

“Zerreisset, zersprenget, zertrümmert die Gruft” BWV 205.1

Der zufriedengestellte Aeolus

1. CHOR DER WINDE

Zerreisset, zersprenget, zertrümmert die Gruft,
Die unserm Wüten Grenze gibt!
Durchbrechet die Luft,
Dass selber die Sonne zur Finsternis werde;
Durchschneidet die Fluten, durchwühlet die Erde,
Dass sich der Himmel selbst betrübt!

2. AEOLUS

Ja! ja!
Die Stunden sind nunmehr nah,
Dass ich euch treuen Untertanen
Den Weg aus eurer Einsamkeit
Nach bald geschlossener Sommerszeit
Zur Freiheit werde bahnen.
Ich geb euch Macht,
Vom Abend bis zum Morgen,
Vom Mittag bis zur Mitternacht
Mit eurer Wut zu rasen,
Die Blumen, Blätter, Klee
Mit Kälte, Frost und Schnee
Entsetzlich anzublasen.
Ich geb euch Macht,
Die Zedern umzuschmeissen
Und Bergegipfel aufzureissen.
Ich geb euch Macht,
Die ungestümen Meeresfluten
Durch euren Nachdruck zu erhöhen,
Dass das Gestirne wird vermuten,

Placated Aeolus

1. CHORUS OF THE WINDS

Burst, blast, batter the cave¹
That provides a barrier to our raging [to get out]!
Rend the air
So that even the sun may turn to darkness;
Slice through the floods, churn up the ground,
So that indeed the sky roils itself!²

2. AEOLUS

Yes, yes!
The hours are now near
When, after the summertime, soon drawing to a close,
I will blaze, for you loyal subjects, [you winds,]
The path out of your seclusion [in this cave]
To freedom.
I [will] grant you power,
From evening to morning,
From noon to midnight,
To roar in your rage,
To horrifically bluster
The flowers, leaves, clover
With cold, frost, and snow.
I [will] grant you power
To knock cedars⁴ over
And to burst apart mountain summits.
I [will] grant you power
To elevate the stormy ocean floods
By your force,
So that the stars⁵ will suppose

GENERAL NOTE: J. S. Bach's setting of this *dramma per musica* was performed on August 3, 1725 for the name day of Leipzig professor August Friedrich Müller (the “August” mentioned in the text). The speaking characters are Aeolus, the Greek god of the winds; Pomona, a Roman goddess of fruitful abundance; Zephyrus, the Greek god representing the west (gentle) wind; and Pallas Athena, a Greek goddess here representing wisdom. Aeolus keeps the harsh winter winds captive in a cave until he releases them, bringing winter. The Greek mythology is here a little loose, but Pallas Athena is presented as the protector of the Muses and of their place on Mt. Helicon and in the region of Pieria.

¹In modern German, “Gruft” refers to a “grave” or “[burial] vault,” but in older German the word was also used as a synonym for “Höhle” (“cave”).

²The sense of “Betrüben” here is not “traurig machen” (“to sadden/distress”) but the older-German sense “trübe machen” (“to roil”).

⁴Cedar trees grow large, flourish in winter, and live to a great age. Thus they were well-known biblical symbols of strength (e.g., Psalm 92:13).

⁵The grammatically singular “das Gestirn” (literally, “the star”) is a collective noun that refers to “the stars”; the noun's grammatical plural is “die Gestirne” (“the stars”). The librettist clearly connotes plural stars here, but he uses the singular article “das” (“the”), the plural noun “Gestirne” (“stars”), the singular verb “wird vermuten” (“will suppose”), and the plural possessive “ihr” (“their”).

Ihr Feuer soll durch euch erlöschend³ untergehn.

3. AEOLUS

Wie will ich lustig lachen,
Wenn alles durcheinandergeht!
Wenn selbst der Fels nicht sicher steht
Und wenn die Dächer krachen,
So will ich lustig lachen!

4. ZEPHYRUS

Gefürchter Aeolus,
Dem ich im Schosse sonst liege,
Und deine Ruh vergnüge,
Lass deinen harten Schluss
Mich doch nicht allzufrüh erschrecken;
Verziehe, lass in dir,
Aus Gunst zu mir,
Ein Mitleid noch erwecken!

5. ZEPHYRUS

Frische Schatten, meine Freude,
Sehet, wie ich schmerzlich scheide,
Kommt, bedauret meine Schmach!
 Windet euch, verwaisten Zweige,
 Ach! ich schweige,
 Sehet mir nur jammernd nach!

6. AEOLUS

Beinahe wirst du mich bewegen;
Wie? seh ich nicht Pomona hier,
Und wo mir recht, die Pallas auch bei ihr?
Sagt, Werte, sagt, was fordert ihr von mir?
Euch ist gewiss sehr viel daran gelegen.

7. POMONA

Können nicht die roten Wangen,
Womit meine Früchte prangen,

[That] their sparkle⁶ shall go out, extinguished by you.

3. AEOLUS

How I will laugh merrily
When everything goes topsy-turvy!
When even rock does not stand secure,
And when roofs crack [into pieces],
Then I will laugh merrily!

4. ZEPHYRUS

Fearsome Aeolus,
In whose lap I otherwise lie,
And take pleasure in your tranquility,
Do not let your harsh decree
Alarm me yet all too soon;
Hold off;⁷ let a feeling of compassion
Still awaken in you
Out of favor to me.

5. ZEPHYRUS

Cool shades [of you branches], my joy,
See how I sadly depart;
Come, bemoan my humiliation.
 Writhe [in empathy], forlorn⁸ branches;
 Ah, I remain silent;
 Just regard me, wailingly.

6. AEOLUS

You will well-nigh move me;
Eh? Do I not see Pomona here,
And, if I am right, Pallas with her as well?
Do tell, worthies, do tell, what do you ask of me?
To you a great deal is certainly riding on this.

7. POMONA

If the rosy cheeks¹⁰
Whereby my fruits are resplendent

³The poet's printed libretto gives "verlöschend" (which also means "extinguished").

⁶"[Das] Feuer" ("[the] fire"), in connection with stars, was employed as a synonym for "das Funkeln" ("the twinkle," "the sparkle").

⁷"Verziehen" had a very wide variety of meanings in older German. Here it is apparently used as a synonym for "zögern" ("to hold off").

⁸"Verwaist" (literally, "orphaned") was sometimes used figuratively as a synonym for "einsam" ("lonely," "forlorn").

¹⁰By analogy to "the red/rosy [facial] cheeks" (in German, "die rote Wangen") of a person, the shimmering areas of a fruit of the earth were called "Wangen" ("cheeks").

Dein ergrimmtes Herze fangen,
Ach, so sage, kannst du sehn,
Wie die Blätter von⁹ den Zweigen
Sich betrübt zur Erde beugen,
Um ihr Elend abzuneigen,
Das an ihnen soll geschehn.

8. POMONA

So willst du, grimmger Aeolus,
Gleich wie ein Fels und Stein
Bei meinen Bitten sein?

PALLAS

Wohlan! ich will und muss
Auch meine Seufzer wagen,
Vielleicht wird mir,
Was er, Pomona, dir
Stillschweigend abgeschlagen,
Von ihm gewährt.

PALLAS, POMONA

Wohl! wenn er gegen mich/dich sich gütiger erklärt.

9. PALLAS

Angenehmer Zephyrus,
Dein von Bisam reicher Kuss
Und dein lauschend Kühlen
Soll auf meinen Höhen spielen.
Grosser König, Aeolus,
Sage doch dem Zephyrus,
Dass sein bisamreicher Kuss,
Und sein lauschend Kühlen,
Soll auf meinen Höhen spielen.

10. PALLAS

Mein Aeolus,
Ach! störe nicht die Fröhlichkeiten,
Weil meiner Musen Helikon
Ein Fest, ein angenehme Feier
Auf seinen Gipfeln angestellt.

Cannot capture your angered heart,
Ah, then say, can you see
How the leaves droop from their branches
Dejectedly to the ground
To cower from their misery [at Aeolus's winds]
That shall befall them.

8. POMONA

So do you wish, fierce Aeolus,
To be just like a rock and stone
Despite my pleas?

PALLAS

Well then, I desire to and must
Also hazard my sighs;
Perhaps what he
Silently denied you,
Pomona, will be
Granted by him to me.

PALLAS, POMONA

Good, if he declares himself to be more kindly toward
me/you.

9. PALLAS

Goodly Zephyrus,
Your kiss, teeming with musk,
And your indolent¹¹ [breeze's] cooling
Shall play about on my elevations.
Great king, Aeolus,
Say yet to Zephyrus
That his musk-teeming kiss,
And his indolent [breeze's] cooling,
Shall play about on my elevations.

10. PALLAS

My Aeolus,
Ah, do not disturb the festivities

⁹“Auf den Zweigen” (“on the/their branches”) in the poet's printed libretto.

¹¹“Lauschend” had a wide variety of meanings in older German, and its use here has been rendered most variously—many of the solutions, however, are lexicographically untenable—by previous translators of this libretto, namely as “attentive,” “delightful,” “harkening,” “idyllic,” “intimate,” “listening,” “mild,” “pleasant,” “refreshing,” or “spying.” The leading eighteenth-century German dictionary gives the following as one of the meanings of the verb “lauschen”: “einen geringern Grad des Schlummers zu bezeichnen; ... Im Bette lauschen, im Bette liegen und der stillen Ruhe pflegen ohne zu schlummern” (“to indicate a lesser degree of slumber/quiescence; ... “lauschen” in bed,’ [means] lying in bed and cultivating quiet rest without slumbering”). Bach's librettist used the adverb “lauschend” in this sense of “indolently” for another long poem of his, in which these lines appear: “ein Bach gelinde fliesset, / Sein Wasser mild und lauschend giesset” (“a brook mildly flows, / Its water gently and indolently pours [into the meadows]”). Note that Zephyrus, here addressed by Pallas, is the god of gentle/indolent breezes.

AEOLUS
 So sage mir:
 Warum dann dir
 Besonders dieser Tag so teuer,
 So wert und heilig fällt?
 O Nachteil und Verdruss!
 Soll ich denn eines Weibes Willen
 In meinem Regiment erfüllen?
 PALLAS
 Mein Müller, mein August,
 Der Pierinnen Freud und Lust
 AEOLUS
 Dein Müller, dein August!
 PALLAS
 Und mein geliebter Sohn,
 AEOLUS
 Dein Müller, dein August!
 PALLAS
 Erlebet die vergnügten Zeiten,
 Da ihm die Ewigkeit
 Sein weiser Name prophezeit.
 AEOLUS
 Dein Müller! dein August!
 Der Pierinnen Freud und Lust
 Und dein geliebter Sohn,
 Erlebet die vergnügten Zeiten,
 Da ihm die Ewigkeit
 Sein weiser Name prophezeit:
 Wohlan! ich lasse mich bezwingen,
 Euer Wunsch soll euch gelingen.¹²

While¹³ my Muses' [mount] Helicon¹⁴
 [Has] organized¹⁵ a feast, a goodly celebration
 On its summits.
 AEOLUS
 So tell me:
 Why, then, does this day
 In particular strike you as so precious,
 So worthy and holy?
 Oh, mischief and vexation!
 Shall I then comply with a woman's wishes
 In my governance?
 PALLAS
 My Müller, my August,
 The Pierians' [Muses']¹⁶ joy and delight,
 AEOLUS
 Your Müller, your August!
 PALLAS
 And my beloved son,
 AEOLUS
 Your Müller, your August!
 PALLAS
 Experiences pleasing times,
 Given that his knowing¹⁷ name¹⁸
 Prophesies eternity to him.
 AEOLUS
 Your Müller, your August,
 The Pierians' joy and delight,
 And your beloved son,
 Experiences pleasing times,
 Given that his knowing name
 Prophesies eternity to him.
 Well then, I am defeated;
 Your wish shall come true.

¹²In the poet's printed libretto this line reads, "Seht, euer Wunsch soll euch gelingen" ("Look, your wish shall succeed for you").

¹³"Weil" (normally, "because") was sometimes used as an (old-fashioned) adverb of time ("while"), especially in poetry and in unrefined speech.

¹⁴The name of a mountain in Boeotia, sacred to the Muses.

¹⁵"Anstellen" is here employed in its older-German sense as a synonym for "veranstalten" in its sense of "to organize."

¹⁶The "Pierinnen" are the Muses, said to have been born in Pieria.

¹⁷"Weise" is employed here not in its sense of "scharfsinnig" ("perspicacious," "sagacious") but in its older-German sense of "viel wissend" ("much-knowing").

¹⁸A name prophetic for its literal meaning of "esteemed" and distinguished for its association both with the Roman emperor Caesar Augustus and the then-ruling Saxon elector Friedrich August.

11. AEOLUS
Zurück, zurück, geflügelten Winde,
Besänftiget euch;¹⁹
Doch wehet ihr gleich,
So weht doch itzund nur gelinde!

12. PALLAS
Was Lust?²¹
POMONA
Was Freude?²²
ZEPHYRUS
Welch Vergnügen²³
PALLAS, POMONA, ZEPHYRUS
Entstehet in der Brust,
Dass sich nach unsrer Lust
Die Wünsche müssen fügen.
ZEPHYRUS
So kann ich mich bei grünen Zweigen
Noch fernerhin vergnügt bezeigen.
POMONA
So seh ich mein Ergötzen
An meinen reifen Schätzen.
PALLAS
So richt ich in vergnügter Ruh
Meines Augusts Lustmahl zu.
POMONA, ZEPHYRUS
Wir sind zu deiner Fröhlichkeit
Mit gleicher Lust bereit.

13. POMONA
Zweig und Äste
Zollen dir zu deinem Feste
Ihrer Gaben Überfluss.
ZEPHYRUS

11. AEOLUS
Back off, back off, fleet²⁰ winds;
Calm yourselves.
Yet if you do even waft,
Waft now yet only mildly.

12. PALLAS
What delight?
POMONA
What joy?
ZEPHYRUS
What pleasure
PALLAS, POMONA, ZEPHYRUS
Arises in my breast,
Because wishes must accommodate themselves
To our desire.
ZEPHYRUS
Thus I can still henceforth show myself,
Among [the cool shades of] green branches, to be pleased.²⁴
POMONA
So, I see my delectation
In my ripe [botanical] treasures.
PALLAS
So, I make ready, in pleasing tranquility,
My August's banquet.
POMONA, ZEPHYRUS
We are prepared for your [Pallas's] festiveness
With equal delight.

13. POMONA
Branches and sprigs [shall]
Vouchsafe²⁵ you, at your feast,
The abundance of their gifts.
ZEPHYRUS

¹⁹Bach set lines 1–2 as the da capo, but the poet's printed libretto indicates only line 1 as such.

²⁰“Geflügelt” (literally, “winged”) is used here figuratively as a synonym for “beflügelt” (“quickened” in the sense of “made to move swiftly”; “fleet”).

²¹The poet's printed libretto gives an exclamation mark (as do modern editions), but Bach's score gives a question mark.

²²Again (see the previous line), the poet's printed libretto gives an exclamation mark (as do modern editions), but Bach's score gives a question mark.

²³The poet's printed libretto again gives an exclamation mark (as do modern editions), but Bach's score gives neither an exclamation nor a question mark.

²⁴See movement 5, where Zephyrus was, by contrast, sad and humiliated among “the cool shades” of the “forlorn branches.”

²⁵In Bach's day, “zollen” ordinarily meant “to pay taxes,” but in poetry the verb was often used simply as a synonym for “geben” (“to give”) or “gewähren” (“to bestow/vouchsafe”).

Und mein Scherzen soll und muss,
Deinen August zu verehren,
Dieses Tages Lust vermehren.
POMONA, ZEPHYRUS
Ich bringe die Früchte/mein Lispeln mit Freuden herbei,
Dass alles zum Scherzen vollkommener sei.

14. PALLAS
Ja, ja! ich lad euch selbst zu dieser Feier ein;
Erhebet euch zu meinen Spitzen,
Wo schon die Musen freudig sein,
Und ganz entbrannt vor Eifer sitzen.
Auf! lasset uns, indem wir eilen,
Die Luft mit frohen Wünschen teilen!

15. TUTTI
Vivat August, August vivat,
Sei beglückt, gelehrter²⁷ Mann!
Dein Vergnügen müsse blühen,
Dass dein Lehren, dein Bemühen
Möge solche Pflanzen ziehen,
Womit ein Land sich einstens schmücken kann.

Christian Friedrich Henrici (Picander)

And my frolicking shall and must,
To honor your August,
Increase the delight of this day.
POMONA, ZEPHYRUS
I offer up the fruits/my whispering [of wind] with joy,
So that everything may be more ideal for frolicking.

14. PALLAS
Yes, yes; I invite you indeed to this celebration.
Ascend to my peaks
Where the Muses already are joyful
And sit entirely enflamed with zeal.
Up; let us, while²⁶ we make haste [to ascend],
Rend the air with happy wishes [for wellbeing].

15. TUTTI
Long live August, may August live long;
Be made happy, learned man.
May your pleasure have to blossom
So that your [university] teaching, your endeavoring,
May cultivate [scholarly] “plants” of the ilk
Whereby a land can one day bedeck itself.

(transl. Michael Marissen and Daniel R. Melamed)



Scan or go to <http://www.bachcantatatexts.org/BWV205.1> for an annotated translation

²⁶“Indem” is used here in the temporal sense of “while.”

²⁷The poet’s printed libretto gives “geehrter Mann” (“honored man”) in the da capo, which is most likely just a typo for “gelehrter Mann” (“learned man”).