in 1588,
declared:

If the combination of three notes in either type of cantus deviates from the
legitimate way, is mutilated, or ruined, you will also see the entire
harmony arising from it immediately disturbed, vanish, and utterly fall
apart, just as everything in the expanse of the whole world would perish
and return to nothingness, if it were bereft of the power and awesomeness
of the Holy Trinity.211

The structure of the triad can also be viewed as symbolic of the nature of Christ:
the major triad represents the divinity of Christ while the minor triad is symbolic of his
humanity. The triad has also been used to symbolize God’s glory, most notably in *Gott
ist mein König*.212 In contrast to the happy symbolism of the triad, the descending
chromatic figure in Bach’s music is usually associated with tribulation and an unfulfilled
hope. This juxtaposition of sorrow and joy, tribulation and hope is the essence of the
theology of cross.213 Sequences also lend themselves to theological interpretation. In the
C Major *Fugue*, Bach uses tertiary repetitions for the development of motivic material.
Although such sequencing was common in the Baroque era, tertiary repetition also
functions symbolically for the person and presence of the Holy Spirit.

(Speyer, 1588), as translated in Benito V. Rivera, *German Music Theory in the Early Seventeenth Century*

symmetrical presentation of the major triad....”

Although the basso continuo was a standard element of early baroque music, Bach clearly intended the solo violin sonatas and partitas to be performed without accompaniment. The title page of the *Six Sonatas and Partitas* reads: *Sei Solo. à Violino senza Basso accompagnato. Libro Primo. Da Joh. Seb. Bach aó. 1720.* (Six Solos. For Violin without Bass accompaniment. First Book. by Joh. Seb. Bach. In the year 1720.)

Bach reiterates this performance stipulation in the title pages of each individual sonata and partita. His ability to write so effectively for solo violin may have come from his own training on the instrument. Bach played the violin from his early childhood to the time of his graduation from the Lüneburg gymnasium, and gained a fair amount of proficiency on the instrument. Upon graduation, Bach’s virtuosity earned him a place in the orchestra of Johann Ernst, brother to the Duke of Weimar in 1703. Thus it is reasonable to suppose that Bach composed the Six Sonatas and Partitas for his own personal use. Just as the *Orgelbüchlein* preludes were intended for personal as well as public use, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Bach composed the *Six Sonatas and Partitas* with the intention of playing them personally. The collection certainly reveals an incredible understanding of violin technique and the capabilities of the instrument. Furthermore, the manuscript contains occasional fingerings, suggesting a practical

---


application of Bach’s violin training. Thus the composition of the *Six Sonatas and Partitas* may have been more than a theoretical or pedagogical exercise.

Within the collection, the C major fugue is unique for its treatment of polyphony. The fugue can be divided into solo and tutti sections, contrasting single-voice melodic lines with large sections of four-part harmony. The organization is as follows: tutti (ms. 1-66), solo (66-92), tutti (92-165), solo (165-201), tutti (201-245), and solo (245-288). Tutti cadences are more final than solo cadences and each tutti/solo section is approximately the same length. The subject appears in its inversion (*al riverso*), and is accompanied by a chromatic-scale countersubject. This countersubject appears as an inversion only when accompanying the inversion of the subject. The opening 66 measures also serve as the fugue’s da capo ending, a practice seen in Bach’s English Suites.

A wide variety of ornamentation is included in the Six Sonatas and Partitas, and it spans French, Italian, and Northern German regional differences. Within the manuscript, Bach has written out the ornamental figures, specifically prescribing his performance requirements. In 1737, Johann Adolph Scheibe disapproved of Bach’s method of writing ornamentation because “every ornament, every little grace, and everything that one thinks of as belonging to the method of playing, he expresses completely in the notes.”

Apparently he felt there was not enough space for interpretative freedom on the part of

---


the performer. Written-out ornamentation was a common trait in Bach’s music and although historically informed performers may add some improvisatory ornamentation, it is usually very limited.\footnote{For an example of this, listen to Rachel Podger: \textit{Six Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin}, Sonata no. 3, Allegro Assai.} In Bach’s transcription of Vivaldi’s Concerto in G (RV 332), he follows the melodic outline but includes a “fully ornamented” harpsichord transcription which features written-out “trills, mordents, and appoggiaturas as accents or to sustain longer notes, interspersed with passing notes and a few runs using a variety of different rhythms.”\footnote{Cyr, Mary. \textit{Performing Baroque Music.} 140.} Bach was nothing if not specific.

Although Bach’s contemporaries criticized counterpoint as being an outmoded compositional practice, Bach continued to exploit the possibilities of extreme contrapuntal writing. His music was considered an ancient relic at his death in 1750, and it quickly faded into obscurity. In 1814, only one surviving manuscript of the Six Sonatas and Partitas was still in existence. Fortunately it was rediscovered “among a lot of old papers, destined for the butter shop,” by Pölchau, a collector of music manuscripts. The work had been initially printed in 1802 by Simrock of Bonn, and edited in 1854 by Robert Schumann for Breitkopf and Härtel. The Breitkopf version contained Schumann’s pianoforte accompaniment for the \textit{Six Sonatas and Partitas}.ootnote{Schweitzer, Albert. \textit{J.S. Bach.} Vol. 1. 385-6.}

In composing the \textit{Six Sonatas and Partitas}, Bach followed a tradition of polyphonic writing for solo violin. Other German composers had experimented with the concept, and violinist Bruhns (1666-1697) of Husum often performed his solo works.
polyphonically. He managed this by simultaneously performing the melody on his violin while playing the bass notes on organ pedals.\textsuperscript{224} According to Schweitzer, Bach created his solo violin repertoire with the ideal instrument in mind.\textsuperscript{225} This instrument would be a violin that had “all of the keyed instrument’s possibilities of polyphonic playing, and all of the bowed instrument’s capacities for phrasing.”\textsuperscript{226} As a result, Bach composed solo violin music that was polyphonic and comprised of complete textures rather than individual melodic parts.\textsuperscript{227} Conceptually, Bach approached the works for solo violin with the melodic and harmonic demands of an organist. Writing in 1802, Forkel commented on Bach’s organ playing, saying that “he usually played very briskly, but managed to introduce so much variety that each piece became a conversation.”\textsuperscript{228} This style of performance was naturally reflected in his compositions and the result was a musical conversation.

\section*{E. Metrical Hierarchies}

In his discussion of tempo and metrical hierarchies, Anthony Newman states that the terms \textit{Largo} and \textit{Andante} indicate more than the tempo. Drawing additional support from Mozart and Quantz, Newman states that the Largo “accents the ‘weak’ positions of
the measure in a ‘slow’ tempo.” Furthermore, different time signatures indicate different patterns of accents. It was commonly understood during the Baroque era that each metric signature indicated a specific accent pattern in addition to the fundamental tempo. This is in contrast to the modern performance view that the primary function of a time signature is to indicate tempo. As Newman notices, the majority of texts in Bach’s chorales show a distinct organization of strong and weak beats and measures within the metrical hierarchy. These accent patterns occur in regular and irregular combinations, and in predictable and unpredictable patterns of repetition. Common patterns include SW (Strong Weak), SWW, SSW, SWWW, and SSWW. This practice of organizing measures and beats into “strong” and “weak” was a common in European music, even as early as the sixteenth century. If a measure contained a cadence, the entrance of a theme on the downbeat, or a suddenly thicker texture, it was often categorized as “strong.” However, the categorization of strong and weak measures also depended upon the musical context. While composition and performance practice of the Baroque were governed by a set of rules, those rules were often flexible and subject to the whim of

---


the performer. One of the most arbitrary and yet intriguing bits of advice from the Baroque era regarding performance practice is the exhortation to play in “good taste.”

In dealing with metrical hierarchy and the division of strong and weak beats, the Italians categorized notes as either “good” (*note buone*) or “bad” (*note cattive*), a practice that affected “meters, accents, fingering, rubato,” bowing, etc.\(^{235}\) In fact, the bowing symbols were derived from the Latin words for “good” and “bad” (*nobilis* and *vilis*, respectively). As a result of the Baroque bow design, down bows were naturally heavier than up bows and resulted in a natural accent. The typical bowing pattern of $\text{Π} \text{Π} \text{Π} \text{Π}$ would result in heavy-light-heavy-light accent patterns. Because the down bow was stronger, it was considered “good” and was used on the strong beats of a measure. The up bows were considered weak and “bad,” and occurred on the weak beats. String players organized their bowing patterns according to the SWSW accent patterns in the music, and according to metrical hierarchy. The early sources suggest several reasons for this organization, citing the Baroque aesthetic which revered Greek rhetoric and affect. The accented and unaccented notes in music are thus likened to the stressed and unstressed syllables in the speech of a Greek orator. According to Mattheson:

> Prosody, the study of the art of speech, teaches us what rhythm is, how to place the accents properly, what is long or short.\(^{236}\)

---


Frescobaldi also linked speech and music, insisting that his keyboard works ought to be played with the “same kind of stress accents as if they were sung.”\footnote{Newman, Anthony. \textit{Bach and the Baroque: European Source materials from the Baroque and Early Classical Periods with Special Emphasis on the Music of J.S. Bach}. 47.}

Do not keep strict time throughout, but as in the style of the modern madrigals, use here a slow tempo, here a fast one and here one that, as it were, is suspended in the air always in accordance with the expression of the meaning of the words.\footnote{Newman, Anthony. \textit{Bach and the Baroque: European Source materials from the Baroque and Early Classical Periods with Special Emphasis on the Music of J.S. Bach}. 47.}

This sensitivity to text and its musical implications is also found in the chorale preludes of Bach.

![Figure 4.3, Cantata 59, Chorale](image)

In the chorales, the first violin accompaniment doubles the soprano and “sings” the text with the vocalist. The second violin, viola, and cello also mimic their vocal counterparts. However, these accompaniment parts feature slight deviation of rhythm and harmony.

The rhythmic organization of the \textit{fugue} also reflects this sensitivity to word accent patterns and textual painting. The very structure of the chorale melody is symbolic. As the text pleads for the descent of the Holy Spirit, the melody follows a pattern of descent. This is in contrast to the rising of the Saint’s prayers to heaven, depicted in the tertiary repetition of the melody.\footnote{Compare statement of melody in measures 1, 5, and 10 of the \textit{Fugue}. This pattern is repeated throughout the movement.} Each repetition features the melody in a higher register.
As compared to the cantatas, the opening fugue quotation of *Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott* features a displacement of strong and weak beat accents. However, the melodic quotation would still have been clearly identified by listeners familiar with Lutheran church music. While BWV 59 features a quarter-note pickup into the first measure, the Sonata’s opening subject begins with a half-note. If we view the fugal subject as an unsung version of the chorale text, this rhythmic alteration places a greater emphasis on the word *Komm*. Furthermore, the generative rhythmic material of the fugue is derived entirely from the cantata arrangements of the chorale. The following motives from measures 40-42 form the compositional basis of the fugue.

Figure 4.5, Sonata no. 3, *fugue*, S.1005

While the cantata features eighth-note passing motion primarily on the strong beats, the fugue features eighth-note passing motion on the weak beats. This propels the harmonic motion into the next measure and successfully organizes the chorale melody into strong and weak measures. Here it is necessary to reconcile the instrumental representation of
the text with the baroque aesthetic of organizing music into strong and weak beats. In the chorale, the instrumental accompaniment naturally follows the word accent patterns of the vocal line. String players were taught to imitate the vocalists and effectively “sing” the text. Handel’s *Messiah* is a popular example of this because the orchestra often directly imitates what the choir has just sung. In the fugue, however, Bach offset the chorale melody so that the strong and weak accents occur one beat later. This is seen more clearly if the fugue is viewed in 4/4 rather than cut time.

![Figure 4.6, Cantata 59, Chorale](image)

If discrepancies occurred between word stress and strong or weak measure stress in Bach’s vocal music, the instrumentalists were to play the meaning of the text. In chorales lacking ornamentation, melodic stress corresponded to word stress rather than the metrical stress of strong and weak measures and beats.240 This aesthetic governed the performance practice of the Baroque era to such an extant that it continued to influence musicians into the following century. In 1856, Franz Liszt complained about a “mode of playing, still customary in some places...a mechanical kind of playing which, meticulously adhering to the meter, splits up the performance by perpetually emphasizing the strong and weak beats.”241

---


F. Chiasmus

The Chiasmus is another compositional characteristic found in Bach’s compositions that represents a theological concept. Used by German composers to symbolize the cross, it was a “figure arranged so that the order of events in one of the two parallel series is inverted in the other.” The structure of the melodic symbol was a series of four notes, written out in a zigzag pattern (up, down, up down, etc.). The pattern could be featured in the reverse, or elaborated on by adding more notes. The visual result is a symmetrical shape much like the Christian cross. Another cross symbol was derived from the ♯ sign. Besides its resemblance to the cross, the German word for sharp is Kreuz, translated “cross.” At times, Bach’s use of the chiasmus is overt. The arrangement of movements within the St. John Passion is a clear example of a formal chiasmus structure.

The chiasmus can appear both as a musical figure and as the formal structure of a work. As a formal structure, the chiasmus can be seen in such works as the Credo of the B Minor Mass, BWV 232. Bach commonly uses forms that are “symmetrical around a central axis,” such as ABCACBA, to symbolize the cross. Here, the form features a pattern of tonal descent to the central Crucifixus movement, before “rising again.”

II. Credo (“Symbolum Nicenum)
1. Credo in unum Deum (A mixolydian)
2. Patrem omnipotentem (D major)

---

242 Marissen, Michael. Lutheranism, Anti-Judaism, and Bach’s St. John Passion. 30.

243 Stapert, Calvin. My Only Comfort: Death, Deliverance, and Discipleship in the Music of Bach. 16-17.

244 Stapert, Calvin. My Only Comfort: Death, Deliverance, and Discipleship in the Music of Bach. 16-17.
3. Et in unum Dominum (G major)  
4. Et incarnatus est (B minor)  
**5. Crucifixus (E minor)**  
6. Et resurrexit (D major)  
7. Et in Spiritum Sanctum (A major)  
8. Confiteor (F-sharp minor)  
9. Et expecto (D major)

This structure is also used in the tonal organization of the Six Sonatas and Partitas.

Sonata in G minor - Partita in B minor

Sonata in A minor - Partita in D minor

Sonata in C major - Partita in E major

The key progression (G, B, A, D, C, E) outlines the Hexachord Durum and results in a chiasmus.

Figure 4.7, Helga Thoene, Tonal Structure of the *Six Sonatas and Partitas*.\(^{245}\)

The chiasmus also appears as a musical figure representing the cross. A famous example of this occurs in the St. Matthew Passion.

Figure 4.8, St. Matthew Passion, S.244

---

Bach’s symbolic representation of the cross naturally ties into Lutheran theology. As previously discussed, Luther saw the Gospel story as series of juxtapositions: death versus the resurrection, law versus grace, Christ’s humanity versus Christ’s divinity, etc. It is thus at the cross, in a moment of complete weakness and humility, that Christ’s power and majesty are most clearly displayed.\textsuperscript{246} In this manner God was to be found “hidden in opposites.” The C major Sonata is evidence of this powerful theological dichotomy as depicted in music.

\textsuperscript{246} Colossians 2:15. “And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”
The *Six Sonatas and Partitas* were intended as more than a theoretical or pedagogical exercise. They convey fundamental truths and expound doctrines of the Christian faith in a manner similar to Bach’s cantatas. This is especially apparent in the *Sonata no. 3* in C major for solo violin. Although lacking a sung text, the fugal setting of *Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott* effectively preaches the Word. The surrounding movements of the Sonata further expound the unsung text through affect and rhetorical gestures. Thus it appears that Bach deliberately chose sacred themes for a “secular” unaccompanied instrumental work, and the *Six Sonatas and Partitas* bear evidence of a sacred, if non-Liturgical function. Following in the footsteps of Luther, Bach’s *Six Sonatas and Partitas* reveal a heart dedicated to the edification of fellow man and the glorification of God. *Soli Deo Gloria.*
WORKS CITED


The *Hymns of Luther set to their original melodies*. Ed. Woolsey Bacon. 26-28


