J. S. BACH

Mass in B minor

BWV 232

User guide prepared for
The Choral Society of Grace Church

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0.1 Introduction: Bach's *Missa tota*

The work of a lifetime

Bach's *Mass in B minor* (BWV 232) is the synthesis of his life's work. Drawing on decades of composition, including what he considered to be the most thematically relevant of his great cantatas, Bach created a masterpiece designed to endure for the ages. The *Mass* displays Bach's highest skill as a composer for solo instruments, solo voices, chamber ensemble (trio sonata), virtuoso chorus (in 4, 5, 6 and 8 parts), and large orchestral forces. Unrivaled for its sheer variety, the *Mass* assimilates styles both ancient and modern, moods both introspective and extroverted, the *stile antico* of Palestrina and his contemporaries as well as Baroque dance forms and advanced counterpoint. Combined with the great keyboard treatises (*Well-Tempered Clavier, Clavier-Übung* and *Art of the Fugue*), the *Mass* is a summation of all he knew as a musician.

Conception of the "missa tota"

Friedrich Smend, the editor of our performing edition (*Neue Bach-Ausgabe*, 1955), was among the first to grasp, from careful analysis of the autograph score, that the raw material for the work "called: *Mass in B minor*" was actually composed in different stages over several decades. He posited that Bach intended this compilation to be an anthology of sacred music rather than a "*missa tota*" – a unitary whole. Certainly the length of the *Mass* would have made it unsuitable for ecclesiastical use in the Roman Catholic liturgy, and its use of the Latin Missal text would likewise have excluded it from the Lutheran service. In light of these considerations, Bach may not have envisioned that the *Mass* would be performed in its entirety – and indeed it was not until sometime in the mid-19th century.

While Smend asked all the right questions, subsequent scholarship generally holds that he reached the wrong answer. Although large sections of the *Mass* were refashioned from earlier models, they were purposefully arranged to create a coherent musical narrative. Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach referred to his father's four consecutively numbered autograph folios collectively as "the Great Catholic Mass" in family correspondence. Bach withheld the usual "SDG" (*soli Deo Gloria* – to the glory of God alone) from the end of the Symbolum Nicenum and Sanctus, inscribing it only after the concluding Dona nobis pacem (which itself links back to an earlier section in the *Missa*). And although the Kyrie-Gloria (1733) and Sanctus (1724) were in fact performed as stand-alone works, and the Symbolum Nicenum is hefty enough to have been, there would seem to be little reason (besides a *missa tota*) to have set the final movements of the *Mass* during a time of failing health and eyesight.

The care with which Bach compiled the *Mass*, the intensity of his labor on missing sections (especially the Symbolum Nicenum) during the final years of his life, and the internal coherence of its musical layout can all be read as evidence of his intention to create a glorious whole.

0.2 The four "books" of the *Mass*

Missa (Kyrie and Gloria)

The Kyrie-Gloria section (or *Missa*) of Bach's *missa tota* was dedicated to Friedrich August II, Elector of Saxony (King Augustus III of Poland) to mark his accession to the Saxon/Polish thrones in 1733. It was probably performed in Dresden, the Saxon capital, that same year. The tripartite Kyrie reflects on the death of the previous King-Elector and the jubilant Gloria celebrates the accession of the new monarch – "the king is dead – long live the king!" Bach presented a beautiful set of performance parts to the Dresden court in an attempt to win royal patronage, which eventually came in 1736 (although without an honorarium). Prepared with the help of his wife and two sons, the Dresden parts are an important source for modern editions of the work.

As ruler of Lutheran Saxony and Catholic Poland, the King-Elector had to balance the needs of both religious communities. The fact that the Kyrie-Gloria *"missa brevis"* was accepted in both traditions made it politically appropriate for the bi-confessional court. Bach composed four more "Lutheran masses" (BWV 233-236) in the 1730s, and reworked several movements from the Gloria of the *Missa* into a Christmas cantata (BWV 191) (c. 1745).

Symbolum Nicenum (Credo)

Bach's setting of the Nicene Creed – used routinely in the Roman Catholic church and on high feast days in the Lutheran church – incorporates both the earliest and the latest work in the *Mass*, from a parody of a 1714 cantata (BWV 12, used in the Crucifixus) to probably the last vocal music Bach ever composed (the Et incarnatus est chorus). Composed over the last decade of Bach's life, it features his deepest exploration of the *stile antico* idiom along with contrapuntal and harmonic developments that seem avant-garde even to today's ears. Bach labored closely over the organization of the different movements in this section, constructing a symmetrical arch with the Crucifixus as its *Herzstück* – its keystone, or heart (see illustration at 0.3). The Symbolum Nicenum was first performed by C.P.E. Bach in Hamburg in 1786, a generation after Bach's death.

Sanctus

The glorious 6-part Sanctus was composed for the Thomaskirche in Leipzig for Christmas Day, 1724, and performed there again in the 1740s. It would have been a worthy successor to the 1723 *Magnificat* (BWV 243a), composed for Bach's first Christmas as Thomaskantor.

Osanna, Benedictus, Agnus Dei et Dona nobis pacem

The remaining movements of the *Mass* (including the Osanna – split off from the Sanctus, where it would normally have appeared) took shape in 1748-1749, incorporating material from the 1720s, the 1730s and the *Mass* itself. Far from "bringing up the rear," the movements are carefully arranged to form a coherent key sequence and narrative, Bach's own emotional response to his faith. The final Dona nobis pacem ties the entire *missa tota* together by circling back to the Gratias agimus tibi setting from the *Missa*.

0.3 Symmetry and balance

Kyrie: ABA symmetry

Kyrie eleison Chorus – *stile moderno*	Christe eleison Soprano I and II duet (Christ's duality, 2nd person of the Trinity)	Kyrie eleison Chorus – *stile antico*

"Progressive tonality", with the root key of each movement spelling a B minor triad (B, D, F#)

b minor	D major	f# minor

Gloria: choral-solo "round robin"

Gloria-Et in terra pax	Laudamus	Gratias agimus tibi	Domine Deus	Qui tollis	Qui sedes	Quoniam-Cum Sancto Spiritu

Each of the 5 vocal soloists and each instrument family of the orchestra is represented:

Chorus →Chorus (paired)	Violin, Soprano II	Chorus	Flute, Soprano I, Tenor	Chorus	Oboe, Alto	Horn, Bass →Chorus (paired)

Keys flow seamlessly from one to the next:

D major	A major	D major	G major to b minor	b minor to F# major	b minor	D major

Symbolum Nicenum: arch with Crucifixus as the keystone

			CRUCIFIXUS					
			Et incarnatus	central choruses	**Et resurrexit**			
			(Christ's time on earth)					
		Et in unum	solos (second and third persons of the Trinity)			**Et in Spiritum**		
	Patrem		choruses (first person of the Trinity, eternal life)				**Confiteor**	
(paired) **Credo**								(paired) **Et expecto**
D major (A mixolydian)	D major	G major	b minor	e minor to G major	D major	A major	f# minor	D major
stile antico →	*stile moderno*						*stile antico* →	*stile moderno*

Osanna, Benedictus, Agnus Dei et Dona nobis pacem: reconciliation and farewell

Osanna Double chorus	Benedictus Tenor solo	Osanna (repeat) Double chorus	Agnus Dei Alto solo	Dona nobis pacem Chorus (parody of Gratias)

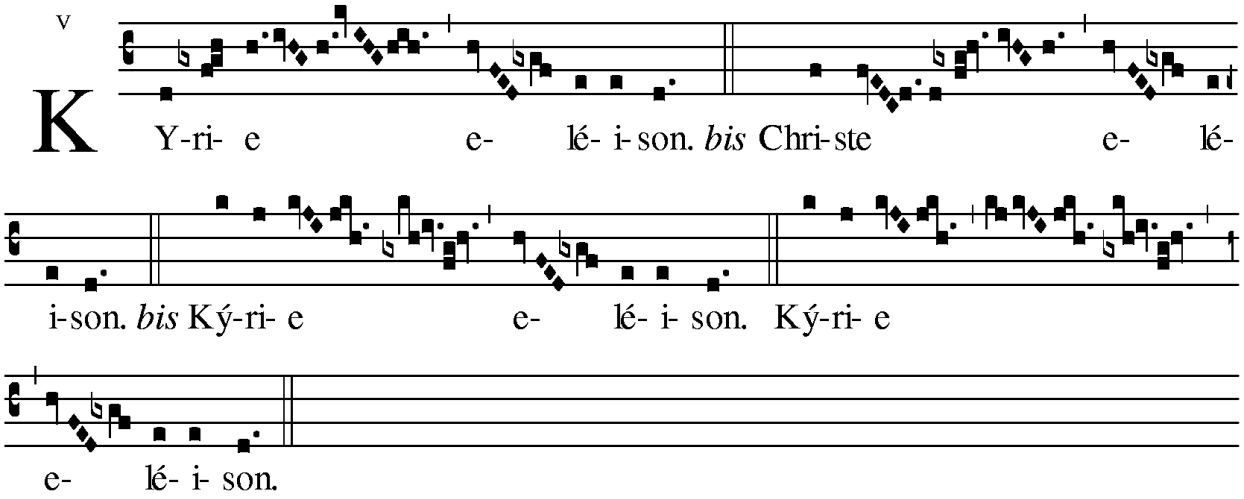
Alternation of regal choruses and intimate arias highlights dual nature of Christ; key sequence leads inexorably to resolution:

D major	b minor	D major	g minor	D major

0.4 Universality

Because the *Mass* was not composed with a specific commission or church occasion in mind, Bach felt free to expand it into an overview of "all the science he had attained in music" (to paraphrase his dedication of the 1733 *Missa*). At the same time, it remained a personal and intimate expression of his faith, lived through music. The argument Bach advances through the *Mass* is both timeless and overpowering, almost enough to turn skepticism into belief.

Bach's choice of the text of the Latin Mass Ordinary as his organizing principle is perhaps the best indication that he wished the *Mass* to be a musical testament, a *missa tota* designed to transcend the practical constraints of time, place, vernacular language, musical exigency or confessional tradition. In the words of Christoph Wolff, "the Great Mass, whose text hands down early Christian theological doctrine across the centuries, was surely also intended to preserve Bach's musical and artistic credo for future generations."



Using the Latin setting – the eternal language of the small "c" catholic church, still used in some Lutheran rites of the day – can be seen as an effort to lift the work above doctrinal differences and give it an ecumenical cast. By contrast, the great Passions and the cantatas, written in German, and most likely participatory in nature through congregational singing of the chorales, were conceived as "popular" rather than universal works. Unlike the Passions and cantatas, the *Mass* contains no recitatives or chorales, and the arias mainly lack *da capo* treatment. Musically, the chorus predominates, allowing Bach to explore fugal and contrapuntal techniques and ancient and modern musical forms in depth – pure music to indicate pure belief.

Unlike the great keyboard treatises, Bach's other expressions of a pure and universal music, the *Mass* gives all of Bach's forces – chorus, soloists, and players alike – roles in the universal project he had in mind. Second only to the double-orchestra/double-chorus *St. Matthew Passion*, this is the largest-scale work Bach ever composed, and like the Passions, it is participatory. The wrapper for the set of parts presented to the Dresden court in 1733 describes the work as a "Mass for 21 voices: 3 violins, 2 sopranos, alto, tenor, bass, 3 trumpets, timpani, 1 hunting horn, 2 transverse flutes, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, violoncello, and continuo." The *Mass* became a canvas on which Bach projected humanity as a society of equals, as individuals united in a great project of faith and music-making.

0.5 Narrative structure

The Mass Ordinary, that collection of sacred texts used without variation in the Eucharistic liturgy of the Roman Catholic and other Western churches, produces a tidy narrative of the Christian faith, elaborating on the doctrine of the Trinity and recounting the trajectory of Jesus. Bach carefully arranges his *Mass* to maximize the clarity and impact of this narrative.

The following table shows the principal sections of the Mass Ordinary, with their origins and the dates they are believed to have entered the liturgy:

Kyrie	Pre-Christian and Early Christian (Greek) in origin	Entered the Ordinary 6th century AD, probably from the Eastern Church
Gloria	Luke 2:14 (angels' appearance at the Nativity); devotional poetry	Entered the Ordinary 4th century AD
Credo	Written by committee at the Councils of Nicea (325 AD) and Constantinople (380 AD); symbol of the Christian faith	Latest addition to the Mass Ordinary (11th century AD)
Sanctus*	Isaiah 6:3 (looking upon the face of God, guarded by six-winged seraphim)	Oldest section of the Mass Ordinary (2nd century AD)
Benedictus	Matthew 21:9 (Jesus's entry into Jerusalem)	
Agnus Dei	John 1:29, repeated in Book of Revelation (association with end times)	Entered the Ordinary 7th century AD

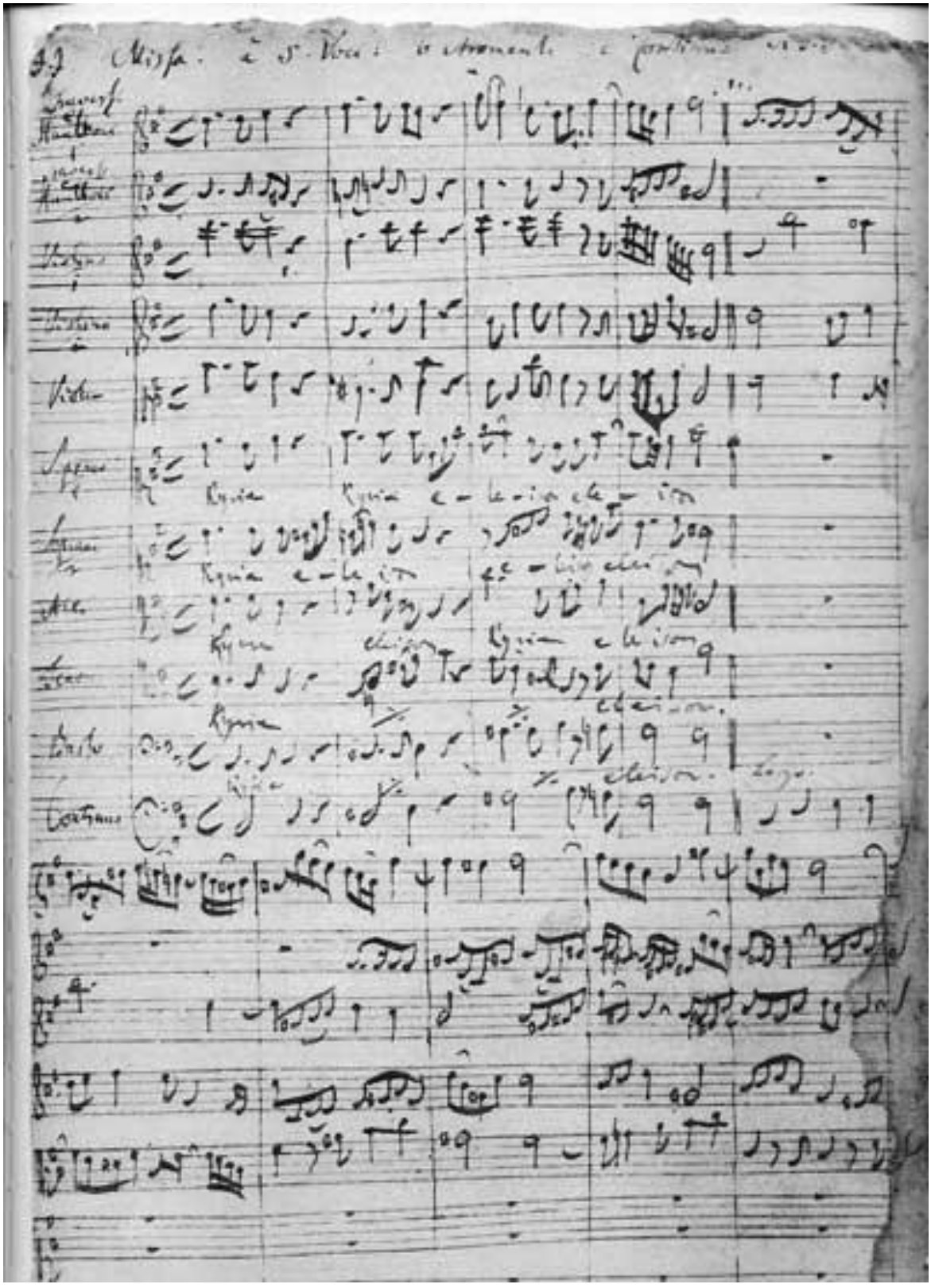
* The opening of the Sanctus began as a Hebrew prayer (the Kedusha) spoken during the 18 benedictions that precede the opening of the ark: *"Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh Adonai Tz'vaot / Melo Kol Haaretz Kevodo"*.

Each section embodies a different attitude of worship: Pleading for mercy (the primal Kyrie), Celebrating (Gloria), Believing/testifying (Credo), Ecstasy (Sanctus), Blessing (Benedictus), Praying for peace (Agnus Dei).

The texts are also directional, a spiritual journey leading from the pre-Christian (the Kyrie, left in its original Greek language), to the birth of Christ (the Gloria canticle, begun with the famous text from the Gospel of Luke), the central creed of Christ's church (the Nicene Creed), the reward for the faithful (Sanctus – looking on God in the flesh) and ultimately a vision of the Lamb of God at the last trumpet (Agnus Dei).

The Nicene Creed is particularly dense, with further elaboration of key Christian doctrines, including the incarnation, the frustratingly complicated nature of the Trinity, and (in the one "future-oriented" section of the liturgy) the resurrection of the dead – all hanging upon the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. (See the diagram at 0.3 for Bach's masterful and transparent organization of the Symbolum Nicenum.) Any composer setting the Credo faces the daunting task of breaking down a text written by committee and making it vivid, *believable*.

Every decision made in setting the text of the *Mass* – division among movements, voicing, instrumentation, tonality, style, mood – reveals a calculated awareness of its central narrative. Not for nothing was Bach called "the Fifth Evangelist."



Opening of the *Mass*, facsimile from Bach's autograph score. Note the letters "J.J." (Jesus Juva – *Jesus, help*) in the upper left corner.

1.1 Kyrie eleison (I)

Chorus (5 voices), flutes, oboi d'amore, strings, continuo

Kyrie eleison. *Lord have mercy upon us.*

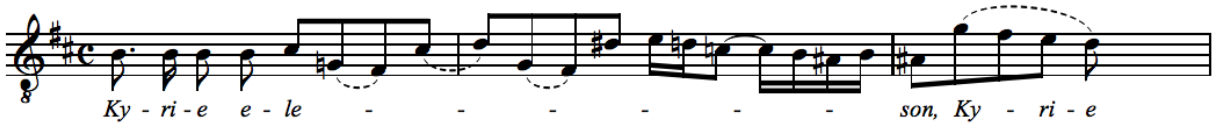
Antecedents: Composed as part of the 1733 *Missa*.

At the musical threshold of the *Mass*, the Kyrie opens tutti, without orchestral introduction, the only one of Bach's major choral works to do so. Arching figures in the soprano II, tenor and soprano I lines beckon the listener into a cathedral of sound. The choir appeals to the Lord three times, each time more insistently.

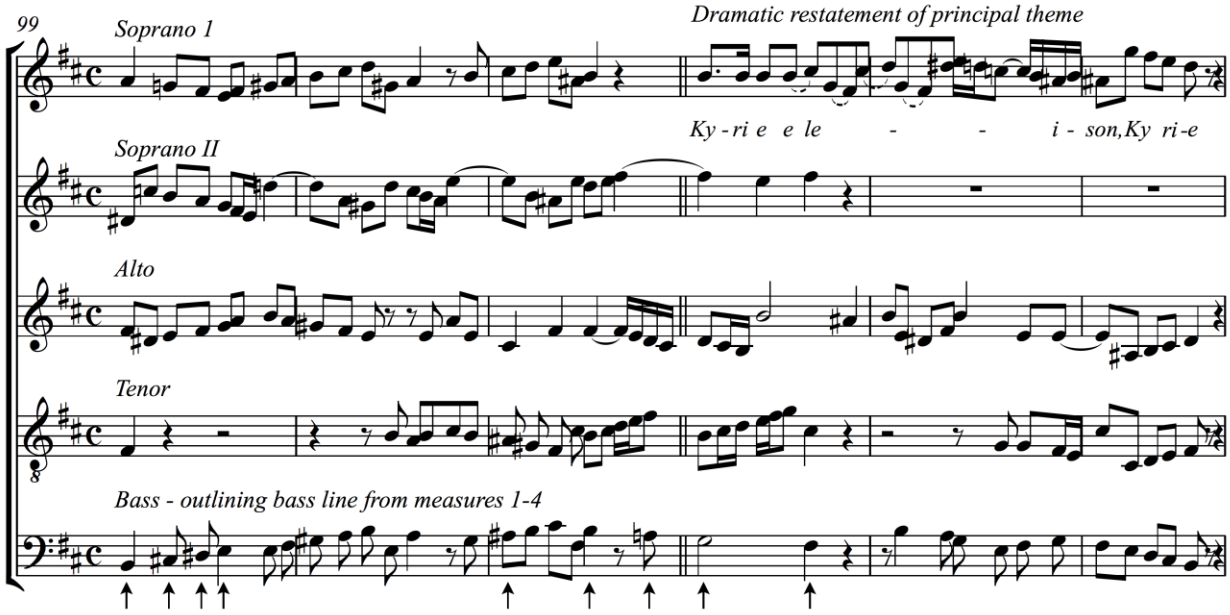
At nearly 10 minutes, the sprawling Largo that follows is the longest section of the *Mass*:

measures 5-29	complete statement of musical material by the orchestra
measures 30-72	complete statement by the chorus; the tenors begin, supported by the barest orchestration
measures 73-80	orchestral interlude
measures 81-101	restatement and development by chorus and orchestra, begun by the basses, a plea for mercy rising up from the depths
measures 102-end	dramatic re-initiation (beginning in soprano I line)

The movement is characterized by extreme dissonance and chromaticism, a sober appeal to the Deity. The two-word text becomes a mantra of sorts, with special emphasis given to "eleison" – *have mercy*. The major musical gesture is a sighing appoggiatura figure, always trying to reach up but continually earthbound:



The basses, starting at measure 99, repeat an outline of the bass line from measures 1-4, dramatically preparing the soprano I entrance at measure 102:



1.2 Christe eleison

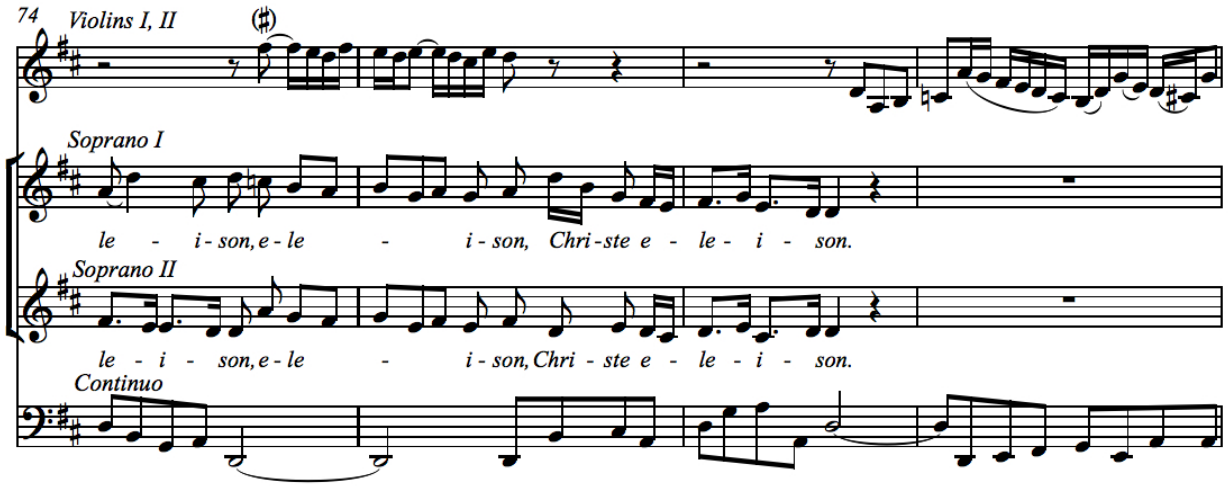
Soprano I and II, violins I and II, continuo

Christe eleison. *Christ have mercy upon us.*

Antecedents: Composed as part of the 1733 *Missa*.

Free of the angst and dissonance of the opening Kyrie, this movement evokes a mood of peace and serenity. The instrumental texture is straightforward and unadorned. The duet setting alludes to Christ as the second person of the Trinity; the separation of the voices by thirds further emphasizes the triune nature of God. The orchestra is also divided in two – unison violins (I and II) in a duet with the continuo instruments.

The violins in measures 74-75 have a brief riff above the voices beginning on F-sharp – the German word for # (sharp sign) is *Kreuz* – the Cross:



The *Kreuz* device returns numerous times in the *Mass*, isolating specific notes or patterns of notes at key moments to remind the listener that his faith, his salvation, hang upon the Cross.

1.3 Kyrie eleison (II)

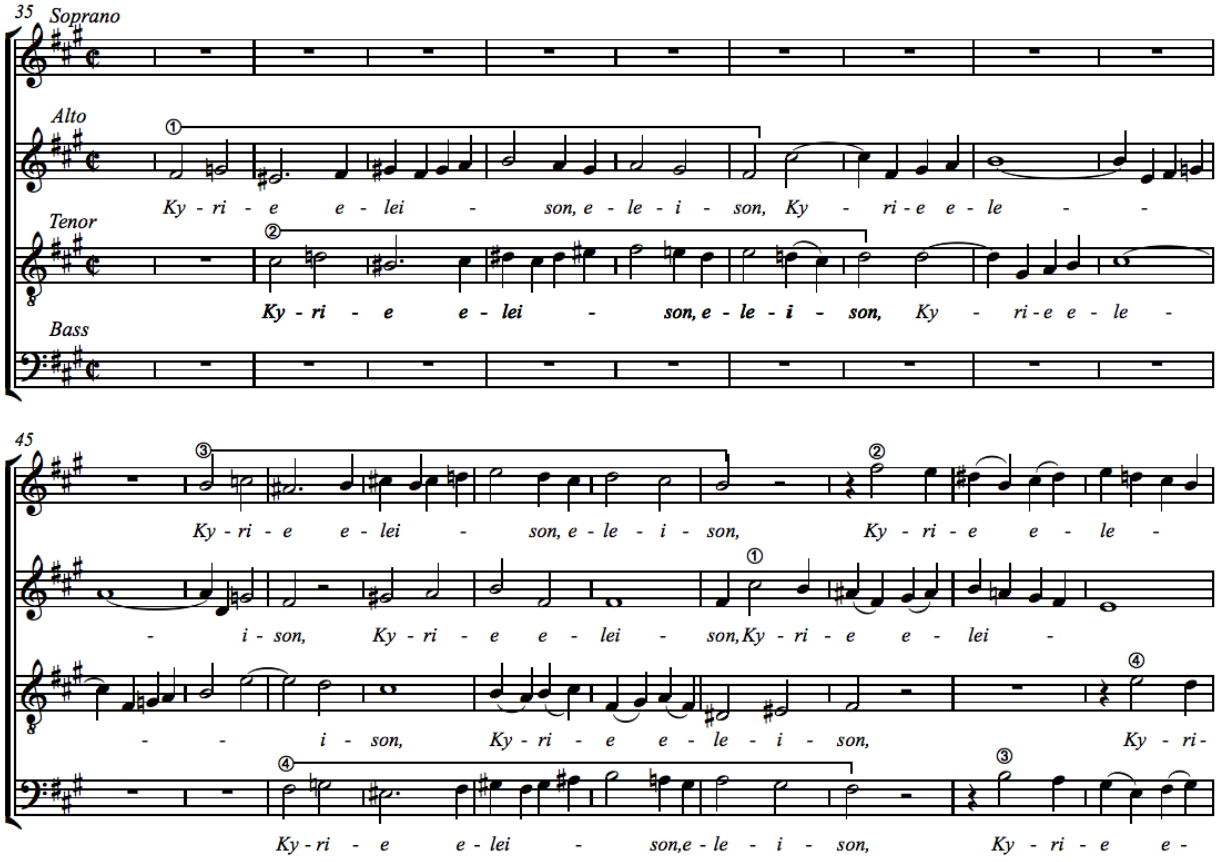
Chorus (4 voices), flutes, oboi d'amore, strings, continuo

Kyrie eleison. *Lord have mercy upon us.*

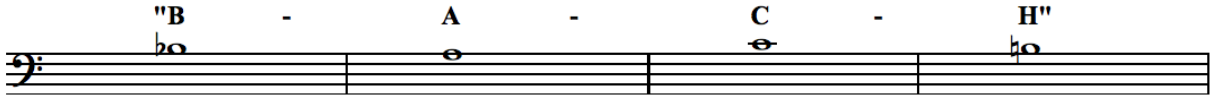
Antecedents: Composed as part of the 1733 *Missa*.

Bach turns to the *stile antico* for the third panel in the opening triptych of the *Mass*. Free from the metrical constraints of the Baroque (dance forms, a hierarchy of beats in the measure), the *stile antico* permits elongated, asymmetrical phrases. Over a restless basso continuo, the movement is joined to the opening Kyrie by its chromaticism and harmonic instability.

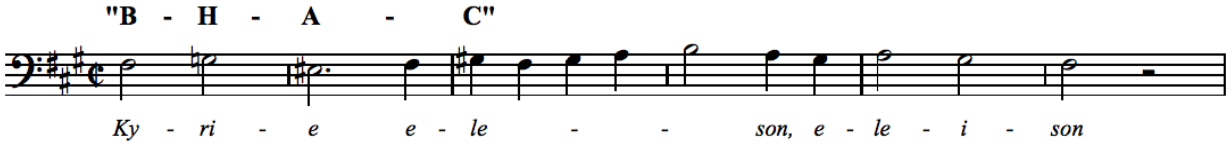
A clear example of *stretto* (overlapping fugal entrances) occurs beginning at measure 35; with the peal of offbeat figures at 43-44, the text is energized and intensified:



Bach often used his surname as a musical device. The letters B-A-C-H correspond, in German, to B-flat, A, C and B-natural:



Might this musical "signature" be coded into the Kyrie theme (transposed and scrambled)?



1.4 Gloria in excelsis

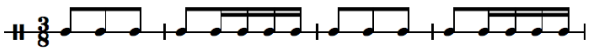
Chorus (5 voices), flutes, oboes, trumpets, timpani, strings, continuo

Gloria in excelsis Deo — *Glory to God in the highest*

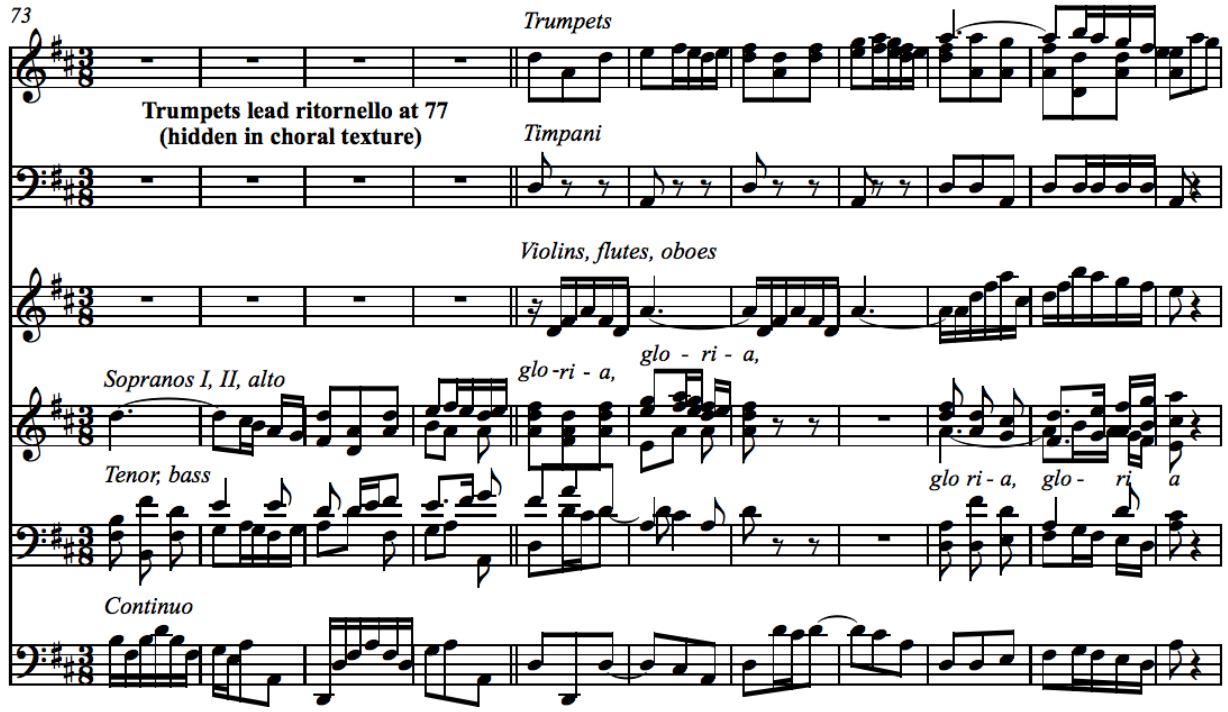
Antecedents: Composed as part of the 1733 *Missa*; later recycled as the opening movement of a Christmas cantata (BWV 191) (c. 1745).

With the Gloria, Bach ushers in the full forces of his resplendent orchestra: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 3 trumpets, timpani, strings and continuo, and 5-part chorus. These are the same forces used in his setting of the other great New Testament canticle, the 1723 *Magnificat*, reworked into D major (BWV 243) the same year he set this section of the *Mass*. The high, ebullient texture is welcome relief from the toilsome and introspective Kyrie.

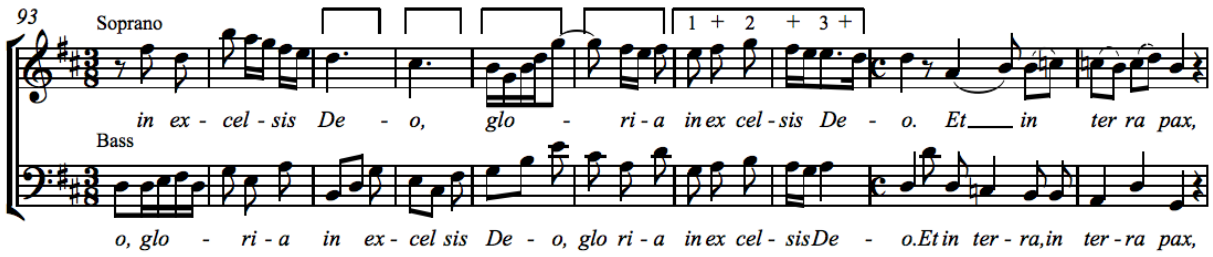
The opening section is modeled on a Baroque dance rhythm, closest to a *gigue* or *passepied*:



A clear example of the *ritornello* technique (restatement of a block of material to create a sense of arrival, a sort of musical wish-fulfillment) takes place at measure 77, as the entire orchestral introduction returns, this time as part of the choral texture:



The first sopranos are then carried up to their highest note in the *Mass*, a high B, on the word "highest," with a hemiola (2 bars of 3/8 to 1 bar of 3/4) establishing the tempo for the next chorus:



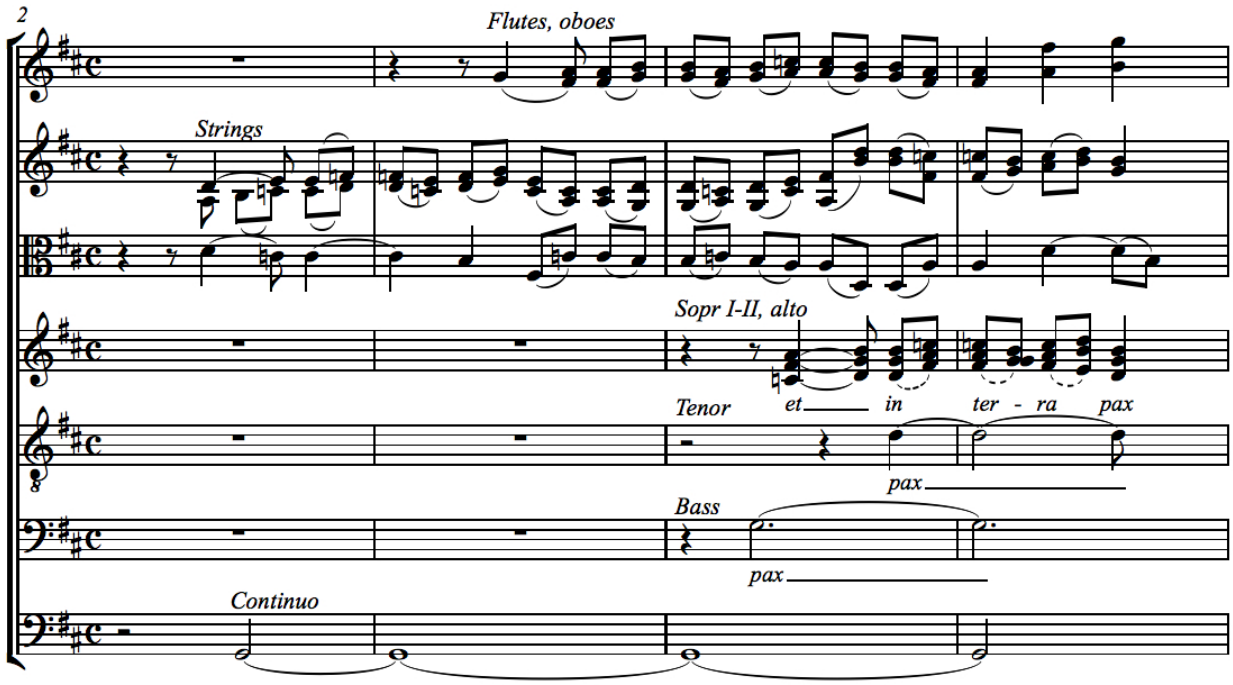
1.5 Et in terra pax

Chorus (5 voices), flutes, oboes, trumpets, timpani, strings, continuo

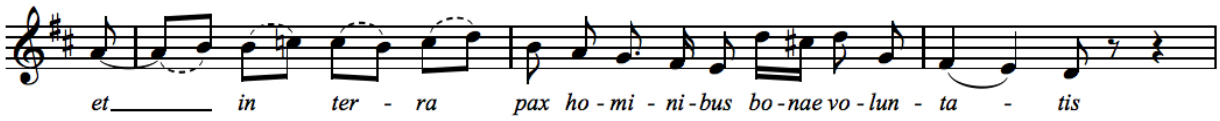
et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.	*and on earth peace, good will toward men.*

Antecedents: Composed as part of the 1733 *Missa*; later recycled as the opening movement of a Christmas cantata (BWV 191) (c. 1745).

The transition to "et in terra pax" is led by the basses, who, with an octave leap down at measure 1, shift our focus from the heavens to the earth. This is the text said by the angels to shepherds abiding in the field on the night of Jesus's birth. Bach duly paints a pastoral scene over a G-major pedal point (measures 2-5); note the tenors and basses emphasizing the word "peace":



The appoggiatura "sighing" gestures from this pastoral transition are the seeds of the primary subject of a majestic fugue that begins, innocently, at measure 21:



After a series of counter-subjects, the sopranos run out of material, simply chirping "pax, pax … pax, pax" at measures 31-32. The entire fugue is given a second time, this time with the full forces of the orchestra, beginning with the soprano I entrance at measure 43 (another example of the *ritornello* technique). The fugue is traditionally used by composers to evoke many voices coming together as one – here, the many nations and peoples of earth, responding to the good tidings brought by the angels. Gathering force, the fugue draws to a conclusion, with the word "peace" sung three times in isolation by the basses (measures 63-65), and the phrase "and on earth peace" four times by the chorus (measures 66-69), to emphasize Bach's central point.

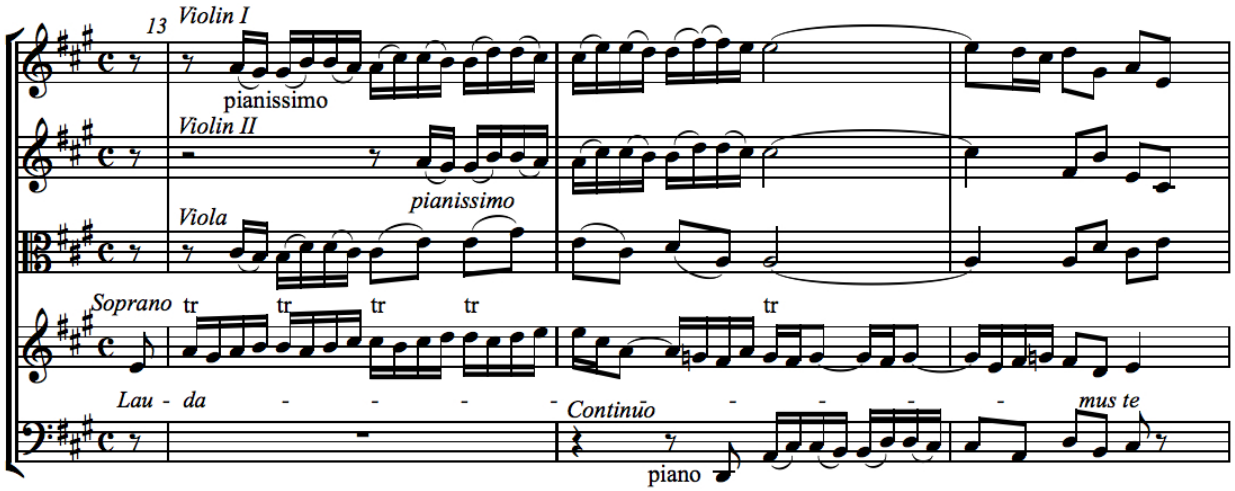
1.6 Laudamus te

Soprano II, solo violin, strings, continuo

Laudamus te. Adoramus te.	*We praise thee. We adore thee. We*
Benedicimus te. Glorificamus te.	*bless thee. We glorify thee.*

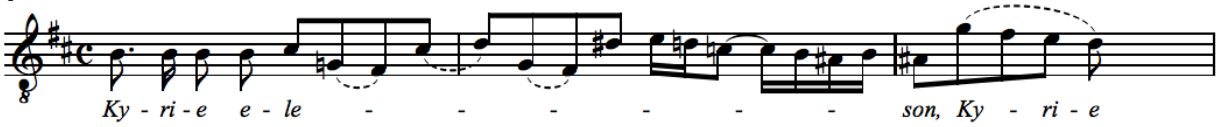
Antecedents: Composed as part of the 1733 *Missa*.

The soprano II and violin start off the "round robin" of vocal and instrumental solos that alternate with the choral movements of the Gloria section (see chart at 0.3). Bach writes a simple song of praise, with two complementary and intertwined melodies, both richly ornamented. The trills on the soprano's opening, ascending line are particularly characteristic. The slurred ("et in terra pax") figure from the prior movement is echoed in the orchestra:

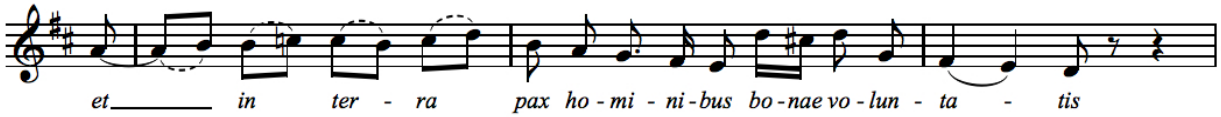


Throughout the *Mass*, these slurred, appoggiatura (literally "leaning") gestures are used to soften edges, to deepen meaning, to intensify rhythm and chromaticism:

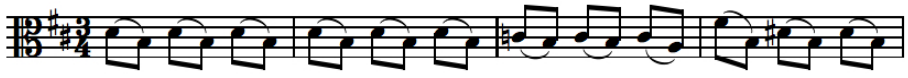
Kyrie I:



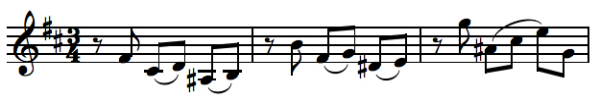
Et in terra pax:



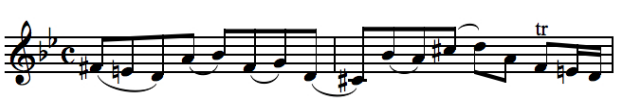
Qui tollis (violas):



Et incarnatus est (violins):



Agnus Dei (violins):



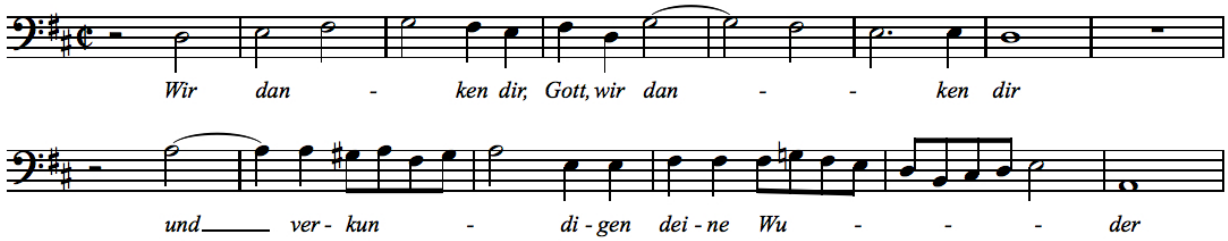
1.7 Gratias agimus tibi

Chorus (4 voices), flutes, oboes, trumpets, timpani, strings, continuo

Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.	*We give thanks to thee on account of thy great glory.*

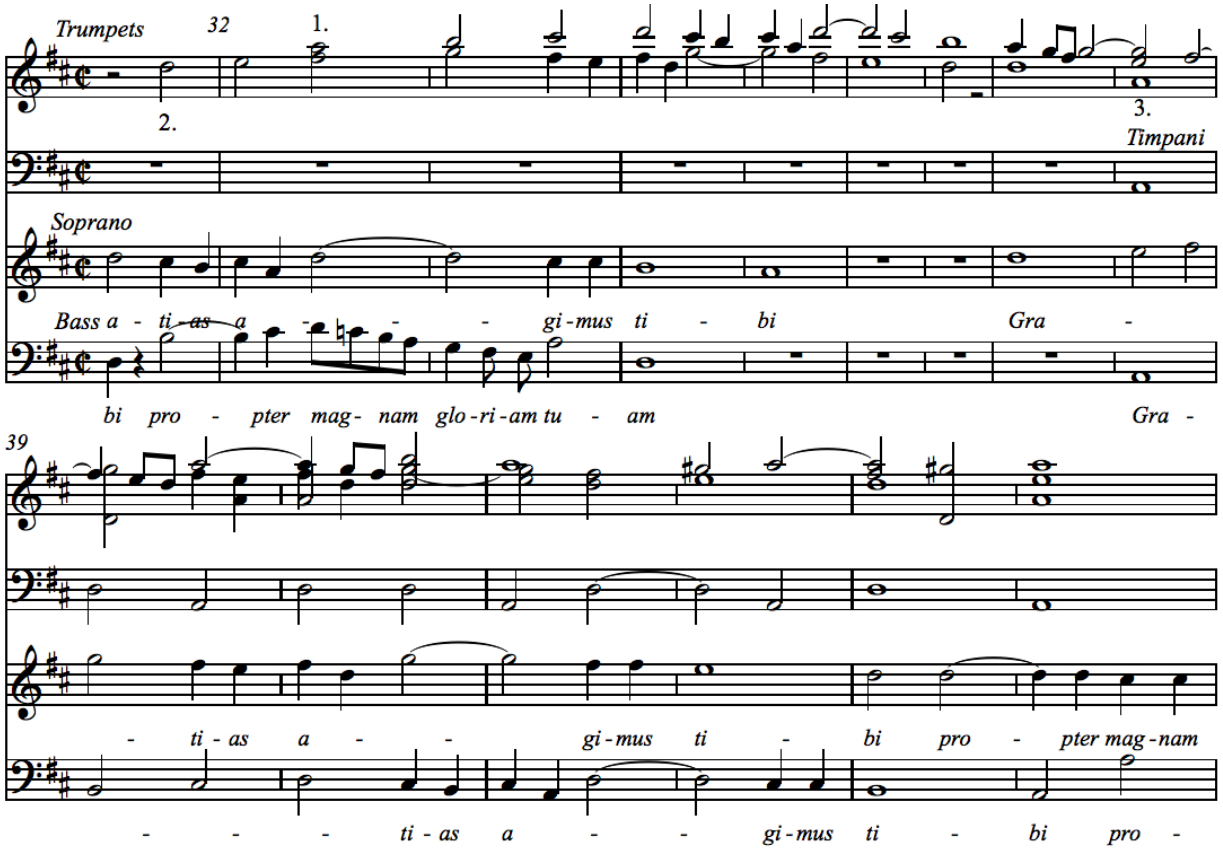
Antecedents: Composed as part of the 1733 *Missa*, and borrowed from the textually appropriate BWV 29/1 (1731).

The text of the cantata matches almost exactly the text Bach needed to set for the *Mass*: "Wir danken dir, Gott, wir danken dir und verkündigen deine Wunder – *We thank you, God, we thank you and tell of your great deeds*" (Psalm 75:2):



The Gratias is composed in the *stile antico*, the archetype of Palestrina, whose music was a lasting influence over the Dresden court (an object of Bach's professional aspirations). The theme of thanksgiving begins low, in the basses, rising upward through the other voice parts, all accompanied *colla parte* by the instruments of the orchestra.

The trumpets begin to expand this texture at measures 32-33 – the first trumpet carrying us up to a high D, beyond the reach of the human voice. The bass note at measure 35 is the deepest in the movement, accompanied by a resounding entrance from the timpani:



1.8 Domine Deus

Soprano I, tenor, solo flute, strings (muted), continuo

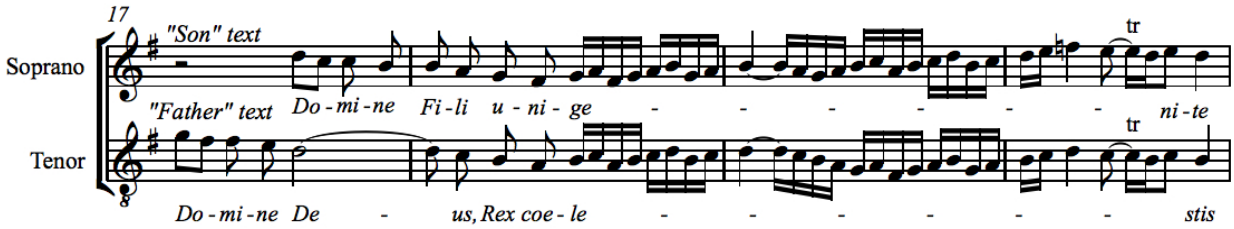
Domine Deus, rex coelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens. Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe *altissime*. Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris:	*Lord God, king of heaven, God the omnipotent Father. Lord the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, the most high. Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father:*

Antecedents: Composed as part of the 1733 *Missa*; later recycled (to a different text) as part of Cantata 191 (c. 1745).

This next soloist intervention contemplates the second person of the Trinity, underlined once again by Bach's use of a duet (here, for soprano and tenor) (see Christe eleison, 1.2). (The word "altissime" appears only in the Lutheran version of the Gloria, the one most familiar to Bach.)

Throughout the *Mass*, the choice of G major, and the use of a solo flute (or pair of obbligato flutes), are, as here, strongly associated with the character of Jesus. (See also Et in unum Dominum (2.3) (G major), Agnus Dei (4.4) (g minor), Qui tollis (1.9) and Crucifixus (2.5) (pair of flutes), and Benedictus (4.2) (solo flute).) At measures 13-14, and again later in the movement, the violins play a sustained high note, the same "halo" that appears nearly everywhere that Jesus sings in the Passions.

Bach divides the three textual statements into a movement with two distinct sections, the first in a major key (God the omnipotent Father, Jesus the only-begotten Son) and the second in a minor key (the Lamb of God, sacrificed for our sins). In the first section, Bach has the soloists singing the Father-Son texts at the same time. The tenor begins with the Father text in measure 17, followed two beats later by the soprano singing the Son text, then they synchronize for the remainder of the phrase:



This repeats at measures 25-26, this time with the soprano singing the Father text and the tenor singing the Son text, and again and again throughout the movement – the Father text always coming first. In this clever way, Bach emphasizes the "same but different" nature of the first two persons of the Trinity: Jesus coming from God the Father, but of the same substance as the Father. (See also Qui sedes (1.10) and Et in unum Dominum (2.3).)

Beginning at measure 75 (now in the second, minor key section), the soloists are rhythmically unified, singing the same Agnus Dei text separated (purposefully) by thirds. The second section leads without break into the Qui tollis prayer.

1.9 Qui tollis

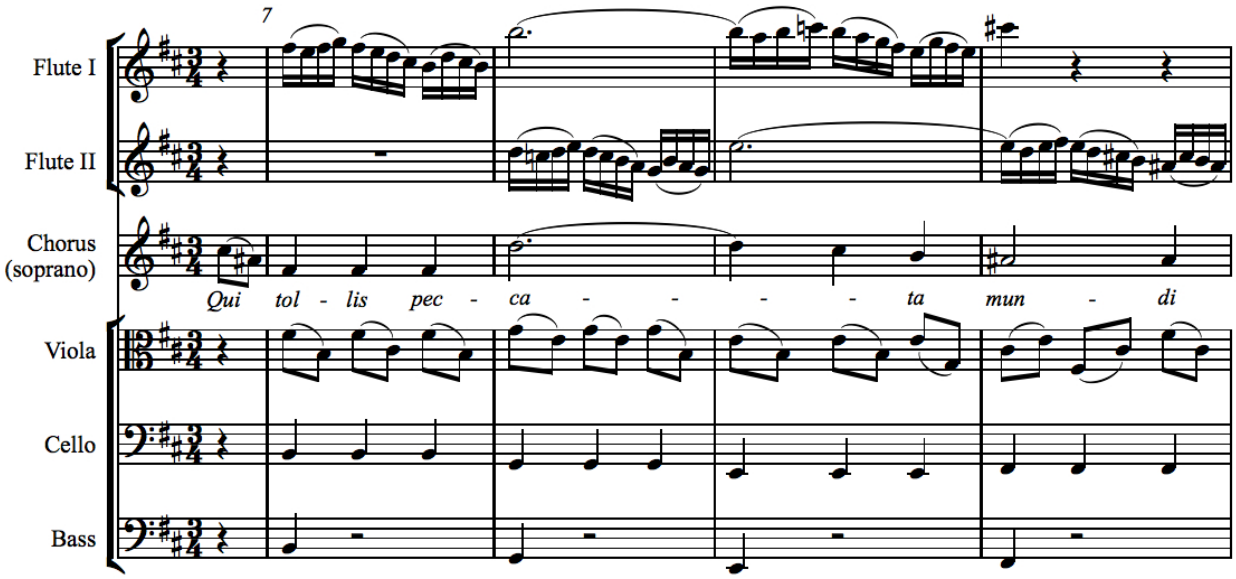
Chorus (4 voices), 2 flutes obbligato, strings, continuo

Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram.	*Who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Who takest away the sins of the world, hear our prayer.*

Antecedents: Composed as part of the 1733 *Missa*, and modeled on BWV 46/1 (1723) ("Schauet doch, und sehet").

With this doleful and dissonant chorus, Bach lowers the figure of Jesus into the real world, where he is sullied by – and beseeched to lift away – human sin. It is a striking change from the sweet, innocent atmosphere of the prior movement. (A similar shift is made by the Et incarnatus est (2.4), also in B minor.)

The instruments of the orchestra are layered rhythmically, with the continuo instruments playing on the first beat of the measure, the cellos playing quarter notes, the violas in sighing, slurred eighth-notes and the pair of flutes in sixteenths:



The flutes make a clear link to the movement before (part of the same section of text), and paint a picture of an innocent being somehow trapped in, trying to break free from, the muck.

The text of Cantata 46, taken from the Lamentations of Jeremiah, establishes a spiritual as well as musical parallel to the *Mass*:

Schauet doch und sehet, ob irgendein Schmerz sei wie mein Schmerz, der mich troffen hat. Denn der Herr hat mich voll Jammers gemacht am Tage seines grimmigen Zorns.	*Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like my sorrow, that has come upon me. For the Lord has made me full of anguish on the day of his wrathful anger.* – *Lamentations 1:12*

1.10 Qui sedes ad dextram Patris

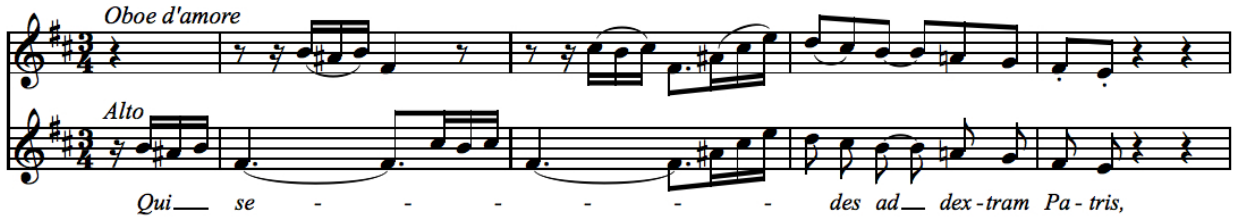
Alto, solo oboe d'amore, strings, continuo

Qui sedes ad dextram Patris, miserere nobis.	*Who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy upon us.*

Antecedents: Composed as part of the 1733 *Missa*.

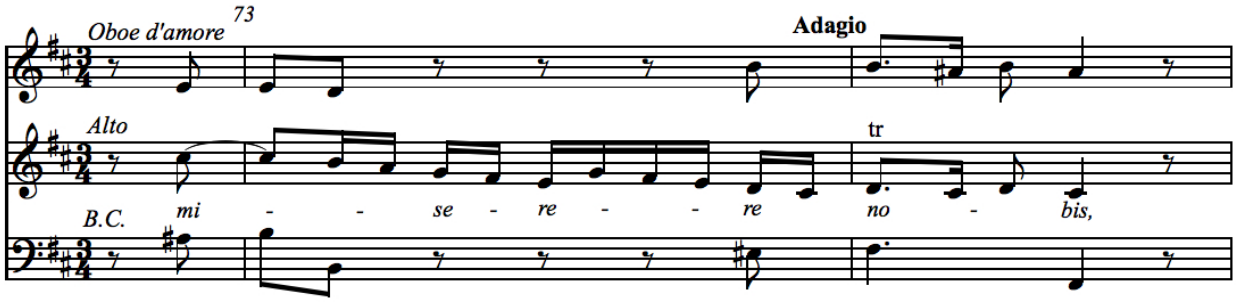
The prayer for mercy continues with this next solo movement, this time for alto and oboe soloists (the oboe d'amore is selected here, as elsewhere in the *Mass*, for its mellower sound and lower range). The text is linked to the prior movement, but continues the mood in a more contemplative, individualized manner.

Again, Bach uses a musical device to simplify a complicated bit of doctrine. The alto and oboe soloists play a canon, one following the other, then joining together to finish the phrase (see measures 18-21):



The Son, seated at the right hand of the Father, is the same as the Father, but different (see also Et in unum Dominum (2.3) and Domine Deus (1.8)).

Bach writes a brief Adagio at measure 73-74 to emphasize the prayer for mercy, for pity, with the alto soloist singing a descending phrase ending on the word "nobis" – "us" – bringing the focus back down to earthly sin:



* * *

Each of the vocal soloists will have had his or her moment in the spotlight during the Gloria (see table at 0.3): The soprano II in the Laudamus, soprano I and tenor in the Domine Deus duet, the alto in this movement, and the bass in the following one (Quoniam). Each instrumental family of the orchestra is similarly represented: The strings (violin in Laudamus), flutes (Domine Deus), oboes (this movement) and finally the brass (horn, used in the Quoniam). Bach thus displays the riches of his full forces playing and singing together, in the choruses, as well as the special character of each individual voice.

1.11 Quoniam tu solus sanctus

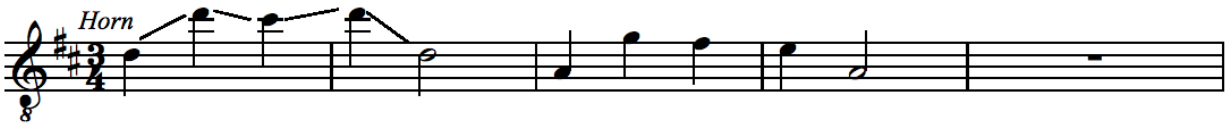
Bass, solo horn, 2 bassoons obbligato, continuo

Quoniam tu solus sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus altissimus: Jesu Christe	*For thou alone art holy, thou alone art God, thou alone art most high: Jesus Christ*

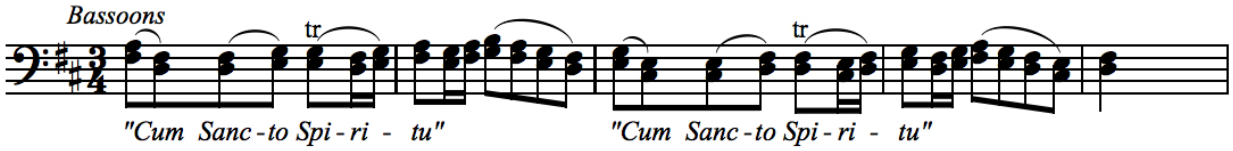
Antecedents: Composed as part of the 1733 *Missa*.

Bach uses a unique and wonderful instrumentation for this next-to-last section of the Gloria, writing a jam session for bassoons, corno da caccia (hunting horn, a Baroque predecessor to the modern French horn) and bass soloist – the bass voice used in Bach's Passions as the voice of Jesus.

The horn opens the piece playing a "perfect" melody – a figure that reads the same forwards as backwards:



The bassoons play a jolly rhythm that anticipates the phrase "Cum Sancto Spiritu" in the next chorus, making clear the textual connection between the two movements:



The text is richly ornamented, with trills emphasizing the words "sanctus" (holy) and "Dominus" (Lord) in measures 16 and 19; Jesus is here arrayed in splendor rather than as a sacrificial lamb. The overall setting is regal and patriarchal, in keeping with Bach's dedication of the 1733 *Missa* to the new King-Elector, but not without humor, as the composer uses a low texture to give voice to the "most high".

1.12 Cum Sancto Spiritu

Chorus (5 voices), flutes, oboes, trumpets, timpani, strings, continuo

cum Sancto Spiritu, in gloria Dei Patris.	*with the Holy Ghost, in the glory of God*
Amen.	*the Father. Amen.*

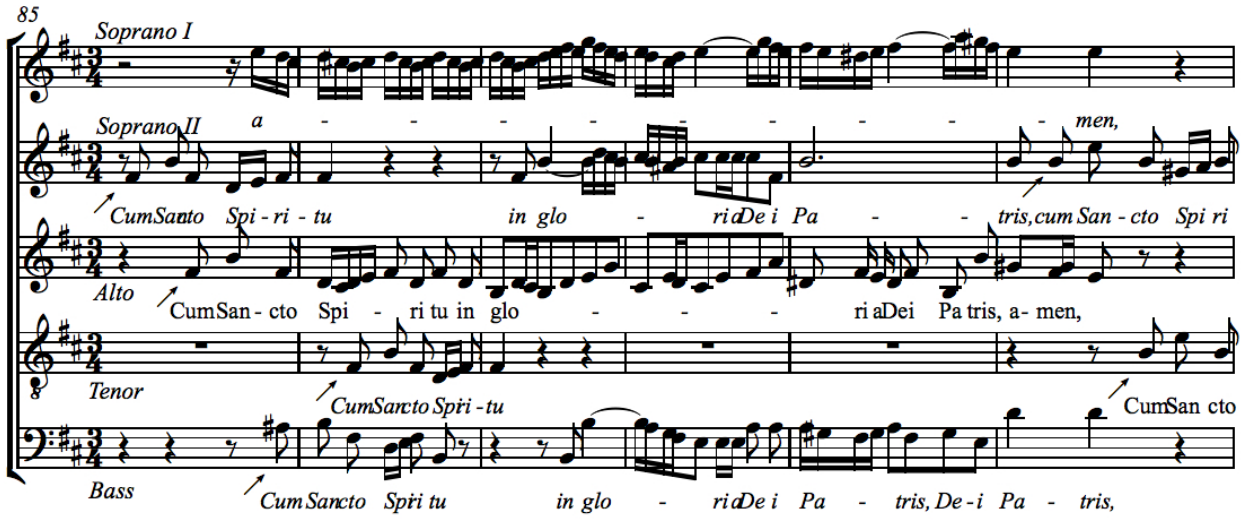
Antecedents: Composed as part of the 1733 *Missa*, and later recycled as the final movement (to a different text) of Cantata 191 (c. 1745).

The final section of the Gloria explodes from the preceding aria with euphoric energy, a virtuosic concerto movement for the full forces of the orchestra and 5-part chorus. Bach marks the movement Vivace (lively – or in this case, "life-ly"); the Holy Spirit will be described later in the *Mass* as the Lord and giver of life. The Vivace marking is used only one other time in the *Mass*, to herald the closing movement of the Symbolum Nicenum, which also has a text concerned with life ("et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum et vitam venturi saeculi – *I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come*").

The movement's structure is straightforward (intro, A-B-A-B):

measures 1-36	Intro: choral-orchestral celebration
measures 37-64	A: first iteration of a complicated fugue for voices and continuo only (no doubling instruments)
measures 65-80	B: chamber music interlude (instrumental riffs playing off the voices, with trumpet flourishes)
measures 80-111	A: complete restatement of the fugue, this time with instruments doubling/augmenting the voices
measures 112-end	B: vocal-instrumental coda, capped off by fireworks in the trumpets (see the triplet figure in measures 126)

The movement's propulsive energy comes from an almost continuous motor of 16th notes, even in measures 5-8 and similar passages, where the chorus is generally static. In the second "A" section, the fugal subject is hidden by "false entrances" – fragmentary statements of only the first few notes of the subject:



The listener delights in finding the real subject in the midst of all the decoys. The movement ends with a burst of fireworks from the trumpets.

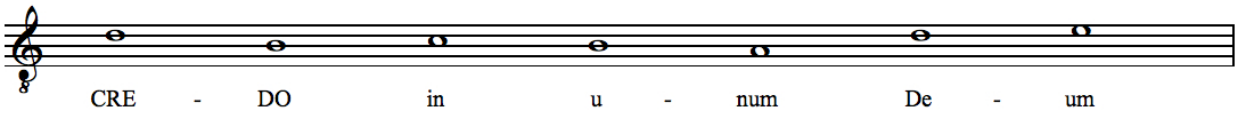
2.1 Credo in unum Deum

Chorus (5 voices), violin I and II, continuo

Credo in unum Deum *I believe in one God*

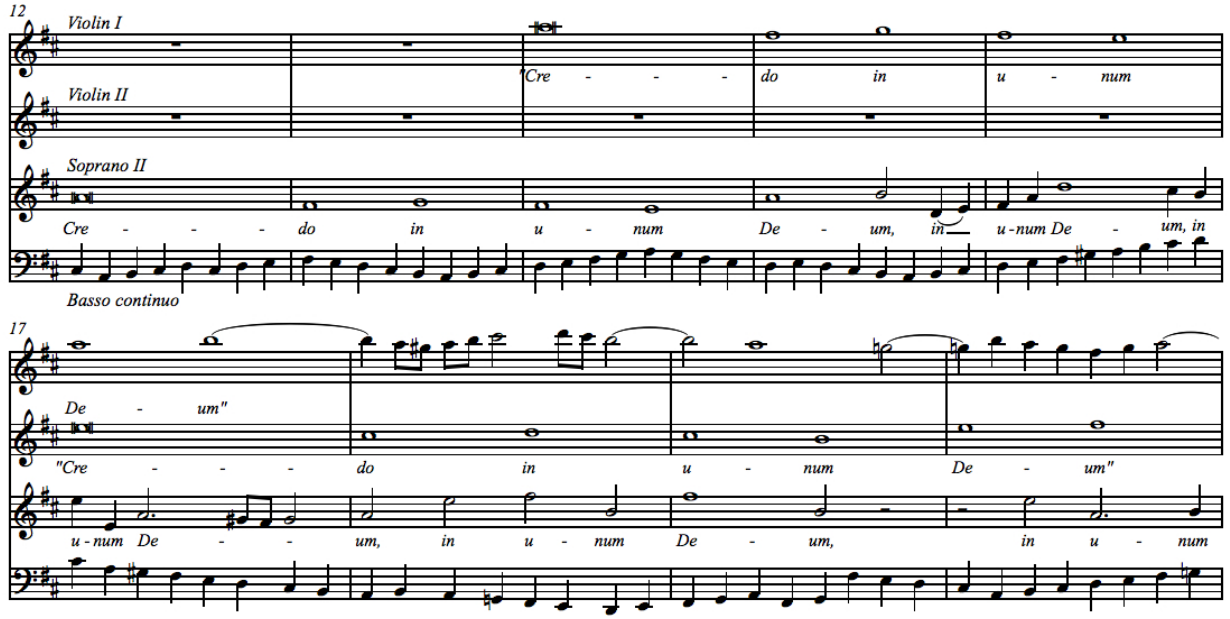
Antecedents: Composed in the 1740s for the *Mass*, and based on a lost Credo intonation composed c. 1740 (in G mixolydian).

Used in place of the Apostles' Creed on high feast days in the Lutheran church, the Nicene Creed (Symbolum Nicenum) served as a bridge between Protestant and Catholic traditions. In setting this carefully parsed statement of Christian belief, Bach is called to testify what *he* believes. He begins with the core statement, the First Commandment itself – "I believe in one God" – set to a Gregorian chant melody then in use in Leipzig:



By returning to the ancient, original music of the Western Church, Bach invites the listener to reflect on the earliest beginnings of the faith. From mixolydian mode (one of the ancient church modes), the chant is transposed up a tone to facilitate the entrance of trumpets and drums (in D) in the next movement. The chant is begun by the tenors (from the Latin "tenere," to hold, as in "hold the line"), used routinely as the "testifying" voice throughout Bach's sacred music. (See elsewhere in the *Mass* the opening of the Kyrie (1.1), Cum Sancto Spiritu fugue (1.12), the Confiteor chant melody (2.8), Pleni sunt coeli (3.1).)

Each of the other voice parts takes up the Gregorian chant melody in turn, joined by the first violins (at measure 14) and second violins (at measure 17), for a total of seven voices:



Composed 10 to 15 years after the 1733 *Missa*, this chorus shows a more sophisticated understanding of the *stile antico* method than Bach's earlier, more stolid settings of the Kyrie (1.3) and Gratias agimus (1.7). Rhythm is freer, and vocal lines more fluid, shorn of doubling instruments and supported only by a walking bass line – the one "modern" touch in what is essentially a Renaissance motet. Bach had clearly profited from studying the collection of Flemish and Italian polyphony he amassed for his library beginning in the 1730s.

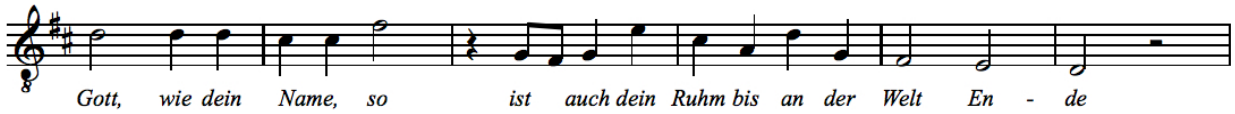
2.2 Patrem omnipotentem

Chorus (4 voices), oboes, trumpets, timpani, strings, continuo

Patrem omnipotentem, factorem coeli et terrae, visibilium omnium, et invisibilium.	*the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.*

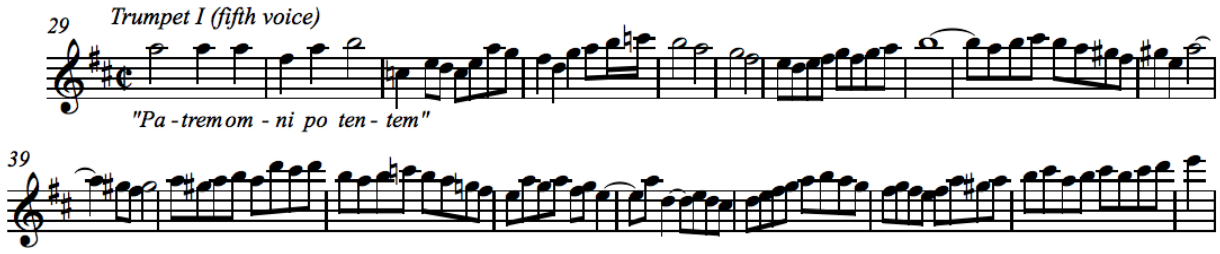
Antecedents: Based on the opening movement of a 1729 cantata (BWV 171) - "Gott, wie dein Name, so ist auch dein Ruhm bis an der Welt Ende – *God, as your name is, so also your praise is to the ends of the world."* (Psalm 48:11).

The jagged melody of Cantata 171 offers a musical and textual parallel:



The image of praise working its way "to the ends of the world" lends itself naturally to the *Mass* text – "heaven and earth … all things visible and invisible."

The repetition of the text "Credo in unum Deum" on block chords (at measures 1-3, 6-8, 10-12 – three times) establishes a link to the prior movement. The orchestration thickens, and the walking bass line doubles in pace – a general quickening of activity from the *stile antico* motet that came before. The choral texture is reduced from five to four voices, but with a special surprise: the first trumpet substitutes for a fifth choral voice with a bravura solo that disappears into the stratosphere – supersonic, invisible, beyond even the reach of the sopranos:



Harmonically, the Patrem chorus is an extended cadence from A major to D major, with a blaze of trumpets and timpani underlining a triumphant moment of arrival at measures 67-69.

As with the Confiteor and Et expecto choruses that end the Symbolum Nicenum (see diagram at 0.3), Bach writes a pair of opening choruses that move from the *stile antico* to *stile moderno*. (The double-time walking bass line fairly hurries the listener to a more modern pace.) In this way, Bach emphasizes both the *timelessness* and the *timeliness* of the old-time religion.

2.3 Et in unum Dominum

Soprano I, alto, oboi d'amore, strings, continuo

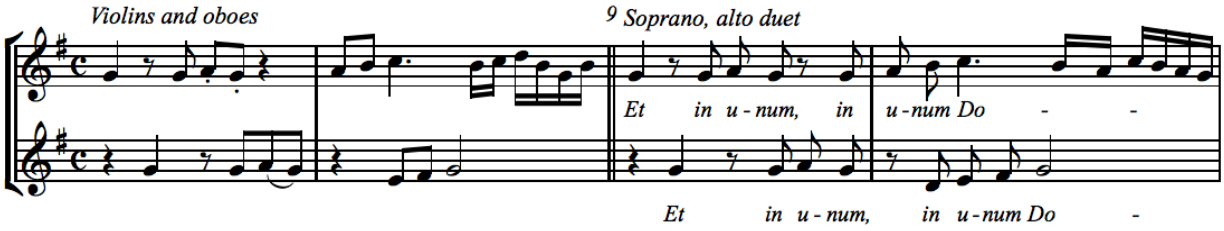
Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum, Filium Dei unigenitum. Et ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula. Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero. Genitum, non factum, consubstantialem Patri: per quem omnia facta sunt. Qui propter nos homines, et propter nostram salutem descendit de coelis.	*And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven.*

Antecedents: Composed in the 1740s for the *Mass*, based on an unknown cantata movement.

The longest single-movement text setting in the entire *Mass*, Et in unum Dominum was originally even denser before Bach hived off the Et incarnatus est text to its own chorus (see 2.4). Smend gives the original (longer text) setting as Bach's preferred version (page 126 of your score), with the updated (shorter) setting as a "variant" (page 135 of your score). Scholars now agree that the "variant" reflects Bach's final intentions for the *Mass*. It is certainly lovelier, with a shimmering high A in the soprano to highlight the word "Jesum" (measure 15).

Once again, Bach uses a duet to convey the second person of the Trinity (see Christe eleison (1.2)), writing in the G major key closely associated in the *Mass* and elsewhere with the figure of Jesus (see Domine Deus (1.8), also a duet).

Knowing that music can be used to say things that are too specific for words, Bach uses this movement to express a complex theological principle in a beguilingly simple way. The text at issue expresses the nature of the Trinity and of the relationship between God the Father and God the Son: The Son is "ex Patre natum" – born of the Father, therefore different, but also "consubstantialem Patri" – of one substance with the Father, therefore the same. See how he reconciles the two, using a perky figure traded between the first and second violins and oboes:



The first statement (God the Father) is detached, harder; the second (God the Son) is slurred, softer, representing the one who suffered. Same notes, made of the same substance, overlapping but different.

Beginning at measure 64, the solo voices enter a lower tessitura, as focus shifts to the imperfections of "us men" ("nos homines") for whom Christ lowered himself. The violins lead a descending figure in the orchestra (measures 73-74) to elucidate the word "descendit" and prepare the transition to the next chorus.

2.4 Et incarnatus est

Chorus (5 voices), violins I and II, continuo

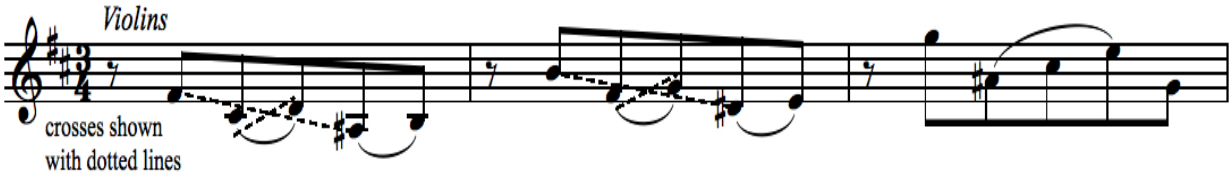
Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine: ET HOMO FACTUS EST.	*And was incarnate of the Holy Ghost by the Virgin Mary, AND WAS MADE MAN.*

Antecedents: Newly composed for the *Mass* in 1748 or 1749, and Bach's last known choral work.

By breaking this text off from the Et in unum Dominum duet (see 2.3), Bach completes the beautiful symmetry of his setting of the Symbolum Nicenum (see diagram at 0.3). In a movement rich with musical iconography, we are returned to the tonality of b minor, the opening key of the *Mass* and a key associated with sin and worldliness (see Kyrie, 1.1 and Qui tollis, 1.9).

The movement is mournful, dissonant, and heavily influenced by the Italian Baroque style to which Bach regularly returned. (Compare the setting of "Et in terra pax" from the famous Vivaldi *Gloria*, RV 589, with its descending string motif.)

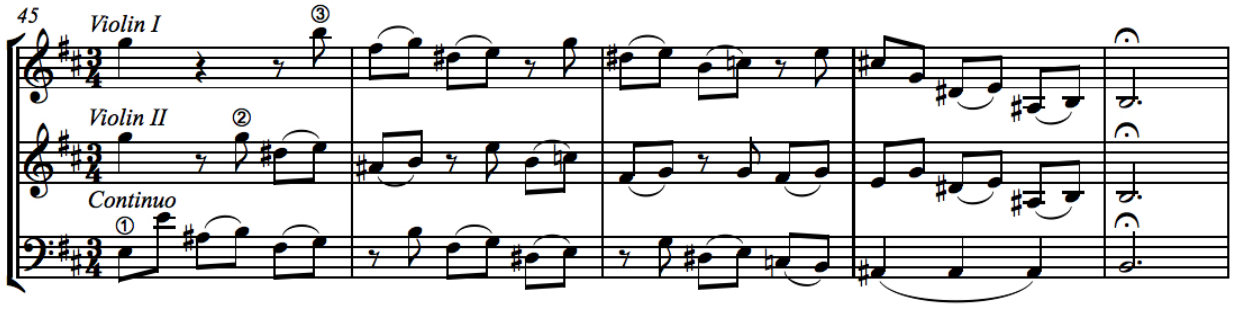
The violins of the orchestra play a sighing appoggiatura figure:



Intersecting lines drawn between the first and fourth notes and second and third notes of the violin figure reveal a *kreuz* – a cross, *the* Cross; the letter X (Chi) is also the first letter of the Greek word for Christ. The music advances the narrative, reminding us that Jesus took on human form so he could suffer for our sins.

At measures 42-44, the altos lead the text "et homo factus est"; their chromatic phrase is a retrograde foreshadowing of the descending, chromatic *basso lamento* of the Crucifixus.

The *Kreuz* figure is intensified at measures 45-48, with three overlapping statements of the material, reminding us that there were three crosses on Golgotha:



The Crucifixus that follows is the *Herzstück*, the heart, core, linchpin, of the Symbolum Nicenum, Bach's expression of faith (see again diagram at 0.3).

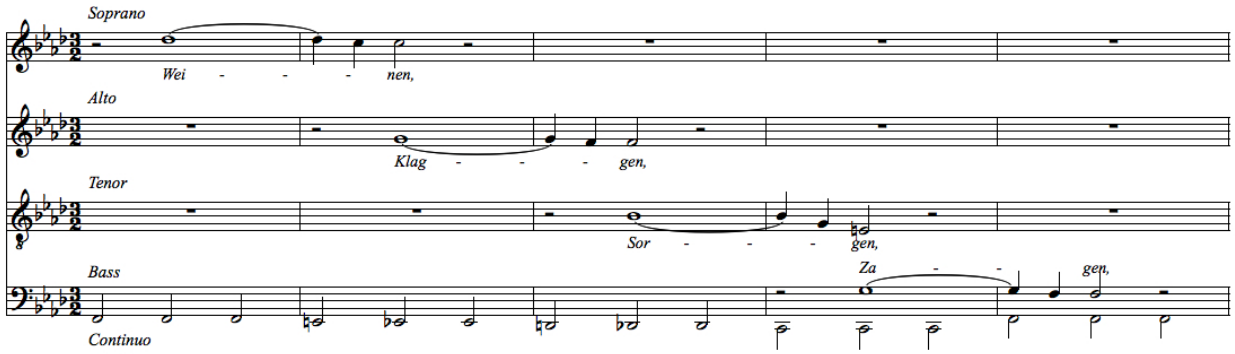
2.5 Crucifixus

Chorus (5 voices), flutes, strings, continuo

Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato, passus, et sepultus est.	*And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried.*

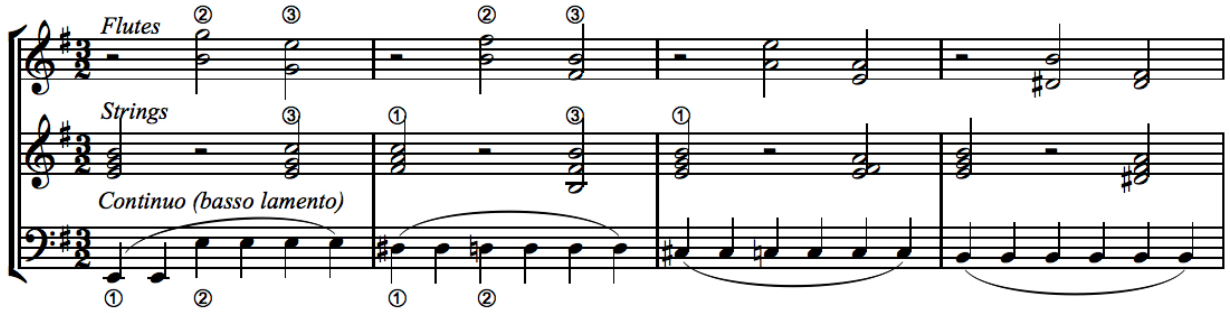
Antecedents: Based on the second movement of the 1714 cantata "Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen" (BWV 12) ("*Weeping, lamentation, worry, despair, anguish and trouble are the Christian's bread of tears, that bear the marks of Jesus*"), with similarities to the Vivaldi aria "Piango, gemo, sospiro e pano – *I weep, moan, sigh and suffer*".

John Harbison mused on how satisfying it must have been for Bach to lay the oldest music in the *Mass* (the Crucifixus) next to the newest (the Et incarnatus est), and have the two "collaborate" so successfully with one another – Bach's young self and old self, an integral whole. Cantata 12 expresses the sorrow and anguish Christians are compelled to feel at Jesus's crucifixion:



Like its cantata model, the Crucifixus is written as a *chaconne* (or *passacaglia*), over a four-bar bass line that is repeated 12 times, with a 13th added to prepare the transition to the chorus that follows. The descending chromatic bass figure is called a *basso lamento* (see Purcell's *Dido's Lament* for another famous example).

The instruments of the orchestra play three overlapping pulses – the bass instruments with strong beats on 1 and 2, the flutes on 2 and 3, and the violins on 3 and 1:



… three distinct rhythmic events to remind us that Jesus was crucified alongside two human beings. As in the Qui tollis (1.9), the pair of flutes signify Jesus, here on the central cross, betrayed by sin and treachery. After extreme, literally "excruciating" dissonance in measures 37-42, the chorus settles into a lower and lower range, as Jesus is entombed. The G major chord at the end creates a sense of expectation that is quickly fulfilled by what follows.

2.6 Et resurrexit

Chorus (5 voices), flutes, oboes, trumpets, timpani, strings, continuo

Et resurrexit tertia die, secundum Scripturas. Et ascendit in coelum: sedet ad dexteram Patris. Et iterum venturus est cum gloria judicare vivos et mortuos, cujus regni non erit finis	*And on the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father, and he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.*

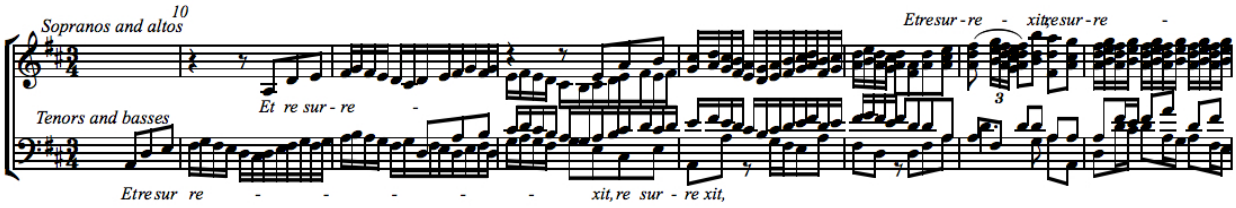
Antecedents: Composed in the 1740s for the *Mass*, based on a lost instrumental concerto (BWV Anh. 9/1, 1732 or 1735).

For the first time in the entire Credo, the choir and full forces of the orchestra – flutes, oboes, bassoons, trumpets, timpani, strings, continuo – enter as one, in a brilliant, high range, hailing the resurrection of Jesus.

There are several biblical accounts of this moment in the narrative, but Bach most likely had in mind Matthew 28:

> In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. ***And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead***; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. ***And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word***. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

At measures 10-14, we hear each voice of the choir running off to spread the good news, a pile-up of choral entrances culminating in a high B in the soprano I line – one of only two times in the *Mass* Bach carries them up to that extreme:



The movement is both majestic and excitable, closely resembling the *courante* Baroque dance form; instrumental interludes traded among the different families of the orchestra and a lengthy *sinfonia* at the end add to the mood of celebration.

The basses of the chorus are given a lengthy "solo" from measures 74-85 on the text, "and he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead" – a moment of righteousness unequaled in sacred music.

2.7 Et in Spiritum sanctum Dominum

Bass, 2 oboi d'amore, continuo

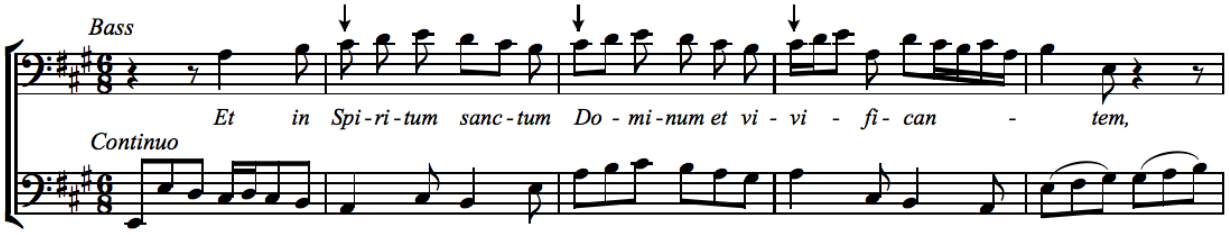
Et in Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum et vivificantem: qui ex Patre Filioque procedit. Qui cum Patre, et Filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur: qui locutus est per Prophetas. Et in unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam.	*And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified; who spake by the Prophets. And I believe in one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.*

Antecedents: Composed in the 1740s for the *Mass*.

The immediacy of the resurrection scene gives way to a more detached mood as Bach contemplates the Holy Spirit, the animating force behind the establishment of Christ's church and the spreading of the Word. The focus remains on the dance, in this case a *pastorale* form, performed by three solo voices – two oboes, representing the first and second persons of the Trinity and the bass in the foreground vocalizing the third.

The simple, unadorned setting offers a contrast to the very busy Cum Sancto Spiritu (1.12) chorus, the other "Holy Spirit" section of the *Mass*. Bach's choice of a bass voice gives the aria a sacerdotal character, making us all sit up a little bit straighter as we reflect upon the eternal church.

The repeated C-sharp in the melody serves as a "pivot note" to the C-sharp that begins the Confiteor chorus that follows:



2.8 Confiteor

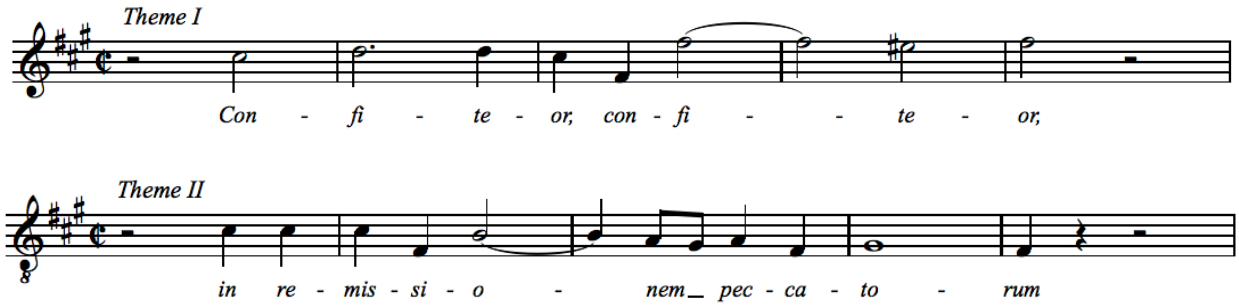
Chorus (5 voices), continuo

Confiteor unum baptisma in remissionem peccatorum. Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum…	*I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead…*

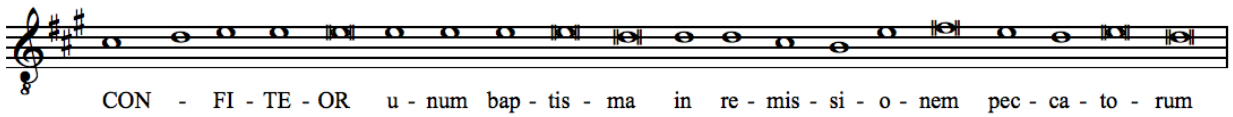
Antecedents: Probably new material for the *Mass*, composed 1748-1749.

Continuing the narrative structure of the Credo (see again the diagram at 0.3), Bach now directs his statement of inner belief outward, into a profession of faith and affiliation – from "Credo" (I believe) to "Confiteor" (I confess).

As in the opening movement (Credo in unum Deum, 2.1), he writes a complex motet in the *stile antico*, with two complementary themes over a walking bass line (the first theme with an affirming octave leap):



Later on, beginning at measure 73, the basses and altos sing (in a canon) the Gregorian chant for this text that was then in use in Leipzig, augmented by the tenors (at half tempo) at measure 92:



Bach must next engage with a text concerning the resurrection of the dead, the one moment in the Mass Ordinary that deals in future prophecy. Bach writes an Adagio beginning at measure 121 that treats this doctrine with appropriate mystery – murky, unstable harmonies groping towards an uncertain outcome. (As Yoda observed, "Difficult to see. Always in motion is the future.")

At measure 125, he lingers on an E-flat minor chord, the same chord he used for the moment in the *St. Matthew Passion* where Christ loses his faith, crying out (in Aramaic), "Eli, Eli, lama asabthani? – *my God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?*"

At measures 138-139, the first sopranos are given an enharmonic shift from C-natural to B-sharp (the second note, with a *kreuz* written in front of it) – the same note, but changed intrinsically and in relation to the shifting harmonies underneath. In this way, Bach depicts, right on the printed page, the change wrought by Jesus's sacrifice: "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump" (I Corinthians: 51-52).

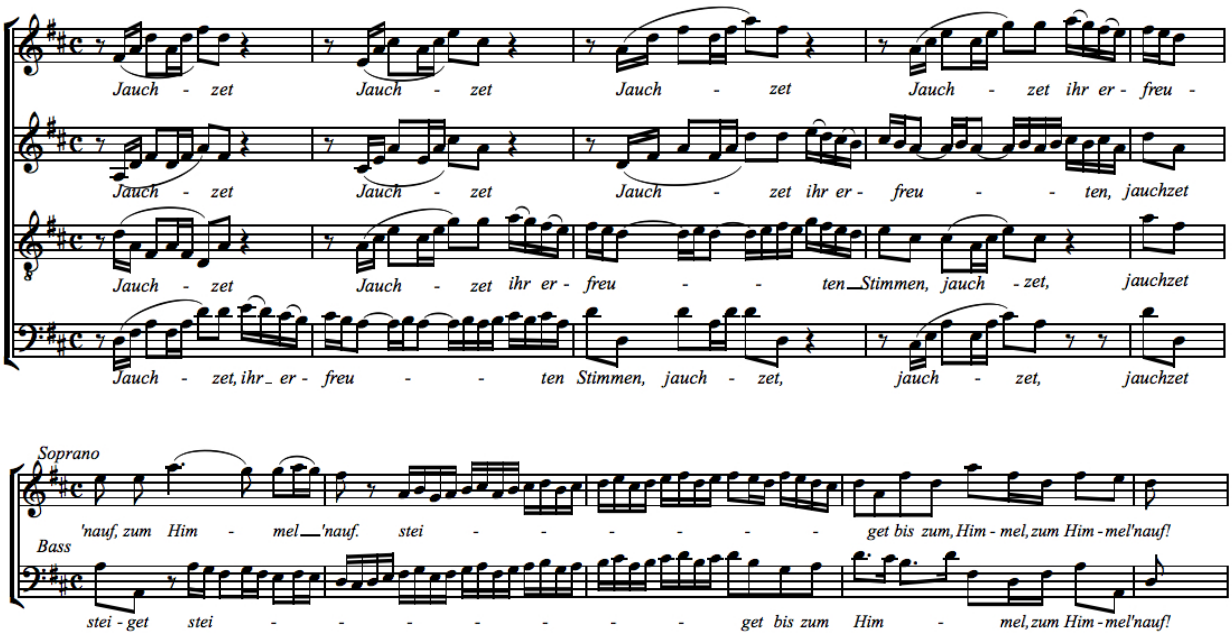
2.9 Et expecto

Chorus (5 voices), flutes, oboes, trumpets, timpani, strings, continuo

Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum.	*and I look for the resurrection of the*
Et vitam ventura saeculi. Amen.	*dead, and the life of the world to come.*
	Amen.

Antecedents: Based on second movement of BWV 120 (1729), "Jauchzet, ihr erfreuten Stimmen, steiget bis zum Himmel 'nauf - *Exult, you delighted voices, climb all the way to heaven!*"

Bach opens the throttle for this final section of the Symbolum Nicenum. It is closely patterned on the 1729 precedent, adding a fifth choral part (for second sopranos) and overlaying text on the existing orchestral introduction. Two brief illustrations from the cantata:



Et expecto is in a modern Baroque dance style, with the rising figures at the beginning outlining a *bourrée* rhythm. By linking the *stile antico* and *stile moderno* idioms of the Confiteor → Et expecto (as he did earlier with the Credo → Patrem pair of choruses) Bach emphasizes both the timelessness and the timeliness of the creed.

The little understood doctrine of the resurrection of the dead holds that the actual bodies of Christian believers will (after a deep sleep) be reconstituted at the last judgment, and taken up to greet God himself – "yet in my flesh shall I see God." The melismas that begin in the choir at measure 41 were, in the cantata model, used to set the phrase "steiget bis zum Himmel 'nauf – *climb all the way to heaven"*, and here depict the journey upward of the resurrected faithful to receive their reward. The doleful pair of flutes from the earlier Crucifixus are here revivified (see measures 17-20). The entire movement is marked Vivace e Allegro – lively, and *life*-ly (see also Cum Sancto Spiritu, 1.12).

It takes an earthquake to raise the dead, and Bach summons one here, with an awe-inspiring episode for solo timpani – unprecedented in all of his music – from measures 26-33. The music spirals up to a triumphant conclusion, all lingering uncertainty having been removed.

3.1 Sanctus

Chorus (6 voices), oboes (3), trumpets, timpani, strings, continuo

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth. Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria *eius*.	*Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts. Heaven and earth are full of* his *glory.*

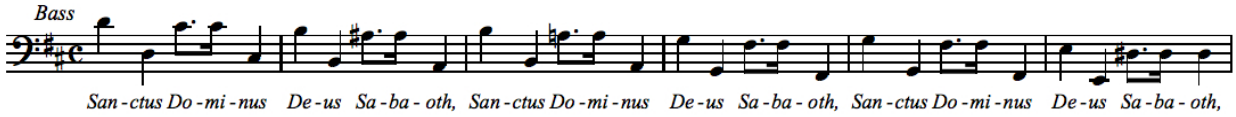
Antecedents: Composed for Christmas Day, 1724. Originally for three sopranos, alto, tenor and bass, modified for the *Mass* for two sopranos, two altos, tenor and bass.

The text of the Sanctus comes from an awe-inspiring episode in the book of Isaiah:

> In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, ***Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.*** And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.
>
> *– Isaiah 6:1-7*

Bach's radiant setting opens with five vocal and instrumental choirs crying out to one another: the high voices (soprano I, II and alto I), low voices (alto, tenor and bass), high strings (violin I, II and viola), three oboes, and three trumpets – all undergirded by a rumbling timpani to represent the quaking of the temple. The six-voiced choral texture evokes the six-winged seraphim, an order of angels strongly associated with fire and purification (as can be seen from the second half of the Isaiah text). The high-voiced choir (SSA) sings luscious triads at measures 17-22 and elsewhere – this texture was used briefly to spotlight an appearance of angels earlier in the *Mass* (see Et in terra pax (1.5), measure 63).

God's majestic presence is depicted by a regal bass motif in descending octaves, first seen at measures 17-24:



A lively fugue follows on the text Pleni sunt coeli; the subject jumps from a high note on the word "heaven" to a low note for "earth." The tenors enter first (as usual), then alto IIs and soprano Is in turn, followed by joint entrances from the soprano II/alto I (measure 66) and tenor/bass (measure 72) in a process of augmentation and increasing excitement.

A shift occurs at measure 78, where the basses introduce a "fanfare" theme, a bridge to the subject of the Osanna in excelsis movement that follows. High voices begin a series of 16th-note melismas (in thirds) at that same spot, calling to mind the purifying energy of the fire-angels. This same fiery mode of expression is used to bring the whole episode to a close.

4.1,3 Osanna

Double chorus, flutes, oboes, trumpets, timpani, strings, continuo

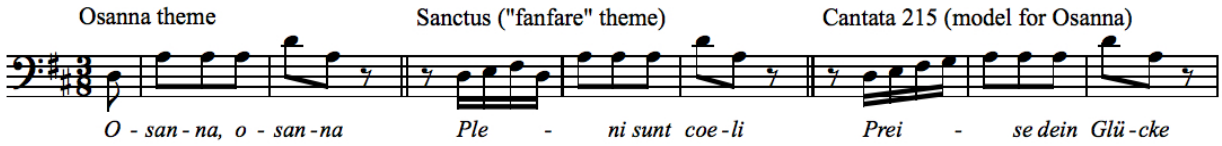
Osanna in excelsis. *Hosanna in the highest.*

Antecedents: Derived from a secular cantata used in an open-air performance for the Saxon King-Elector on his visit to Leipzig (BWV 215/1, 1734).

The Osanna text is joined to the Sanctus in the Mass Ordinary. Here, Bach splits it off to begin the final "book" of his *missa tota*. Again, Bach has a symmetrical scheme in mind for this section of the *Mass* (see diagram at 0.3), with three majestic choruses flanking two intimate arias where Bach explores his innermost faith.

The music for the Osanna comes from the opening of a double-chorus cantata dedicated to Augustus III soon after his accession to the Saxon and Polish thrones: "Preise dein Glücke, gesegnetes Sachsen, Weil Gott den Thron deines Königs erhält – *Praise your good fortune, blessed Saxony, since God upholds the throne of your king.*" Augustus was also the dedicatee of the 1733 *Missa* (Kyrie-Gloria section of the *Mass*), and a focal point for Bach's career aspirations.

The principal theme of the Osanna is taken directly from Cantata 215, and echoes the "fanfare" theme from the Sanctus:



The different instrument groupings in the orchestra – continuo (measure 1), flutes (measure 2), oboes (measure 3), violins (measure 4) and trumpets (measure 5), all thoughtfully labeled in the vocal score – shout praise to the new monarch from all regions of the realm.

Bach writes for double chorus, a vision of crowds flocking to see the balcony appearance of the king. The first chorus sings excitedly (measures 15-42) with the second chorus giving cheers of assent; the roles are reversed from measures 38-62. A musical "canopy" occurs in measures 63-80, with a long melisma rising upward through the bass I, tenor I, alto I and soprano I voices then back down again through soprano II, alto II, tenor II and bass II.

The piece concludes with an extended *sinfonia* as the multitudes sit down to a festive coronation banquet.

Ton Koopman's recording of Cantata 215 with the Amsterdam Baroque is available on YouTube (search for "cantata 215 part 1") and well worth a listen. In its original context, Bach's music (though still magnificent) appears as fulsome praise, with cringe-worthy paeans to the royal patron. In the *Mass*, it becomes something more universal, transfigured by Bach's skillful juxtaposition with the adjoining movements.

4.2 Benedictus

Tenor, solo flute, continuo

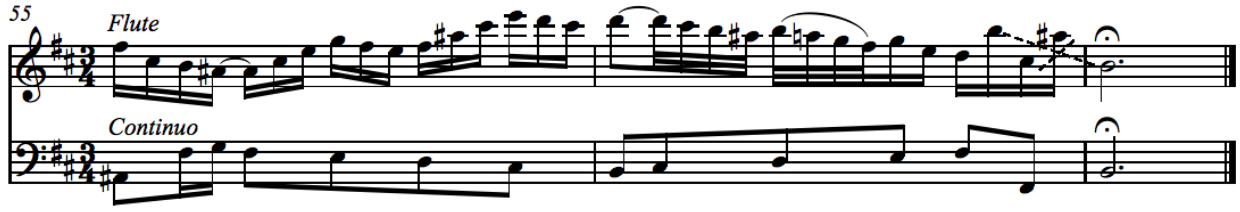
Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.	*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*

Antecedents: Composed c. 1748-1749, based on an unkown aria.

From the wide shot of the Osanna, Bach moves us in for a closer view of the individual at the center of all this adulation. The Benedictus text comes from the Gospel of Matthew, shouted by the crowds as Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. (The crowds also shouted "Hosanna to the Son of David," acknowledging Jesus's royal lineage.)

The texture of this movement is spare and unadorned, in contrast to the splendor and pomp of the Osanna. Bach writes for solo flute (the flutes strongly associated with the figure of Jesus throughout the *Mass* – see Domine Deus (1.8), Qui tollis (1.9), Crucifixus (2.5)) and tenor, the voice of the Evangelist from the great Passions, commenting on and explaining the action and its significance. The flute theme reaches constantly upward, as if straining to see something unattainable, divine.

The tenor ends the piece absolutely alone, with no instrumental accompaniment (measure 48), as if to emphasize the solitary sacrifice Jesus will make later that same week. There is a very real sense, to be made explicit later in the Agnus Dei (4.4), that Jesus is leaving us. The flute solo ends with a *Kreuz* figure, to emphasize this:



Bach then repeats the Osanna double chorus, as required by the Mass Ordinary, and also in keeping with his symmetrical scheme for the final "book" of the *missa tota* (see chart at 0.3).

* * *

The contrast Bach draws between majesty and intimacy in this final section of the *Mass* could not be greater. In the Gloria and Symbolum Nicenum, we see fluid connections between the arias and choruses. Duet partners finish each others' sentences, texts are shared between solo and choral settings, and movements are sometimes connected by a direct musical segue. Here, the connections are abrupt, with rapid mood shifts from chorus to aria and back. The Osanna celebrates the King of Kings; the Benedictus and Agnus Dei reveal Jesus as the Lamb of God. What emerges is a masterful and complex portrait of the central figure in Bach's faith, a figure both powerful and fragile, a perfect being who chose to experience human suffering, who in his absence became omnipresent, and who is not perceived remotely but personally, through his injunction to "love one another".

4.4 Agnus Dei

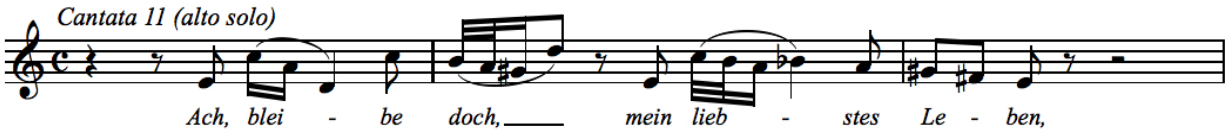
Alto, violins, continuo

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. (*final statement omitted by Bach)*	*Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.*

Antecedents: "Ach bleibe doch," alto aria from BWV 11 (also called the Ascension Oratorio) (c. 1735), based on a lost wedding cantata movement (BWV Anh. 196/3) (1725).

With the Agnus Dei, Bach pivots to an intensely personal mode of expression. Having expressed the content of his faith in earlier sections of the *Mass*, Bach now reflects on what it means to him, on its emotional impact in his own life.

This touching movement is based on an alto aria from a cantata describing Christ's final appearance to his disciples and ascension into heaven. Bach writes a new alto melody here; the alto in the cantata sings the violin figure from the *Mass*:



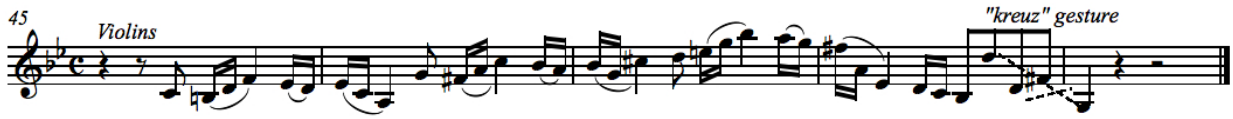
The aria is sung from the perspective of a lover who is left behind:

Ach, bleibe doch, mein liebstes Leben,	*Ah, just stay, my dearest Life,*
Ach, fliehe nicht so bald von mir!	*ah, don't flee so soon from me!*
Dein Abschied und dein frühes Scheiden	*Your farewell and Your early departure*
Bringt mir das allergrößte Leiden,	*brings me the greatest of all sorrows,*
Ach ja, so bleibe doch noch hier;	*ah, truly, just stay awhile here;*
Sonst werd ich ganz von Schmerz umgeben.	*otherwise I will be completely undone with grief.*

Bach addresses Jesus as his soul mate, as his life, revealing the vulnerability that comes with love. He confronts a painful irony of his faith, that the one being he loves the most must leave this earth, to return again, against an unverifiable promise of ultimate return.

The Agnus Dei is organized over a searching, chromatic, 12-tone bass line, moving rootlessly from point to point, without clear forward motion or satisfying cadences. The texture is lonesome – unison violins, continuo, alto soloist – stripped of the ornamentation found in the cantata. In contrast to the other minor-key arias in the *Mass*, no major-key episodes pierce the gloom. In the violins at measures 3-4, we see again the anxious, sighing appoggiatura gesture used in the very opening of the *Mass*, in the textually linked Kyrie eleison – *Lord, have mercy*.

At measure 34, Bach writes a fermata on the word "peccata" (sin), over an F-sharp (# = *kreuz*) in the continuo. Here, he lingers over the connection between the sins of the world – Bach's own sins – and Jesus's torture and sacrifice. The orchestral postlude offers the listener a moment to say, in his heart of hearts, the only words in the Mass Ordinary that Bach chose *not* to set. The last four notes of the piece form a final *Kreuz*:



4.5 Dona nobis pacem

Chorus (4 voices), flutes, oboes, trumpets, timpani, strings, continuo

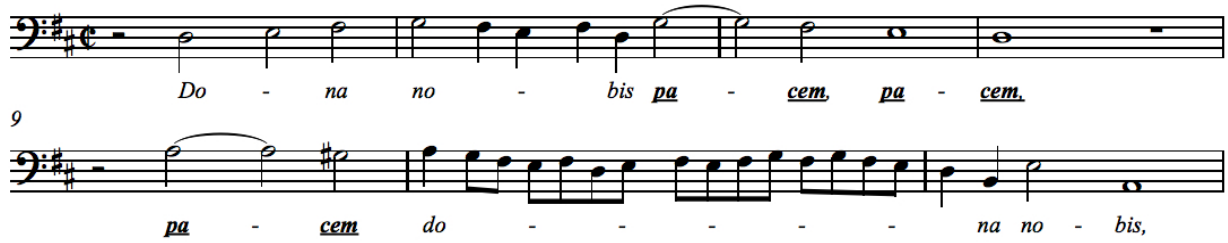
Dona nobis pacem. *Grant us peace.*

Antecedents: Gratias agimus tibi (from BWV 232 itself, originally composed as part of the 1733 *Missa*).

In creating his *Mass*, Bach drew on decades of his earlier compositions, re-shaping works he considered to be the best analogues (musically and textually) for what he now had to express, and arranging them (along with a great deal of new music) into a vivid narrative.

To end his masterpiece, Bach returns to music from the *Mass* itself. By hearing the same music for the second time, we are called upon to reflect on how we have been instructed, inspired and changed. He chooses a chorus of thanksgiving, Gratias agimus tibi (1.7) to set the final prayer of the Mass Ordinary – an appropriate valedictory for a man for whom music and faith were so deeply intertwined. He thanks God for the rich harvest of his life's work, and for his *Mass* in particular, a synthesis achieved in years of failing health and eyesight.

The Dona nobis pacem begins small, from the basses of the chorus, leading the listener out of the anxious, doubtful Agnus Dei, and moves upward through the other voices; the instruments "sing along" *colla parte* with the chorus. Bach manipulates the text underlay so that the word "peace" is repeated three times in a row (recall the Et in terra pax chorus (1.5)):



The chorus unfolds, rather unremarkably, in a narrow range of only about two octaves. At measure 15, the sopranos take us a fourth higher, to the next plane; a lone trumpet sneaks in to provide a halo of sound. Then, beginning at measure 27, the outer voices of the choir, sopranos and basses, open up the vista; the first trumpet enters (at measure 32) a fifth higher than the sopranos, going all the way to a high D, beyond the range of the human voice. From that note to the low A in the double bass (with stirring timpani entrance) at measure 35, Bach encompasses a range exceeding four octaves, more than double where he started. The effect is magical, a vast expansion of the choral-orchestral texture, a view from the mountaintop.

Bach has engaged deeply with his faith in writing the *Mass*, and in so doing illuminates a path for his listeners – listeners he may never have expected to encounter in his own lifetime. The path leads to a glorious and eternal peace, the banishing of uncertainty, and the achievement of our full potential as human beings, based on a foundation as securely laid as the *Mass* itself.

The citizens of Leipzig stand for this chorus in the Thomaskirche, in silent, stirring tribute to the world's greatest musician, a man who created music as strong as his faith.

Biographical timeline

March 21, 1685	Johann Sebastian Bach born in Eisenach into a family of musicians (seventh and youngest child of Johann Ambrosius Bach and Maria Elisabeth Bach)
May 1694	Death of Maria Elisabeth Bach
February 1695	Death of Johann Ambrosius Bach Sebastian joins household of oldest brother, Johann Christian Bach
August 1703	Appointed organist and choirmaster at Arnstadt (age 18)
1705-1706	Study with Buxtehude in Lübeck
October 1707	Marriage to cousin Maria Barbara Bach
1707-1708	Service to town council in free imperial city of Mühlhausen
1708-1717	Service at ducal court in Weimar Studies works of Vivaldi and other Italian masters
1717-1723	Service at princely court of Anhalt-Cöthen
July 1720	Death of Maria Barbara Bach (mother of seven of Bach's children)
December 1721	Marriage to Anna Magdalena Bach (court soprano)
1721-1723	*Well-Tempered Clavier, Brandenburg Concertos, Orgel-Büchlein*
1723-1750	Leipzig (second city of Saxony, after Dresden) • Served town council as Cantor of St. Thomas and in other posts • Composition of *Magnificat*, *Passions* (Matthew, John, Mark), sections of *Mass in B minor* (1720s and 1730s) and myriad cantatas • Directorship of Collegium Musicum (public concert series) (1729) • Appointed concertmaster to Duke of Saxe-Weissenfels and Royal-Polish and Electoral-Saxon Court Composer (1736)
1733	Frederick August II (Augustus III) succeeds as Elector of Saxony and King of Poland; Kyrie-Gloria section of *Mass in B minor* composed
1748-1749	Last movements of *Mass in B minor* composed
March 1750	Bach endures cataract surgery performed (without anaesthesia) by a visiting oculist, John Taylor
July 28, 1750	Bach dies (age 65), possibly of a post-surgical infection, survived by Anna Magdalena, 6 of 12 sons and 3 of 8 daughters

Bach never ventured West of his birthplace, East of Berlin and Dresden or North of Lübeck on the Baltic Sea, to which he traveled 250 miles – on foot.

As a composer, Bach is to Western music what Shakespeare is to the English language and Newton is to the modern scientific method, once called "the supreme lawgiver of music." But his impact on the life of today's musicians goes even deeper. He was a legendary organist who at the same time saw himself as far more than a performer. He regularized modern keyboard playing, with treatises that combined theory and practice to teach by example. He invented the modern system of keyboard fingering and demonstrated the workability of tempered tuning, composing in all 24 keys.

A "learned musician," he read French, Italian, Latin and Greek, and built an impressive library of German, French, Flemish and Italian masterworks, both ancient and modern. He compiled the Old Bach Archive (works of his own family) and was a keen advocate for his music, his career and his legacy as well as those of his sons.

Works consulted

This guide was prepared for a volunteer chorus of experienced musicians, music educators and arts-aware professionals – amateurs in the real (and best) sense – with the aim of enhancing their experience of a colossal work of art. It is based on an overview of a several excellent surveys and standard performing editions and contains no original scholarship. Few if any insights herein are original to the author. The following is a non-exhaustive list of works consulted.

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Rilling, Helmuth. *The Rilling Discovery Lectures, Bach Mass in B minor* (on line video lecture demonstrations, http://oregonbachfestival.com/digitalbach/discovery/). Eugene: Oregon Bach Festival, 2010.

Wolff, Christoph. *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2000.

Translations of the Mass are from the Book of Common Prayer; biblical citations from the King James Version; and cantata translations from Emmanuel Music (http://emmanuelmusic.org).

Watercolor of the Thomaskantorei in Leipzig, Bach's home and workplace from 1723 to 1750, painted by Felix Mendelssohn in 1838. Bach's studio windows are at the right of the main building, just above the gate.

Learning aids

Score markings

Each singer is responsible for marking his or her score and learning the music before each scheduled rehearsal. A special website with all score markings has been set up at http://choraltracks.com/wordpress/John%20Maclay/

Vocal line assignments

Please check the sticker issued along with your score for your vocal line assignment and mark your score accordingly. N.B.: If your sticker says "Soprano 2+" you sing Soprano in SA, Soprano I in SSA, and Soprano II in SSAA. If your sticker says "Alto 1+" (sometimes called "sopralto," for fun) you sing Alto in SA, Soprano II in SSA and Alto I in SSAA.

MP3 rehearsal tracks

The score marking website - http://choraltracks.com/wordpress/John%20Maclay/ - also has an indispensable collection of MP3 rehearsal tracks that can be listened to on line or saved to the desktop and dragged into iTunes. Note that the Confiteor/Et expecto choruses are combined into a single MP3 file. For each chorus, you can choose from options of escalating difficulty: your part predominant, your part in the left speaker (to mix volume), balanced voices, your part omitted, and orchestra only.

Listening

Two recommended recordings (also on iTunes) from the dozens that are out there:

- Helmuth Rilling, Stuttgart Bach Collegium and Gächinger Kantorei Stuttgart (Hänssler Classic 98274, released 2006) – modern pitch, modern instruments.
- Philippe Herreweghe, Collegium Vocale Gent (Harmonia Mundi 5901614, released 2007) – Baroque pitch, early instruments.

Viewing

- Oregon Bach Festival – four superb lecture-demonstrations by Helmuth Rilling are archived on line at http://oregonbachfestival.com/digitalbach/discovery/
- YouTube – search "Blomstedt, 2005" and you will pull up a playlist (18 videos) of a complete performance of the *Mass* by Herbert Blomstedt in Leipzig's Thomaskirche (Bach's own church), including interviews with the maestro.

Reading

- John Butt: *Bach: Mass in B minor* (Cambridge, 1991) – a concise musical analysis.
- Christoph Wolff: *Bach: The Learned Musician* (Norton, 2000) – best full length bio.

Rehearsal and performance schedule

Rehearsals take place Tuesdays at Grace Church from 7:00-9:30 PM unless otherwise noted. We never cancel rehearsals based on weather.

REHEARSALS	*Material covered*	NOTES
January 8	*Kyrie I; Gloria-Et in terra pax*	
January 15	*Kyrie II; Qui tollis; Cum Sancto Spiritu*	
January 22	*Dona nobis pacem; Et incarnatus; Crucifixus; Et resurrexit*	**Snack night (sopr/tenors to bring)**
January 29	*Credo; Patrem; Gratias*	
February 2 (Saturday – strongly encouraged)*	*Credo; Patrem; Et incarnatus; Crucifixus; Et resurrexit; Confiteor; Et expecto*	**10:30 AM-12:00 PM – Alto sectional** **12:10-1:40 PM – Sopr. I/II sectional** **1:50-3:20 PM – Ten./Bass sectional**
February 5	*Confiteor; Et expecto*	**Tickets handed out (limit 4 p.p.)**
February 12	*Focus on Symbolum Nicenum*	**Master class with Jim Marvin**
February 19	*Sanctus; Osanna*	**Snack night (altos/basses to bring)**
February 26	*Back and fill*	
March 2 (Saturday – optional)*	*Conductor's choice*	**Make-up rehearsal (1:00-3:30 PM)**
March 5	*Drill seemingly impossible sections*	**Sectionals in Church/Chantry**
March 12	*Review and clean up*	
March 19	*Complete run through*	**Snack night (sops/tenors to bring)**
March 26	*TBD*	**Tickets and $$ due back**
April 2	*TBD*	
April 6 (Saturday – optional)*	*Choristers' choice*	**Make-up rehearsal (1:00-3:30 PM)**
April 9	*Focus on Gloria section*	**With vocal + instrumental soloists**
April 16	*TBD*	
April 23	*TBD*	**Snack night (altos/basses to bring)**
April 30	*TBD*	
CONCERT WEEK		**NOTES**
May 7 (Tuesday)	**7:00 PM REHEARSAL**	**In the Church**
May 9 (Thursday)	**6:30 PM REHEARSAL**	**Dress rehearsal (with orchestra)**
May 10 (Friday)	**8:00 PM CONCERT**	**CALL is at 6:30 PM, on stage**

* **Chantry Chapel at Grace Church (10th Street corner gate). Wine served at the break.**

- Our goal is to help busy adults be productive members of a first-rate chorus.
- You must attend **16 out of 19 rehearsals, including April 30, May 7 and May 9**. Otherwise, your concert participation is at the conductor's discretion.
- Saturday rehearsals erase Tuesday night absences on a one-for-one basis.
- Email the conductor (preferably in advance) if and when you need to miss rehearsal.