

# J. S. BACH

Himmelfahrts-Oratorium

Ascension Oratorio

BWV 11

Klavierauszug  
nach dem Urtext der Neuen Bach-Ausgabe von  
Piano Reduction  
based on the Urtext of the New Bach Edition by

Joachim Eichhorn



Bärenreiter Kassel · Basel · London · New York · Praha  
BA 10 011-90

BESETZUNG / ENSEMBLE

Soli: Soprano, Alto, Tenore (Evangelista), Basso

Coro: Soprano, Alto, Tenore, Basso

Tromba I, II, III; Timpani; Flauto traverso I, II; Oboe I, II;  
Archi; Continuo, Organo

Zu vorliegendem Klavierauszug sind das Aufführungsmaterial (BA 10011)  
und eine Studienpartitur (TP 1011) erhältlich.

In addition to the present vocal score, the complete orchestral parts (BA 10011)  
and a study score (TP 1011) are also available.

Ergänzende Ausgabe zu: *Johann Sebastian Bach, Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke*, herausgegeben vom  
Johann-Sebastian-Bach-Institut Göttingen und vom Bach-Archiv Leipzig, Serie II, Band 8:  
*Himmelfahrts-Oratorium* (BA 5061), vorgelegt von Paul Brainard. Neuausgabe 1983.

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Englischer Kantatentext / English version of the cantata libretto:

© Z. Philip Ambrose, *J. S. Bach: The Extant Texts of the Vocal Works in English Translations with Commentary*,  
Volume 1: BWV 1–200; Volume 2: BWV 201–. (Philadelphia: XLibris, 2005)  
and <http://www.uvm.edu/~classics/faculty/bach>

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# PREFACE

Bach began to take an interest in the oratorio at a time when four of his annual cantata cycles were evidently complete and a fifth was possibly underway. Perhaps the composer, now in the middle of his Leipzig period, felt that the best way of combining gospel readings and contrapuntal church music lay in the biblical oratorio. Due to the shortage of sources, however, we do not know for certain whether he wrote only the three surviving oratorios (for Christmas, Easter and Ascension) or others that have disappeared over the years. True, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and Johann Friedrich Agricola, in their 1754 obituary, mention “many oratorios” among Bach’s unpublished works, but there is no way of knowing which works (apart from the aforementioned) they may have had in mind.

Bach’s *Ascension Oratorio* (BWV 11) was written, as we know from the surviving score and original parts, for performance on 19 May 1735. Composed in eleven numbers, it reveals striking similarities in its formal design with the cantatas of the *Christmas Oratorio*, which arose six months previously. This circumstance suggests that the two works may have had the same librettist – possibly Christian Friedrich Henrici.

Like most of Bach’s post-1730 vocal works, the *Ascension Oratorio* is largely drawn from his earlier compositions. The close juxtaposition of parody movements and newly composed numbers is clearly evident in the autograph score, the sections of which constantly alternate between fair copy and rough draft.

The work is apparently based on two pieces written for secular occasions. The opening chorus was probably taken from a festive cantata, *Froher Tag, verlangte Stunden* (BWV Anh. 18), composed for the inauguration of the rebuilt Thomasschule on 5 June 1732. It is uncertain, however, whether this piece or its recasting as a celebratory cantata for the name day of Augustus III in 1733 (BWV Anh. 12) served as the basis of the parody since all that survives of these two works is their librettos. It is conceivable that the school cantata lacked trumpets and timpani and that the

brass parts were only added later for the royal homage. The arias for alto (no. 4) and soprano (no. 10) evidently originated in *Auf! süß entzückende Gewalt* (BWV Anh. I 196), a wedding serenade for the marriage of Peter Hohmann and Christiana Sibylla Mencke on 27 November 1725.

Apart from the chorale *Nun lieget alles unter dir* (no. 6), all the remaining numbers may well have been newly composed, including not only the recitatives and accompaniments (nos. 2, 3, 5, 7, 8 and 9) but also the large-scale chorale finale for chorus, *Wenn soll es doch geschehen* (no. 11). In the autograph full score this number appears in a heavily corrected first draft, and it was even entered by Bach himself in most of the orchestral parts. In design and scoring it forms a direct counterpart to the final chorale of the *Christmas Oratorio* (BWV 248), a piece equally rich in its instrumentation and composed only a few months previously.

Our edition is based not only on Bach’s autograph score but also, for the first time, on the original set of parts, which resurfaced in 1979. Admittedly, as Bach only partially revised these parts, they add relatively little of source-critical value. Greater importance attaches to an organ part that Bach transposed and wrote out in his own hand along with the thoroughbass figures. This source is especially valuable for its presentation of the continuo part in the *secco* recitatives (nos. 2, 5, 7<sup>a</sup> and 7<sup>c</sup>). In the autograph score this part is written in conventional notation with long, sustained note values (♩ etc.), whereas in the organ part it appears in quarter notes separated by rests (♩ ♯ - | - etc.). Bach employed this same notation for the *secco* recitatives in the organ part of his *St. Matthew Passion* (BWV 244) and in several other post-1730 continuo parts in his chorale cantatas. The change of notational practice arose around 1730 and reveals that he had decided to notate his *secco* recitatives as actually performed.

Andreas Glöckner, 1998  
(translated by J. Bradford Robinson)