

Choral Reviews

Steven Grives, Editor

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied, BWV 190
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750: 1724)
Reconstruction by Masato Suzuki (first movement)
and Masato and Masaaki Suzuki (second movement)
ed. Kirsten Beißwenger (2012)

SATB, alto, tenor and bass soloists
3 trumpets, timpani, 3 oboes (1 oboe d'amore), bassoon
2 violins, viola and basso continuo
(ca. 18')

Soprano D4-A5, Alto B3-E5
Tenor D3-A4, Bass D2-E4

Carus 31.190
web address: www.carus-verlag.com

- Vocal score: 31.190/03, 8.50 €
- Choral Score: 31.190/05, 2.20 € (does not have a piano reduction)
- Instrumental Accompaniment: 31.190/19, 77.00 €
0301/0400, org, str – 4 violin 1, 4 violin 2, 3
viola, 4 cello/double bass
NOTE: The string and organ parts are also sold
individually and can be used with the wind parts
that are sold together in one packet.
- Full Score: 31.190/00, 24.00 €

Score: [www.carus-verlag.com/images-intern/
medien/30/3119000/3119000x.pdf](http://www.carus-verlag.com/images-intern/medien/30/3119000/3119000x.pdf)

Text: [www.bach-cantatas.com/Texts/BWV190-
Eng3P.htm](http://www.bach-cantatas.com/Texts/BWV190-Eng3P.htm)

Sacred, German:

Psalm 149: 1, Psalm 150: 4, 6 (movement 1);
Martin Luther (movements 1, 2); Johannes Herman
(movement 7); Anonymous [probably Christian
Friedrich Henrici (Picander)] (movements 2-6)

Written for the New Year's Day service in 1724, *Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied*, BWV 190 must have come as a surprise to Leipzig's faithful. While typically a more festive cantata may have been expected on such an occasion, the newly appointed *Cantor figuralis*, Johann Sebastian Bach, surely exceeded expectations with this exuberant setting of "Sing to the Lord a New Song." Sadly, this work survives largely in fragments. Of the first two movements, for example, only both violin and four vocal parts have survived. Bach himself, when revising the cantata to be performed at the bicentenary of the Augsburg Confession in 1730, may have contributed to the loss of the majority of the instrumental parts. The arias in the work received different texts, the recitatives were recomposed, and the final chorale was replaced entirely. In order to spare himself from copying parts unnecessarily, Bach likely used the original set of parts for the first two movements, which remained largely unchanged. This revised cantata, which bears the same title but a different catalog number—BWV 190a, has been completely lost altogether.

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The few instrumental and vocal parts extant for BWV 190 are presumably extra copies left over from the original performance in 1724. The result of these losses leaves anyone wishing to perform this great work today in search of a satisfactory and stylistically convincing reconstruction.

The earliest reconstruction of the work by Bernhard Todt (1904) largely ignored the ranges and the idiomatic figuration of period Baroque instruments. While two other attempts by Walther Reinhart (1948) and Diethard Hellmann (1972) addressed a number of these issues, the more recent reconstruction by celebrated conductor and Bach-specialist, Masaaki Suzuki and his son, composer and performer Masato Suzuki, is the first to use exclusively thematic and motivic material already found within the work itself.¹ This economy of means, where a tightly controlled and limited amount of material is used in a varied and highly inventive manner, reflects Bach's own practice. The result affords the listener a thoughtful and plausible solution to the missing instrumental parts without the distracting accoutrements of many previous attempts.

The first movement, reconstructed solely by Masato Suzuki, combines selected verses from Psalms 149 and 150. Melismas on words such as "loben" ("praise") span up to six full measures in length and add to the movement's overall excitement and joy. The three main sections of this chorus are punctuated by unison statements of Luther's German translation of the *Te Deum* text. This ancient Latin hymn, set to slow-moving notes in the vocal parts, exclaims a confidence and assuredness of the faith. The fugal middle section on the text "All that has breath, praise the

¹ Diethard Hellmann has published two reconstructions of this cantata, one of the revised version from 1730, BWV 190a (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1974), and the original 1724 version, BWV 190, Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1996).

Lord" gives way to the final section set entirely to the text, "Alleluja!" Masato has chosen the instrumentation of this movement to match that of the final movement which in turn corresponds to the instrumentation indicated on the extant title page that lists: 4 voices, 3 trumpets, timpani, 3 oboes, bassoon, 2 violins, and viola with continuo. While several other reconstructions have employed the tutti texture also in the second movement, Masaaki and Masato have limited the instrumentation to only strings and continuo as Bach would have most likely reserved the tutti ensemble for the outer movements only. The German *Te Deum* returns in this movement, now set in four-part harmony each phrase of which is separated by a passage of recitative for solo bass, tenor, and alto, respectively. The third movement begins with an extended instrumental passage featuring dance-like rhythms and lilting melodic lines later taken up by the solo alto voice. The recitative of the fourth movement leads into the duet of the next movement for tenor and bass with an unspecified solo instrument. While the low tessitura of this solo part seems to indicate it was intended for the oboe d'amore, the overall range also allows for the use of a solo violin. Each phrase of this movement, alluding to the gospel reading assigned to New Year's Day, Luke 2: 21 (the circumcision and naming of Jesus), begins with the name of Jesus. The last recitative for solo tenor introduces the final movement in which triumphant brass fanfares punctuate the ends of each phrase of the hymn, "Laß uns das Jahr vollbringen / Zu Lob dem Namen dein" (Let us complete the year / In praise of Your Name").

This work, often neglected in the repertoire because of its incomplete status, should provide a welcome challenge to the skilled college or university choir.

—David J. Recca