

WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 17 December 2022
7.30pm

Kuhnau Christmas Cantatas

Solomon's Knot

Zoë Brookshaw soprano
Clare Lloyd-Griffiths soprano
James Hall countertenor
Kate Symonds-Joy alto
James Way tenor
Thomas Herford tenor
Alex Ashworth bass
Jonathan Sells artistic director,
bass

George Clifford violin
Gabriella Jones violin
Maxim Del Mar violin
Joanne Miller viola
Nichola Blakey viola
Jonathan Rees cello
Jan Zahourek double bass
Eva Caballero flute
Marta Gonçalves flute

Inga Maria Klaucke bassoon
Anneke Scott horn
Martin Lawrence horn
Neil Brough trumpet
William Russell trumpet
Katie Hodges trumpet
Rosemary Toll timpani
Josep Maria Martí Duran theorbo
Oliver-John Ruthven organ

Johann Kuhnau (1660-1722) Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied *London première*

O heilige Zeit

Das Alte ist vergangen *London première*

Interval

Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern

Frohlocket, ihr Völker, und jauchzet, ihr Heiden *London première*

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Kuhnau at Christmas

Johann Kuhnau is usually remembered as the predecessor of Johann Sebastian Bach in Leipzig, where he was cantor at the Thomasschule from 1701 to 1722. In his day, Kuhnau was celebrated as a polymath. He was a practising lawyer and wrote a dissertation on the laws affecting church musicians. An accomplished linguist, he was fluent in French, Italian, Latin, Greek and Hebrew. In the 1690s he wrote two operas and at least three comic novels, including a satire on an incompetent musician.

Above all, Kuhnau was recognised for his achievements as a choral director, organist and composer. Although many of his works are now lost, he composed prolifically. As his obituary explained: 'The church pieces he composed ... may be difficult to count, considering that he never or very rarely used works by other composers in his many performances; on the contrary, he was often called upon to help out others with compositions of his own.'

The years around 1700 saw many changes within Lutheran church music. In previous decades, church composers set texts from the Bible and hymns, often using experimental structures that closely followed the words. From 1700 it became fashionable to use newly written libretti as pioneered by the clergyman Erdmann Neumeister. These libretti were modelled on opera, using the structure of recitatives and arias, and often with flowery Baroque metaphors. As Erdmann Neumeister argued: 'Even though this kind of poetry is modelled on theatrical verse, is it not sanctified by being dedicated to the glory of God?'

Kuhnau had a fraught relationship with these new styles of church music. Around 1710 he faced competition from ensembles run by Leipzig students performing at the opera and at the Neukirche. Aggrieved by their ventures, he vowed not to write church music in operatic styles: 'The Holy Place and Holy Text demand all the Art, Splendour, Modesty and Honour the composer can give them.' At other times, however, he enthusiastically employed operatic styles, as shown by the Christmas cantatas in today's programme.

The older style of church music is represented by *Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied*. The text is from Psalm 98, whose joyful exuberance is captured by the festal scoring and dance-like opening. Kuhnau responded to each line of the text with different musical ideas or scorings, ranging from tutti chattering on 'Denn er tut Wunder' ('He hath done marvellous things') to the rapt soprano line on 'Der Herr lässt sein Heil verkündigen' ('The Lord hath made known his salvation'). The virtuoso bass solo 'Mit Drommeten und Posaunen' ('With trumpets and sound of cornet') is aptly accompanied by the brass, with rushing semiquavers representing the roaring sea on 'Das Meer brause'. The final Halleluja is a feat of counterpoint, combining one theme in slow upward steps with two themes in quicker notes.

In *O heilige Zeit*, written in the mid-1700s, Kuhnau aligned himself with the latest fashions for church cantatas. Instead of Biblical words, he used a libretto newly published by Neumeister. The libretto implies that the movements should be set as recitatives or arias for a solo

singer, and Kuhnau follows aspects of this plan. He sets 'Wüte nur' as an operatic rage aria to show how the 'alte Schlange' ('old serpent') has been disarmed; and the limpid recitative 'Ach, denk ich zwar' expresses tenderness towards the baby Jesus. Yet Kuhnau also develops the music far beyond the implications of the libretto. The first movement, envisaged as recitative by Neumeister, is an exuberant chorus over a running bass. He uses the opening theme 'O heilige Zeit' as a motto against the other voices, and restates it at the end of subsequent movements. All this gives a level of musical complexity and coherence exceeding what Neumeister envisaged.

Kuhnau combined old and new styles in *Das Alte ist vergangen*, for the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ on New Year's Day. The cantata comprises Biblical extracts set for chorus, alternating with newly written poetry set as solo arias. The choruses use the earlier style where each Biblical line is illustrated by a different theme, such as detached chords on 'Das Alte' or a wandering contrapuntal subject for 'ist vergangen' ('is gone'). The arias contemplate Christ's circumcision and baptism as symbols of the annual shift from old to new life, using blood and water as metaphors for religious covenants. In the final chorus, festal cries of 'Freuet euch' featuring trumpets and drums are followed by a prayer for the New Year.

Other church cantatas used chorale tunes, the hymns familiar to all Lutherans, as a way to communicate with the congregation. *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern* is an elaboration of Philipp Nicolai's 1599 chorale, where the morning star symbolizes Christ's coming. In the outer choruses, the chorale is stated by the sopranos, with contrapuntal elaborations in the lower voices and instruments. The intervening movements include recitatives and arias for the tenor. 'O Wundersohn' uses woodwind descending lines for the moment of incarnation where earth and heaven become one. The aria 'Kommt ihr Völker' summons crowds to Jesus with effects taken from Italianate opera, including upward rushing scales in the strings.

In *Frohlocket, ihr Völker, und jauchzet, ihr Heiden*, possibly written in the last years of his life, Kuhnau used the most modern styles. The piece sets a libretto by an unknown author, with no quotations from the Bible or from hymns. Kuhnau created expansive movements using the techniques of Italian operatic composers such as Vivaldi. The scale of the initial chorus is signalled by the instrumental opening, featuring trumpets and a solo violin whose line unfolds over a long harmonic arc. In the tenor aria 'Kleines Kind', the earth's delight at Christ's birth is conveyed by a sparkling duet between solo violin and obbligato organ. The alto aria 'Willkommen, mein Leben' is built on a repeating *ciaccona* bass which, along with the optimistic upward steps of the melodic lines, may suggest the unending welcome given by the believer to Christ. The sheer inventiveness is typical of Kuhnau's work and amply justifies the revival of his cantatas.

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Johann Kuhnau (1660-1722)

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied

Liturgical text

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied!	Sing unto the Lord a new song!
Denn er tut Wunder.	For he hath done marvellous things.
Er sieget mit seiner Rechten und mit seinem heiligen Arm.	His right hand and his holy arm hath gotten the victory.
Der Herr lasset sein Heil verkündigen, Für den Völkern lasset er seine Gerechtigkeit offenbaren, Er gedenket an seine Gnade und Wahrheit dem Hause Israel.	The Lord hath made known his salvation, his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen, He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel.
Aller Welt Ende sehen das Heil unsers Gottes.	All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.
Jauchzet dem Herrn alle Welt.	Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth.
Singet, rühmet und lobet, lobet den Herrn mit Harfen und mit Psalmen.	Make a loud noise and rejoice and sing praise.
Mit Drommeten und Posaunen jauchzet für dem Herrn, dem Könige.	Sing unto the Lord with the harp and the voice of a psalm. With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the Lord, the King.
Das Meer brause, und was drinnen ist, der Erdboden und die drauf wohnen.	Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein.
Die Wasserströme frohlocken und alle Berge sein fröhlich für dem Herrn.	Let the floods clap their hands let the hills be joyful together before the Lord, for he cometh to judge the earth.
Denn er kömmt, das Erdreich zu richten, er wird den Erdboden richten mit Gerechtigkeit und die Völker mit Rechte.	With righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.
Halleluja.	Hallelujah.

O heilige Zeit

Liturgical text

Choro

O heilige Zeit! Wo Himmel,
Erd und Luft
Mit Jauchzen, um den andern ruft.
Wo Gott und Mensch und Engel sich erfreut
Und nur die Teufel trauern müssen.
Denn heute hat der Held
Sich bei uns Menschen eingestellt.
Der ihre Pforte umgerissen,
Die Macht der Finsternis
Erschreckt uns weiter nicht.
Das helle Gnadenlicht
Erleuchtet uns zur Seligkeit.
O heilige Zeit!

Aria

Wüte nur, du alte Schlange,
Gift und alle Raserei
Macht mir weder Angst noch bange,
Ist dir doch dein Kopf entzwei.
Gottes Sohn, des Weibes Samen,
Leget mir die Rüstung an,
Dass ich unter seinem Namen
Höll und Teufel trotzen kann.

Arioso

Ach, denk ich zwar, mein liebster Jesu,
Hier zurücke, in was für Armut
Die Mutter dich gebar.
Wie Stroh und Heu dein Samt und Seide war.
Und wenn ich auf die Krippe blicke,
Worin man dich, der alles hält und trägt,
Aus Mangel bessern Raums gelegt,
So mag mein Auge wohl
Mit Wehmutstränen fließen.
Doch aber wünsch ich dich
In meine Brust zu schliessen.
Der Glaube soll das Bette sein.
Komm, liebster, komm, lege dich hinein.

O holy time

Chorus

O holy time! When heaven, earth and air
call to one another in exultation.
When God and man and angel rejoice
and only the devil must mourn.
For today the hero has come among us men.
He has torn down hell's gates
and the power of darkness affrights us no more.
The bright light of mercy
inspires us to holiness.
O holy time!

Aria

Rage away, old serpent,
all your venom and rage
cause me neither fear nor anxiety
for your head is crushed.
God's son, of woman's seed,
gives me armour
that in his name
I may defy hell and the devil.

Arioso

Alas, dearest Jesus, I think here below
in what poverty your mother bore you.
How straw and hay were your satin and silk.
And when I look on the crib
in which you, who bear and sustain all,
were laid for lack of better place,
my eye overflows with tears of sorrow.
But I want to fold you to my breast.
Faith shall be the bed.
Come, dearest, come and lie herein.

Aria
 Eigne dir mein Herze
 zu,
 Nichts sol dich daraus
 vertreiben
 Und ich will darüber schreiben:
 Hier ist meines Jesu Ruh.
 Zwar du wirst es unrein
 finden,
 Doch du deckest alle Sünden
 Mit der teuren Liebe zu.
 Da du dich mit Heil und
 Leben
 Mir zu eigen hast gegeben.

Aria
 Dedicate my heart to
 yourself,
 nothing shall drive you
 from it
 and over it I will write:
 here my Jesus finds rest.
 True, you will find it
 impure,
 but you cover up all sins
 with your dear love.
 For you, with health and
 life,
 have given yourself to me.

Duo - Choro
 Was ist der Mensch als Staub
 und Erde.
 Noch bist du als ein
 Menschenkind
 Zu mir auf Erden kommen
 Und wurdest mir in allem
 gleich
 Das Sündengift nur
 ausgenommen.
 Dass ich als Gotteskind
 Dir gleich und ähnlich
 werde.
 Drum wart ich auf dein Reich,
 Wo du vor allen
 Engelschaaren
 Das Erbe meine Herrlichkeit
 Wirst seelig offenbaren.
 O heilige Zeit!

Duet - Chorus
 What is man but dust and
 earth.
 Still you as a child of
 man
 came to me on earth
 and became my equal in
 all,
 save only for the poison
 of sin.
 So that I as a child of God
 may become equal and
 like to you.
 So now I await your
 kingdom
 when you before the
 angelic hordes
 will blissfully show forth
 the glory I inherit.
 O holy time!

O heilige Zeit!
 O holy time!

Arioso
 Haltet mich nicht länger auf,
 Welt und alle Wollustblicke.
 Bleibt zurücke,
 Denn mein Lauf eilet nach
 des Himmels Höhen.
 Haltet mich nicht länger auf,
 Lasst mich gehen,
 Denn ich will zu Jesu nauf.

O holy time!
 O holy time!

Arioso
 Delay me no longer,
 world and sights of lust.
 Stay back,
 for my course hastens
 towards heaven's heights.
 Delay me no longer,
 let me go,
 for I will rise up to Jesus.

Arioso - Choro
 Ich bin entzückt, dass ichs im
 Glauben nur erblickt.
 Was wird mir erst geschehen
 Wenn ich im Schauen werde
 sehen
 Die Krone meiner Seeligkeit?
 O heilige Zeit!

Arioso - Chorus
 I delight that I saw it only
 through faith.
 What will become of me
 if I see with my
 eyes
 the crown of my bliss?
 O holy time!

Das Alte ist vergangen The old is gone

Sonata
 SATB
 Das Alte ist vergangen, es ist
 alles neu worden.

Sonata
 SATB
 The old is gone, everything
 has become new.

Alto
 Weil Christus des Gesetzes
 Ende,
 Hat Er den alten Bund
 erfüllt
 Und der Leviten
 Opferhände
 Mit seiner Vorhaut Blut gestillt.
 Als nun Johannes
 aufgekomen
 Und himmlisch Wasser
 mitgebracht,
 Hat Er die Tauf auch
 angenommen
 Und so den neuen Bund
 gemacht.

Alto
 Since Christ is the end of
 the Law,
 he has fulfilled the Old
 Covenant
 and satisfied the Levite's
 sacrificing hands
 with his foreskin's blood.
 When John made his
 appearance
 and brought heavenly
 water with him,
 he also received
 baptism
 and with it formed the
 New Covenant.

SATB
 Wieviel euer getauft sind, die
 haben Christum angezo
 gen.

SATB
 As many of you who are
 baptized have been
 clothed in Christ.

Soprano
 In Christi Rock heiss ich ein
 Christe,
 So nur in Wasser
 angetan,
 Wenn dies der Juden Talmud
 wüsste,
 Er legte nicht das Messer an,
 Um zu beschneiden, was
 doch bleibt,
 Ich meine Adams altes Kleid,
 Das Aberglaube nicht
 vertreibt,
 Denn dieser stammt von
 Teufels Neid.

Soprano
 In Christ's clothing I am
 called a Christian
 when I am dipped in the
 water;
 if the Talmud of the Jews
 knew it,
 it would not apply the knife
 to circumcise what
 remains;
 I mean Adam's old clothing,
 which does not drive out
 superstition,
 for this originates in
 devilish envy.

SATB
 Des Herzens Lust stehet zu
 deinem Namen und zu
 deinem Gedächtnis.

SATB
 The heart's desire stands
 by your name and by
 your memory.

Bass
 So oft, o Jesu, man von
 deinem Namen redet,
 Wird mir vor Freuden das
 matte Herz bestrickt,
 Das auszuschütten sich
 vor deinem Thron
 entblödet,
 Und gleichwohl inniglich
 aus Liebes Brunst
 entzückt.

Bass
 As often, O Jesus, as your
 name is mentioned,
 my weary heart is
 enchanted for joy;
 it is not ashamed to pour
 out its feelings before
 your throne,
 and yet it is delighted
 inwardly out of love's
 fervor.

Bald kein Gedanke geht in Einsamkeit vorüber, Da deines Namens Kraft mich nicht zum Himmel führt, Doch wär, dies gar zu sehn, Viel tausendmal mir lieber, Weil das Gesicht uns doch mehr als Gedanken rührt.	Hardly any thought passes by in solitary wise in which the power of your name does not lead me to heaven; but if it were to be seen, this I would prefer a thousand times, because sight does indeed move us more than thought.
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<i>SATB</i> Freuet euch, Dass eure Namen im Himmel angeschrieben sind.	<i>SATB</i> Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.
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<i>SATB</i> Gottes Denken eures Namens wünsch ich euch zum Neuen Jahr. Der, so euch bereits gekennet, als noch nichts von Erde war, Hat im Himmel angeschrieben euer wohl und übel Tun. Wollet ihr nun dahin kommen, lasst die Welt in Argen ruhn.	<i>SATB</i> Divine remembrance of your names I wish you for the New Year. He who knew you before the earth came into being has written your good and bad deeds in heaven. If you wish now to reach that place, let the world rest in its evil ways
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Interval

Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern

<i>SSATB</i> Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern, Voll Gnad und Wahrheit von dem Herrn, Die süsse Wurzel Jesse, Du Sohn David aus Jacobs Stamm, Mein König und mein Bräutigam, Hast mir mein Herz besessen. Lieblich, freundlich Schön und herrlich, Gross und ehrlich, Reich von Gaben, Hoch und sehr prächtig erhaben.	<i>SSATB</i> How beautifully the morning star does shine, full of grace and truth from the Lord, the sweet root of Jesse; you, Son of David from the house of Jacob, my king and my bridegroom, you have taken possession of my heart. Delightful, friendly, beautiful and glorious, great and honorable, rich in gifts, highly and very magnificently noble.
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<i>Tenor</i> Allein, heut wird der Grosse klein, Der Sohn, aus Gott geboren, Wird heut ein Menschen-Sohn, Als hätt der Himmels-Herr sein Himmelreich verloren, Er wird ein rechtes Opferlamm, Weil Er als Davids höchster Stamm In Davids eigner Stadt Nur einen Stall zur Herberg hat.	<i>Tenor</i> But today the great becomes small, the Son, born of God today becomes a son of man, as if the Lord of heaven had lost his heavenly kingdom. He becomes a proper sacrificial lamb because he as David's highest scion in David's own city has a mere stable as his abode.
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<i>SSATB</i> Uns ist ein Kind geboren, ein Sohn ist uns gegeben, Welches Herrschaft ist auf seiner Schulter, Und er heisset wunderbar Rat, Kraft, Held, ewig Vater, Friedefürst.	<i>SSATB</i> A child is born to us, a son is given to us, whose rule is on his shoulder, and he is called wondrous counsel, power, hero, eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
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<i>Tenor</i> O Wundersohn, Dein überirdisch Wesen Hat sich zum Thron Den ird'schen Leib erlesen, Damit der Mensch, die Erde Zu deinem Himmel werde.	<i>Tenor</i> O wondrous Son, your supernatural being has chosen for its throne the earthly body, so that man, the earth, becomes your heaven.
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<i>Tenor</i> Doch leuchtet in der Niedrigkeit Ein Strahl von seiner Göttlichkeit, Ein Kaiser schreibt die Schatzung aus, So zieht zugleich der Prinz der Prinzen In eines ird'schen Leibes Haus, Die Engel sagen Ihn der Welt in Lüften an, Weil es kein Mensch verrichten kann. Denn alle Himmel sind sein eigen, Wie sollt sich nicht vor Ihm die ganze Erde neigen.	<i>Tenor</i> But in your low estate a beam of your divine nature shines, an emperor orders the census, and at the same time the Prince of Princes moves into an earthly body's house; the angels announce his coming in the sky because no man can do so. Since all the heavens are his own, how should the whole earth not bow down before him?
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<i>Tenor</i> Kommt, ihr Völker, kommt mit Haufen, Kommt und huldigt diesem Kind. Himmel, Erde, zu den Heiden	<i>Tenor</i> Come, you peoples, come in great numbers, come and honor this child. Heaven, earth, the nations his scepter shall always guide because they belong to him.
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<i>Tenor</i> Ich huld'ge dir, grossmächt'ger Prinz, Weil deine Gottes-Kraft die Macht der Sünden, Durch die uns Satan tracht, Mit sich als Sklaven zu verbinden, Ganz aus dem Wege schafft, Ich ehre die verborg'ne Macht, Und meine untertän'ge Lippen Lobsingen dir auch in der schlechten Krippen.	<i>Tenor</i> I honor you, prince of great might, because your divine power entirely eliminates the power of sin through which Satan schemes to bind us to him as slaves; I honor the hidden power and my humble lips sing praise to you even in the lowly crib.
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<i>SSATB</i> Zwingt die Saiten in Cythara, Und lasst die süsse Musica Ganz freudenreich erschallen, Dass ich möge mit Jesulein, Dem wunderschönen Bräut'gam mein, In steter Liebe wallen. Singet, springet, Jubilieret, Triumphieret, Dankt dem Herren, Gross ist der König der Ehren.	<i>SSATB</i> Pluck the strings of the harp and let the sweet music resound with great joy, that I may be with little Jesus, my wonderfully beautiful bridegroom, in constant love. Sing, jump. jubilate, triumph, give thanks to God, great is the King of Glory.
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Frohlocket, ihr Völker, und jauchzet, ihr Heiden	Rejoice, all ye nations, exult all ye gentiles
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<i>Coro</i> Frohlocket, ihr Völker, und jauchzet, ihr Heiden. Der Meister der Freuden, Der göttliche Held Besuchet die Welt, Er will sie erlösen vom ewigen Leiden.	<i>Chorus</i> Rejoice, all ye nations, exult all ye gentiles! The master of joys, the divine hero, has visited the world to redeem it from eternal suffering.
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<i>Tenor</i> Halleluja, Der Heiden Trost ist nunmehr da, Der Stern aus Jacob ist erschienen, Wir sehen in der Nacht Die Rute Aaronis grünen. Des Weibes Samen lacht Aus deren Schoss, Die Mutter und auch Jungfrau ist. Dies kleine Kind macht alle Bande los, Womit uns Satanas gebunden Und unser Kindes-Recht Hat sich mit dem geweihten Knecht Nun wieder eingefunden.	<i>Tenor</i> Hallelujah! The comfort of the gentiles has arrived, the star of Jacob has appeared! We see Aaron's rod flowering in the night. The seed of woman laughs from the lap of the virgin mother. This little child unravels the bonds with which Satan has bound us. Through the consecrated servant our childly rights have been restored.
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<i>Tenor</i> Kleines Kind und grosser Held, Du erfreuest alle Welt. Denn du bist darum geboren, Dass sie nicht soll sein verloren.	<i>Tenor</i> Little child, great hero, you are the delight of the whole world. For you were born that it shall not be lost.
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<i>Alto</i> Wie danken wir dir doch Vor diese unverdiente Gnade, Denn unser Seelen Schade Wird durch dich, unsern Hort, geheilt, Weil deine Hülfe zu uns eilt, Und des Gesetzes Joch, das du zerbrichst, Darf uns nicht drücken. Die Freuden-Post, du seist geboren, Erschallt in unsern Ohren, Soll uns das Herz in seinem Schmerz erquicken.	<i>Alto</i> We thank you for this undeserved mercy, for our damaged souls shall be healed through you, our refuge. You rush to our aid, and the yoke of the law that you have broken shall no longer oppress us. The joyous message of your birth resounds in our ears and shall refresh our hearts in their sorrow.
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<i>Alto</i> Willkommen, mein Leben, Willkommen mein Licht. Dir hab ich mein Herze zur Wohnung ergeben, Verschmähe es nicht.	<i>Alto</i> Welcome, my life! Welcome, my light! I have made my heart your dwelling place. Do not spurn it!
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<i>Coro</i> O Freuden Wort, mein Freund ist mein, Ich bin und bleibe ewig sein.	<i>Chorus</i> O word of joy, my friend is mine, and I shall be and remain eternally His!
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