Sleepers awake! Johann Sebastian Bach

It has been my absolute joy of late, to discover that J. S. Bach (1685-1750) Christian composer, clearly shows in his Cantata 140 - Sleepers Awake - "Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme", that he considered it to be for this life and not for the end of time. His musical interpretation of the event - baptism of the Spirit sends chills down my spine, it being so perfectly depicted.

Here is one version of it though I think Sir John Gardiner does the best albeit without German choristers which is an annoyance with their pronunciation :

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1UOglSsceH4

This one is quite good

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXcza9fQz_4

I just pray that it will be a blessing to someone. Here are the words in German and English.

BWV 140 -

Cantata for the Twenty-Seventh Sunday after Trinity

1. Choral
Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme,
der Wächter sehr hoch auf der Zinne,
wach auf, du Stadt Jerusalem.
Mitternacht heit diese Stunde,
sie rufen uns mit hellem Munde,
wo seid ihr klugen Jungfrauen?
Wohlauf, der Bräu'gam kümmt,
steht auf, die Lampen nehmt,
Alleluia!
Macht euch bereit
zu der Hochzeit,
 ihr mässet ihm entgegengeh'n.
("Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme;"

verse 1) 1. Chorus
Awake, calls the voice to us
of the watchmen high up in the tower;
awake, you city of Jerusalem.
Midnight the hour is named;
they call to us with bright voices;
where are you, wise virgins?
Indeed, the Bridegroom comes;
rise up and take your lamps,
Alleluia!
Make yourselves ready
for the wedding,
you must go to meet Him.

2. Rezitativ T
Er kommt, er kommt,
der Bräu'gam kommt,
General Topics :: Sleepers awake! Johann Sebastian Bach

2. Recitative T
He comes, He comes,
the Bridegroom comes,
O Zion's daughters, come out,
his course runs from the heights
into your mother's house.
The Bridegroom comes, who like a roe
and young stag
leaps upon the hills;
to you He brings the wedding feast.
Rise up, take heart,
to embrace the bridegroom;
there, look, He comes this way.

3. Arie- Duett S B (Dialog - Seele, Jesus)
Wenn kündest du, mein Heil?
- Ich komme, dein Teil. -
Ich warte mit brennenden Ä-le.
Erfind der Saal
- Ich finde den Saal -
zum himmlischen Mahl.
Komm, Jesu.
- Ich komme, komm, liebliche Seele. -

4. Choral T
Zion hörnt die Wächter singen,
das Herz tut ihr vor Freuden springen,
sie wachtet und steht eilend auf.
Ihr Freund kommt von Himmel prächtig,
von Gnaden stark, von Wahrheit mächtig,
ihr Licht wird hell, ihr Stern geht auf.
Nun komm, du werte Kron',
Herr Jesu, Gottes Sohn,
Hosanna!
Wir folgen all
zum Freuden saal
und halten mit das Abendmahl.
("Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme,"

verse 2) 4. Chorale T
Zion hears the watchmen sing,
her heart leaps for joy within her,
she wakens and hastily arises.
Her glorious Friend comes from heaven,
strong in mercy, powerful in truth,
her light becomes bright, her star rises.
Now come, precious crown,
Lord Jesus, the Son of God!
Hosannah!
We all follow
to the hall of joy
and hold the evening meal together.

5. Rezitativ B
So geh herein zu mir,
du mir erwähnte Braut!
Ich habe mich mit dir
von Ewigkeit vertraut.
Dich will ich auf mein Herz,
auf meinen Arm gleich wie ein Sigel setzen,
und dein betrübtes Aug' erglänzen.
Vergiß, o Seele, nun
die Angst, den Schmerz,
den du erdulden mößtest;
auf meiner Linken sollst du ruhn,
und meine Rechte soll dich umfassen.

5. Recitative B
So come in to Me,
you My chosen bride!
I have to you
eternally betrothed Myself.
I will set you upon My heart,
upon My arm as a seal,
and delight your troubled eye.
Forget, O soul, now
the fear, the pain
which you have had to suffer;
upon My left hand you shall rest,
and My right hand shall kiss you.

6. Arie - Duett S B (Dialog - Seele, Jesus)
Mein Freund ist mein,
und ich bin sein,-
die Liebe soll nichts scheiden.
Ich will mit dir
-du sollst mit mir-
im Himmels Rosen weiden,
da Freude die Feste, da Wonne wird sein.

6. Aria - Duet S B (Dialogue - Soul, Jesus)
My Friend is mine,
- and I am yours, -
love will never part us. 
I will with You 
- you will with Me - 
graze among heaven’s roses, 
where complete pleasure and delight will be.

7. Choral 
Gloria sei dir gesungen, 
mit Menschen- und englischen Zungen, 
mit Harfen und mit Zimbeln schon. 
Von zwÃ¶lf Perlen sind die Pforten, 
an deiner Stadt sind wir Konsorten 
der Engel hoch um deine Thron. 
Kein Aug hat je gespÃ¼rt, 
kein Ohr hat je gehÃ¶rt solche Freude, 
des sind wir froh, 
io,io, 
ewig in dulci jubilo. 
(“Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme,” verse 3)

7. Chorale 
Let Gloria be sung to You 
with mortal and angelic tongues, 
with harps and even with cymbals. 
Of twelve pearls the portals are made, 
In Your city we are companions 
Of the angels high around Your throne. 
No eye has ever perceived, 
no ear has ever heard 
such joy 
like our happiness, 
io,io, 
eternally in dulci jubilo!

"Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme," Philipp Nicolai (mov’ts. 1, 4, & 7) 
Â©Pamela Dellal

Emmanuel Music is the Ensemble-in-Residence at Emmanuel Church 
15 Newbury Street Â• Boston, MA 02116 Â• 617.536.3356 Â• music@emmanuelmusic.org

Re: Sleepers awake! Johann Sebastian Bach - posted by Lysa (), on: 2013/8/20 10:05

I wanted to hear it and would this be it? the audio is 28 minutes long... It's beautiful.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sj-NKqR0tw

The youtube description says:
A church cantata by German composer Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), with the cantata chorale based on the Luteran hymn "Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme" ("Sleepers awake, the voice is calling") by Philipp Nicolai. The text is based on the Parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25:1-13, the reading of which is scheduled for the 27th Sunday after Trinity in the Lutheran lectionary. This cantata was first performed in Leipzig on November 25, 1731. Bach later transcribed the fourth movement chorale for organ (BWV 645) and published it along with the SchÃ¼bler Chorales.
Re: , on: 2013/8/20 10:31
Yes indeed Lisa beautiful though I like the Sir John Gardiner conducted performance with the Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists best. The tempo seems perfect to me and the crispness of it. Many versions of it sound too 'soft'. The refrain in the first movement with Gardiner - da-dadada-da-dadada to me is the sound of the heartbeat of excitement when one comes into the presence of God.

I am a great Bach fan.

Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2013/8/20 17:42
Very beautiful indeed, especially the German original. God gave us a man with exceptional musical talent and his music still bares witness of God today.

Sadly, we are unaccustomed to such depth of Christian lyrics nowadays.

Re: , on: 2013/8/21 1:48
Yes I agree. When we have this as our heritage, it seems criminal to me that it is not used much or not at all in the church.

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2013/8/21 8:58
Bach actually did not write the texts to the cantatas. His job was to set them to music. They were written by poets and other librettists. Most of the 200 plus extant liturgical cantatas of JS Bach require superior instrumental skill and vocal agility to perform even satisfactorily. Things are not the same in church settings today as they were back in the 1720's and 30's. Bach's Lutheran church cantatas are considered the crowning musical achievement of man, even by the estimation of atheistic musicologists. Many of the arias and solo obbligati violin and oboe lines demand a virtuosic skill that far surpasses anything a "normal" worship ensemble is able to reproduce today. Musicians and singers who lived in Bach's day were pretty much all virtuosi. People took music a lot more serious back then and were expected to be highly disciplined. The sort of skill today is found only in Conservatories and in other secular and professional settings, but hardly ever in a church. Another sad instance of artistic degradation, of the integrity of what was once designated to be for the glory of God redesignated to the glory of man and the esteeem of the world.

Re: , on: 2013/8/22 1:35
Anyone attending a junior school concert in Germany today, would be amazed at the highly trained musical skills of the children playing classical pieces. Listening to them, it is easy to imagine what took place in churches in Bach's day. They still take music very seriously indeed. In public libraries, there are sections named 'Classical music for babies' containing sizeable collections of cd's, a lot of them produced just for that purpose, and mothers are encouraged to introduce babies to it very early. Every neighbourhood, has frequent public performances for adults and Beethoven is very popular indeed. It is quite a different world.

I think it is a shame that we cannot have more recorded performances of Bach's sacred works in our gatherings as part of worship. Even atheists who love and perform Bach's works come to believe that there is likely to be a God. I was listening to Sir John Gardiner who said that very thing. I find the works very spiritually uplifting myself.

It's a bit disappointing to hear that Bach did not write the cantatas but nevertheless, they were written by believers and Bach's beliefs did come across though in the way he set those texts to music.

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2013/8/22 8:04
I don't think people have the attention span today to sit through an entire cantata. The music is too magnificent to be apprecated by contemporary listeners. The public requires undemanding repetition; anything more would result in mass boredom. The German would need to be translated and put on a projector. Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts have a hard enough time as it is getting "airtime" in a church without omitting entire stanzas for the sake of attention preservation.

I collect the Bach cantatas. I believe they are the greatest miracle in all of music. I have a recording of BWV 4 "Christ Lag in Todesbanden" by Gardiner and also "Ausz der Tiefen Rufe Ich Herr Zu Dir" by him. The best versions in my opinion! But I prefer the modern instrumentation by Rilling for most others. It's nice to find something we can finally agree on.
I too am pleased that we have found something to agree on and am of the same opinion regarding Bach's cantatas being the greatest musical miracles of all.

I have the Masaaki Suzuki version of BWV 4 "Christ Lag in Todesbanden" and also "Aus der Tiefen Rufe Ich Herr Zu Dir" but I do like the Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists. I have not listened yet to Rilling but will now look for him on YouTube. Can you get the BBC documentaries in the US on YouTube? There are some very good ones on Bach.

I recently obtained a boxed set by Gardiner, including St Matthew's and St John's Passion which was quite a bargain.

Although whole cantatas would as you say be too much, the most famous movements could be played, and appreciated I am sure, and after all, nothing is required but to sit and listen even without English interpretation, whereas using Wesley and Watts hymns in the service require one to participate.

It looks like the devil does indeed get the best music.

I play some Bach pieces on the classical guitar, though the guitar was not invented in his time. These are transcriptions from the lute suites or violincello solo suites. Very challenging and enriching for the soul.

Gardiner's Bach Pilgrimage documentary is available in the US on YouTube. There are several other videos to view by him such as BWV 244, the Magnificat, etc. I definitely recommend checking out Helmut Rilling if you like faster tempi, the big choir sound and, crisp, modern instrumentation. He was the first to record the entire cycle of the Bach cantatas back in the 70's. Gardiner has some superior versions of individual cantatas as does Suzuki and Koopman.

Narrowpath, I am a classical guitarist as well. I studied classical guitar performance at the Boston Conservatory and played through the 4 lute suites. I am very familiar with the 6 violin sonatas and partitas and the cello suites. I've also played through the Anna Magdalena notebook and transcribed some of the two-part harpsichord inventions for solo guitar. I've also played a lot of Dowland. In recent years I've gotten away from performance and have started focusing on composition. I have a YouTube channel dedicated to my original guitar pieces, concertos, sinfonias, sonatas, harpsichord and chamber music, etc. I compose in a neoclassical style similar to Bach and Vivaldi. All to the glory of God and the edification of the soul.

Thanks Paul, though having trouble finding BWV 140 by Rilling. I saw his complete cantata set for only Â£65 on Amazon.

My son plays and builds lutes.

ps I found it and bought it. I do like the tempo a lot (and better accents!) but it will sound better on my hi-fi set up.

You won't be disappointed! I love Rilling's cycle. Be sure to check out his BWV 10. I can listen to the introductory chorus endlessly. Bach was such a genius. I didn't know your son was a luthier. I have a great affinity for English and Italian lute music of the Renaissance. S.L. Weiss was the great German baroque lutenist of his age, and he and Bach were good friends. I'm sure your son is familiar with his music.

Let me know when you receive the Rilling collection. It's something you'll cherish for the rest of your life. The CD liner notes are good too. The music is so absolutely stupendous, the English language doesn't have adequate superlatives to describe the splendour. It's the best of the best.
Re: , on: 2013/8/24 3:01
Thanks, I am looking forward to the postman arriving. In the meantime I have BWV 140 on cloud. I am very much enjoying hearing German singers, it is much more natural than the forced gutturals on the Garndiner recordings and makes a big difference for me, having become familiar with the German language through living in the country.

My son (I will let you know when he puts some of his music on YouTube) is a big fan of Weiss. He is busy building his second lute.

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2013/8/26 11:37
Here is the sublime BWV 10 - Bach's German Magnificent. The fourth introduction of the choir at 3:46 is a rare insight into the sounds of heaven. I can imagine the all the angelic hosts, all the seraphims and cherubims and redeemed saints in glory crying this music out. It reduces me to tears and trembling, breathless awe each time I hear it. My mortal frame can hardly bear it:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NlrsPW9jap8

Re: , on: 2013/8/30 0:58
Incredible. No music has ever moved me to tears like that of Bach. He surely is the greatest. That piece is all that you have described. Breathless awe indeed. 'Lost in wonder, love and praise.' My order arrives today and I eagerly await it but one speaker on my good headphones is playing up.

Re: , on: 2013/8/30 4:36
My parcel has arrived, accompanied by "The Complete Cantatas" by Richard Stokes, so I am in for a glorious weekend.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2013/8/30 11:49
Paul and Brenda, what do you think of Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor? I remember happening upon that years ago in a very dark time of my life... and was totally dumbstruck with awe. I felt something akin to fear that I couldn't identify at the time, but now know was the fear of God.

I still listen to it from time to time. Today here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PEHGxpRoZQM

How can anyone listen to this and still be an unbeliever? All I could do at the end was cry out with tears in my eyes, Hallelujah!

Allan

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2013/8/30 12:31
BWV 565 (The beginning of the Toccata is the famous haunted mansion theme) is actually considered a spurious work today by many Bach specialists. It is for sure a youthful, virtuoso piece and very unique among Bach's known organ works from that time period (circa 1703-1708). The famous, dark introductory toccata octaves, the extended "floating" motifs in the middle of the fugue, the pedal-point theme - these are not typically found in the rest of his early organ works. So, there is a debate surrounding this piece, just because of its utter uniqueness. It may be by him (I think it is plausible, at least), but there is also a possibility it may not. Several cantatas once attributed to Bach have now been found to be by other composers (Like BWV 15).

One thing is certain though, it is a very bold, ingenious, fresh piece of music! Definitely north German style. The fugue's beginning is so wonderful; it spellbinds me each time. I've always thought that the advent of Johann Sebastian Bach is an atheist's nightmare. You have to basically commit intellectual suicide to postulate that this kind of music just "happened" through billions of years of random selection and genetic mutations (from which the human race began as primordial protozoans in a galactic ocean of space dust).
Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2013/8/30 12:52
Here is the introduction of BWV 61 "Come Thou Redeemer of the Gentiles!"

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GM2hpS64Sc

As a composer, let me tell you that this is music of another dimension.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2013/8/30 12:55
"BWV 565... is actually considered a spurious work today..."

I hope not.

Maybe this is "higher criticism." :)

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2013/8/30 13:01
"BWV 565... is actually considered a spurious work today..."

Maybe it's kind of like the book of Hebrews in the Bible. They're forever debating who wrote it. But we certainly know Who inspired it.