

“Auf, schmetternde Töne der muntern Trompeten” BWV 207.2 (207a)

1. Auf, schmetternde Töne der muntern Trompeten,
Ihr donnernden Pauken, erhebet den Knall!
Reizende Saiten, ergötzet das Ohr,
Suchet auf Flöten das Schönste zu finden,
Erfüllet mit lieblichem Schall
Unsre so süsse als grünende Linden
Und unser frohes Musenchor!

1. Fire away,¹ blaring melodies² of the sprightly trumpets;
You thundering kettledrums, raise your crashing sound.
Beguiling strings, please the ear;
On flutes, seek to find the [musically] most beautiful;
Fill with lovely clamor
Our lindens [our Leipzig],³ as sweet as [they are] verdurous,
And our happy choir of Muses.⁴

2. Die stille Pleisse spielt mit ihren kleinen Wellen.
Das grüne Ufer fühlt itzt gleichsam neue Kräfte
Und doppelt innre rege Säfte.
Es prangt mit weichem Moos und Klee;
Dort blühet manche schöne Blume,
Hier hebt zur Flora grossem Ruhme
Sich eine Pflanze in die Höh
Und will den Wachstum⁵ zeigen.
Der Pallas holder Hain
Sucht sich in Schmuck und Schimmer zu erneun.
Die Castalinnen singen Lieder,
Die Nymphen gehen hin und wieder
Und wollen hier und dort bei unsern Linden,
Und was? den angenehmen Ort

2. The tranquil Pleisse⁶ flutters,⁷ with its tiny ripples.
Its verdant bank now feels, as it were, new powers
And redoubled lively inner strengths.⁸
It [the riverbank] is resplendent with soft moss and clover;⁹
There, many a beautiful flower blossoms;
Here, to Flora's¹⁰ great glory,
A plant swells into the heights
And wishes to display its growth.

GENERAL NOTE: It is perhaps worth mentioning that this cantata libretto is extraordinarily difficult to translate, as the German text shows all signs of having been written rather hastily and carelessly. Indeed, this is some of the least gratifying poetry to be found in Bach's music.

¹It is not entirely clear whether the “auf” (in this context, literally, “up”) is a command to the trumpets or to the “Töne” (“[aggregate] sound qualities [of multiple trumpets],” or “[musical] notes,” or “melodies”). If the latter, which appears syntactically more likely, then the word “auf,” as a command/interjection, is a synonym for “los!” (“go!,” “come on!,” “get going, you!,” or “fire away”) and at the same time a synonym for the convoluted way that the word “erheben” (normally, “to raise [something],” or “to exalt”) is used of the “crack” or “crash” sound that is made when striking the drums, in line 2. If, however, “auf” is a command to the trumpets per se, then the word would yield the following sense: “Lift up the trumpets [from being held idly at one's side, into the position that music is able to be performed on them].”

²See fn. 27, below.

³The linden tree was a symbol of Leipzig, whose name means “place where lindens grow.”

⁴The “Musenchor” is “the choir of [the nine] muses,” lead by Apollo. In this cantata and in the secular cantata BWV 1162 (formerly Anh. 18), the expression “Musenchor” is used as a metaphor for Bach's own ensembles. BWV 1162 was designed for the reinauguration of the Thomas School, in 1732. Since a school or university was sometimes called a “Musensitz” (“seat of the muses”), it made good sense for the librettist to call Bach's Thomas-School choir a “Musenchor” in these two works. In Bach's “Hercules” cantata BWV 213, the closing ensemble aria is in the voice of the “Chor der Musen.”

⁵The verb “zeigen” (“to show,” or “to display”) takes the accusative, and in modern German, where “Wachstum” (“growth”) is neuter, the line would read “Und will *das* Wachstum zeigen” (“And wishes to display the/its growth”). In older German, this noun could be neuter but was usually given as masculine, hence here “Und will *den* Wachstum zeigen.”

⁶The Pleisse is a small river that flows through Leipzig, a city sometimes known as the “Pleissenstadt” (“city of the Pleisse”).

⁷When employed where the subject is a body of moving water, the German verb “spielen” is synonymous with “wallen,” just as is the case with their corresponding English verbs “to play” and “to flutter.”

⁸In older German, the word “Saft” (“juice,” “sap,” or “radical moisture”) was often employed in combination with the word “Kraft” (“power”) to denote health or viridity, hence the collocations “Kraft und Saft” (“power and strength”) and, as here, “Kräfte und Säfte” (“powers and strengths”). That is, “Saft” could refer to not to moisture per se but to vigor and vitality.

⁹“Moos und Klee” literally means “moss and clover,” but figuratively suggests an ideal bed of green, as in the English expression “to be in the clover.”

¹⁰Roman goddess of flowers.

Ihres schönsten Gegenstandes finden.
Denn dieser Tag bringt allen Lust;
Doch in der Sachsen Brust
Geht diese Lust am allerstärksten fort.

The [sacral] grove,¹¹ loyal¹² to Pallas,¹³
Seeks to renew itself in ornament and luster.
The Castalians¹⁴ sing songs;
The nymphs¹⁵ go to and fro
And wish, here and there, amid our lindens,
... and [wish] what? To find the pleasant site
Of their most beautiful purpose [honoring the gods].
For this day brings delight to all,
But in the Saxons' breast
This delight takes effect¹⁶ most strongly of all.

3. Augustus' Namenstages Schimmer
Verklärt¹⁷ der Sachsen Angesicht.
Gott schützt die frommen Sachsen immer,
Denn unsers Landesvaters Zimmer
Prangt heut in neuen Glückes Strahlen,
Die soll itzt unsre Ehrfurcht malen
Bei dem erwünschten Namenslicht.

3. The luster of August's name day¹⁸
Lights up¹⁹ the Saxon visage.
God ever protects the good²⁰ Saxons,
For the countenance²¹ of our sovereign
Is today resplendent in new rays of good fortune
That our reverence shall now depict²²
Amid the wished-for light of his name.

4. Augustus' Wohl
Ist der treuen Sachsen Wohlergehn;
Augustus' Arm beschützt
Der Sachsen grüne Weiden,
Die Elbe nützt

4. August's wellbeing
Is the faithful Saxons' welfare;
August's arm protects
The Saxons' verdant meadows;

¹¹A "Hain" ("grove") was a small woodland area or a group of trees planted in honor of pagan deities to serve either as places of worship or for the reception of images. The Luther Bibles of Bach's day use this word specifically in this way, e.g., in Exodus 34:13.

¹²"Hold" is apparently being used here in one of its older German senses, "inclined to like to see and promote the best of one's master"; this is the way the word is used in the common older German collocation "treu und hold" ("faithful and loyal"). That is, this line is apparently saying that the grove (see fn. 11, above) is loyal to Pallas, not that the grove is considered lovely or dear or favorable by Pallas.

¹³Probably Pallas Athena (Minerva to the Romans), Greek goddess of war, wisdom, weaving, and chastity.

¹⁴Nymphs of a spring at Delphi on mount Parnassus, sacred to the Muses.

¹⁵Evidently not the Castalians of the previous line, but other nymphs.

¹⁶Here the separable verb "fortgehen" is apparently being used in its sense of "für sich gehen" ("to take effect").

¹⁷Some modern sources give this word as "erklärt" ("clarifies," "explains"), probably a typographical error.

¹⁸Saxon Elector Friedrich August II (King August III of Poland); the name day was August 3.

¹⁹"Verklären" can mean "transfigure," and often does in religious contexts. But here the verb probably means "light up" or "illuminate," in keeping with the metaphor of this whole aria.

²⁰The adjective "fromm" usually means "pious," and that sense is most likely meant in part here too, but most likely it extends more broadly to mean "good" in the sense, e.g., that American politicians today use this word in such expressions as "I am proud to serve the good people of the state of New York." Consider, too, e.g., such expressions in older German as "ein frommes Pferd," which refers not to a pious horse but one that is good for riding.

²¹"Zimmer" is apparently not being used here in its literal sense as a "room" or "chamber" in the king's castle or elsewhere, but as a synonym for "Antlitz" ("countenance"), paralleling the use of "Angesicht" ("visage") in line 2. It was said, e.g., in older colloquial German: "Wieviel wurden in dem oberen *Zimmer* des Kopfs nur ein Fenster haben?" ("How many [people] would have only one 'window' [i.e., eye] in the 'upper room' of the head?"). Those knowledgeable in scripture would have recognized a reference here to Matthew 18:9 concerning a person with one eye: "Und so dich dein Auge ärgert, reiss es aus, und wirf es von dir; es ist dir besser, dass du einäugig zum Leben eingehst, denn dass du zween Augen habest, und werdest in das höllische Feuer geworfen" ("And if your eye causes you offence, tear it out, and cast it from you; it is better for you to go into [eternal] life [in heaven] one-eyed, than that you might have two eyes [here on earth], and might be cast [in the end] into the [eternal] fire of hell").

²²"Malen" (literally, "to paint"), employed in this instance for its rhyme with "Strahlen" ("rays"), is apparently here being used as a synonym for "schildern," in its sense of "to verbally paint a narration or poetic image"—which is what this very cantata is to be understood as doing.

Dem Kaufmann mit so vielen Freuden;
 Des Hofes Pracht und Flor
 Stellt uns Augustus' Glücke vor;
 Die Untertanen sehn
 An jedem Ort ihr Wohlergehn;
 Des Mavors heller Stahl muss alle Feinde schrecken,
 Um uns vor allem Unglück zu bedecken.
 Drum freut sich heute der Merkur
 Mit seinen weisen Söhnen
 Und findet bei diesen Freudentönen
 Der ersten güldnen Zeiten Spur.
 Augustus mehrt das Reich.
 Irenens Lorbeer wird nie bleich;
 Die Linden wollen schöner grünen,
 Um uns mit ihrem Flor
 Bei diesem hohen Namenstag zu dienen.

The Elbe²³ serves
 The merchant with so many joys;
 The splendor and florescence of the court
 Showcases for us August's good fortune;
 His subjects behold
 Everywhere their welfare;
 Mars's²⁴ bright steel must frighten all enemies,
 So as to shield us from all misfortune.
 Thus today Mercury²⁵ rejoices
 With his wise sons²⁶
 And finds, in these melodies²⁷ of joy,
 Vestige of the first golden eras.
 August enhances the realm.
 Irene's laurel tree²⁸ never yellows;
 The lindens [of Leipzig] wish to grow more beautifully verdant,
 So as with their florescence
 To attend to us on this grand nameday.

5. Mich kann die süsse Ruhe laben,
 Ich kann hier mein Vergnügen haben,
 Wir beide stehn hier höchst beglückt.
 Denn unsre fette Saaten lachen
 Und können viel Vergnügen machen,
 Weil sie kein Feind und Wetter drückt.
 Wo solche holde Stunden kommen,
 Da hat das Glücke zugenommen,
 Das uns der heitre Himmel schickt.

5. Sweet rest can refresh me;
 Here I can have my enjoyment;
 We two [allegorical characters]²⁹ stand here, most highly blessed.
 For our fruitful crops laugh³⁰
 And can make much merriment,
 Because no enemy and [bad] weather oppresses them.
 Where such fair hours come,
 There good fortune has increased
 That the clear blue sky sends us.

6. Augustus schützt die frohen Felder,
 Augustus liebt die grünen Wälder,
 Wenn sein erhabner Mut
 Im Jagen niemals eher ruht,
 Bis er ein schönes Tier gefällt.
 Der Landmann sieht mit Lust
 Auf seinem Acker schöne Garben.

6. August protects the happy fields;
 August loves the verdant forests,
 When his sublime bravery
 In the hunt never rests
 Before he has felled³¹ a fine beast.
 The peasant beholds, with delight,

²³River in Dresden, seat of Saxony and home of August.

²⁴“Mavors” was another name for Mars, the Roman god of war.

²⁵Roman god of commerce, messages, trickery; he was regarded as a patron deity of Leipzig.

²⁶These sons of the god Mercury are the Lares, protective gods of Roman mythology.

²⁷“Ton” (plural, “Töne”) means “tone” or “[musical] note” or “sound,” but in older German it can also mean “tune” or “melody.”

²⁸Irene was the Greek goddess of peace; in ancient Greece, wreaths of honor were made up of foliage from laurel trees.

²⁹In the lost printed librettos that were distributed to Bach's original listeners, the four voices of the choir were most likely identified as specific allegorical characters. (They are not identified in his extant performing materials.) The soprano and bass sing this duet aria, and given the content of their poetry elsewhere in this cantata, they might plausibly have been the characters “Irene” (“Peace”) and “Mars” (“War”).

³⁰It may sound strange for “crops” to “laugh,” but this very expression (“Saaten lachen”) is indeed found occasionally in German poetry, where “lachen” is likewise used of various inanimate objects that appear to be alive with movement, sound, or the play of light and colour, as if expressing joyous feeling. Martin Luther wrote, commenting on Joel 1:10-12, that “die Poeten sagen, die Wiesen und Saat lachen, das ist, sie [als ‘stehende Saaten’] stehen schön; hier aber sagt er das Gegenteil, das Erdreich traure, der Wein stehe beschämt” (“the poets say the hayfields and crop laugh, that is, they [as ‘standing crops,’ i.e., as crops that are not yet cut or felled] grow beautifully; but here he [the prophet Joel] says the opposite: May the soil mourn, may the vine grow in a shamefaced manner”).

³¹“Gefället” here is the past tense of “fällen” (“to fell”), not a form of the verb “gefallen” (“to please”).

Ihm ist stets wohl bewusst,
Wie keiner darf in Sachsen darben,
Wer sich nur in sein Glücke findt
Und seine Kräfte recht ergründt.

7. Preiset, späte Folgezeiten,
Nebst dem gütigen Geschick
Des Augustus grosses Glück.
Denn in des Monarchen Taten
Könnt ihr Sachsens Wohl erraten;
Man kann aus dem Schimmer lesen,
Wer Augustus sei gewesen.

8. Ihr Fröhlichen, herbei!
Erblickt, ihr Sachsen und ihr grosse Staaten,
Aus Augustus' holden Taten,
Was Weisheit und auch Stärke sei.
Sein allzeit starker Arm stützt teils Sarmatien,
Teils auch der Sachsen Wohlergehn.
Wir sehen als getreue Untertanen,
Durch Weisheit die vor uns erlangte Friedensfahne.
Wie sehr er uns geliebt,
Wie mächtig er die Sachsen stets geschützt,
Zeigt dessen Säbels Stahl, der vor uns Sachsen blitzet.
Wir können unsern Landesvater
Als einen Held und Sieges Rater
In dem grossmächtigsten August
Mit heisser Ehrfurcht itzt verehren
Und unsre Wünsche mehren.
Ja, ja, ihr starken Helden, seht der Sachsen
unerschöpfte Kräfte
Und ihren hohen Schutzgott an und Sachsens
Rautensäfte!
Itzt soll der Saiten Ton

Beautiful sheaves [gathered] on his cultivated land.³²
He is constantly well aware
How in Saxony no one may live in want
Who but finds himself in his [August's] good fortune
And correctly fathoms his [August's] powers.

7. Praise, [you] latter times to come,³³
Alongside kind fate,
August's great good fortune.
For in the monarch's deeds
You [latter times] can divine Saxony's wellbeing;
One can read from the luster [of Saxony's wellbeing]
Who Augustus was.

8. You happy ones, draw nigh.
Perceive, you Saxons and you great states,
From August's fair deeds,
What wisdom and also strength is.
His always strong arm, in due proportion,³⁵ upholds the
Sarmatians'/Poles'³⁶—
[And] in due proportion also the Saxons'—welfare.
We behold, as faithful subjects,
The banner of peace obtained for us by [August's] wisdom.³⁷
[Just] how dearly he has loved us,
How mightily he has constantly protected the Saxons,
His sabre's steel displays, which flashes for us Saxons.
We can now venerate our sovereign
As a hero and provider of victory³⁸
In [the person of] the most mighty August,
With ardent reverence,
And enhance our wishes.
Yes, yes, you strong heroes, look upon the Saxons' unexhausted
powers
And their grand tutelary god, and Saxony's [protective] rue-plant
juices.³⁹

³²In Bach's day too, "Acker" and "Feld" were often treated as fully synonymous, referring to what in English is called a "field" (of land). Strictly speaking, a field was an "Acker" only if it was cultivated land (even if it was sometimes left fallow), and a field was a "Feld" whether or not its potentially cultivatable land was ever in fact cultivated. Logically, however, special kinds of "Felder"/"Äcker," such as "Winterfelder" and "Winteräcker" ("winter fields"), or "Weizenfelder" or "Weizenäcker" ("wheat fields"), were indeed fully synonymous.

³³The uncommon expressions "späte Folgezeit" and "späte Folgezeiten" were essentially synonymous with the more frequently employed expression "späte Nachwelt" ("latter posterity" or "latter generations").

³⁵"Teils" in modern German means "partly," which is not quite the sense that the cantata poet seems to be projecting here. One might invent the word "apportionally" to capture the poet's sense, but perhaps the closest equivalent in actual English usage would be "in due proportion."

³⁶"Sarmatia" was the Greek and Roman name for parts of Eastern Europe, used here as a name for Poland. Saxons associated "Sarmatia" with vaguely alien and strange fairy-tale-like customs. This cantata, like several other secular cantatas of Bach's, reflects and promotes the propagandistic Saxon notion that the supposedly uncouth Poles and purportedly civilized Saxons together both fully welcomed the Saxon August as ruler of Saxony and Poland.

³⁷"Durch Weisheit die vor uns erlangte Friedensfahne" is presumably to be parsed as "Die durch Weisheit vor uns erlangte Friedensfahne."

³⁸"Siegesrater" is not a standard German word. "Sieges" straightforwardly means "of victory," but "Rater" is ambiguous. "Rater" could, in principle, be a synonym for "Ratgeber" ("adviser") in the sense of "Bestimmer des zu tuenden" ("determiner of what to do"), or for "Errater" ("diviner," e.g. of riddles), or for "Vorsorger" ("provider"). The last of these seems to make the most sense for the cantata.

³⁹"Raute" is the herb known in English as "rue," and "Rautensäfte" are extracts made from it that were thought to have various protective powers, especially against poisonous-snake bites and the like. The various Saxon coats of arms have traditionally featured depictions of the leaves of rue plants.

Die frohe Lust ausdrücken,
 Denn des Augustus fester Thron
 Muss uns allzeit beglücken.
 Augustus gibt uns steten Schatten,
 Der aller Sachsen und Sarmaten Glück erhält,
 Der stete Augenmerk der Welt,
 Den alle Augen hatten.
 O heitres, hohes Namenslicht!
 O Name, der die Freude mehrt!
 O allerwünschtes Angedenken,
 Wie stärkst du unsre Pflicht!
 Ihr frohe Wünsche und ihr starke Freuden, steigt!
 Die Pleisse sucht durch ihr Bezeigen,³⁴
 Die Linden in so jungen Zweigen
 Der schönen Stunden Lust und Wohl zu krön'n
 Und zu erhöh'n.

Now shall the strings' melody⁴⁰
 Express happy delight,
 For August's secure throne
 Must always make us blessed.
 August gives us constant [protective] shade,⁴¹
 [August, he] who upholds the good fortune of all Saxons and
 Sarmatians/Poles,
 [He who is] the constant focus⁴² of the world,
 Which has had all eyes [on it].
 O clear, grand light of [August's] name!
 O name that enhances joy!
 O remembrance wished for by all,⁴³
 How you strengthen our [sense of] duty!
 Soar, you happy wishes and you strong joys.
 The [river] Pleisse, by its [deferential] bearing,⁴⁴
 [And] the lindens, in such tender shoots,
 Seek to crown and to exalt
 The beautiful hours' pleasure and wellbeing.

9. August lebe,
 Lebe, König!
 O Augustus, unser Schutz,
 Sei der starren Feinde Trutz,
 Lebe lange deinem Land,
 Gott schütz deinen Geist und Hand,
 So muss durch Augustus' Leben
 Unsers Sachsens Wohl bestehn,
 So darf sich kein Feind erheben
 Wider unser Wohlergehn.

9. [Long] live August,
 [Long] live [the] king!⁴⁵
 O August, our protection,
 Be the obstinate enemies' mortification;⁴⁶
 Live long [in service] to your land;
 May God protect your spirit and hand;
 Thus by means of August's life
 Our Saxony's wellbeing must abide,
 Thus no enemy can rise up
 Against our welfare.

(transl. Michael Marissen and Daniel R. Melamed)



³⁴Modern editions do not give the comma here that is found in Bach's original performing part, whose verbal text is in his handwriting.

⁴⁰See fn. 27, above.

⁴¹In the sense of a protective umbra.

⁴²In older German, this noun was usually given as neuter ("das Augenmerk") but was otherwise, like in this cantata, given as masculine ("der Augenmerk").

⁴³The adjective "allerwünscht" refers to the remembrance being "wished-for by all," not to its being the "wished-for the very most intensely." The latter sense would require "allererwünscht" rather than "allerwünscht."

⁴⁴"Bezeigen" is being used here in its older German sense as a synonym for "Verhalten" ("behavior," "conduct," "demeanor," "bearing").

⁴⁵"Es lebe der König" is the expression for the toast "Long live the King!"

⁴⁶The spelling "Trutz" is employed here to effect a rhyme with "Schutz." The more common spelling was "Trotz," a word that had a wide variety of meanings in older German. In this cantata movement, "Trutz" apparently carries the sense of the word "Kränkung" ("mortification") in its extended use as a synonym for "Beschämung" ("humiliation"). "Trotz" is employed in this same way in a striking passage from Luther's *Table Talk*, which states, "Luther hat oft gesagt: wenn er auf dem Bette stürbe, so sei es dem Papst eine grosse Schande und Trotz" ("Luther often said: if he [i.e., Luther] might die on his bed [i.e., as opposed to being capitally punished], then it would be a great shame and mortification to the Pope").

Scan or go to <http://www.bachcantatatexts.org/BWV207.2> for an annotated translation