

If Thou Art Near

"Bist du bei Mir"

Johann Sebastian Bach

Transcribed for piano by
Elinor Remick Warren

Piano

Andante con molto espressione

mp cantando e molto legato

* The melody is in large notes, and must be brought out at all times.

First system of musical notation. Treble and bass staves. Key signature: two flats. The system begins with the tempo marking *a tempo*. The bass staff starts with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and a melodic line. The treble staff has a piano (*p*) dynamic marking towards the end. There are various articulations and slurs throughout.

Second system of musical notation. Treble and bass staves. The system begins with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The bass staff has a *l.h.* (left hand) marking. The treble staff has a *poco espr.* (poco espr.) marking. The system ends with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. There are various articulations and slurs throughout.

Third system of musical notation. Treble and bass staves. The system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic, followed by a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The treble staff has a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking. The system ends with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. There are various articulations and slurs throughout.

Fourth system of musical notation. Treble and bass staves. The system begins with a *molto dim.* (molto dim.) marking. The bass staff has a piano (*p*) dynamic. The treble staff has a *poco espr.* (poco espr.) marking. The system ends with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. There are various articulations and slurs throughout.

Fifth system of musical notation. Treble and bass staves. The system begins with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The bass staff has a *molto cresc.* (molto cresc.) marking. The treble staff has a *broadly* marking. The system ends with a *rall.* (rallentando) marking. There are various articulations and slurs throughout.

ten. *a tempo* *ten.*

fp *p* *molto rit.* *pp con amore* *p*

cresc. *mf*

poco rall. *mp*

poco espr. *mp* *mf*

Meno mosso *f marcato* *sempre più rit. e cresc.* *sfz* *marcato*

This tender melody, *If Thou Art Near*, (*Bist du bei mir*) reflects an impression of the great Bach, of which we are perhaps not as aware as that side of his character which shines through his inspired church compositions or his expressive fugues.

While Bach was of a deeply religious nature (the bulk of his music being written for the church), he was a jolly, wholesome man, who loved his wife, his large family of children, and life in general. Far from being the stern gentleman with the severe white wig we meet in familiar portraits, Bach's expansive nature exemplified most of the enduring human virtues. He wrote a number of love songs for his wife, for he adored her with a tender regard that only his beautiful music could adequately express.

Thus we find today, after more than two hundred years, this tranquil but impassioned memento of his eternal devotion for his Anna Magdalena. This transcription for piano maintains, insofar as possible, the straightforwardness and warm simplicity that characterizes the original song.

Elinor Remick Warren [1939]

Warren transcribed Bach's famous air in 1939, the third year of her marriage to Z. Wayne Griffin. The composition was subsequently performed by Warren in concert, and by other pianists, notably Stewart Wille on his many tours as accompanist for Lawrence Tibbett. Following the death of Griffin, with whom she said she was "always in love," after a forty-five-year marriage, Warren began her piano practice with this composition each day, feeling that every time she played it her husband was close in spirit.

Virginia Bortin [1996]