

Bach – Cantatas Vol.41 (Suzuki)

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01 – 05. *Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen, BWV 56* 06 – 10. *Ich habe genug, BWV 82* 11 – 14. *Der Friede sei mit dir, BWV 158* 15 – 19. *Ich bin vergnügt mit meinem Glücke, das mir der liebe Gott beschert, BWV 84* Masaaki Suzuki (Harpisichord), Peter Kooy (Bass), Carolyn Sampson (Soprano) Bach Collegium Japan Masaaki Suzuki – conductor

Suzuki is in overdrive with Volume 41 of the complete Bach cantatas now reaching the public, this one dedicated to solo voices. Three of the works here (BWV 56, 82, 84) were written during a one-year period, the composer's fourth year in Leipzig, and a very hectic one. Eight cantatas for solo voice and orchestra were completed during this time, of which these three are part. The last one, BWV 158, remains a breed apart, and harder to categorize.

“I shall willingly carry the cross” (BWV 56) is one of many post-Trinity cantatas, and this one focuses on the theme of suffering in the Christian life. There are ample opportunities in the text for some suggestive word-painting, as in the figuration from the cello in the second movement that speaks of a Christian's life as a voyage by ship; and the final recitative mentions arrival at the “port” of rest in a very direct and appealing work whose texts no doubt spoke very directly to the Leipzig congregation.

“I am content” (*Ich habe genug* , BWV 82) is one of the most popular and famous of all the Bach cantatas. It was written for the feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary (Feb. 2) in 1727, and has been recorded many times by many different and stylistically varied artists. Here we have the E-Minor soprano version, sung with plaintive expression and resigned temperament by Carolyn Sampson in a reading that I think almost equals that of Lorraine Hunt Lieberson on a not-too-distant Nonesuch recording. Bach originally intended this piece for mezzo-soprano, as the first solo part is written with the alto clef; later he changed his mind (and the clef) and went with a bass line, but subsequent copies show that the work was probably performed by soprano

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as well, as the E-Minor part for soprano showed up in 1731, and the obligato wind part (intended for oboe) for this soprano version is given to the flute. This is the version used here, though Suzuki has recorded the bass version as well in Volume 38.

“I am content with my happiness” (BWV 84) was written for Septuagesima Sunday (third to the last Sunday before Lent—dropped from the parlance of the Roman Catholic Church since Vatican II, still kept in the Lutheran churches), and focuses on the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matthew). The language of the texts remains direct and alert, while the music is supple and dance-like, with an especially noticeable second aria where the violin and oboe spar with one another.

“May peace be with you” (BWV 158) is somewhat problematic as to origin, as the only copies are from the late 18th century. It seems to have been conceived for Easter Tuesday and the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary. The texts appear to belie that assertion however, as they refer to both celebrations in the same piece, and may well have been assembled by a post-Bach compiler, obviously not paying a lot of attention. The second movement call-and-response imitative dialogue between soprano and bass make for an interesting feature of this unusual and quite lovely work. --- Steven E. Ritter, Editorial Reviews

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