

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 13

Form: Aria (T) - Recit (A) - Aria (chorale) (A) - Recit (S) - Aria (B) - Chorale (SATB). For the biographical context in which this cantata was written (a particularly unhappy time for Bach), see side note.

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## J.S. Bach

### Cantata No. 13 (titled "concerto da chiesa")

#### Meine Seufzer, meine Tränen

NBA I/5; BC A34

2. S. after Epiphany (BWV 155, 3, 13)

\*Rom. 12:6-16 (Ends at "men of low estate"; Diversity of gifts, exemplary conduct)

\*Jn. 2:1-11 (Wedding at Cana, where Jesus tells his mother, "My hour has not yet come.")

On this day the the order of marriage was traditionally read. See Petzoldt, "Bach Kommentar," vol. 2, p. 455.

Librettist: Georg Christian Lehms  
FP: 20 Jan. 1726 (St. Thomas)

Cantata's Instrumentation:

Flauto dolce I, II

Oboe da caccia

Vln I, II

Vla

SATB

Continuo with organo

Fl. I, II  
Ob. da caccia  
Bc.

#### 1. Aria

•Despair: My days are filled with sighs and tears (13/1). Probably allusion to Psalm 56:8: "Thou hast kept count of my tossings; put thou my tears in thy bottle! Are they not in thy book?"

13/1. Recorders in 3rds

Da capo aria

Sustained or repeated (throbbing) notes alternate with moving figures, suggesting resignation vs. discomfort. No apparent pastoral associations of 12/8. The recorders play theme derived from vocal opening.



D minor (For the significance of D minor, see side note.)

3

L.H.

E7

A minor

D7

Recorders in imitation.

5

G minor

F7

D minor

C# dim.

A7

7

L.H.

D minor

G# dim.

E7

A7

D minor

#### 9 Tenore

Mei - ne Seuf-zer, mei - ne Trä-nen kön - nen nicht zu zäh - len

Oboe da caccia takes over theme in thirds with singer.

D minor

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11

sein,

L.H.

D7 G minor C7 F major

13

mei - ne Seuf - zer, mei - ne Trä - nen kön - nen nicht zu zäh - len

R.H.

5 independent lines creates turgid color reflective of the text.

F major D minor D minor

15

sein, mei - ne Seuf - zer, mei - ne Trä - nen,

E7 A minor D major

17

mei - ne Seuf - zer, mei - ne Trä - nen kön - nen nicht zu zäh - len

G minor G minor

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19

sein, mei - ne Seuf - zer; mei - ne

L.H.

G minor A7 D minor G7

21

Trä - nen kön - nen nicht zu zäh - len

C minor F7 D minor A7

23

Text painting: Chromaticism for "Seufzer," including cross relation.

sein, meine Seuf - zer, mei - ne Trä - nen können nicht zu zäh - len

D minor G# dim.7 C# dim.7 A7 D minor

25

sein;

f

D minor

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27

L.H.

E7 A minor D7 G minor

29

G minor F7 D minor A7

31

D minor E7 D minor

B Section of da capo aria. The "path of death" is depicted with a steadily descending vocal line. Modulations to the remote keys of B-flat minor and F minor.

33

wenn sich täg - lich Weh - mut fin - det

Text painting: Oboe da caccia echoes singer to depict gloom following believer constantly. Then the instrument resumes 16th-note runs.

Oboe da caccia imitates singer.

D minor G7 C minor D7

35

und der Jam - mer nicht ver - schwin - det,

Oboe da caccia imitates singer.

G minor A# dim. F7 B-flat minor C7

E-flat 7

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Text painting: Chromaticism for description of "pain."

Text painting: Long note for "torment" to indicate its unrelenting nature, while oboe da caccia resumes 16th-note runs, probably indicating torment's all-encompassing nature (see later singer's melisma).

37

ach, so muß uns die - se Pein

Oboe da caccia

F minor E-flat 7 C minor D7 E-flat major (G minor delayed)

39

— schon den Weg — zum To - de bah - nen,

Original: "bähnen," a usage common in Silesia, the librettist's home region. See Petzoldt, vol. 2, p. 456.

G minor G minor

41

wenn sich täg-lich Weh - mut fin - det und der Jam - mer nicht ver -

Oboe da caccia in parallel 3rds with singer.

G minor

Singer's only melisma spans 2 octaves, depicting the poet's all-encompassing, unrelenting misery (text: "will not disappear").

43

schwin - det, ach, so

Oboe da caccia imitates singer's melisma.

G7 C minor F7

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Text painting: Extreme Chromaticism & held note for "pain."

45

8

muß uns die - se Pein - schonden Weg - zum To - de bah -

Recorder I

Recorder II

2 descending tetrachords, traditional symbol of lament.

G# dim.7

A minor

47

8

nen, ach, - so muß - uns die - se Pein schonden Weg zum

A minor

E7

49

8

To - de bah - nen.

tr

pp

mf

A minor

A minor

D minor

dal segno

Secco ...

## 13/2. 2. Recitativo

Alto

•Despair: I cry to God but he does not answer (13/2). The word "noch" (yet or still) recalls Jesus' words in the Gospel reading (and the theme often emphasized on this day): "My hour has not yet come" (see above).

Full da capo emphasizes the extent of the misery.

Alto is often the voice of the believing soul. See Petzoldt, "Bach Kommentar," vol. 1, p. 541.

Mein liebster Gott läßt mich an - noch vergebens rufen und mir in meinem Weinen noch

B-flat 7

E-flat major

D7

**J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 13** The reference to the hour ("Stunde") when God will hear recalls Jesus' words to his mother in the Gospel reading, "My hour has not yet come." The theme of waiting for God's hour was often emphasized on this day (see above). The reference to "seeing the promise from afar" may allude to Hebrews 11:13, which lists the heroes of faith: "These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar...."

4  
kei-nen Trost erscheinen. Die **Stunde** läs-set sich zwar wohl von fer-ne se-hen, al-

G minor G minor E dim.7 C major

Text painting: Chromatic ariso for "flehen" (plead); The vocal line is characterized by large upward-reaching intervals, followed by drops, as if the poet alternates between hope & despair, while the continuo treads downward (occasionally pushing upward) in heavy, unrelenting steps, displaced by octaves, as if exhausted (see full score for exact line).

7  
lein ich muß doch noch vergebens fle - hen.

C7 F minor F7 B-flat minor E dim.7 F minor F minor

NBA: continuo note is unfigured, suggesting hopeful F major.

13/3. **3. Choral** (Mel: „Freu dich sehr, o meine Seele“) •Despair: God's promise to help has not come true (13/3). The chorale as a whole alludes to Isaiah 49:14-16. "But Zion said, 'The LORD has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me....'"

Central Movement: Alto voice continues. It is often the voice of the believing soul. See Petzoldt, "Bach Kommentar," vol. 1, p. 541.

Recorders & Ob da caccia double voice.  
Fl. I, II  
Ob.  
da caccia  
Viol. I, II  
Va., Bc.

Strings F major F major

Repeated notes (often the tonic) reflect the insistency of the statement.

Note the frequent appearance of figura corta (see side note). "Lively string figures in a joyful F major express...hope for God's promised help, even though...so far no such help is forth coming." See Alfred Dürr/Jones, p. 199. Petzoldt suggests that the strings express persistent prayer in face of delayed response. See vol. 2, p. 458.

3 (13)

F7 F major

5 (15) **Alto** Alto sings unembellished chorale tune, doubled by Recorders I, II at the octave, Oboe da caccia.

Der Gott, der mir hat ver - spro -  
der läßt sich ver - ge - bens su -

F major G7 C major

Chorale Lines 1 & 3.

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7(17)

chen  
chen

C7

9(19)

C major

Chorale Lines 2 & 4.

sei - nen Bei - stand je - der zeit,  
itzt in mei - ner Trau - rig keit.

F major F major F major

22

F major D minor A7 D minor

For significance of D minor see note at opening movement.

24

D7 G minor D minor A7 D minor

26

Chorale Line 5.

Ach, will er denn für und für

D minor (C7) F major F7 G7 A7 D minor



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28

*f*

D minor

D minor

30

Chorale Line 6.

grau - sam zür - nen ü - ber

*p*

F major

F major

32

mir,

*f*

G7 C major

C major C7

C# dim. A7

A7

34

D minor

F7

B-flat major

F major

36

Chorale Line 7.

kann und will er sich der Ar -

*p*

F7

F major

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38

men

B-flat major

40

Chorale Line 8.

itzt nicht wie vor

C7 D minor F major F major B-flat major

43

hin er - bar - men?

C7 B-flat delayed... F7 B-flat major B-flat major (C7)

45

F major

47

F7 B-flat major C7 F major F major

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Secco

13/4. **4. Recitativo** • Hope: Sorrow real yet God can change it to joy (13/4). Chromaticism used to color the text.

Soprano

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 6 mm.

Mein Kummer nimmet zu und raubt mir al-le Ruh, mein Jammerkrug ist

Bc.

F7 F# dim.7 G minor B dim.7

Allusion to the "waterpots" ("Wasserkrüge") of the Gospel reading.

ganz mit Trä-nen angefüllet, und die-se Not wird nicht gestillet, so mich ganz unempfindlich macht.

C minor E dim.7 F minor E dim.7 F minor

Der Sorgen Kummernacht drückt mein beklemmtes Herz darnieder, drum sing ich lauter Jammerlieder.

F minor A dim.7 F7 B-flat minor

Text painting: Descent of an octave for "pressing heart down."

Doch, Seele, nein, sei nur ge-trost in dei-ner Pein: Gott kann den Wer-mut-saft gar leicht in

B-flat minor F minor G7 C7 F# dim.7

Text painting: Diminished chord for "wormwood/gall."

Freu-denwein ver-keh-ren und dir als-dann viel tau-send Lust ge-wäh-ren.

F7 B-flat major B-flat major (ends hopefully)

Text painting: Major chord reached at the word "transform" (wormwood into wine). This is an allusion to the Gospel reading in which Jesus turns the water into wine. Eric Chafe notes that the tears/wine metaphor appears in BWV 21, 155, 13. See "Analyzing Cantatas," 49, 251n10.

Text painting: "Pleasures" depicted with upward leaps of 6ths.

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• Hope gained by looking to heaven; weeping of no use (13/5). Extreme chromaticism for opening anguished text: augmented seconds, diminished seventh chords, tritones. Hope expressed in ascending scales ("looking to heaven"). This is one of the most anguished of Bach's arias.

## 13/5. 5. Aria

Obbligato by Recorders I, II, Vln solo in unison.

Fl. I, II  
Viol. solo  
Bc.

Alfred Dürr notes the two affects of the ritornello (lament vs. joy). See Dürr/Jones, 199.

Sighing figures

figura corta

Tritones

G minor C# dim.7 A7 D dim. B dim.7 G7 C minor F# dim.7 D minor C# dim.7 D7

Lament of previous measures changes to hope/joy. Ascending B-flat major scale, harmonized in G minor.

G minor G minor

Figura corta (see side note). Obbligato rises to D, then sinks to G.

This material is developed in the B section (mm. 35-52), the ascending lines depicting "looking to heaven."

B-flat major Ascending G minor scale C major D7 G minor

Text painting: Extreme chromaticism for "groaning" and "pitiful weeping."

Äch - zen und er - bärmlich Weinen,

A-flat major D7 G minor G minor F# dim.7 C# dim.7 D dim. B dim.7 G7 C minor

Descending chromatic 4th is traditional symbol of lament.

Äch - zen und erbärmlich Weinen, er bärmlich Weinen,

F# dim.7 C major F# dim.7 C# dim.7 D major G minor C# dim.7 A major D dim. G major C minor

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15

Äch - zen und er - bärmlich Wei - - nen hilft der

F# dim.7 D minor C# dim.7 D7 C# dim. A7 D major D7

17

Sor - gen Krankheit nicht, nicht, Äch - zen, Äch - zen und erbärmlich Wei -

Emphatic, speech-like vocal writing while obbligato points to heaven. Obligato echoes voice.

Ascending B-flat major scale.

G minor F7 B-flat major C# dim. F# dim. F# dim. D7 G minor

20

- - nen, und - - erbärmlich Wei - - nen, er - bärmlich Wei - - nen,

Descending chromatic 4th is traditional symbol of lament.

C# dim.7 D7 G major C# dim.7 N6 (B-flat-D-F-G#) A major A7 D minor G# dim.7 A dim. E major D major G minor

24

Äch - zen und er - bärmlich Wei - - nen hilft der

C# dim.7 A minor G# dim.7 N6 A7 A7 D minor A major

Descending chromatic 4th is traditional symbol of lament.

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Emphatic, speech-like vocal writing while obbligato points to heaven.

26

Sor - gen Krank - heit nicht, nicht, hilft der Sor - gen

Ascending F major scale.

D minor C major C7 F major

28

Krank - heit, hilft der Sorgen Krankheit

R.H.

F major A major G7 A7 D minor C# dim.7 D minor

30

nicht, nicht, hilft der Sor - gen Krankheit nicht;

Ritornello transposed to D minor.

D minor G# dim.7 E7 A dim. F# dim.7 G minor D7

33

Descending chromatic 4th is traditional symbol of lament.

C# dim.7 G# dim.7 A7 D minor A major A7

35

Ascending F major scale.

D minor C major F major

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Petzoldt notes the comparison of the "Path to Death" in movement 1 with the "Glance toward Heaven" here in movement 5.

37

This material from the second part of the ritornello (m. 5ff.) reappears, the ascending lines & intervals depicting "looking to heaven."

aber

Figura corta (see side note above).

G major A major G7 C major A7 D minor D minor

Contrasting B Section. Text painting: Octave leap up in voice for "looking to heaven" with ascending scales in the obbligato.

39

wer gen Him - mel sie - het und sich da um Trost be - mü - het, dem kann

D minor G minor F major

41

leicht ein Freu - den - licht in der Trau - erbrust er - schei - nen, figura corta

G# dim. A minor E7 A minor A minor

43

a - ber wer gen - Him - mel sie - het

Text painting: Octave leap up in voice for "looking to heaven" with ascending scales in the obbligato.

D7 E7 A minor G minor

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45

und sich da - um - Trost be - mü - het,

Ascending B-flat major scale.

G minor

B-flat major

R.H.

47

dem - kann leicht ein Freu - den - licht in der Trau -

figura corta

B-flat 7

G7

C minor

tr

49

- er - brust er - schei - nen, dem kann leicht ein Freu - denlicht, ein

G major

C minor

C minor

51

Freu - denlicht in der Trauer - brust - er - schei -

Ascending C minor scale.

figura corta

C minor

E-flat major

F7

G7

C minor

C minor

N6

G7

C minor

tr



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53

nen.  
Opening material returns ("modified da capo").

C minor      F# dim.7 D7      E dim.7      C major      B dim.7 F minor      G minor      F# dim.7      G7

Descending chromatic 4th is traditional symbol of lament.

56

Äch - zen und er - bärm - lich Wei -

C minor      C minor B dim.7      F# dim.7 D7      E dim.7 C7      F minor

59

- - - - - nen, und - - - - - erbärmlich Wei - - - - - nen, er -

B dim.7      E dim.      F major      B dim.7      F# dim.7      G major G7      C minor      F# dim.7      D major

Descending chromatic 4th is traditional symbol of lament.

62

bärmlich Wei - nen, Äch - zen und er - bärmlich Wei - nen hilft der

E dim.7      C major      F minor      B dim.7      F# dim.7      G7      G major      G7

Chromatic descending 4th 17

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Emphatic, speech-like vocal writing while obbligato points to heaven.

65

Sor-gen Krank-heit nicht, nicht, Äch-zen, Äch-zen und erbärmlich Weinen,

C minor B-flat 7 E-flat major F# dim. B dim. G major

68

Äch-zen und erbärmlich Wei - nen, erbärmlich Wei - nen,

Descending chromatic 4th is traditional symbol of lament.

F# dim.7 G7 C major F# dim.7 C# dim.7 D major G minor C# dim.7 A major D dim. G major C minor

72

Äch - zen und er - bärmlich Wei - nen hilft der

Descending chromatic 4th is traditional symbol of lament.

F# dim.7 C# dim.7 D7 G minor D major D7

74

Sor - gen Krank-heit nicht, nicht, hilft der Sor - gen

Emphatic, speech-like vocal writing while obbligato points to heaven.

G minor F major F7 B-flat major G minor

figura corta

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76.

Krank - - - - - heit, hilft der Sorgen Krankheit

L.H. L.H.

F7 B-flat major C major D major F# dim.7 G minor

78.

nicht, nicht, hilft der Sor- gen Krankheit nicht.

G minor G minor C# dim.7 A major B dim.7 C minor G7

81.

Descending chromatic 4th is traditional symbol of lament.

F# dim.7 C# dim.7 D7 G minor D major D7

83.

Ascending B-flat major scale.

figura corta

G minor F major F7 B-flat major

85.

Ascending G minor scale.

C major D major D major G minor G minor G minor

tr

(Added to libretto, probably by Bach). See also 44/7, 97/9—Bach liked this chorale? Hope: Exhortation to trust God's sovereignty (13/6). Petzold argues that the chorale serves a catechismal function. See "Bach Kommentar," vol. 2, pp. 456, 460. He notes that Bach gives the greatest rhythmic motion to words that make reference to a merciful God (mm. 3–5, 9).

13/6.

6. Choral (Mel: „Nun ruhen alle Wälder“)

Soprano 1.

Simple, 4-part chorale setting enjoins the believer to trust God despite suffering. For a description of Bach's unhappiness during this time in his life, see note above at movement no. 1.

Soprano 1  
Alto  
Tenore  
Basso

So sei nun, See - le, dei - ne und trau - e dem al - lei - ne, der

Fl. I, II  
Ob.  
da caccia  
Viol. I, II  
Va., Bc.

B-flat major

B-flat major

5

dich er - schaf - fen hat. Es ge - he, wie es ge - he, dein

dich er - schaf - fen hat. Es ge - he, wie es ge - he, dein

dich er - schaf - fen hat. Es ge - he, wie es ge - he, dein

dich er - schaf - fen hat. Es ge - he, wie es ge - he, dein

G minor

G7

C minor

B-flat major

9

Va - ter in der Hö - he, der weiß zu al - len Sa - chen Rat.

Va - ter in der Hö - he, der weiß zu al - len Sa - chen Rat.

Va - ter in der Hö - he, der weiß zu al - len Sa - chen Rat.

Va - ter in der Hö - he, der weiß zu al - len Sa - chen Rat.

F7 B-flat major

B-flat major