J.S. Bach

Complete Chorale Harmonisations

for trombone quartet

Volume III

Chorales 283-434

arranged by Robert Timmers

Cherry Classics Music

Foreword

Robert Timmers has made a valuable contribution to the trombone repertoire with these thoughtfully presented chorales. I like how the voice leading is clearly readable and how it is such a scholarly presentation. I can recommend these to every trombone player and fully expect them to become standard in quartet books all over.

-Rick Stout, second trombone of The Cleveland Orchestra

Introduction

The first collection of J.S. Bach's settings of Luther Chorales was actually during his lifetime, by Johann Ludwig Dietl, one of Bach's students at the Thomasschule in Leipzig. The impetus behind this original collection is unknown but since then there have been numerous publications, arrangements and editions of this music. The source material for this collection comes directly from the 1941 Riemenschneider 371 Harmonized Chorales whose origins go all the way back to C.P.E. Bach's original collection of his father's chorales for their first large scale publication. Since C.P.E. Bach's collection does not contain all of the chorales (for reasons for which we can only speculate) the rest were gathered piece by piece from their respective cantatas.

A few brief notes on performance. The trombone has a small yet important place in Bach's own music as they are included in his Leipzig versions of some cantatas and even an arrangement Bach did of Palestrina's *Missa Sine Nomine* for voices, cornetti, and trombones! One thing to keep in mind is at the end of the day, these works are essentially church hymns as they fit into the Lutheran service. There would be a choir, congregation, and full (for Bach's time) orchestra doubling all four voices of the chorale performing in a beautiful reverberant church. Low brass players love to treat these as proto-Bruckner/Mahler/Wagner excerpts (i.e. slow, meditative, lush, etc.). There is obviously no question of the influence Bach's writing had on these composers, but viewing them solely through this lens will ultimately lead players to miss out on all the rich aspects of this music. When it comes to tempo, articulation, phrasing, fermata execution, it is strongly suggested to listen to period performances of these works to understand them in their entirety. Tempi tend to be swift and flowing.. Almost every note in the soprano voice is a new syllable so articulations are firm and clear versus smooth and legato. Any moment in the soprano that does have a single syllable stretched over multiple notes is indicated with a slur in this publication. The only editorial liberties taken in this publication are in certain chorales from no. 372 onward. There are instances where the 3rd of a chord would be left out of the choral writing but exist in an instrumental obbligato line (typically horn or trumpet). This line is gently merged with the 4 voice parts simply to maintain the quality of the chord and disturb the original character of the chorale as little as possible. These instances are almost exclusively at cadences/fermati. This approach actually mirrors C.P.E. Bach's edits when dealing with this same issue in the 371 chorales.

Much more can be said here in this introduction from an academic perspective, but this isn't meant to be a research publication. Luke Dahn's website, the aptly named www.bach-chorales.com, is one of many fantastic resources for this music and was in fact very useful as a reference for this very publication. I can only hope that these chorales can be either the beginning of one's journey into the music of Bach or spur a renewed appreciation for a composer with whom I'm sure many are already

quite familiar. At the same time, these can provide endless benefits for the performer in regards to sound, pitch, phrasing, ensemble, style and more. All four parts are included to allow players to immediately see how their part integrates into the whole and the indexes in the back will allow players to explore everything from multiple harmonisations of one chorale melody to finding a chorale from their favorite cantata. All 24 major and minor keys have been employed with as even a distribution as possible. Original spacing between the soprano and bass voice has been preserved with the entirety of the trombone range getting covered. With this vast output all in one place for low brass players, I hope that they provide a constant well of curiosity, inspiration, and education for everyone throughout their playing lifetime.

Lastly, a special thanks to Eric Starr, Matthew Barbier, and Rick Stout for their support, encouragement and generous feedback throughout the formation of this project. Without it this would undoubtedly have remained a simple file stuck on a hard drive somewhere instead of in front of a group of four low brass players.

-Robert Timmers

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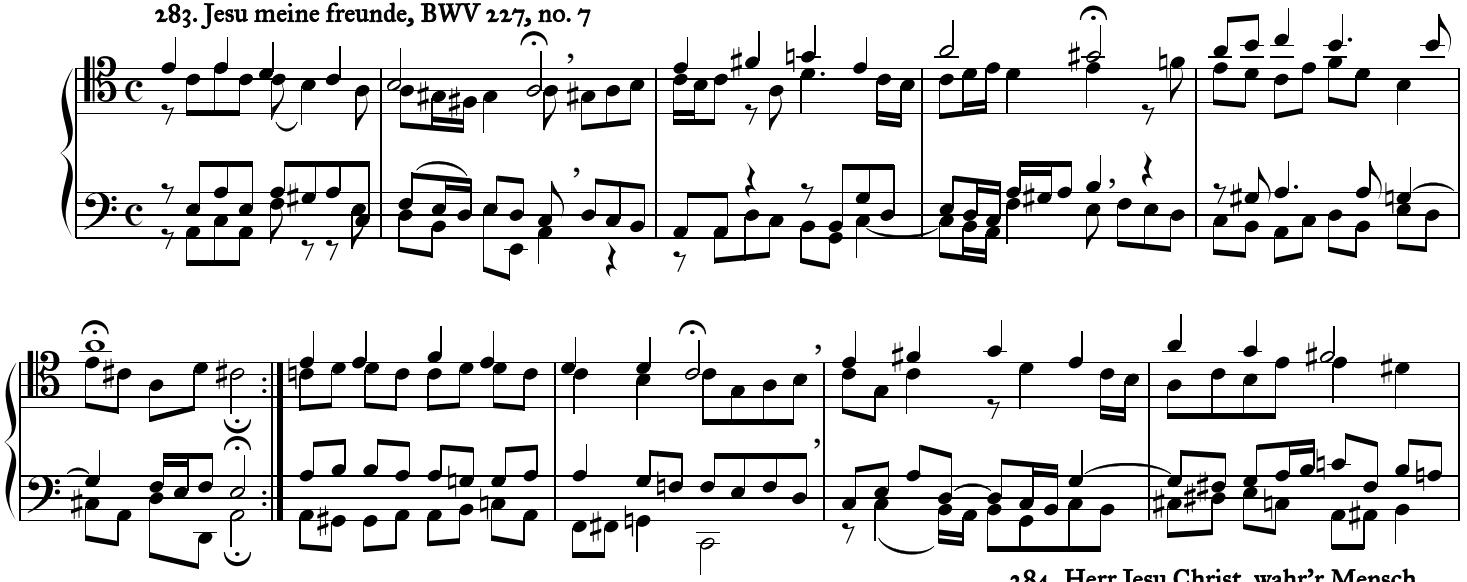
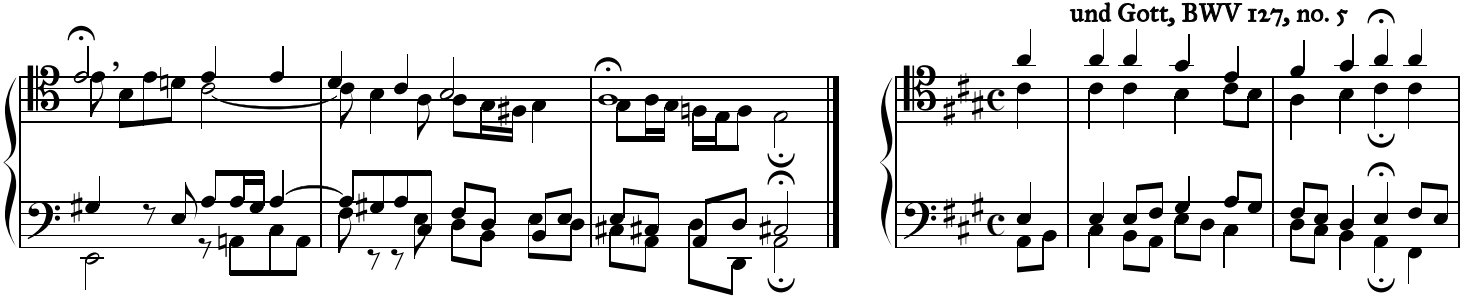
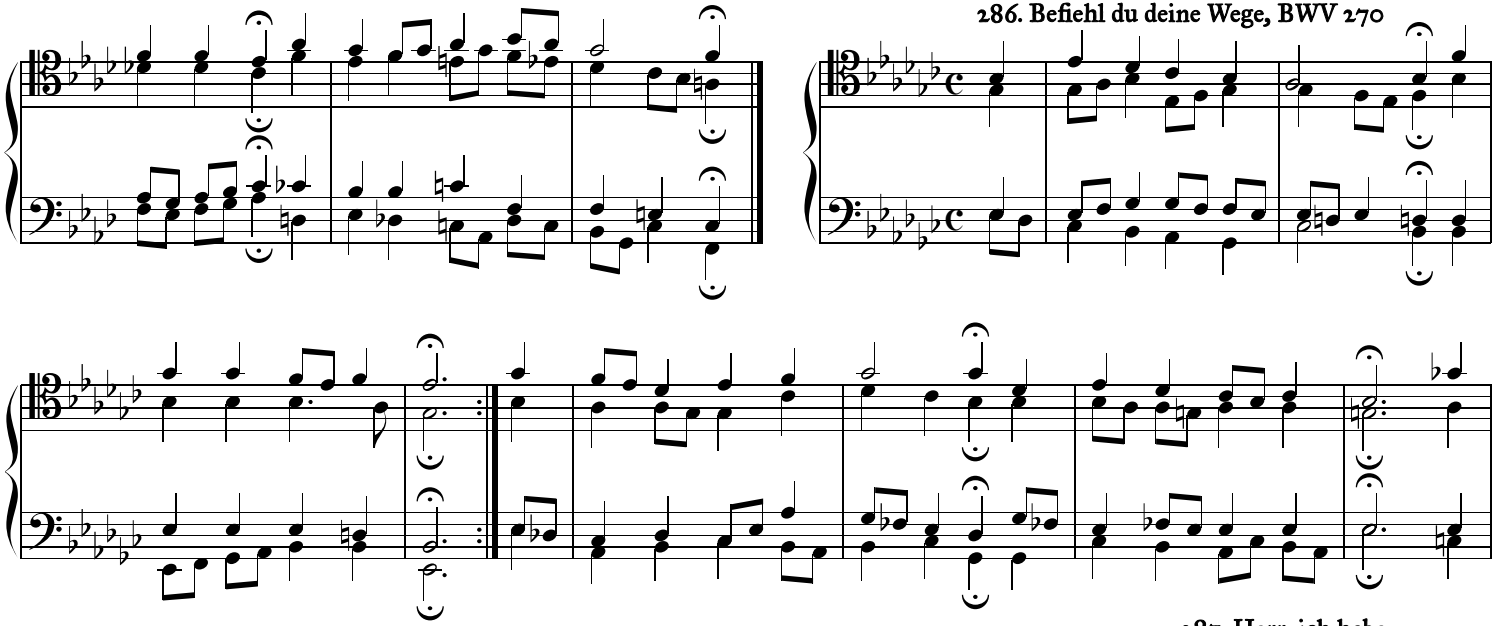
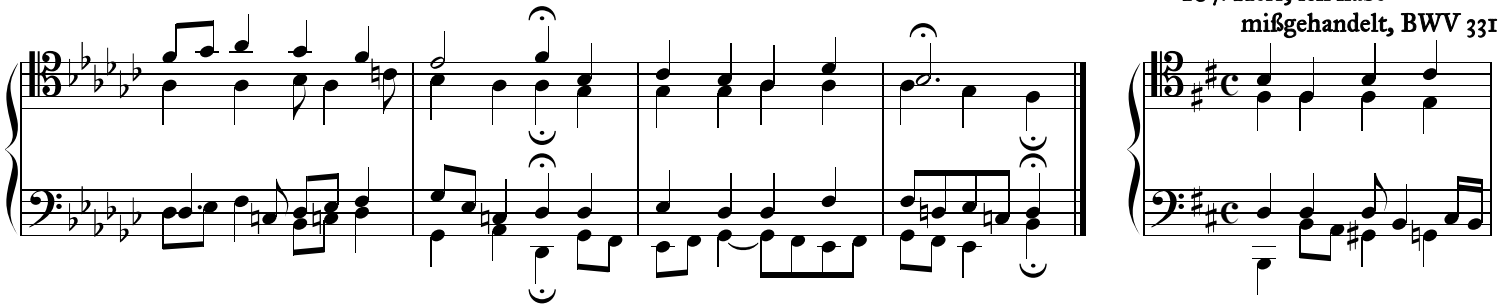
283. Jesu meine freunde, BWV 227, no. 7



284. Herr Jesu Christ, wahr'r Mensch und Gott, BWV 127, no. 5



286. Befiehl du deine Wege, BWV 270



287. Herr, ich habe mißgehandelt, BWV 331