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The Music of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach
Supplement 12.2. The Double-Chorus *Heilig*

The table below shows the design of the work. Further commentary on its history and structure follows.

<u>m.</u>	<u>text</u>	<u>keys</u>	<u>choir</u>	<u>comment</u>
<i>Introduction (arietta)</i>				
15	Herr, werth daß Schaaren der Engel	G > D		varied repeat of opening ritornello
29	Sey mir gepriesen . . . ich jauchzet dir	C e > G		
<i>“Prelude” (antiphonal choruses)</i>				
1	Heilig	E > F#:V	Angels	<i>piano</i> , with strings only
8		G:V	Nations	<i>forte</i> , with trumpets 1–2 and oboes
13	Heilig ist Gott	e:V > F#	Angels	<i>piano</i> , with strings only
18		G	Nations	<i>forte</i> , tutti, dotted rhythms
23	Der Herr Zebaoth	C:iv > E:V	Angels	<i>piano</i> , <i>crescendo</i> , with strings only
30		C	Nations	<i>fortissimo</i> , tutti, dotted rhythms
<i>Fugue</i>				
1	Alle Lände	C	both, in unison	exposition
26	Herr Gott dich loben wir	C >	Angels	chorale melody combined with orchestral stretto
49	Herr Gott dich loben wir	F >	Nations	chorale melody combined with orchestral stretto
73	Alle Lände	F > d >	Angels, then Nations	episode
91	Heilig + Alle Lände	C > d >	both, alternating	echo of “prelude” + subject in bass (ex. 12.5)
114	Alle Lände	C > a >	Angels, then both	episode recapitulated
134	Alle Lände	C	both, in unison	stretto and coda

Although NV dates the *Heilig* to 1778, Bach had already used a version of it in his Michaelmas Music of 1776. In that pastiche, the *Heilig* was heard alongside the opening movement of Sebastian's 1726 church piece BWV 19 for the same day, together with music by Emanuel's half-brother Friedrich. Probably nothing survives of this version, but peculiarities in the *Heilig* as published raise the possibility that it was originally a somewhat simpler setting of its text.¹ The familiar version contains only a few brief passages in which the two choirs are genuinely independent of one another, yet it was already described as involving a double chorus (*Doppelchor*) in a newspaper account of the 1776 performance.² This implies that at least the singers were already divided into two groups. The division between two performing bodies nevertheless is incidental to the structure of the music, even though the alternation between distinct types of music (representing heaven and earth) is fundamental to the expressive character of the work.

From his re-use of his father's passion music, Emanuel must have understood that Sebastian's two great passions were conceived along similar lines. Although there is already a rudimentary division between two choirs in the St. John Passion, even in the St. Matthew Passion the structure is only occasionally truly antiphonal.³ The texts of several of the Cramer Psalms call for division between two choirs, but even the expanded version of one of these songs, arranged by Emanuel for church use, is for a single chorus alternating with a soloist.⁴ The loss of Bach's original parts makes it impossible to know in what form the *Heilig* was given in its numerous performances at Hamburg, where the exceptionally large ensemble required by the published version would have posed practical problems.⁵ This did not prevent Bach from having Breitkopf produce, or some 267

¹ As argued by Harasim, *Die Quartalsmusiken*, 205–10.

² *Hamburgische Correspondent* for Oct. 25, 1776 (no. III/45 in Wiermann, *Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach*, 398–99).

³ The two choirs of solo and ripieno voices in Sebastian's St. John Passion sing antiphonally in only two movements, and these are chorale arias that involve a soloist from one choir alternating with the four voices of the other (one of these movements was a temporary substitution, subsequently removed). On Bach's expansion of this conception into a not quite fully fledged double-chorus work in the St. Matthew Passion, see Melamed, *Hearing Bach's Passions*, 49–65.

⁴ This is the setting of Psalm 8 (“Wer ist so würdig?”) whose choral version (W. 222), dating from 1774, was incorporated into the Easter Music for 1780 (W. 241).

⁵ As observed by Ulrich Leisinger in CPEBCW 5/5.1:xiv. Harasim, *Die Quartalsmusiken*, 206–10, argues that an autograph “Tromba 1” part, the sole extant fragment of Bach's performing material for W. 217 (now kept as part of P 339), was prepared for a version that lacked measures 138–41 of the fugue. Those measures are present in the reduced score for one choir preserved in Cambridge, Harvard College Library, Mus 627.2.579 PHI, but the latter may transmit an arbitrary arrangement of the one Bach published, not an early version or an alternate reduced version by the composer.

subscribers from paying in advance for, the extraordinary first edition, a *tour de force* of music printing on systems of twenty-eight staves.

The final stretto and coda are the one portion of the work in which a substantive revision is documented; Bach either expanded or, perhaps, reduced the stretto by four measures that contain the sole passage in which the two choirs briefly have independent parts (mm. 138–41).⁶ In either case, the counterpoint did not require great skill, given the triadic nature of the opening of the subject. But the demonstration of what Bach elsewhere called “contrapuntal devices [*Künste*]” is not the point here; rather it was the incorporation, into a traditional *a cappella* fugue, of first the *Te Deum* citation and then, at the heart of the movement, the reminiscence of the angelic Sanctus heard in the “prelude.” The work’s bilateral symmetries reflect the division between two choirs; Bach would employ comparable planning only once more, in the Double Concerto W. 47 of his final year. The latter, of course, lacks the textual and sacred elements of the *Heilig*, and the two different keyboard instruments are not so strongly distinguished by their music as are the latter’s two choirs. One nevertheless wonders whether Bach recalled the design of the *Heilig* as he wrote his last orchestral work, one which, although generally avoiding serious counterpoint between the two soloists, also ends with a grand stretto.

As Kramer points out, Bach’s explanation for the key relationships in the work is “evasive.”⁷ To say only, as Bach does, that “E is the dominant of A, and A minor is very closely related to C” is to ignore the most interesting parts of the story.⁸ Although one can explain any third-related progression through routine secondary dominants, Bach’s juxtapositions of more remotely related harmonies are not so readily analyzed. The latter are already prefigured within the arietta, which, composed after the *Heilig* itself, must have been written with its plan in mind. As in many arias, the voice enters with a simplified repetition of the opening ritornello. But after what seems like a routine second ritornello in the dominant (D), the arietta is suddenly diverted to IV (C, m. 29), then V of vi (E minor, m. 33; [online example 12.8a](#)). The half-step dislocation (C–B) will be reversed in the choral “prelude” (m. 29: B; m. 30: C). Although the arietta returns to G for its last line, the tonic is never strongly confirmed, and the final cadence is of the open type that Bach sometimes uses in his instrumental music when a movement ends with a “tonic preparation” ([online example 12.8b](#)). The arietta has, then, already led the listener into the maze of modulations that now continues in the “prelude.”

⁶ Whether the eight-part stretto was an insertion or was removed to simplify the work for performances by reduced forces is uncertain; the passage was originally present in the trumpet part mentioned in the preceding note, then removed.

⁷ Kramer, “The New Modulation of the 1770s,” 552, referring to Bach’s commentary in *Versuch*, ii.41.12. Bach represents the sequence of tonalities G–E as a figured bass progression, illustrating beside it three others (C[♯]–D[♯], G–A^b⁶, and F^b–E^{6/4}), which according to him also occur in the *Heilig*.

⁸ Bach, *Versuch*, ii.41.12, as translated by Kramer, “The New Modulation,” 573.

Example 12.8a. Arietta "Herr, wert daß Schaaren der Engel," from *Heilig*, W. 217, mm. 29–36

Musical score for Example 12.8a, measures 29–36. The score is in 2/4 time and G major. It features four staves: Violin (vn.), Viola (va.), Soprano (S), and Bass/Contralto (b.c.).

Measures 29–32: The vocal line (S) sings "Sey mir ge - prie - - - sten un - - - ter ih - nen!". The instrumental parts (vn., va., b.c.) provide accompaniment. The dynamic is *p* (piano) and the tempo is *tasto*.

Measures 33–36: The vocal line (S) sings "ich jauch - ze dir, ich jauch - - - ze dir!". The instrumental parts continue. The dynamic is *f* (forte) for the first two measures and *p* (piano) for the last two. The tempo is *tasto*. The bass line includes figured bass notation: 6, 4, 7.

Example 12.8b. Arietta "Herr, wert daß Schaaren der Engel," from *Heilig*, W. 217, mm. 43–46

Musical score for Example 12.8b, measures 43–46. The score is in 2/4 time and G major. It features four staves: Violin (vn.), Viola (va.), Soprano (S), and Bass/Contralto (b.c.).

Measures 43–46: The vocal line (S) sings "Völ - ker jauch - zend lob - sin - - - gen dir mit mir!". The instrumental parts (vn., va., b.c.) provide accompaniment. The dynamic is *f* (forte) and the tempo is *tasto*. The bass line includes figured bass notation: 6.