J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 115 Form: Chorus/Fantasia - Aria (A) - Recit (B) - Aria (S) - Recit (T) - Chorale.

Introduction & updates at melvinunger.com.

NBA I/26: BC A156

22. S. after Trinity (BWV 89, 115, 55)

*Philippins 1:3-11 (Paul's prayer for the church at Philippi) *Matthew 18:23-35 (The parable of the unforgiving servant) Librettist: Unknown

of Bach's chorale cantata cycle (see note).

FP: 5 November 1724 (Leipzig: St. Thomas). This is part

The underlying 1695 chorale was written by Johann Burchard Freystein (1671–1718), who moved in Pietist circles. For a discussion of the theological and biblical adjustments made by the cantata librettist, see Martin Petzoldt, Bach Kommentar 1:622-623

J.S. Bach

Cantata No. 115

The chorale and cantata texts both emphasize spiritual wakefulness in view of the Last Judgment. The connection to the Gospel reading is tenuous but can be seen in movement no. 4, where two quoted lines from the chorale's 7th stanza allude to the indebted servant of Jesus' parable in the

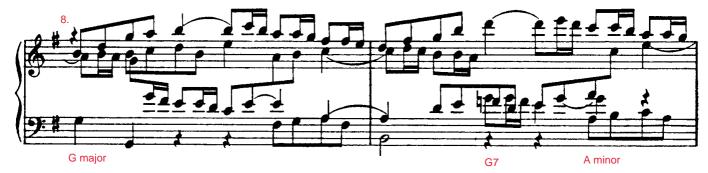
Mache dich, mein Geist, bereit Gospel reading. Alfred Dürr writes, "The text is based on the ten-verse hymn of 1695 by Johann Burchard Freystein, whose theme--a warning to be vigilant and to pray-is only loosely connected with the Sunday spel. It is not the kernel of the parable (the contrast between God's Grace and man's lack of mercy) that lies at the heart of this cantata text but rather a certain aspect of it: the king's demand for settlement catches the unfaithful servant unawares, which teaches us to be prepared when the Lord comes and demands settlement of us. Some such passage as Luke 21:36 perhaps suggested the choice of hymn for this Sunday: "Thus watch and pray now always so that you may be accounted worthy of escaping all these things that shall come to pass " See The



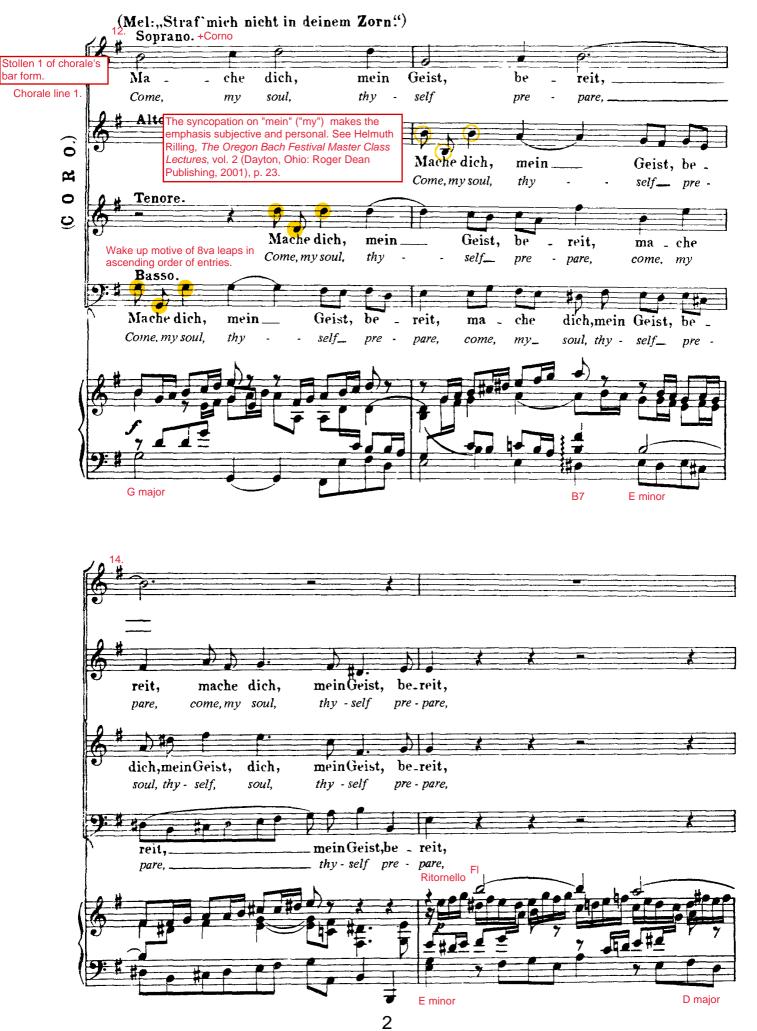
The opening chorale fantasia is strikingly similar to that of BWV 114 (performed 5 weeks earlier). Both movements have a striding rhythm with figura corta in 6/4 meter. Both have an urgently insistent character as if exhorting the listener or pressing a point.







plays nervous "tumult" motive (see strings, m. 54) D(7) G major









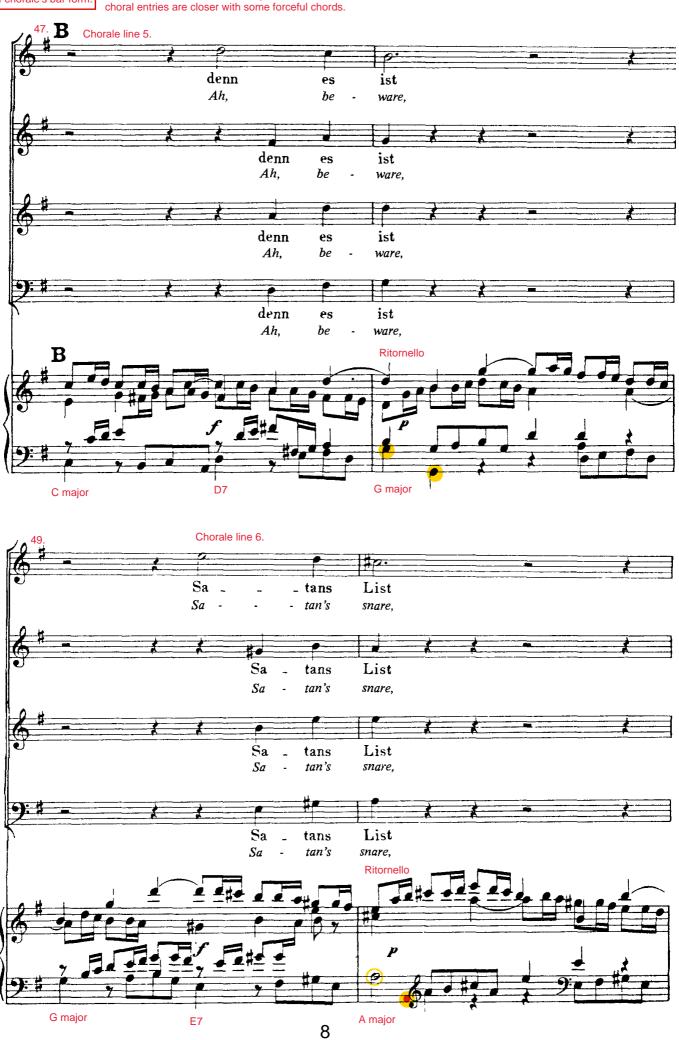




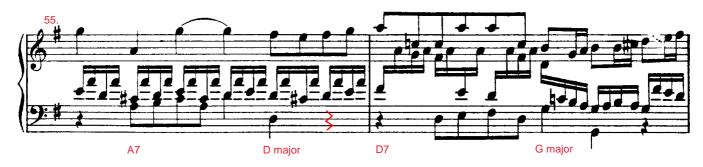












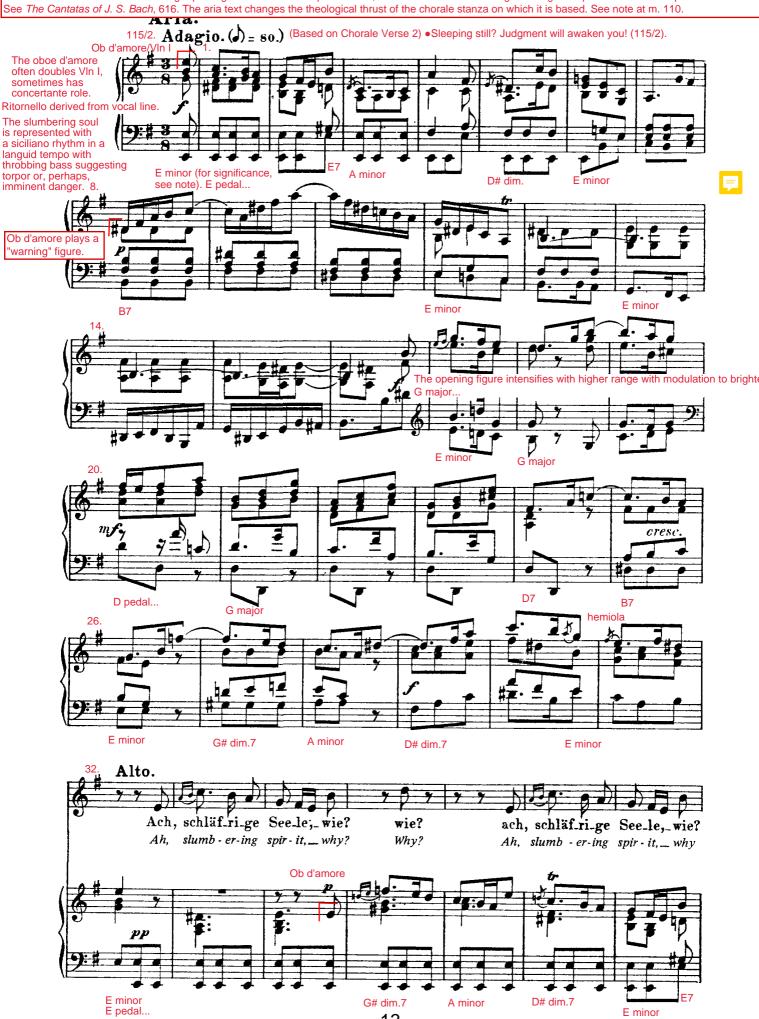








Alfred Dürr writes, "The principal section [of the aria] is a melancholy siciliano, marked 'adagio'— apparently a lullaby of the 'slumbering soul'. The middle section contains an internal contrast: an allegro passage warns of sudden punishment, and then a return to the original adagio tempo reflects the 'sleep of eternal death." See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*. 616. The aria text changes the theological thrust of the chorale stanza on which it is based. See note at m. 110.



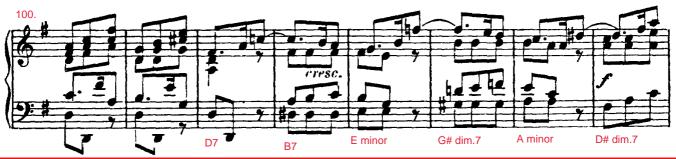




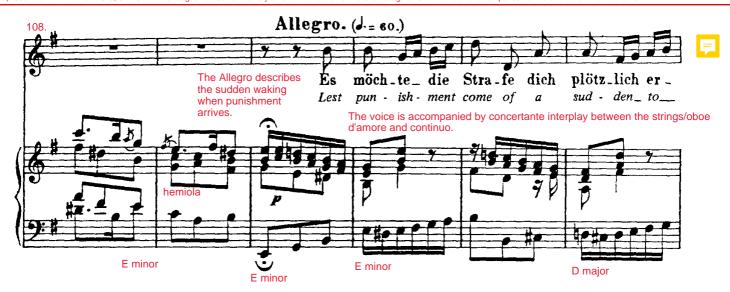
E minor

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D pedal...



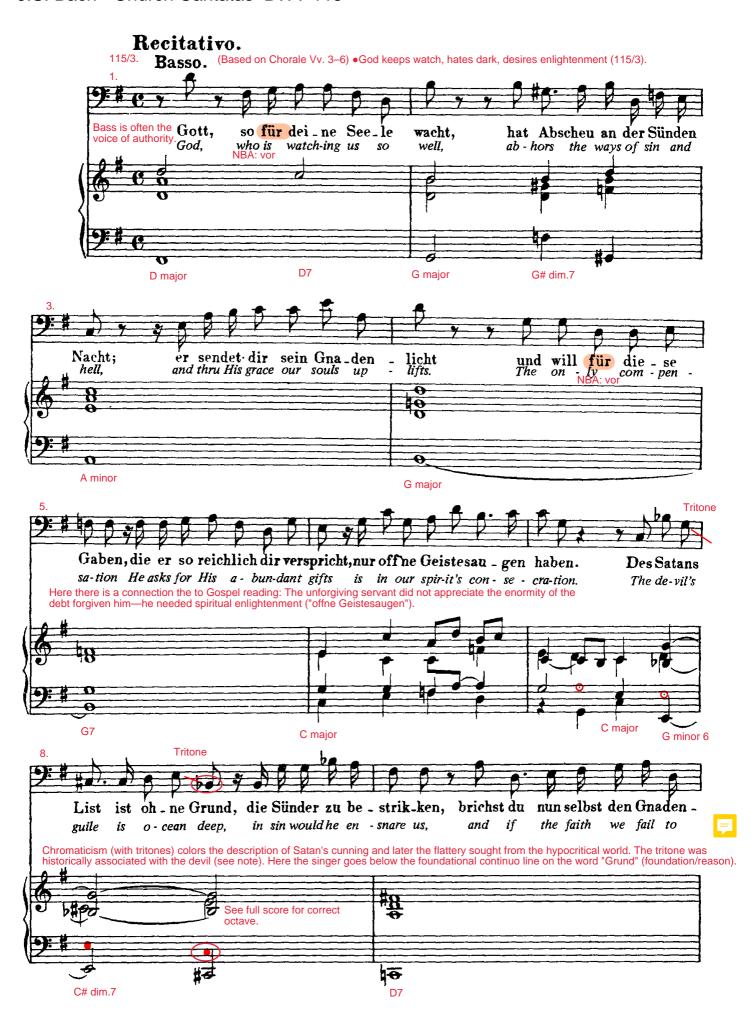
Martin Petzoldt argues that the cantata text revises the chorale's Pietistic view of spiritual sleepiness as negligence resulting in unexpected sinful actions that cause sorrow to a more orthodox/biblical understanding that sin leads to the sleep of eternal death. The alteration results in a clear allusion to Lamentations 1:14 (Luther 1545: "Meine schweren Sünden sind durch seine Strafe erwachet") ("My grave sins are awakened by his punishment"). See Bach Kommentar 1:618, 622–624. Note: English bibles have a very different translation of the Greek original. See the note for a comparison of the chorale and cantata texts.

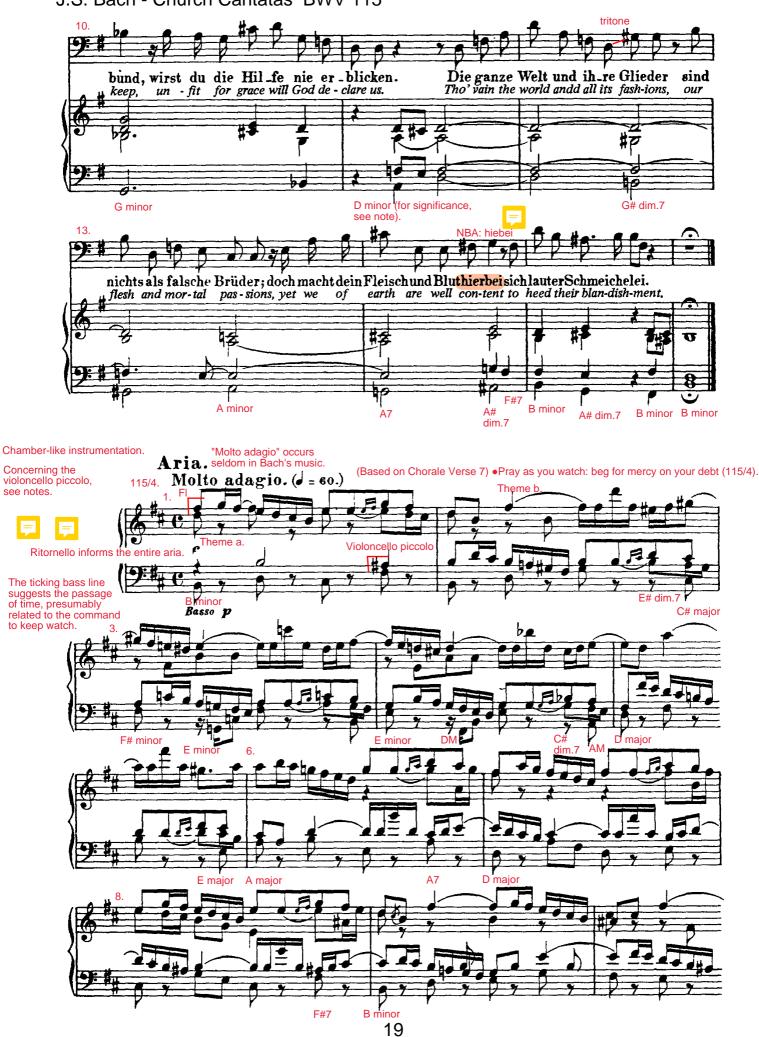


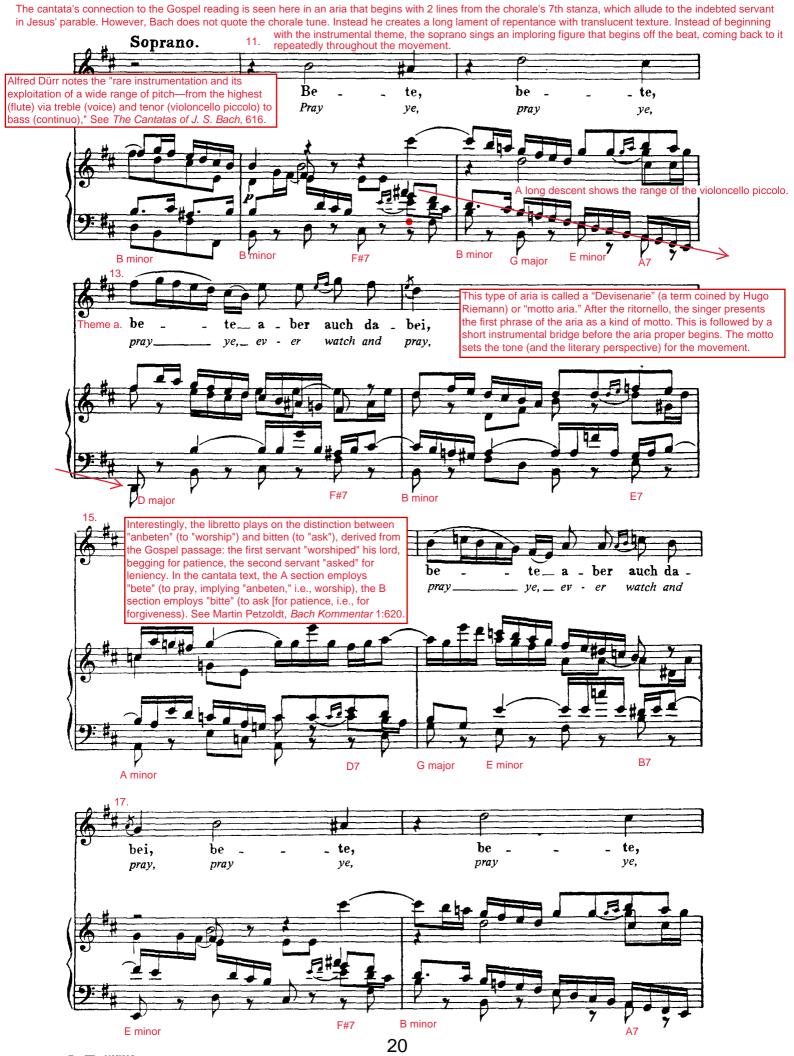


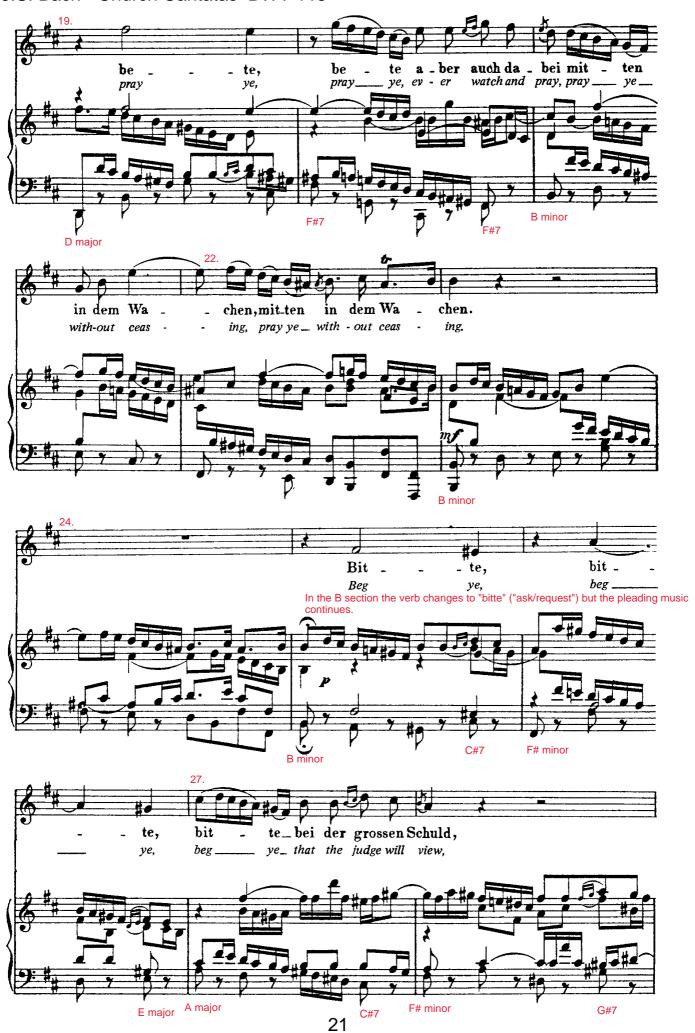
















The arioso ending underscores God's merciful response, represented by the forgiving master in the Gospel reading, The tenor's descending line (with cross figures) suggests the image of God coming down, while the walking bass illustrates the text: "He will step to us (i.e., to our side) as helper." See Helmuth Rilling, The Oregon

