

ICH RUF ZU DIR, HERR JESU CHRIST

Weissenfels, 1714

This is probably the best-known chorale setting of the *Orgelbüchlein* with frequent performances both on the organ and in transcription. Paradoxically, it is atypical of the collection and of Bach's treatment of chorales in general. It is the only prelude in trio texture in the collection and has the character of an accompanied aria.

The autograph slurs in the middle voice may be a direction to play the 16ths in imitation of the bowing style of a player of the viola or viola da gamba. In this style the articulative silence between the slurred groups should be very small and resemble the effect of changing bow direction in string playing.

A curiosity of this prelude is the cessation of ornamentation after the fifth phrase. An early copy by Johann Tobias Krebs (Mus. ms. Bach P 802, Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Berlin) contains additional ornamentation in the last phrases (though this particular attempt is rather unattractive).¹ An idiomatic style of added ornamentation would contain keyboard figures like the *grosso* and *messanza* (see Introduction, p. 17). Another viewpoint stresses the word *rechten* (true, straight, pure) in the text of the fifth phrase and interprets the "straight," unadorned melody of the last lines as a figure for *rechter Glaube* (pure faith).

The *Affekt* of supplication in time of despair should be reflected in registration, especially in the choice of an intimate solo color. A gemshorn or a string register may be appropriate for the left hand. The pedal, with 16' and 8' registration, may be played with a small separation between each note. Ornaments should be played with flexibility and freedom against the continuous motion in other voices.

Original minor third lower.

Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ!
 Ich bitt, erhö'r mein Klagen;
 verlei' mir Gnad zu dieser Frist,
 lass mich doch nicht verzagen.
 Den rechten Glauben, Herr, ich mein,
 den wollest du mir geben,
 dir zu leben,
 mein'm Nächsten nüt'z zu sein,
 dein Wort zu halten eben.

I call to You, Lord Jesus Christ!
 I beg, hear my complaint!
 Grant me grace at this time;
 let me not despair!
 The pure faith, Lord, I wish
 that You would give me:
 to live to You,
 to help my neighbor,
 and to keep Your Word faithfully.
 (Johann Agricola)

¹Stephen Daw, "Copies of J. S. Bach by Walther and Krebs: P 801, P 802, P 803," *Organ Yearbook* 7 (1976): 52.

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BWV 639

This musical score is for the chorale 'Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ' (BWV 639) by Johann Sebastian Bach. It is written in G major and 4/4 time. The score consists of three systems of staves, each with a vocal line (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a keyboard accompaniment (Right and Left Hand). The piece begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first system includes a trill ornament above the vocal line. The second system features first and second endings, with a circled '5' indicating a measure. The third system has a circled '10' above a measure. The fourth system has a circled '15' above a measure. The score concludes with a double bar line. Various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and ornaments are used throughout the piece.