

# J. S. BACH



**“Betrachte, meine Seele”  
from St. John’s Passion**

**Piano arrangement  
by Eleonor Bindman**

## Notes on the “Betrachte, meine Seele” arrangement

This wonderful bass aria from “St. John’s Passion” is scored for low strings, lute and organ continuo and the proximity of the instrumental registers made it very challenging to adapt for the piano. The result seems “pianistic” enough yet not “baroque,” because Bach’s harmonic lute accompaniment gains a luxurious “romantic” feel on the piano. Since the aria is very short, I took the liberty of repeating it in a higher register, as any pianist would naturally prefer to have the melody in the right hand, with left hand accompaniment. I am grateful to Stuart Arlott for suggesting this gem as a possible arrangement and would like to dedicate this piano version to his son Jules.

The melody here is notated (for convenience and continuity) as an upper voice of the left hand, but in practice it’s almost equally shared with the right hand. When reading through the transcription, it should become clear which melody notes are within reach of either hand. Some repeated bass notes are put in parentheses if they involve stretching wider than an octave and they may be skipped. The slow tempo should help you navigate this dense texture and careful pedaling will take care of executing the melody with an expressive *legato cantabile*.

Eleonor Bindman  
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Betrachte, meine Seel, mit ängstlichem Vergnügen,  
Mit bitterer Lust und halb beklemmtem Herzen  
Dein höchstes Gut in Jesu Schmerzen,  
Wie dir auf Dornen, so ihn stechen,  
Die Himmelsschlüsselblumen blühn!  
Du kannst viel süße Frucht von seiner Wermut brechen  
Drum sieh ohn Unterlass auf ihn!

Contemplate, my soul, with anxious pleasure,  
with bitter joy and half-constricted heart,  
your highest Good in Jesus’ suffering,  
how for you, out of the thorns that pierce Him,  
the tiny ‘keys of Heaven’ bloom!  
You can pluck much sweet fruit from his wormwood;  
therefore gaze without pause upon Him!

# "Betrachte, meine Seele"

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From St. John's Passion

J.S. Bach

Adagio ♩=60

*p*

*mf marcato*

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. simile

*p*

*mf marcato*

Ped. \*

3

6

9

"Betrachte, meine Seele"

12

15

18 *mf cantabile*

21

23

25

Musical notation for measures 25-26. The piece is in G minor (three flats). Measure 25 features a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a complex accompaniment. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5. A dynamic marking  $\text{mf}$  is present. Measure 26 continues the melodic and accompanimental patterns.

27

Musical notation for measures 27-28. Measure 27 shows a continuation of the melodic line in the treble and the accompaniment in the bass. Measure 28 features a melodic phrase with a fermata and a dynamic marking  $\text{mf}$ .

29

Musical notation for measures 29-30. Measure 29 begins with a melodic phrase in the treble and a bass line. A dynamic marking  $f$  is present. Measure 30 continues with a melodic line and a bass line with a dynamic marking  $f$ .

31

*molto espressivo*

Musical notation for measures 31-32. Measure 31 is marked *molto espressivo* and features a melodic line with a dynamic marking  $p$ . Measure 32 continues with a melodic line and a bass line. A dynamic marking  $p$  is present. A tempo change is indicated from *rit.* to *a tempo*.

33

Musical notation for measures 33-34. Measure 33 features a melodic line with a dynamic marking  $pp$ . Measure 34 continues with a melodic line and a bass line. A dynamic marking  $pp$  is present. A tempo change is indicated from *poco rit.* to *a tempo*.