

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Reformation Cantata

Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott, BWV 80

Lutheran Vespers

Organ

Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott, BWV 720
Nun danket alle Gott, BWV 657

THE HOLY TRINITY BACH CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA

Frederick Grimes, Director
Nancianne Parrella, Assistant Director

William Hays, continuo Organ
Mark Shuman, continuo cello
Diane Higginbotham, Soprano
Jacqueline Pierce, Mezzo-soprano
Gene Tucker, Tenor
Daniel Pratt, Baritone



Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, New York City, The Rev. A. James Laughlin, Jr., Pastor

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH**REFORMATION CANTATA****Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott, BWV 80****Lutheran Vespers****Organ****Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott, BWV 720****Nun danket alle Gott, BWV 657****The Holy Trinity Bach Choir and Orchestra****Frederick Grimes, Director****Nancianne Parrella, Assistant Director****Diane Higginbotham, Soprano****Jacqueline Pierce, Mezzo-soprano****Gene Tucker, Tenor****Daniel Pratt, Baritone****Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, New York City****The Rev. A. James Laughlin, Jr., Pastor****The Holy Trinity Bach Choir****Soprano:**Bonnie Hamilton
Diane Higginbotham*
Joyce McDonald
Martha Scoppa**Tenor:**Scott Breiner
David Kuester
Stephen Endress
Gene Tucker***Alto:**Carol Baker
Shirley Close
Evelyn Flory
Margaret Kiunke
Jacqueline Pierce***Bass:**Daniel Colburn
Douglas Dunnell
Daniel Pratt*
Neil Raber (not pictured)

*Soloists

The Holy Trinity Bach Orchestra**Trumpet:**Gerard Schwarz
Edward Carroll
Lee Soper**Bassoon:**

Ethan Bauch

Trombone:

John D. Rojak

Violin:Laurie Carney Grubb
Martin Foster**Timpani:**

Fred Hauptman

Viola:

Margaret Middleton

Oboe:Mark Hill
Hans Keitel**Cello:**

Mark Shuman

English Horn:

Virginia Brewer

Double Bass:

Andrée Brière

Organ:

William Hays

Bach Vespers at Holy Trinity

Since 1904, when Holy Trinity opened its doors for worship in the present location, the congregation has been interested in good music. For many years, Holy Trinity participated in the fashionable practice of presenting oratorios and other large scale choral works with organ accompaniment. While these oratorios were a great contribution to the musical life of the city, they were not necessarily any more outstanding than those given each week in any one of a dozen or more churches in Manhattan.

By 1968, when Holy Trinity was to celebrate its 100th anniversary as a congregation, there seemed to be a need for a music program that offered something more individual, something specifically Lutheran. The answer was obvious — Bach. The cantatas were an immediate success, attracting large crowds even from the first.

This was the first time in America that Bach cantatas had been presented on a regular basis as part of religious services on the appropriate days of the church year for which they were written. Bach, as cantor of St. Thomas Church (Lutheran) in Leipzig from 1723 to 1750, was responsible for preparing a cantata for each Sunday based on the Gospel lesson of the day.

The Bach program has continued to grow each season until now in the Eleventh Season it is often impossible to find a seat (even on the floor!) for the Sunday afternoon services.

Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott, BWV 80

Many of J. S. Bach's church cantatas were quickly written for a performance which could be only a few days hence. Later performances were sometimes given, but usually with the original composition unchanged. Some cantatas, however, went through several versions and were "cut and paste" operations, hastily assembled to relieve the pressure of the moment. Cantata 80 is of the second category. At least four versions of the work may be traced. Three of them were done by Bach himself; but the fourth, that version so beloved by today's audiences, is, strangely, a version almost certainly unknown to the composer.

The first version, "Alles was von Gott geboren" (BWV 80a), was written for the third Sunday in Lent and first performed on that day in Weimar in 1715. The text, much of which was retained in later versions, was by the Weimar court poet, Salomon Franck, who prepared the libretti for most of Bach's Weimar cantatas. The opening movement (movt. 2 of the later versions) was a bass aria, "Alles was von Gott geboren." The ornamented melody of "Ein' feste Burg," played by the oboe, and sung by the soprano in later versions, was then played by the oboe alone. Following this movement came the bass recitative, "Erwäge doch"; the soprano aria, "Komm in mein Herzenshaus"; the tenor recitative, "So stehe denn"; the alto-tenor duet, "Wie selig"; and the closing chorale harmonization, "Mit unser Macht." The text of the alto-tenor duet was slightly different from that of later versions, and the text of the final chorale was the second of Luther's four stanzas of "Ein' feste Burg." This cantata is in every way typical of the cantatas of 1715 — there is no opening chorus; the arias are short; the recitatives are approximately one-half secco, one-half arioso; and, with the exception of the final movement, chorale tunes occur in the orchestral rather than the vocal parts.

Little of certainty can be said about the second version of the cantata, except that it began with a simple four-voice setting of Luther's hymn using the well known text of the first stanza, "Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott." As Bach began his second year at Leipzig on the first Sunday after Trinity, 1724, he also began the composition of that cycle of cantatas which has so captured the world's imagination, the chorale cantatas. These were cantatas based not only on chorale tunes but also on the complete chorale text, either verbatim or paraphrased. It is likely that this second version of "Ein' feste Burg" was intended to be the Reformation cantata of the chorale cantata cycle, and that it was first performed on October 31, 1724. The autumn of 1724 was a busy time for Bach. He was preparing and performing a chorale cantata, usually of new composition, each Sunday. He had given the first performance of Cantata 38 on Sunday October 19, and he was probably working on Cantata 115 which would be first performed on Sunday November 5. And a cantata must also be presented on Reformation Day, Tuesday October 31. The Lenten cantata from Weimar, "Alles was von Gott geboren," contained Luther's Reformation hymn; furthermore, it could not be used in Lent in Leipzig because that orthodox city forbade such elaborate music during penitential seasons; but it could quickly be made over into a chorale cantata for Reformation. And that is almost certainly what happened. A first movement consisting of a simple chorale statement of "Ein' feste Burg" was added; the bass aria became a soprano-bass duet with the soprano singing the second stanza of Luther's text along with the oboe; the bass recitative and the soprano aria could be used unchanged from the Weimar version; the unison chorale movement using Luther's third stanza, "Und wenn die Welt," was probably added at that date, but without trumpets and drums; the tenor recitative could be used unchanged; the alto-tenor duet needed only minor textual changes to remove some of the most obvious Lenten poetic imagery (no matter that it ruined Franck's poetry); and the text of the final stanza, rather than the second stanza, of the hymn was used for the closing movement. Thus, with little work, Bach had a new chorale cantata.

The third version of Cantata 80 is distinguished by the addition of the huge chorale motet on the first stanza of the hymn, thus replacing the former simple chorale as the opening movement. At that date the movement did not yet require trumpets and drums. The remainder of the work was most likely retained as it existed in the second version. And if the unison chorale, the present fifth movement, had not been inserted earlier, it was surely entered then along with the new first movement motet. Those two movements are the only music of the cantata dating later than 1715 and, in spite of their brilliance, they give the work a certain unevenness because of their shocking contrast of Bach's mature compositional style to that of his youth. The date of this third version is unknown but 1735 has been suggested because of similarities in style between the first movement and other works known to be written around that date. It appears that the composer never again changed the cantata.

The fourth version is the same as the third with the addition of three trumpets and two tympani in movements 1 and 5. These insertions are now widely accepted as the work of Johann Sebastian's eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann, who added them sometime after his father's death.

Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott, BWV 720

The organ chorale on "Ein' feste Burg" is a composition written for the dedication of a new organ. During the year from July 1707 to June 1708 when Bach was organist of St. Blasius, Mülhausen, he requested a rebuilding of the organ. The request was approved at the parish meeting of February 21, 1708, and work was begun. Bach resigned the position before the new organ was ready, but the church officials in accepting his resignation June 26, 1708 requested that he "help bring to completion the project that had been undertaken." This he no doubt did, for upon completion of the rebuilt instrument he returned to play it. The organ chorale on "Ein' feste Burg," written for that occasion, was especially designed to show off the new instrument. The opening dialogue between the sesquialtera and the fagott in the right and left hands respectively represent specific registrational indications, both stops having just been newly installed. Later in the work, when the chorale tune appears in the pedal, it was no doubt placed there to show off the new 32' pedal subbass and the revoiced 16' pedal trombone. The compositional style is that of the very young Bach and is similar to that of the organ chorales of Dietrich Buxtehude, possibly because Bach had visited Buxtehude in 1706 and was still much under the older master's influence.

Nun danket alle Gott, BWV 657

The organ chorale on "Nun danket alle Gott" is from a collection of organ chorales known as The Great Eighteen or The Leipzig Chorales. These were a collection of seventeen chorales assembled by Bach, to which was added an eighteenth chorale written a few days before his death. Many of the chorales in the set are reworkings of earlier compositions written when Bach was court organist at Weimar. No such early model for "Nun danket," however, has been found. The form is that known as the "Pachelbel type," named after Pachelbel, the teacher of J. S. Bach's older brother. In "Pachelbel" chorales the tune is stated in a straightforward manner phrase by phrase, each phrase being preceded by a short imitative introduction using its theme.

Notes by William Hays

Side 1

Organ, Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott, BWV 720

Frederick Grimes, organ

Processional Hymn, Ein' feste Burg

Versicles

The Rev. A. James Laughlin, Jr., Cantor

Psalm XLVI, Tone II

Lesson, St. John 8:31-36

The Rev. A. James Laughlin, Jr., Reader

Cantata 80, Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott

Chorus — Soprano & Bass Duet — Bass Recitative — Soprano Aria

Side 2

Cantata 80 (conclusion)

Chorale — Tenor Recitative — Alto & Tenor Duet — Chorale

Versicles

Nunc Dimittis, Tone V, I

Collects**Benediction**

Recessional Hymn, Nun danket alle Gott

Organ, Nun danket alle Gott, BWV 657

Nancianne Parrella, organ

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