

Preface

It would be redundant to add further praise to the famous author of these lyrics, since his works have already received much recognition. One can, however, not be grateful enough for the distribution of this collection and is totally convinced of its enormous benefit. I for my part have been very much moved by the excellence of the noble and instructive thoughts these lyrics contain and felt compelled to set all of them to music. It is well known that didactic odes can not be set to music as easily as lyrical poems. However, if didactic odes are as beautifully written as those of Mr. Gellert, one feels compelled to make all efforts to embellish their purpose so that their use will become more widely spread.

It is solely for this reason that I composed these melodies. My special aim was to make these odes more attainable and enjoyable for music lovers .

Whenever possible, these melodies were written in view of the entire poem. I say, whenever possible, because anyone who understands music will also understand that one cannot expect too much from a melody which has more than one verse and in which the diversity of characteristic marks, of one or multi-syllabic words, of subject matters etc. will make a infinite difference in the musical presentation. My compositions will show that I tried in various ways to circumvent these disparities.

I gave my melodies the necessary harmony and ornaments. In this way I avoided surrendering them to the stiffness of a general bass player and at the same time they can be used as instructive pieces. Since the singing voice is consistently high, this will be a great relief for untrained voices.

I deliver these pieces in the order in which I have written them. I added another theme to a few of the songs to achieve greater variation. As a result the words are a bit more spaced out. Hopefully this fact will be as insignificant as it has been in case of elaborate choral settings , where this will appear much more frequently. The melodies which show captions such as 'lively', 'cheerful', et al. require a moderate tempo, otherwise one can easily fall into a bold interpretation and can easily forget that these are religious songs.

Last but not least I hope again for the approval of the experts and would be very grateful if my good intentions would be recognized.

Berlin, February 1st, 1758

C.P.E. Bach

Translation by Ulla Godosar