

Eastman Bach Cantata Series

Joshua Johnstone and Liyao Yu,
conductors

Sunday, November 16, 2025
Hatch Recital Hall
3:30 PM



Eastman School of Music

~ PROGRAM ~

BWV 150: Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich (1707)
Cantata for various Church Occasions

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)
15'

- I. Sinfonia
- II. Chorus: Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich
- III. Soprano Aria: Doch bin und bleibe ich vergnügt
- IV. Chorus: Leite mich in deiner Wahrheit
- V. Alto, Tenor, and Bass trio: Zedern müssen von den Winden
- VI. Chorus: Meine Augen sehen stets zu dem Herrn
- VII. Chorus: Meine Tage in dem Leide

Sofia Mains, *soprano*
Caitlyn Babcock, *alto*
Daniel Perez, *tenor*
Jack Leslie, *baritone*

Benjamin Jackson, *violin*
Lydia McConkie, *violin II*
Yu-Ping Wu, *cello*
Alison Pollock, *bassoon*
Timothy Stewart, *organ*

Joshua Johnstone, *conductor*

~ INTERMISSION ~

~ PROGRAM ~

BWV 36: Schwingt freudig euch empor (1731)

Cantata for the First Sunday in Advent

J. S Bach

30'

PART I

- I. Chorus: Schwingt freudig euch empor
- II. Soprano and Alto duet: Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland
- III. Tenor Aria: Die Liebe zieht mit sanften Schritten

*IV. Chorale: Zwingt die Saiten in Cythara

PART II

- V. Bass Aria: Willkommen, werter Schatz!
- VI. Tenor Chorale: Der du bist dem Vater gleich
- VII. Soprano Aria: Auch mit gedämpften, schwachen Stimmen

*VIII. Chorale: Lob sei Gott dem Vater ton

Abigail Liebegott, *soprano*

Caroline Barata, *alto*

Caleb Meyerhoff, *tenor*

Max Foreman, *bass*

Zihua Ma, *violin I*

Benjamin Jackson, *violin II*

Daphne Huerta, *viola*

Yu-Ping Wu, *cello*

Samuel Suchta, *oboe d'amore I*

Madison Barber, *oboe d'amore II*

Dominic Fiacco, *organ and rehearsal pianist*

Liyao Yu, *conductor*

**the audience is invited to stand and sing*

~ PROGRAM NOTES, TEXTS, & TRANSLATIONS ~

BWV 150: Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich

Among the earliest of Bach's surviving church cantatas, *Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich* (*For Thee, O Lord, I Long*) offers a remarkable glimpse of the young composer's developing voice. Bach's manuscript has been lost, but stylistic and textual evidence suggest that Bach composed the work around 1707, possibly while still serving in Arnstadt. Some scholars even propose that it may have been his very first cantata, while others cast doubt on its authenticity entirely.

In contrast to Bach's large-scale, mature Leipzig cantatas, BWV 150 feels intimate and experimental. The chorus is featured prominently throughout, while solo writing is minimal—there is only one brief aria for soprano. Strikingly, the cantata contains no recitatives and no da capo arias, and it concludes not with a chorale, but with a graceful chaconne: a dance-like movement in lilting triple meter that gathers energy as it builds to the end.

The text alternates between verses drawn from Psalm 25 and poetry by an unknown author. Movements 2, 4, and 6 set biblical lines that speak of constant patience, hope, and trust in God. The intervening movements—3, 5, and 7—set original poetry whose source is unknown. Recent scholarship, however, has uncovered an intriguing acrostic in the text of these three movements: accounting for copying errors and using a few antiquated spellings, the first letters of each poetic line of movements 3, 5, and 7 spell out “Doktor Conrad Meckbach,” a Mühlhausen city councillor whose seventieth birthday occurred in April 1707. This discovery suggests that the cantata may have been composed for that occasion, lending further evidence to its likely origin in Bach's Arnstadt years.

- Joshua Johnstone

I. Sinfonia

II. Chorus

Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich.

Mein Gott, ich hoffe auf dich.

Laß mich nicht zuschanden werden,

Daß sich meine Feinde nicht freuen über mich.

For you, Lord, is my longing.

My God, I hope in you.

Let me not be put to shame,

So that my enemies may not rejoice over me.

III. Soprano Aria

Doch bin und bleibe ich vergnügt,

Obgleich hier zeitlich toben

Kreuz, Sturm und andre Proben,

Tod, Höll, und was sich fügt.

Ob Unfall schlägt den treuen Knecht,

Recht ist und bleibet ewig Recht.

But I am and remain content,

Although here for a time there rage

Cross, storm, and other trials,

Death, hell, and what is ordained.

Even if misfortune strikes your faithful servant,

Right is and always remains right.

IV. Chorus

Leite mich in deiner Wahrheit

Und lehre mich;

Denn du bist der Gott, der mir hilft,

Täglich harre ich dein.

Guide me in your truth

And teach me:

For you are the God who helps me,

Everyday I wait on you.

V. Alto, Tenor, Bass Trio

[C]Zedern müssen von den Winden

Oft viel Ungemach empfinden,

[Niemals]Oftmals werden sie verkehrt.

Rat und Tat auf Gott gestellet,

Achtet nicht, was widerbellet,

Denn sein Wort ganz anders lehrt.

Cedars must before the wind

Often feel much hardship,

Often they are overturned.

Word and deed entrust to God,

Pay no attention to what howls against you,

For his word teaches quite otherwise.

VI. Chorus

Meine Augen sehen stets zu dem Herrn;
Denn er wird meinen Fuß aus dem Netze ziehen.

*My eyes look constantly towards the Lord
For he will pluck my foot from the net.*

VII. Chorus

Meine Tage in den Leiden
Endet Gott dennoch zur Freuden;
Christen auf den Dornenwegen
[K]Führen Himmels Kraft und Segen.
Bleibet Gott mein treuer Schatz,
Achte ich nicht Menschenkreuz;
Christus, der uns steht zur Seiten.
Hilft mir täglich sieghaft streiten.

*My days spent in sorrow
God ends nevertheless with joy;
Christians on the thorny ways
Are led by heaven's strength and blessing.
If God remains my faithful protection,
I do not care for men's spite.
Christ, who stands at our side,
Helps me everyday to strive victoriously.*

Psalm 25: 1-2 (Mvt. 2); Psalm 25: 5 (Mvt. 4); Psalm 25: 15 (Mvt. 6); Anon (Mvts. 3, 5, 7)
English Translation by Francis Browne

BWV 36: Schwingt freudig euch empor

When the congregation at Leipzig's St. Thomas Church gathered on December 2, 1731, they might have been startled to hear familiar festive music resounding from the choir loft. Johann Sebastian Bach had reused material he had written years earlier for a teacher's birthday, transforming it into an Advent cantata that heralded the season's joyful anticipation of Christ's coming.

The key to this transformation lay in Bach's masterful substitution of the original recitatives with new chorale settings. Two beloved Advent hymns—"Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland" ("Now come, Savior of the Gentiles") and "Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern" ("How brightly shines the morning star")—frame and unify the work at the ends of Parts I and II. To Bach's Leipzig listeners, these familiar tunes immediately declared the cantata's new sacred purpose: a celebration of hope as Advent begins.

Although its origins were secular, *Schwingt freudig euch empor* ("Soar joyfully upwards") maintains its festive brilliance. The prominent oboes d'amore add a tender, expressive tone to the music, particularly in the opening chorus. Between the aria and choruses, the Advent chorale "Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland" blooms as a serene canon for soprano and alto, their lines delicately woven with oboes and continuo, creating a duet of stillness. The tenor aria "Die Liebe zieht mit sanften Schritten" unfolds with graceful tenderness, as love itself approaches with quiet devotion. At the start of Part II, the bass aria "Willkommen, werter Schatz!" brings warmth as the soul welcomes Jesus, supported by passionate strings. Later, a muted solo violin offers a delicate partner to the soprano's reflection that even "with subdued, weak voices, God's majesty is honored," before the cantata ends with an exultant four-part chorale.

Surviving in multiple versions, *Schwingt freudig euch empor* provides a rare glimpse into Bach's compositional process. From its first version as a birthday ode, through later celebrations for a princess and other patrons, to its sacred rebirth in Leipzig, the work shows Bach's remarkable ability to reshape and renew his music to suit each occasion. In its Advent form, the cantata weaves together joyful radiance and spiritual intimacy, lifting hearts "joyfully upward" toward the promise of Christmas.

On a personal note, this Bach Cantata was the first one I ever heard or knew. I still remember that day—a cold winter in an unfamiliar city when everything seemed to go wrong. I didn't know what the music was about, but I cried silently, feeling both exhausted and, somehow, hopeful. On my most hopeless day, I encountered the most joyful music. I was seventeen. Now, years later, I am deeply grateful to bring this cantata to life as my Bach cantata debut—to share the same light that once found me.

- Liyao Yu

PART ONE

I. Chorus

Schwingt freudig euch empor
Zu den erhabnen Sternen,
Ihr Zungen,
Die ihr itzt in Zion fröhlich seid!
Doch haltet ein!
Der Schall darf sich nicht weit entfernen,
Es naht sich selbst zu euch
Der Herr der Herrlichkeit.

*Soar joyfully aloft
To the sublime stars,
Ye voices, who now
Gladly dwell in Zion!
Yet, stop!
The sound shall not have to travel far,
The Lord of glory Himself
Approaches you.*

II. Soprano and Alto Duet

Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland,
Der Jungfrauen Kind erkannt,
Des sich wundert alle Welt,
Gott solch Geburt ihm bestellt.

*Come now, Saviour of the gentiles,
Recognised as the Virgin's child,
All the world stands amazed
That God ordained Him such a birth.*

III. Tenor Aria

Die Liebe zieht mit sanften Schritten
Sein Treugeliebtes allgemach.
Gleichwie es eine Braut entzückt,
Wenn sie den Bräutigam erblicket,
So folgt ein Herz auch Jesu nach.

*Love now draws on with gentle tread
Its true beloved more and more.
Just as the bride is enchanted
To behold the bridegroom,
Even so the heart seeks Jesus.*

IV. Chorale

Zwingt die Saiten in Cythara
Und laßt die süße Musica
Ganz freudenreich erschallen,
Daß ich möge mit Jesulein,
Dem wunderschönen Bräutigam mein,
In steter Liebe wallen!
Singet, Springet,
Jubilieret, triumphieret,
Dankt dem Herren!
Groß ist der König der Ehren.

*Play the strings in Cythera
And let sweet Musica
Sound out with naught but joy,
That I may with little Jesus,
This exquisite groom of mine,
Pilgrimage in constant love!
Sing, dance,
Rejoice, triumphant,
Thank the Lord!
Great is the King of honour.*

PART TWO

V. Bass Aria

Willkommen, werter Schatz!
Die Lieb und Glaube machet Platz
Vor dich in meinem Herzen rein,
Zieh bei mir ein!

*Welcome, precious treasure!
Love and faith prepare a place
For Thee in my pure heart,
Come dwell in me!*

VI. Tenor Chorale

Der du bist dem Vater gleich,
Führ hinaus den Sieg im Fleisch,
Daß dein ewig Gotts Gewalt
In uns das krank Fleisch enthalt.

*Thou who art like the Father,
Bring about victory over the flesh,
That Thy God's eternal power
May keep sick flesh away from us.*

VII. Soprano Aria

Auch mit gedämpften, schwachen Stimmen
Wird Gottes Majestät verehrt.
Denn schallet nur der Geist darbei,
So ist ihm solches ein Geschrei,
Das er im Himmel selber hört.

*Even with subdued, weak voices
God's majesty is honoured.
For though our soul alone may sound,
This to Him is a mighty shout
That He in heaven itself doth hear.*

VIII. Chorale

Lob sei Gott, dem Vater, g'ton,
Lob sei Gott, sein'm eingen Sohn,
Lob sei Gott, dem Heiligen Geist,
Immer und in Ewigkeit!

*Praise be to God, the Father,
Praise be to God, His only son,
Praise be to God, the Holy Spirit,
Forever and eternally!*

Possibly Christian Friedrich Henrici (Picander) (Mvts. 1, 3, 5, 7);
Martin Luther "Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland," v. 1, 6, 8 (Mvts. 2, 6, 8);
Philipp Nicolai "Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern," v. 6 (Mvt. 4)
English Translation by Francis Browne

We acknowledge with respect the Seneca Nation, known as the "Great Hill People" and "Keepers of the Western Door" of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We take this opportunity to thank the people whose ancestral lands the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester currently occupies in Rochester, New York.

UPCOMING EASTMAN CHORAL CONCERTS

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All student performances are free unless otherwise noted.

Eastman Chorale

Sunday, November 23, 2025 at 3:30 PM

Kilbourn Hall

music of Pärt, Rautavaara, Rutter, Hailstork, & Pizzetti | William Weinert, conductor

Eastman-Rochester Chorus, Eastman Chorale, and Eastman School Symphony Orchestra

Friday, December 5, 2025 at 7:30 PM

Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre

Anton Bruckner *Mass in F Minor* | William Weinert, conductor

ESM/UR Treble Chrous and Eastman Repertory Singers

Sunday, December 7, 2025 at 3:30 PM

Kilbourn Hall

Philip Silvey, Joshua Johnstone, and Audrey Rivetta, conductors

Messiah Sing!

Tuesday, December 9, 2025 at 7:30 PM

Kilbourn Hall

Handel *Messiah* | with soloists and conductors from the Eastman School of Music



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