

**Bach *Magnificat in D & E flat* BWV 243 & 243a
(Novello edition ed. N. Jenkins)***INTRODUCTION***The first version - BWV 243a**

Bach's D major *Magnificat* has long been known as one of his finest short choral works and is frequently performed on festive occasions. His earlier version of the work, in the key of E flat major, is no mere transposition and deserves to be better known.

The history of this work begins with Bach's first year in Leipzig as Thomaskantor. As Robert L. Marshall explains in "*On the origin of the Magnificat*" † Bach had the luxury of almost six weeks (from November 15 to December 24) to prepare this major work (together with a setting of the *Sanctus* BWV 238 and a revision of Cantata BWV 63) for performance on Christmas Day, 1723. Consisting of twelve movements, and with four added interpolations - the *Laudes* or 'Lauds' not belonging to this portion of St. Luke's Gospel - the *Magnificat*, despite its concision, is double the length of his normal weekly cantatas; and with it the new Thomaskantor was obviously intending to impress his new employers and congregation. Moreover, it contains many more elaborate choruses than were required of the weekly cantatas, and absolutely no *secco* recitatives or four-part chorales, which would have been quick and easy to compose.

Its structure and tonal plan are satisfyingly symmetric and have long been admired by scholars. The choruses are followed by three groups of solo movements in related keys, the last of which is always for an increasing number of singers (thus no. 3 is a solo, no. 6 is a duet and no. 10 is a trio.) In order to break up an otherwise long sequence of arias he introduces the Chorus at movement no. 4 to sing two appropriate words detached from the previous aria : '*omnes generationes*' (*all generations*). C.S. Terry noted in 1929 †† that a similar device had been used in a *Magnificat* in G minor ascribed to Albinoni. But Bach is able to craft this into 27 bars of majestic counterpoint leading to a splendid climax on a chord of a dominant ninth at bar 24, which, in the earlier version, he leaves boldly unresolved. Movement no. 10 employs the *tonus peregrinus*, to which the *Magnificat* was traditionally chanted, as an instrumental counterpoint to the voices; in the first version this is given to a solo trumpet; and in the revision to unison oboes. Movement no. 11, *Sicut locutus est*, with its mention of '*our forefathers, Abraham and his seed*' inspired Bach to look back at the music of his predecessors in Leipzig, such as the composer whom he had so recently succeeded - Johann Kuhnau (1660-1722) - and is written in an old-fashioned *a capella* fugal style which would have been familiar to earlier congregations. The lesser doxology '*Gloria Patri et Filio*' brings the work back to its home key; and at the words '*sicut erat in principio*' (*as it was in the beginning*) Bach enjoys one of his musical jokes by

reintroducing the music of the work's opening bars. Although this musical device was not unknown to baroque composers, the appositeness of the text at this point would have appealed to Bach. The composition is full of such delightful word-painting: '*dispersit*' is vigorously '*scattered*'; '*exaltavit*' and '*deposuit*' graphically depict '*rising*' and '*falling*'; and, in the closing bars of Movement no. 6 the words '*timentibus eum*' (*them that fear him*) are sung to a plangent repeated note (particularly at bar 31) which suggests intensely controlled nervousness.

The 4 Christmas Lauds

A Leipzig Christmas custom, that the civic authorities unsuccessfully attempted to curb in 1702 according to Martin Geck*, was the introduction of 4 *Laudes* (hymns in Latin and German) into the Latin text of the *Magnificat*. These had been a feature of Kuhnau's settings, as evidenced by a set of parts still extant in Leipzig.** Bach sets the same four texts, in the same order as Kuhnau:

- A a setting of Martin Luther's chorale "*Vom Himmel hoch*"
- B an anonymous text derived from St. Luke 2: 10 "*Freut euch und jubiliert*"
- C a text derived from the greater doxology "*Gloria in excelsis Deo*"
- D a verse of a Christmas Hymn dating from the late 16th century "*Virga Jesse*"

However, the fact that they are grouped together at the back of the manuscript, with indications in the score as to where they should be placed, seems to indicate that they were not originally planned as part of the work, but added as an afterthought. Whether this was as a result of Bach bowing to the precedent established by Kuhnau and his predecessors, or abandoning an early plan to use material already written by Kuhnau - or whether it was in deliberate homage to it - we shall not know for certain. But Robert L. Marshall (op. cit.) describes how, far from being composed in the same style as the rest of the *Magnificat*, these interpolations seem to survey a range of previous historical styles of vocal music. "*Vom Himmel hoch*" is an *a capella* chorale cantus-firmus motet in the strict *stile antico*. "*Freut euch und jubiliert*" is polyphonic, with an independent basso continuo, and pairs of voices moving in parallel motion that harks back to early baroque practice - in such works as Monteverdi's motets and an earlier setting of the same text (1603) by Sethus Calvisius - himself a Thomaskantor in Leipzig in the early 17th century. "*Gloria in excelsis Deo*" is less polyphonic, has an obbligato violin part, and proceeds in a basically chordal fashion that is reminiscent of Carissimi's later Italian style, as cultivated in Germany by the Thomaskantors Johann Schelle, Kuhnau, and others. Finally, "*Virga Jesse*" is the most contemporary in style, being written as a florid operatic duet for soprano and bass soloists with continuo. This last movement introduces the only problem in providing a new performing edition of BWV 243a, since the last page of the m/s is missing, leaving "*Virga Jesse*" incomplete at bar 30.

For a description of the editorial completion of this movement see: **Completion of Laud 'D'**.

This version of the *Magnificat* was published by N. Simrock (Bonn) in 1811 as *Magnificat a cinque voci*, but omitted from the Bachgesellschaft edition (Leipzig, 1851-99). It appeared in the Neue Ausgabe (NBA) in 1955.

The second version - BWV 243

The far more familiar D major version was published in the Bachgesellschaft edition [11. Band Teil 1] in 1862, with the 4 *Laudes* from BWV 243a (D incomplete) added as an appendix/anhang. Bach's revision was prepared sometime between 1732 and 1735 and, as explained in the Oxford Composer's Companion# and by Marshall†, was intended for performance on 2nd July 1733 when the Feast of the Visitation of Mary coincided with the end of national mourning for the death of the Saxon Elector, Friedrich August I. The first and most obvious differences between the two versions are: the downward transposition into D major, which was a better key for the trumpets and drums and frequently used for such festal music (cf. movements in the *Christmas Oratorio* and *B Minor Mass*), and the introduction of a pair of Flutes. However, there are many places where the musical lines have been significantly, and sometimes imperceptibly, changed. For a very obvious example compare: movement 8 bar 14 where the violins' upward flourish makes such a dramatic improvement to the line. For a passage where Bach's changes may not be such an improvement compare: movement 4 bar 24, where the arresting dissonance of the dominant ninth has the sting taken out of it in the later version. Movement 10 is given an extra bar (bar 35) in the later version and its obbligato changed from Trumpet to Oboes. More importantly, by removing the 4 Christmas *Lauds*, Bach made the work usable on those high feasts, (some 15 in the Lutheran Church), when an elaborate setting of the Latin *Magnificat* could be performed. This revision may explain the fact that Bach's obituary (the *Neokrolog*) written by J. F. Agricola (a former pupil and amanuensis) and C.P.E. Bach (his second son) specifically mentions his list of compositions as including "many *Oratorios, Masses and Magnificats*." The work was revived by C.P.E. Bach for a performance in Hamburg when he took over as director of music at the five principal churches there from Telemann in 1786.

The Novello Octavo edition, which this edition supersedes, was published in 1874 with an English translation, loosely based on the text found in The Book of Common Prayer, by the Reverend John Troutbeck [1832-99]. With its designation that the top vocal line should be sung by "Trebles" this edition betrays its origin as being principally intended for ecclesiastical use. With its thundering octaves in the piano accompaniment and mannered (and undesignated) realisation of the continuo bass it has also long been showing its age. The present edition, therefore is intended to provide a more scholarly version, with a new rehearsal piano accompaniment, yet retaining the page numbering and layout of its predecessor NOV07033.

It is also the first edition to provide both versions of the work within one set of covers.

EDITORIAL PROCEDURE

TEXT

The Latin text is the standard version of the Vulgate bible. Bach makes one alteration in not setting the word 'eius' in the line ' *Et misericordia eius a progenie in progenies timentibus eum*' (movement no. 6) rendering its meaning as 'And [his] mercy is on them that fear him'. The fact that his son C.P.E. Bach sets the complete line in his D major *Magnificat* of 1749, as does Schütz in his *Magnificat* SWV 468 of c.1665, seems to

indicate that this was an oversight on the composer's part, rather than a customary change made in Lutheran worship.

The only **English translations** which are provided are new, singing versions of the 4 *Christmas Lauds*. These are the work of the Editor. The original text is placed on top, as this will be the preference of most choirs. But the Editor feels that the use of English texts for these movements will :

a) make their meaning clear to an audience that may well otherwise have a good understanding of the *Magnificat* text.

b) underline the fact that they are not an integral part of the Gospel verse, and were not part of Bach's original scheme.

MUSIC

The musical text of this *performing* edition is derived from the *Neuen Bach-Ausgabe* (1955 & 1959). The Bachgesellschaft edition of BWV 243 [11. Band, Teil 1] was also consulted.

Cantata 110 in the NBA was used to assist the completion of *Laud D* .

COMPLETION OF LAUD 'D'

For the completion of the missing portion of "*Virga Jesse*" the editor is indebted to Alfred Dürr's preface to his edition of BWV 243a in the *Bärenreiter Studienpartituren*+. This revealed that the continuo part to the Duet '*Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe*' (movement 5 of Cantata 110 for Soprano and tenor soloists) was very nearly identical to the continuo part of this Laud, - albeit in A major rather than F major. Consequently, a transposition downward of a major third revealed how this could be used from bar 36 onwards to provide a suitable, and completely Bachian, ending. Since the last 4 bars are identical to the opening 4 bars, that leaves a mere 11 bars where the editor has had to exercise discretion as to the vocal lines. His first decision was to retain all that was practical of the downward transposition of the voice parts. Since the last 7 quaver beats of BWV 243a are not identical to the similar passage in Cantata 110 (except for the continuo bass) and yet are obviously the beginning of a repeated motif (as in Cantata 110 bars 36b-37a, 37b-38a, 38b-39a) a similar repeated passage has been based on this material for bars 30, 31, 32 of this completion. These new vocal parts are swapped over (as in Cantata 110) for bars 36, 37, 38. Bars 39b - 41 are exactly as Bach wrote them in the Cantata, except that the *Alleluia* text has been fitted syllabically in place of the original text ('*und den Menschen ein Wohlgefallen*'.) That just leaves bars 38-39a where the editor has had to adapt the downwardly transposed material of Cantata 110. In fact, only the first two quaver beats of bar 38, where the repeated motif joins the existing material, are not absolutely by Bach. As a singer himself, the editor has been concerned to make these lines truly "vocal". Although a close comparison of the editor's completion with Alfred Dürr's version for the *Bärenreiter* edition+ will reveal broad similarities between them both, the editor is confident that these vocal lines, and their textual underlay, will be better to sing.

THE REHEARSAL PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT

This edition is provided with a new rehearsal accompaniment by the Editor, in which the material based on instrumental parts is in normal-size type and editorial realisation is in cue-size. It endeavours to embrace all of the orchestration, although it has not been possible to preserve every part at the correct pitch: but in this it is consistent with every other edition currently available.

THE ORCHESTRAL SCORE AND PARTS

The score and parts, available on hire, have been completely newly set and correspond exactly with this vocal score. All the movement numbers and bar-numbers agree with each other. Thus there will be no problem in rehearsal for every performer to identify a given passage. The orchestral parts may be used for both 'period' instrument and 'modern' instrument performances. A newly-arranged Continuo Keyboard part is suitable for chamber organ or harpsichord.

Trumpets and Timpani BWV 243 requires 3 *D* trumpets; BWV 243a - 3 *E flat* trumpets.

3 virtuoso players are required, with Trumpet 1 needing to reach high D (E flat in *BWV 243A*). The timpani are tuned to D & A (E flat & B flat in *BWV 243a*).

Flutes There are two parts for Flutes in *BWV 243*. The only movement for flutes in *BWV 243a* is Aria no. 9, which is designated for two Recorders (*Flauto dolce*). However there is no reason why this may not also be played on the *Flauto traverso*.

Oboes In *BWV 243* Bach's requirements are for 2 players doubling *oboes* and *oboe d'amore*. Transpositions of the *d'amore* music (nos. 3 & 4) are given in an appendix, thus allowing the whole piece to be played on 2 oboes if so desired. *BWV 243a* requires 2 oboes only.

The oboe parts to *BWV 243a* also contain movement no.10 in case it is felt that an oboe obbligato would be more appropriate here (as in *BWV 243*.)

Strings The string parts contain all the bowing and articulation found in the m/s. Articulation found in the m/s of *BWV 243* has been carried over into *BWV 243a*, which has none, and is shown there in square brackets or by cut-slurs. Editorial additions are also shown by square brackets and cut-slurs. Care has been taken over the positioning of page-turns.

The differences between the two versions of the work for strings are:

no. 6	BWV 243a	strings	BWV 243	<u>muted</u> strings + 2 Flutes
no. 8	BWV 243a	violins I, II & <u>viola</u>	BWV 243	violins I & II
no. 9	BWV 243a	<u>not</u> designated <i>pizz.</i>	BWV 243	continuo 'cello <i>pizzicato</i>
no.10*	BWV 243a	violins I, II & viola	BWV 243	'cello, senza violone

*This movement contains one note which is too low for the violin, so there is a music cue in the 'cello part to allow that instrument to take over if required.

N.B. In *BWV 243a* the 'cello continuo is required for *Laudes B, C, & D*; and violin I plays in *C*.

Keyboard Continuo This is the part from which the continuo should be played. The vocal score is no adequate substitute since it is a piano reduction for rehearsal purposes. The *Keyboard Continuo* part contains the few figured bass markings found in the m/s, and a new realisation which will be of enormous assistance to those not used to improvising from an unfigured bass line.

EDITORIAL MARKINGS

All editorial markings are shown in brackets, with the exception of editorial slurs which have a line through them (cut-slurs).

Dynamics Bach used dynamics sparingly in BWV 243 and not at all in BWV 243a. They are found in several *Arias* where they indicate the difference between an orchestral ritornello and an accompanying passage - viz. *Aria* no.2 bars 17, 21, 51, *Duet* no. 6 bar 32 etc. These have been incorporated in *BWV 243a* as editorial dynamics. A limited number of editorial dynamics [in square brackets] have also been added where they will be of assistance.

Appoggiaturas Editorial appoggiaturas have been added [within brackets] where they are missing from a repeat, as in *Aria* no. 8 at bar 65.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Hywel Davies for his help in seeing this through to publication.

Neil Jenkins
Hove, February 2000

Notes

† Robert L. Marshall *On the origin of the Magnificat* (Chapter 9 of *The Music of Johann Sebastian Bach*) Schirmer Books N.Y. (1989)

†† Charles Sanford Terry *Bach: The Magnificat, Lutheran Masses and Motets*. London (1929)

* Martin Geck *J.S. Bach's Weihnachts-Magnificat und sein Traditionszusammenhang*, Musik und Kirche 31 (1961)

** Musikbibliothek der Stadt Leipzig, Sammlung Becker III.2.124.

Simon Heighes *Magnificat* in *J.S. Bach: Oxford Composer Companions* ed. Malcolm Boyd, O.U.P. (1999)

+ Alfred Dürr *Vorwort/Preface* pp. iv, vi, Bärenreiter Studienpartitur 58, Kassel (1959)