

David Schulenberg  
*The Music of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach*  
**Supplement 11.6. The Aria “Noch steht sie”**

Even if the musical imagery in “Noch steht sie” is rather traditional, Bach's musical rhetoric is his own, for the text was probably conceived as two stanzas of three lines each, the poet expecting it to be set in standard da capo form (see below).<sup>1</sup> Bach instead composed what is musically a rounded binary form, but with bits of text from the first stanza repeated at the opening of the second half. The entire “B” text is presented almost perfunctorily before Bach begins what seems to be a recapitulation of the latter part of the A section. But this is then interrupted by the first of two fermatas, and the aria concludes with a free recycling of phrases from the original “A” text.

*Text as Bach presumably received it*

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| A | Noch steht sie, zu des Mittlers Ehre,<br>Trotz allen Stürmen, seine Lehre,<br>Noch steht sie fest, wie Gottes Thron. | Still it stands—to the Mediator's honor,<br>Despite all storms—his teaching;<br>Still it stands, like God's throne. |
| B | Und nie, nie wird sein Wort vergehen;<br>Und ewig, ewig wird sie stehen<br>Die göttliche Religion.                   | And never, never will his word pass away,<br>And always, always, will it stand—<br>Divine religion.                 |

*Text as Bach set it (with his punctuation)*

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| A | Noch steht sie, zu des Mittlers Ehre,<br>Trotz allen Stürmen, seine Lehre,<br>Noch steht sie fest, wie Gottes Thron,<br>Trotz allen Stürmen, steht seine Lehre,<br>Noch steht zu des Mittlers Lehre.  | [preceded by ritornello in E-flat]<br><br>[modulation to B-flat, then pause on Bb:V]<br><br>[cadence in B-flat, followed by ritornello]   |
| B | Noch steht des Mittlers Lehre,<br>Und nie, nie wird sein Wort vergehen;<br>Und ewig, ewig wird sie stehen,<br>Die göttliche Religion,<br>Sein Wort wird nie vergehen,<br>nie seine Lehre,<br>Trotz allen Stürmen, steht seine Lehre,<br>Steht<br>Noch steht sie fast, wie Gottes Thron,<br>Trotz allen Stürmen, trotz,<br>Des Mittlers Lehre<br>Noch steht sie fast, wie Gottes Thron,<br>Noch steht sie fast zu seiner Ehre. | [modulating back to E-flat]<br>[brief tonicization of C minor]<br>[modulation back to E-flat]<br><br>[pause on Eb:V]<br>[transposed recapitulation of this line]<br>[fermata on Eb:V <sup>7</sup> ]<br><br>[fermata on Bb:V <sup>7</sup> ]<br><br>[cadence in E-flat, followed by ritornello] |

---

<sup>1</sup> The author of the text, the Hamburg poet Heinrich Würzer, is identified in CPEBCW 5/3.2:xxiii.

One is tempted to think that Bach forgot the proper order of the lines while composing the aria. More likely he chose to rewrite the text for his own purposes, preferring not to end, as the poet did, with the simile “like God's throne.” Rather Bach clarified the rather crabbed syntax of the original, closing with an improved version of the opening line (“still it stands firm, to his honor”). Bach must have remembered this when he wrote the Resurrection Cantata in (probably) 1774, for there the aria “Ihr Thore Gottes” contains another reference to “God's throne,” set in almost the same way. The rising melodic line, which in the present aria is attached to the abstract idea of “honor,” there clearly “paints” the ascension to the throne itself (online example 11.7).

[Example 11.7. \(a\) Aria “Noch steht sie, zu des Mittlers Ehre,” no. 12 from Inaugural Piece for Pastor Hornbostel, H. 821e, mm. 90–3; \(b\) “Ihr Thore Gottes,” no. 21 from the Resurrection Cantata, W. 240, mm. 17–18 \(both without winds\)](#)

(a)

90

vn. 1

mf

vn. 2

mf

va.

mf

B

tr

f

Thron, noch steht sie fest zu sei - ner Eh - - - re.

b.c.

mf

unis

f

(b)

17

p

p

p

p

Er steigt auf sei - nes Va - ters, auf sei - nes Va - ters Thron.

p