

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 132 Form: Aria (S) - Recit (T) - Aria (B) - Recit (A) - Aria (A) - Chorale.

Introduction & updates at [melvinunger.com](http://melvinunger.com).

The cantata takes its point of departure from the Gospel reading, where John the Baptist identifies with the Messianic messenger foretold in Isaiah: [John] said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said." (Also Matthew 3:3.) Isaiah 40:3-5: A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; and the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." As a cantata for the 4th Sunday of Advent (the end of a penitential period in the liturgical calendar, it admonishes listeners to put away sin.

J.S. Bach

## Cantata No. 132

### Bereitet die Wege, bereitet die Bahn

#### 1. Aria

132/1. Meredith Little & Natalie Jenne call this "French gigue-like," with the characteristic "sautillant" figure of dotted 8th, 16th, 8th (see note).  
 •Advent: Prepare the way for the coming Messiah!—paraphrase of Isaiah 40:3 (132/1).

#### Instrumentation:

- Oboe
- Vln I, II
- Vla
- Soprano
- Fagotto
- Continuo
- (unfigured)

Most of Bach's Weimar cantatas are chamber-like works, whose modest forces are nevertheless employed in colourful combinations.

- Form (Rhyme: ABAACCA)
- Ritornello (mm. 1-18) AM
- Text lines 1-2 (19-30) AM
- Rit (31-32) AM
- Text lines 1-2 (33-48) AM
- Rit (49-66) F#m-AM
- Lines 3-7 (67-79) F#m-C#m
- Rit (80-81) C#m-AM
- Lines 3-7 (82-90) AM-F#m
- Rit (91-92) F#m
- Line 7 (93) DM
- Rit (94-18(dal segno)) DM-AM
- Text lines 1-2 (19-48) AM
- Rit (49-66) F#m-AM

Ritornello derived from vocal line.

Ob. 1. +Vln I

Viol. Va.

A major C# major F# minor B major E major

Pastoral dance for a pastoral text: compare the first aria of Handel's *Messiah*.

Vln I sometimes doubles the oboe, providing changes of tone color (see full score).

Concerning performance considerations, see note.

tr

7 7

E major E7 A major A7 D major

F# major B minor E major A major

Soprano

Be -

Cont.

A major

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Word painting: Long scalar and circular melisma for "Bahn" ("pathway").

19

rei - tet die We - ge, be - rei - tet die Bahn,

A major C# major F# minor

22

E major E major E major

26

be - rei - tet die We - ge, be - rei - tet die Bahn, be -

E major E7 A major

30

rei - tet die Bahn! Be -

Ritornello

E major E major E7

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Word painting: Extraordinarily long scalar melisma for "Bahn" ("pathway"), reaching to high A.

33

rei - tet die We - ge, be - rei - tet die Bahn,

Viol. Va.

A major A7 D major

36

F# major B minor E7 A major

39

Cont. Ob. Viol., Va.

A major

43

be - rei - - - - tet die Bahn, be -

Ob.

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47

rei - tet die We - ge. be - rei - tet die Bahn!

Ritornello

Viol.  
Va.

A major

F# minor

A major

A major

51

C# major

F# minor

B major

E major

54

E major

E7

57

A major

A7

D major

61

F# major

B minor

E major

A major

Text painting: Repeated notes for "make the paths level."

3 melodic ideas are treated in permutation:  
A = rolling line, B = repeated note, C = skipping figure.

Middle Section

Be - rei - tet die We - ge und

Ob.

A

C

A major

F# minor

Permutation technique is characteristic of Bach's early works.

Text painting: The rolling line presumably depicts the hilly terrain that must be leveled. This is an allusion to Isaiah 45:4: Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.

68

machet die Ste - ge im Glauben und Le - ben dem Höchsten ganz e - ben, im

F# minor                      B7                      E major

71

Glauben und Le -

Ob.

G#7                                      C# minor

74

ben, im Glauben und Le - ben dem Höchsten ganz e - ben, be -

A                                      B                                      C

Viol., Va.                                      Ob. *pp*

C# minor                                      C# minor

77

reitet die Wege und machet die Ste - ge! Messias kommt an!

A                                      B                                      C

Ob.                                      Viol., Va.

The abrupt silence of the instruments at the announcement of the Messiah suggests startling surprise.

C# minor    C# minor

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81

Be - rei - tet die We - ge und ma - chet die Ste - ge im

Cont.

E7 A major

84

Glau - ben und Le - - - - - ben, im Glau - ben und Le - bendem

Ob.

C#7 F# minor

87

Höc - stenganz e - ben; be - rei - tet die We - ge und machet die Ste - ge: Mes -

Viol. Va.

A(7) D major A C#7

90

si - as kömmt an! Mes -

Ritornello

Ob. Viol. Va.

The abrupt silence of the instruments at the announcement of the Messiah suggests startling surprise.

F# minor F# minor

93

si - as kömmt an!

Ob. Viol. Va.

The announcement of the Messiah's arrival is unaccompanied, giving it emphasis.

D major D major E7 A major Dal Segno

132/2. **Tenore 1.** •Advent preparation requires clearing away sin (132/2).

Secco (right hand is editorial realization).

Willst du dich Got - tes Kind und Chri - sti Bru - der nen - nen, so

A major

3  
 müs - sen Herz und Mund den Hei - - - land frei be - ken - nen.

Professing Christ "with heart and mouth" alludes to Romans 10:8-10 and points to BWV 147 ("Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben").

A major

The continuo line becomes active, reflecting the text's call to action.

5  
 Ja, Mensch, dein ganzes Leben muß von dem Glauben Zeugnis geben! Soll

A major

E dim.7

F# minor

F# minor

8  
 Chri - sti Wort und Lehre auch durch dein Blut ver - sie - gelt sein, so gib dich willig drein!

Tritone

Double tritone

B7

Tritone

C# minor

B# dim.

11 **Arioso**  
 Denn die - - ses ist der Chri - sten Kron und

Canon between voice and continuo bass.

C# minor

(N6) B minor

E7

D major

C# minor

The canonic imitation between singer and continuo suggests following Christ's model (*imitatio Christi*) as referenced in the text.

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Figura circulatorio for the crown of glory referenced in the text (see note for more).

13

Eh - - - - re, die - ses ist der Chri - sten

A major

15

Kron und Eh - re, der Chri - sten Kron und Eh - re.

E7 A major A major

17

Recit.

In - des, mein Herz, berei - te noch heute dem Herrn die Glaubens -

A major C# major E# dim.7

20

bahn und räume weg die Hü - gel und die Hö - hen, die ihm entge - gen - ste - hen!

Text painting: Melodic contour depicts "Hügel und Höhen" ("hills and heights").

F# minor A# dim.7 E# dim.7 F# minor

23

(Arioso)

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 4 mm. Wälz ab die schwe - ren Sün - den -

F# G# A# B C# D A E G# dim.7

B minor

The rolling figure becomes a quasi-ostinato.

Text painting: Energetic melodic runs and chromaticism for "roll off the heavy stones of sin (see note for biblical allusions)."



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25

stei - ne, die **schwe-ren** Sün-den - - stei - ne, nimm dei - nen Hei-land

Chromatic inflection for "schweren" ("heavy").

D# dim.7      E minor      A7

Continuo bass depicts "rolling off the heavy stones of sin" referenced in the text.

27

an, daß er mit dir im Glau - ben sich ver - ei -

Text painting: Unisons and duets between singer and continuo depict union with Christ (mystic union), as referenced in the text ("mit dir vereine").

D major      E9      C# minor

29

- ne, im Glau - ben sich mit dir ver - - ei - ne!

E7      A major      A7      D major

31

- ne, im Glau - ben sich mit dir ver - - ei - ne!

E(7)      A major      A major

The aria's dominating question "Who are you?" comes from the Gospel reading but is now addressed to the individual Christian. John 1:19-20: This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed, he did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." The call to repentance mirrors John the Baptist's sermon as recorded in Matthew 3 (see note).

### 3. Aria ● Self-examination: The law shows us to be sinners

Form (Rhyme: ABBACDCD)  
 Ritornello (mm. 1-7) Bm-EM  
 Text lines 1-4 (7-17) Bm  
 Rit (18-20) Bm  
 Text lines 5-6 (20-30) Bm-AM  
 Rit (30-33) AM  
 Lines 7-8 (33-46) F#m-EM  
 Rit (46-49) AM

132/3.

(132/3)

Continuo alone (unfigured bass).  
 Right hand is editorial realization.

Ritornello derived from opening vocal gesture/question, becomes quasi-ostinato.

Alfred Dürr writes, "Musically, the movement is full of audacities in voice-leading, chiefly because the voice often lies below the cello figuration, giving rise to harmonic relationships explained by Spitta in terms of an 'inverted pedal point.'" See Alfred Dürr, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, translated by Richard Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 89.

Regarding the significance of E major, see note.

Text painting: Ascending continuo bass suggests pressing accusation.

Martin Petzold suggests that the audacities mentioned by Dürr reflect human audacity, which transgresses the boundaries of the law, as referenced in the text. See *Bach Kommentar* 2:75.

Violone/Organo (+bassoon?)  
 The cello elaborates a simpler continuo line with a biplanar line of 16ths, thus providing a pedal above the fundamental bass (see full score).

### 7 Basso

The low register of bass singer and continuo suggest getting to the bottom of things, reflected in the question, "Who are you?"

Bass is often the voice of authority: a preacher, prophet, or apostle—here it is the voice of John the Baptist calling his listeners to repentance.

1. Wer bist du? Who are you?  
 2. wer bist du? ask your conscience,  
 fra-ge dein Ge- wis - sen, da wirst du son - der  
 Then will you without

Self-examination in view of conscience.

3. wis - sen, wer bist du, frage dein Ge - wis - sen, da wirst du son - der  
 Then will you without

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11

Heu - - che-lei, ob du, o Mensch, falsch o - der treu,falsch o - der  
 hypocrisy, whether you, O human, false or true

F# major G# minor F#7

13<sup>II</sup>

treu, dein rechtes Ur-teil hö - - ren müssen, dein rech - - tes  
 your proper judgment have-to hear.

B major B7

16

Ur - teil, dein rech-tes Ur - teil hö-ren müssen.

E major F#7 B major B major

Ritornello Echo

18<sup>II</sup>

4.  
 Werbist du?  
 Who are you?

B major

Self-examination in  
view of the law.

21

5. wer bist du? frage das Ge - set - ze, wer bist du? frage das Ge -

Ask the law, who are you?

E major E7 A major

23

set - ze, das wird dir sa - gen, 1. wer du bist, frage das Ge -

C#7 F# minor

25

set - ze, das wird dir sa - gen, 2. wer du bist, das wird dir sa - gen,

It will you tell who you are,

E major A major

27

3. wer du bist, das wird dir sa - gen, 4. wer du bist, das wird dir

A major

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29

sa - gen, wer, 5. wer du bist:

Echo

A major

31

ein Kind des \_\_\_  
A child of

E7 A major F# minor

Text painting: Highly chromatic lines for "a child of wrath in Satan's net," alluding to Ephesians 2:3: We all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

34

Zorns, ein Kind des Zorns in Sa - tans Net - ze, ein Kind des Zorns in  
wrath, a child of wrath in Satan's net,

A# dim.7 B(7) C# major

Text painting: A twisting continuo line of continuous 16ths depict "Satan's net." (All else here is editorial realization).

36

Sa - tans Net - ze, ein A

F# minor F# minor F# minor

38 NBA: falsch und

~~fal - s cher.~~ heuch -  
false and hypocritical

B7 E major E7 A major A7 D major D7

40 -le - rischer

G major C#7 F# minor

42 Christian, ein Kind des Zorns in Sa - tans Net - ze, ein ~~fal - scher,~~ heuch -  
NBA: falsch und

E major E7

44II -le - ri - scher Christ!

A major B major E major E major

47

E major

## 4. Recitativo

•Repentance as response: confession of unfaithfulness to God (132/4).

132/4.

Alto

F# A# B C# E G D E#

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 11 mm.

Ich will, mein Gott, dir frei heraus bekennen: ich ha-be dich bisher nicht recht be-

Viol.  
Va.  
Cont. F# major B minor

"Halo" of strings suggest tender introspection.

The form follows the rhyme scheme: ABAB-CCDD-EEFFGG).

kannt! Ob Mund und Lippen gleich dich Herr und Va-ter nennen, hat sich mein Herz doch

F# major D# B7 E major

Allusion to Jesus' words: "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21)  
 "Every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 10:32)  
 "You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.'" (Matthew 15:7-8, Isaiah 29:13)

von dir ab-gewandt. Ich ha-be dich ver-leugnet mit dem Le-ben. Wie

A7 D major D# dim.7 B major E minor

kannst du mir ein gutes Zeugnis geben? Als, Je-su, mich dein Geist- und Wasser - bad ge-

baptism by water and Spirit

G# F#7 B minor C# major C#7 F# minor

Allusion to John the Baptist's words in John 1:33: I myself did not know him; but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit." See note for more biblical passages.

rei-ni-get von mei-ner Mis-se-tat, hab ich dir zwar stets

F#7 B minor

15

fe - ste Treu ver - sprochen; ach! a - ber ach! der Taufbund ist ge - bro - chen.

B7 E major A# dim.7 E# dim.7 C# major F# minor C#7

18

Die Un - treu reu - et mich. Ach Gott, er - - bar - me dich! Ach

F#7 D# dim.7 E minor

21

Deceptive cadence to depict "Untreu" ("unfaithfulness").

hilf, daB ich mit unverwandter Treue den Gna - den - bund im Glauben stets erneue.

Compare: Matthew 3:5-6: Then went out to [John the Baptist] Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. (Also Mark 1:1-3.)

A7 D major G major A major D major

The flowing violin obbligato appears to depict the cleansing waters of the "Blut- und Wasserquelle" (i.e., literal and spiritual baptism), by which God clothes his people, as referenced in the text. See note for biblical background and note at m. 31.

### 5. Aria

Alto is often the voice of the believing soul or church. See Martin Petzoldt, *Bach Kommentar* 1:176, 541, 592, 694, 2:824, 2:917, 3:101, 143, etc.

•Baptism of blood & water provides clean raiment (132/5).

132/5. Viol. solo

Ritornello related to vocal line.

Cont.

Viol. solo Continuo

Contino realization is editorial.

B minor B minor

2II

A major D major



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4

D major E7 A7

Measures 4-6 of the piano accompaniment. The right hand features a complex rhythmic pattern with sixteenth and thirty-second notes, while the left hand provides a steady bass line.

5 II

D major F# major B minor

Measures 5-7 of the piano accompaniment. The right hand continues with intricate rhythmic patterns, and the left hand has a more active bass line with eighth notes.

7

A(7) D major

Measures 6-7 of the piano accompaniment. The right hand has a descending melodic line, and the left hand has a simple bass line with some grace notes.

8 Alto

Chri - sti Glie - - der,

F#7 B minor B minor

Cont.

Measures 8-10. Measure 8 shows the vocal line for the Alto voice part. The piano accompaniment continues. Measure 9 includes the word 'Chri - sti Glie - - der,'. Measure 10 is marked 'Cont.' and shows the continuation of the piano accompaniment.

9 II

ach, — beden - ket, was der Hei - - land euch geschen - ket,

Viol.

B minor

Measures 9-11. Measure 9 shows the vocal line for the Alto voice part with the lyrics 'ach, — beden - ket, was der Hei - - land euch geschen - ket,'. The piano accompaniment continues. Measure 10 includes the word 'Viol.' and shows the violin part. Measure 11 is marked 'B minor' and shows the continuation of the piano accompaniment.

Ritornello: The violin echoes ("remembers") the singer's line and continues with the rest of the ritornello, so that the vocal line is essentially inserted into the ritornello ("Vokaleinbau").

Ritornello: The violin echoes ("remembers") the singer's line and continues with the rest of the ritornello; essentially, the vocal line is inserted into the ritornello (Vokaleinbau).

Text painting: The exhortation in line 1, "Ach bedenket..." (Ah, consider/remember" is repeated for emphasis.

11

ach, be - den - ket,

B minor A major D major

12<sup>II</sup>

ach, be - den - ket, ach be - den - ket, ach, be -

D major E7

14

den - ket, was der Hei - land

A7 D major D major

15<sup>II</sup>

euch ge - schenket durch der - Tau -

D7 G major D major

The focus on baptism reflects the role of John the Baptist in the Gospel reading.

17

- - - - fe rei - nes - - - Bad!

D major

18

Bei der Blut- und Was - ser - quel - le

D major

F#7

B minor

19ii

wer - - den eu - re - - Klei - - der hel - - le, die - - - be - - fleckt von

Viol. Ritornello

D major

A major

F# minor

21

Mis - - se - - tat, die - - - be - - fleckt, die - - -

C#(7)

F# minor

E7

A7

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22

be - - fleckt von Mis - - - se - -

D major E# dim.7 C#7

23

tat, von Mis - se - tat.

Ritornello

F# minor F# minor

24

For biblical allusions here, see note at the beginning of the movement.

Christus gab zum neu - en Klei - de -

Christ gave as new raiment

Cont.

F# minor F# minor (B7) E(7)

25

ro - - ten Pur - pur, wei - Be Sei - de, die - - se sind der -

crimson purple, white silk; these are the

Viol. Ritornello

tr

A major A# dim.7 F#7

The last text line ("these are the Christian's finery") is repeated several times for emphasis.

27

Chri - sten - Staat, der  
 Christian's finery, the

B minor B minor B minor

29

Chri - sten - Staat, die - - - se sind der - - -

Christian's finery, Violin plays end of ritornello (mm. 7-8).

B minor E7 A major

30

Chri - sten Staat, die-se sind der Chri - sten - Staat, die - se

A# dim.7 F#7 B minor

Cont.

The voice repeats the last line ("these are the Christian's finery") without obligato, thus associating the obligato with the new raiment of "crimson purple, white silk" (i.e., the cleansed state of the repentant Christian), as referenced in the text.

31<sup>II</sup>

sind - - - der Chri - sten Staat.

Viol. Ritornello

B minor B minor Dal Segno

Zum Schluss eventuell den folgenden Choral (welcher die Cantate Nr. 96 schliesst). Vergleiche die Bemerkung in der Partitur.

**ANHANG** (See also 22/5, 96/6, 164/6.) A chorale is missing in autograph score but a separate publication of Franck's libretto includes this chorale, so the arrangement in BWV 164/6 (transposed to A major) can be inserted. For more on the missing chorale, see note.

132/6 **Choral** (Mel: „Herr Christ, der einge Gottessohn“)

The idea that baptism represents the dying to one's old nature ("putting off the old nature; crucifying the flesh") and being resurrected to a new life ("clothing oneself with the new nature") derives from various biblical passages (see note).

**Soprano 1.** •Prayer: Crucify old nature so the new nature may live (132/6).

+Ob, Vln I? Er - töt uns durch dein Gü - te, er - weck uns durch dein Gnad; }  
den al - ten Men - schen krän - ke, daß der neu' le - ben mag }

**Alto**  
+Vln II? Er - töt uns durch dein Gü - te, er - weck uns durch dein Gnad; }  
den al - ten Men - schen krän - ke, daß der neu' le - ben mag }

**Tenore**  
+Vla Er - töt uns durch dein Gü - te, er - weck uns durch dein Gnad; }  
den al - ten Men - schen krän - ke, daß der neu' le - ben mag }

**Basso**  
+Fagotto Continuo? Er - töt uns durch dein Gü - te, er - weck uns durch dein Gnad; }  
den al - ten Men - schen krän - ke, daß der neu' le - ben mag }

**Tutti**

A major C#7 F# major B minor A major A major

5  
wohl hie auf die-ser Er - den, den Sinn und all Be - gehr - den und G'danken hab'n zu dir.  
NBA: hier (BWV 164/6).

wohl hie auf die-ser Er - den, den Sinn und all Be - gehr - den und G'danken hab'n zu dir.

wohl hie auf die-ser Er - den, den Sinn und all Be - gehr - den und G'danken hab'n zu dir.

wohl hie auf dieser Er - den, den Sinn und all Be - gehr - den und G'danken hab'n zu dir.

F#7 F# minor B minor A major E major A major B minor C#(7) A# dim.7 E7 A major A major  
A# dim.7 B# dim.7 D major B minor