

**JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH  
THE MOTETS**

Washington  
 Bach  
Consort



**Pro  
Organo**

**J. REILLY LEWIS, CONDUCTOR**

**Pro  
Organo**

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Bethesda, Maryland



# JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

## THE MOTETS

**D**uring Bach's tenure in Leipzig, he was dependent for his livelihood in no small part on the fees he received for providing music for funerals. This is evident from a letter to Georg Erdmann of 1730, lamenting the high cost of living and bad working conditions in Leipzig. Bach complains bitterly that the previous year's "healthy wind" had caused the death rate to fall, depriving him of more than 100 thaler.

When a particularly prominent or wealthy citizen died, Bach would be commissioned to compose a new motet for the occasion. Specific biblical texts would be chosen by the bereaved family or would be requested in the will. For specially commissioned motets, Bach had the best singers available, and thus could employ very difficult contrapuntal writing in five to eight parts. These compositions were the closest Bach came to writing in the old *a cappella* style of the Latin motet. They were not performed unaccompanied, however, but with the addition of continuo instruments. In at least some cases, instruments were employed to double all of the voice parts as well.

Typically, Bach used both the chosen biblical passages and a chorale text on the same subject, with its traditional melody. The contrast or interaction between the

two sources of text – biblical and choral – and the extent to which the chorale melody itself is used are among the determining elements of the form of the motets. In this respect, as in so much of his music, Bach was following 17th century tradition (the tradition of the “Cantor’s motet”), but he brought the form to a new complexity and increased the length. In spite of the lack of independent instrumental parts, Bach employs all kind of compositional techniques – imitative counterpoint, double fugues, chorale preludes, concerto form, polychoral writing, and so forth – in the interests of expressing the meaning of the text. Consequently a high degree of virtuosity on the part of the singers is essential.

***Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied***, BWV 225, is for double choir in three movements. The nature of its commission is uncertain. The joyous character of the text makes it probable that it was not composed for a funeral, but for a festive occasion such as New Year’s Day. Its year of composition is also not clear, but is probably no earlier than 1726. The first movement, its text from Psalm 149, begins as a polychoral piece with the two choirs in dialogue, and concludes with an eight-part fugue. The more homophonic middle movement is also antiphonal – Choir II sings the third verse of the chorale “Nun lob, mein Seel, den Herren,” while the first choir interpolates another poetic text. The third movement, using a text from Psalm 150, begins with the two choirs once again in dialogue, but concludes with a four-part fugue.

***Der Geist Hilt unser Schwachheit auf***, BWV 226, was composed in 1729 for the funeral of the rector of the Thomasschule, J. H. Ernesti. It is for double choir. An original set of string and wind parts doubling the voices exists, the use of which may be regarded as a performance option, not as obligatory. The text is from Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, concluding with a verse of Martin Luther’s Pentecost chorale, “Komm, heiliger Geist.” The antiphonal effects found in ***Singet dem Herrn*** are not such a prominent feature in this motet. The first movement concludes with an eight-part fugue, then the two choirs join for a four-voice double fugue. The chorale is used in its most traditional place at the conclusion of the work, in a simple but masterful harmonization.



***Jesu, meine Freude***, BWV 227, was composed only a few weeks into Bach's tenure in Leipzig, the occasion being the funeral of the head postmaster's widow. Both the biblical text and chorale were apparently specified by the commission. Bach responded with one of his most symmetrical constructions, the eleven movements carefully planned to alternate chorale stanzas with the biblical quotations. The outer movements (1 and 11) use the same music, and important correspondences also exist between movements 2 and 10, movements 3 and 5, and 7 and 9. For example, movements 4 and 8 are both three-part settings, the first for high voices (the basses dropping out) and the second for low voices (without sopranos). The central (sixth) movement is a five-part double fugue.

***Fürchte dich nicht***, BWV 228, employs verses from the book of Isaiah which were the chosen text for a funeral in January of 1726. It is divided into two large sections. As in *Singet dem herrn* and *Der Geist hilft*, the first movement opens with an antiphonal section followed by a fugue. The setting of the first words "Fear not," is used as refrain, introducing the second section, and returning again at the conclusion of the motet. In the second section the double-choir texture is abandoned and the sopranos sing the chorale "Warum sollt ich mich denn grämen," accompanied by the lower three voices singing an extensive fugue.

***Komm, Jesu, komm***, BWV 229, is based on two verses of a poem by Paul Thymich, written on the occasion of the death of a rector of the Thomasschule before Bach's time. The poem is a meditation on John 14:6 – "I am the way, the truth, and the life." The long first movement is divided into three sections which correspond to the text, expressing first a longing for peace, then weariness of worldly tribulation, and finally joyous expectation. The work is for double chorus until the final section, an aria, which provides the equivalent of the customary concluding four-part chorale. In this case the melody is apparently by Bach himself, with expressive leaps suggesting more the style of a song for solo voice than a traditional chorale melody.

***Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden***, BWV 230, is atypical of the motets. It has only four vocal lines throughout, contains no chorale text or chorale tune, and has an independent continuo part. The work was not widely known until it was published in 1821, and is generally considered to be an early work of Bach, composed long before he came to Leipzig. The text is from Psalm 117, concluding with a fugue on the word “Hallelujah.” The two fugues which provide the outer sections of the motet are contrasted with a less rhythmically active and more homophonic central section – at the words “for his mercy and truth.” As in other works, the greatest contrapuntal complexity – in this case a double fugue – is contained in the first section.

***Ich lasse dich nicht***, BWV Anh. 159, is another eight-voice motet. Since the early 19th-century, the work has usually been attributed to Johann Christoph Bach, J. S. Bach’s father’s cousin. The work was long in the repertoire of the Thomasschule in Leipzig, but dates from much earlier, while Bach was at Weimar (1708-1717). The concluding chorale may have been added by Bach for use in Leipzig. Stylistic similarities between this motet and “Fürchte dich nicht” have caused some speculation that the latter work may also have been composed at Weimar, and adapted years later by Bach for performance at a funeral in Leipzig.

***Sei Lob und Preis mit Ehren***, BWV 231, is another version of the second movement of Cantata 28, “Gottlob! nun geht das Jahr zu Ende” for the First Sunday after Christmas. It is for four voices and is in one movement. As in many opening cantata movements, the chorale melody is present in long note values in the soprano. Unlike a cantata, there are no independent instrumental parts, the continuo simply doubling the vocal bass line. The chorale melody permeates the texture of this work; each of its phrases is preceded by an imitative figure in the lower three voices which is derived from the chorale melody.

– R. Benjamin Dobey

## **The Washington Bach Consort**

The professional musicians and Bach enthusiasts who first assembled informally to share Bach's music in 1977 grew swiftly into a group with a following that filled Dahlgren Chapel at Georgetown University. After three short years, the Washington Bach Consort drew capacity audiences at some of Washington's larger churches, among them the National City Christian Church, the Church of the Epiphany, St. Paul's Lutheran Church and the National Presbyterian Church. From its inception, the Consort's goal was to present Bach's music, in particular the choral works – cantatas, masses, passions, oratorios and motets – as Bach himself did, in a church setting. As the calibre of the Consort chorus and orchestra won recognition, it expanded its concert venues to include performances in the Kennedy Center Concert Hall and the Terrace Theater. Overseas tours further increased the Consort's following. In 1985, during a tour of East and West Germany, the Bach Consort was the only North American ensemble invited to perform during the International Bach Festival, commemorating the 300th anniversary of Bach's birth. This concert was presented in Leipzig's Neues Gewandhaus. The Washington Bach Consort also appears occasionally as a guest ensemble in the music of other composers. Guest appearances have included performances with the National Symphony Orchestra under Gerard Schwarz, Zubin Mehta, Rafael Frübeck de Burgos and Christopher Hogwood. A highlight of the 1989 season included two concerts at the prestigious Piccolo Spoleto Festival in Charleston, South Carolina, where the Consort was heralded for its "gift of organization and polish, solidity and brilliance... surpassingly beautiful."

### **J. Reilly Lewis, Music Director**

Founder and Music Director of the Washington Bach Consort, J. Reilly Lewis has built his distinctive career in the city where he was raised, Washington – and has focused his many talents on what he terms "the inestimable joy of Bach." Mr. Lewis received a B.A. from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and earned his master's and doctoral degrees from The Juilliard School. He was the youngest contestant ever to win the coveted first prize in the National Organ-Playing Competition. His teachers included Nadia Boulanger, Anthony Newman and Helmut Walcha, with whom he spent a year in Germany specializing in Bach as a Fulbright Scholar. A harpsichordist, pianist, organist and conductor, Dr. Lewis has been a guest performer with the International Handel Festival in Halle and the International Bach Festival in Leipzig. He is resident keyboard artist and Associate Conductor of the Handel Festival Orchestra and organist/choirmaster at the Clarendon Methodist Church in Arlington, Virginia. In 1985, he succeeded Paul Calloway as music director of the Cathedral Choral Society.

## The Washington Bach Consort Chorus

### soprano

Joellen Brassfield  
Mickey Fuson  
Jan Gannon  
Amity Hall  
Helen Hammond  
Cynthia Lapp  
Laura Lewis  
Susan Madderom  
Joan McFarland  
Barbara Van Woerkorn

### alto

Brenda Arthur  
Leslis Bearden  
Susan Bofinger  
Stephen Gleason  
Sharon Gratto  
Barbara Hollinshead  
Sue Ross  
Claudia Schmitz  
Jill Steinberg  
Kimberley Wheat

### continuo

Marion Baker - cello  
Deborah Milan - cello  
Jeffrey Koczela - bass  
William Neil - organ

### tenor

Douglas Dykstra  
Mark Fittipaldi  
Marshall Ginn  
Rollin Marquis  
Jeffrey McCracken  
Byron Peters  
James Pierce  
Martin Rosol  
Robert Thompson  
John Wiecking  
Bruce Wilson

### bass

Paul Appeldoorn  
Jay Baylon  
John Becker  
Rick Bell  
R. Benjamin Dobey  
Bart Hewitt  
Thomas Hollenhorst  
Tom Kramer  
William Kugel  
Alan Mayers  
John Ross  
  
J. Reilly Lewis,  
Music Director  
R. Benjamin Dobey,  
Associate Conductor

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## Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied, BWV 225

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied,  
Die Gemeinde der Heiligen sollen ihn loben.  
Israel freue sich des, der ihn gemacht hat.  
Die Kinder Zion sei'n fröhlich über ihrem Könige,  
Sie sollen loben seinen Namen imReihen;  
Mit Pauken und mit Harfen sollen sie ihm spielen.  
Wie sich ein Vater erbarmet,  
Gott nimm dich ferner unser an,  
Über seine junge Kinderlein,  
So tut der Herr uns Armen,  
So wir ihn kindlich fürchten rein.  
Er kennt das arm Gemächte,  
Gott weiss, wir sind nur Staub,  
Denn ohn dich ist nichts getan  
Mit allen unsern Sachen.  
Gleichwie das Gras vom Rechen  
Ein Blum und fallend Laub.  
Der Wind nur drüber wehet,  
So ist es nicht mehr da,  
Drum sei du unser Schirm und Licht,  
Und trügt uns unsre Hoffnung nicht,  
So wirst du's ferner machen.  
Also der Mensch vergehet,  
Sein end, das ist ihn nah.  
Wohl dem, der sich nur steif und fest  
Auf dich und deine Huld verlässt.  
Lobet den Herrn in seinen Taten,  
lobet ihn in seiner grossen Herrlichkeit!  
Alles, was Odem hat, lobe den Herrn, halleluja!

Sing to the Lord a new song,  
The assembly of the saints shall praise him.  
Israel is glad in him who hath made him.  
Let the children of Zion rejoice in him who is their majesty King,  
They shall praise his Name in dance;  
With timbrels and with harps shal they play unto him.  
As a father shows mercy  
God, watch over us in the future,  
On his young children,  
So does the Lord unto us,  
If we fear him with childlike purity,  
He recognizes our frail humanity,  
God knows we are but dust,  
For without you we accomplish nothing  
Despite all our wisdom,  
Like the grass fallen from the rake,  
Or a flower and a fallen leaf.  
If the wind only blows over it,  
It is no longer there.  
Therefore be our shield and light  
And if our hope is not in vain,  
You will be watching over us henceforth.  
In the same way shall man perish,  
His end is very near.  
Happy is he who firmly and enduringly  
Depends on you and your grace.  
Praise the Lord in his deeds, praise him in His  
great majesty! Let everything that has breath  
praise the Lord, hallelujah!

## Komm, Jesu, Komm BWV 229

Komm, Jesu, Komm  
Lein Leib ish müde,  
Die Kraft verschwindt je mehr und mehr,  
ich sehne mich  
Nach deinem Friede;  
Der saure Weg wird mir zu schwer!  
Komm, ich will mich dir ergeben;  
Du bist der rechte Weg,  
Die Wahrheit und das Leben.  
Drum schliess ich mich in deine Hände  
Und sage, Welt, zu guter Nacht!  
Eilt gleich mein Lebenslauf zu Ende,  
Ist doch der Geist wohl angebracht,  
Er soll bei seinem Schöpfer schweben,  
Weil Jesus ist und bleibt  
Der wahre Weg zum leben.

Come, Jesus, come!  
My body is tired,  
and my strength is waning more and more.  
I long  
for your peace.  
The arduous path is becoming too hard for me.  
Come, let me be Your servant.  
You are the right path,  
the truth and life.  
Therefore I give myself into Your hands  
and bid good night to the world.  
Though my life may be ended,  
my spirit is content.  
It shall stay near its creator  
because Jesus is and remains  
the true path to life.



## Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden, BWV 230

Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden,  
und preiset ihn, alle Völker!  
Denn seine Gnade und Wahrheit  
waltet über uns  
in Ewigkeit, Halleluja!

Praise the Lord, all heathens,  
and praise Him, all peoples!  
For His mercy and truth  
rule over us  
forever, Hallelujah!

## Ich lasse dich nicht, BWV Anh. 159

Ich lasse dich nicht, mein Jesu  
Du segnest mich denn.  
Weil du mein Gott und Vater bist,  
Dein Kind wirst du verlassen nicht,  
Du väterliches Herz,  
Ich bin ein armer Erdenkloss,  
Auf Erden weiss ich keinen Trost.

I will not abandon you, my Jesus,  
for you will bless me.  
Since you are my God and Father,  
You will not desert your child,  
dear fatherly heart,  
I am a wretched clump of earth  
and on earth I find no solace.

## Sei lob und Preis mit Ehren, BWV 231

Sei Lob und Preis mit Ehren  
Gott Vater, Sohn und Heiligen Geist,  
Der woll in uns vermehren,  
Was er aus Gnaden uns verheisst,  
Dass wir ihm fest vertrauen,  
Gänzlich verlass'n auf ihn,  
Von Herzen auf ihn bauen,  
Dass uns'r Herz, Mut und Sinn  
Ihm tröstlich sol'n anhangen,  
Drafu singen wir zur Stund:  
Amen, wir werd'ns erlangen,  
Glaub'n wir aus Herzengrund.

Give glory, praise and honor  
to Father, Son and Holy Ghost  
Who multiplies with favor  
his kind and gracious promise blest.  
May we in faith believe him,  
Put all our trust in him,  
Incline our hearts to love him,  
That heart and mind alone  
may rest their faith upon him,  
and so we sing this day:  
Amen, for we shall gain him  
if in our hearts we pray.

## Jesu, meine Freude, BWV 227

Jesu, mein Freude,  
Meines Herzens Weide,  
Jesu, meine Zier,  
Ach wie lange,  
Ish dem Herzen lange  
Und verlangt nach dir!  
Gottes Lamm, mein Bräutigam,  
Ausser dir soll mir auf Erden  
Nichts sonst Liebers werden.  
Es ist nun nichts Verdammliches an denen, die in  
Christo Jesu sind, die nicht mahc dem Fleische  
wandeln, sondern nach dem Geist.  
Unter deinem Schirmen  
Bin ich vor den Stürmen  
Aller Feinde frei.  
Lass den Satan wittern,  
Lass denn Feind erbittern,  
Mir steht Jesus bei.  
Ob es itzt gleich kracht und blitzt,  
Ob gleich Sünd und Hölle schrecken:  
Jesus will mich decken.

Jesus, my joy,  
My heart's delight,  
Jesus, my treasure,  
Oh, how long, how long  
Does my fearful heart  
Yearn for you.  
Lamb of God, my bridegroom,  
I shall cherish nothing  
More than you on earth.  
There is nothing damnable in those who are  
in Jesus Christ and who are not guided by the  
flesh but by the spirit.  
Beneath Your shield  
I am safe from the assault  
of all enemies.  
Let Satan hunt me,  
Let the enemy rage,  
Jesus will help me.  
Whether there be thunder and lightning,  
Whether I be threatened by sin and hell,  
Jesus will guard me.

Denn das Gesetz des Geistes, der da lebendig  
machet in Christo Jesu, hat mich frei gemacht  
von dem Gesetz der Sünde und des Todes.

Trotz dem alten Drachen,  
Trotz des Todes Rachen,  
Trotz der Furcht darzu!  
Tobe, Welt, und springe,  
Ich steh hier und singe  
In gar sichrer Ruh.  
Gottes Macht hält mich in acht;  
Erd und Abgrund muss verstummen,  
Ob sie noch so brummen.

Ihr aber seid nicht fleischlich, sondern geistlich,  
so anders Gottes Geist in euch wohnt. Wer aber  
Christi Geist nicht hat, der ist nicht sein.

Weg mit allen Schätzen!  
Du bist mein Ergötzen,  
Jesu, meine Lust!  
Weg, ihr eitlen Ehren,  
Ich mag euch nicht hören,  
Bleibt mir unbewusst!  
Elend, Not, Kreuz, Schmach und Tod  
Soll mich, ob ich viel muss leiden,  
Nicht von Jesu scheiden.

So aber Christus in euch ist, so ist der Leib zwar  
tot um der Sünde willen; der Geist aber ist das  
Leben um der Gerechtigkeit willen.

Gute Nacht, o Wesen,  
Das die Welt erlesen,  
Mir gefälltst du nicht.  
Gute Nacht, ihr Sünden,  
Bleibet weit dahinten,  
Kommt nicht mehr ans Licht!  
Gute Nacht, do Stolz und Pracht!  
Dir sei ganz, du Lasterleben,  
Gute Nacht gegeben.

So nun der Geist des, der Jesum von den Toten  
auferwecket hat, in euch wohnt, so wird auch  
derselbige, der Christum von dein Toten auferwecket hat,  
eure sterbliche Leiber lebendig machen um des willen, dass  
sein Geist in euch wohnt.

Weicht, ihn Trauergeister,  
Denn mein Friedenmeister,  
Jesus, tritt herein.  
Denen, die Gott lieben,  
Muss auch ihr betrüben  
Lauter Freude sein.

For the law of the spirit who makes us live in  
Jesus Christ has freed me from the law  
of sin and death.

Defy the old dragon,  
Defy the jaws of death,  
Defy all terrors!  
Rage, world, and riot,  
I stand here and sing  
In calm and safety.  
God's might shields me  
Earth and abyss must fall silent,  
However much they may grumble.

But you are not of the flesh but of the Spirit,  
and God's spirit dwells in you. But he who does  
not have the spirit of Christ cannot be His.

Away with all treasures.  
You are my delight,  
Jesus, my desire.  
Hence, vain honors  
Let me not hear of you  
Out of my mind!  
Pain, misery, shame, and death  
Shall not - though I suffer much -  
Part me from Jesus.

But if Christ is in you, then, though the body must die  
for its sins, the spirit shall live because it is just.

Good night, you creature  
Who is chosen of this world.  
I dislike you.  
Good night, sins.  
Remain far behind  
Do not come forth into the light.  
Good night, pride and splendor.  
To you, life of vice,  
I bid good night.

But if the spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead  
live in you, then He who raised Jesus from the dead  
will give eternal life to you mortal bodies because  
his spirit lives in you.

Hence, you mournful spirits!  
For my joyful master,  
Jesus, is coming  
To those who love God,  
Even their affliction  
Must be pure joy.

Duld ich schon heir Spott un Hohn,  
Dennoch bleibst du auch im Leide,  
Jesu, meine Freude.

Though I may suffer scorn and derision,  
You remain, even in my suffering,  
Jesus, my joy.

## **Fürchte dich nicht, ich bin bei dir, BWV 228**

Fürchte dich nicht, ich bin bei dir;  
weiche nicht, denn ich bin dein Gott!  
Ich stärke dich, ich helfe dir auch,  
ich erhalte dich durch die rechte Hand  
meiner Gerechtigkeit.

Fürchte dich nicht, denn ich habe dich erlöst,  
ich habe dich bei deinem Namen gerufen,  
du bist mein!

Herr, mein Hirt, Brunn aller Freuden,  
Du bist mein, ich bin dein,  
Niemand kann uns scheiden.  
Ich bin dein, weil du dein Leben  
Und dein Blut mir zugut  
In den Tod gegeben.

Du bist mein, weil ich dich fasse,  
Und dich nicht, o mein Licht,  
Aus dem Herzen lasse.  
Lass mich, lass mich hingelangen,  
Da du mich und ich dich  
Lieblich werd umfassen.

Have no fear, for I am near you;  
do not flee from me, for I am your God!  
I fortify you, I help you,  
and I maintain you by the right hand  
of my justice.

Have no fear, for I have redeemed you.  
I have called you by your name,  
you are mine!

Lord, my shepherd, font of all joy,  
You are mine, I am Yours.  
No one can part us.  
I am yours because you gave  
Your life and Your blood  
for me.

You are mine because I hold You  
and do not let You, oh my light,  
out of my heart.  
Let me, let me reach the place  
where You and I  
shall lovingly embrace.

## **Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf, BWV 226**

Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf,  
denn wir wissen nicht, was wir beten sollen,  
wie sich's gebühret;  
sondern der Geist selbst vertritt uns aufs beste  
mit unaussprechlichern Seufzen.  
Der aber die Herzen forchet, der weiss  
was der Geistes Sinn sei; denn er vertritt die  
Heiligen nach dem, das Gott gefällt.

Du heilige Brunst, süsßer Trost,  
Nun hilf uns, fröhlich und getrost  
In deinem Dienst beständig bleiben,  
Die Trübsal uns nicht abtreiben.  
O Herr, durch dein Kraft uns bereit  
Und stärk des Fleisches Blödigkeit,  
Dass wir hie ritterlich ringen,  
Durch Tod und Leben zu dir dringen.  
Halleluja, halleluja.

The spirit helps us overcome our weakness  
for we know not how to pray,  
as is proper,  
but the spirit itself intercedes for us,  
with inexpressible sighing.  
But he who explored the hearts understands  
the spirit; for it speaks for the saints  
in a manner that pleases God.

Holy yearning, sweet comfort,  
help us that we may, with joy and confidence,  
remain steadfastly in Your service  
and not be driven away by gloom,  
Oh Lord, prepare us through Your strength  
and strengthen the weak flesh  
that we may struggle bravely on earth,  
and finally reach You through death and life.  
Hallelujah, hallelujah.





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# JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

## THE MOTETS

6 celebrated motets  
plus 2 attributed motets

Washington  
  
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J. REILLY LEWIS  
CONDUCTOR

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<b>Pro Organo</b>	

total playing time: 1:17:06

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