

Bach Choruses for General Use

Wir danken dir, Gott
(from S. 29)

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685 - 1750)

Arranged for
SATB chorus and organ
by Gary Harney

Original Key (D Major)

Text and Translation

Wir danken dir, Gott, wir danken dir
und verkündigen deine Wunder.

We thank you, God, we thank you
and proclaim your wonders.

Text by Johann Gramann

Translation by Francis Browne. Used by permission

Presented by *Bach on a Budget*
<http://www.immanuelbachconsort.org>

“Wir danken dir, Gott” (*from S. 29*)

The Cantata

Wir danken dir, Gott (We thank you, God) was composed for the Inauguration of a New Town Council, and received its first performance on 27 August 1731. Two subsequent performances (1739 and 1749) are also documented.

From the first note, it is clear this is going to be a special work, as the opening movement is a spectacular Sinfonia featuring organ obbligato and an orchestra with trumpets and timpani. It is hard to believe that what began its life as the “Prelude” to his E Major Partita for unaccompanied violin could be transformed into such a lavish concerto movement!

Our chorus follows and will be discussed below. Bach then proceeds to present yet more extraordinary music, including a secco recitative which ends with the words “and all the people will say”, followed by unison chorus adding “Amen!”

The Chorus

“Wir danken dir, Gott” is the only chorus in S. 29 (apart from the aforementioned unison “Amen” and the plain four-voice chorale at the end). In form, Bach presents two fugue subjects, but chooses not to combine them to make a double fugue. The style is in stark contrast to the more modern-sounding Sinfonia that precedes it and the *concertante* movement that follows it. The accompaniment for this movement merely doubles the voices, until bar 62. Beginning there, obbligato trumpets and timpani are added, creating new lines above the voices and creating a thrilling finish to the work. That Bach was fond of this chorus is shown by his use of it for the “Gratias agimus tibi” and “Dona nobis pacem” movements from the *Mass in b minor*.

Because the range of the tenor part in this chorus is rather high (including several instances of the A above middle C), an alternate version of this chorus has also been created, transposed down a step.

The Accompaniment

For the first 61 bars, creating an organ accompaniment to this chorus is straight-forward. Purely doubling instruments are dispensed with, and a general continuo part is provided to support the singers. Pedal is held off until later, in order to create a more distinctly different sound when the trumpets (and in the original, timpani) enter. The bass line has been taken down an octave throughout (with the exception of a few spots where either the upper octave was thought to sound better or where the compass of the keyboard precluded playing an octave lower).

Beginning at bar 62 of the original, *colla parte* trumpet and timpani parts enter. The top two trumpet parts are presented here as in the original. Whether to play these voices (marked “Solo”) on a trumpet stop will depend on the organ at hand. The organ used to try out the accompaniment did not lend itself well to that treatment; however, if the entire accompaniment was played on a *plenum* registration suitable for accompaniment, it proved successful on one manual, with pedal as marked. The addition of the pedal in bar 62, as well as the higher range of the top parts, provide a fine ending even without the use of a separate reed.

16

dei - ne Wun - - der, wir dan - - ken dir, Gott, wir dan -
 - - der, wir dan - - ken dir, Gott, wir dan - -
 wir dan - - ken dir, Gott, wir dan - - ken_ dir,
 wir dan - - ken_ dir

24

- - - - ken_ dir, wir dan -
 - ken_ dir, wir dan - ken dir, Gott, wir dan -
 wir dan - ken dir, Gott, wir dan - - ken dir, wir
 und_ ver- kün - - - di-gen dei - ne Wun - der, wir dan-ken

32

- ken dir, Gott, wir dan - - ken dir und ver- kün -
 - ken dir, wir dan - ken dir, Gott, wir dan - - - ken
 dan - ken dir, Gott, wir dan - - - ken dir, wir dan - - ken
 dir, wir dan - ken dir, wir dan - - ken dir, Gott, wir dan - ken

40

- di- gen dei- ne Wun - - der, wir dan - - - ken dir und
 dir und ver- kün - di- gen dei- ne Wun - - der, wir dan - ken dir, wir
 dir und ver- kün - di- gen dei- ne Wun - -
 dir und ver- kün - di- gen

62

- ken dir, Gott, wir dan - - - - ken dir,
Gott, wir dan - - - - ken dir, wir
dir, wir dan - ken dir, wir dan - - - - ken
dir, wir dan - ken dir, wir dan - ken dir,
(Solo)

67

wir dan - - - - ken dir,
dan - - - - ken dir, Gott, wir dan - - - -
dir, wir dan - - - - ken dir, Gott, wir dan - - - -
wir dan - - - -
wir dan - - - -

72

Gott, wir dan - - - - - ken dir und _____ ver - kün -
 - - - - - ken dir und _____ ver - kün - di - gen dei - ne
 - - - - - ken dir, wir
 - ken dir, Gott, wir dan - - - - ken dir und _____

Man. I

77

- di - gen dei - ne Wun - - - - -
 Wun - - - - - der, und _____ ver - kün - di - gen dei - ne Wun -
 dan - ken, wir dan - ken dir und _____ ver - kün - di - gen dei - ne Wun -
 - ver - kün - - - di - gen dei - ne Wun - - - - -

82

der, und ver - kün - di - gen dei - ne.

der, wir dan - ken dir, Gott, Gott, wir dan -

der, wir dan - ken dir, Gott, Gott,

der, und ver - kün - di - gen dei - ne

(Solo)

87

Wun - der, und ver - kün - di - gen dei - ne. Wun - der.

ken dir und ver - kün - di - gen dei - ne Wun - der.

wir dan - ken dir und ver - kün - di - gen dei - ne Wun - der.

Wun - der, und ver - kün - di - gen dei - ne Wun - der.