

BACH



NOTES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN BACH SOCIETY

## FRANZ LISZT AND HIS EARLY RECEPTION OF BACH'S ORGAN WORKS\*

RUSSELL STINSON

In the fall of 1857, some fifteen months after the death of her husband, Clara Schumann embarked on a lengthy concert tour of Germany and Switzerland. She performed first in Dresden and Leipzig, sharing the bill with the violinist Joseph Joachim. At some point during their stay in Dresden, the two artists were treated to a performance by Johann Gottlob Schneider on the sumptuous Silbermann organ at the court church, the same instrument on which Schneider had often played for Robert Schumann. Also present was arguably the era's most famous musical personality, who had traveled to the Saxon capital to conduct the premiere performance of his *Dante Symphony*.

We have no idea who invited Liszt to this gathering, but it seems unlikely that either Clara or Joachim did. Clara had by this time developed a great animosity toward the man as well as his music, and in one of her letters to Joachim she went so far as to say that she detested Liszt from the depths of her soul.<sup>1</sup> Joachim had likewise severed all ties to his erstwhile mentor, having confessed to Liszt two months earlier that his compositions did nothing but antagonize him. Both Clara and Joachim found the music of Liszt vulgar and lacking in substance, as did such conservatives as Johannes Brahms and the critic Eduard Hanslick. Their assaults on the so-called New German School, as represented by Liszt and his followers, are quite notorious.

It is less well-known that a small battle in "the War of the Romantics" was fought in the Dresden court church that day,

with Liszt and Joachim firing salvos on the subject of Bach's organ works. Our source is a letter written by Clara a week or two after Schneider's performance and addressed to her half brother, the composer Woldemar Bargiel:

I had a pleasant time in Dresden with Joachim, who played more beautifully and wonderfully than ever . . . Liszt's meeting with him showed that they were ill-suited to be together for a minute . . . Once, when Schneider was playing us glorious things on the organ—the most beautiful works of Bach—and Joachim exclaimed, "What divine music!" Liszt replied, "Hm, dry as bones." Joachim answered, "Well, I must say I prefer it to jelly." Liszt then quickly disappeared.<sup>2</sup>

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Clara evidently enjoyed telling this story the rest of her life, if only because Liszt had been outwitted by one of her best friends (who, of course, was accusing Liszt of mawkishness).<sup>3</sup> Still, since Schneider was an old colleague of hers, she probably took Liszt's remark as a personal affront. She might even have felt an uncomfortable sense of déjà vu, as nine years earlier in the same city she had arranged an elaborate musical dinner for Liszt, only to have the guest of honor dismiss her husband's Piano Quintet, with its fugal finale, as "Leipzigerisch." This famous put-down was Liszt's way of saying that such Leipzig-based composers as Schumann and Mendelssohn relied far too heavily on the complex, polyphonic style of a certain Leipziger from the previous century. To surmise from both incidents, Liszt eschewed Bachian counterpoint in his own compositions—because he deemed the style outmoded if not anachronistic—and felt nothing but contempt for Bach's music.

The first of these conclusions contains a grain of truth, for Liszt's compositions are relatively free of Bachian influence (although he wrote not only a fantasy and fugue for the organ but a prelude and fugue for the instrument based on Bach's very name). The second conclusion, however, is quite erroneous. True, there can be no question that Liszt championed Bach's music with far greater discrimination than did either Schumann or Mendelssohn—according to one of his pupils, he made a big distinction between Bach's "immortal" and "mortal" works.<sup>4</sup> But Liszt also regarded several of Bach's sacred vocal works, especially the *St. Matthew Passion*, among the greatest creations in all of music. As a pianist, he played and taught Bach's harpsichord works his whole life, with an emphasis on pieces that allowed for virtuosic display. He seems to have approached the organ music in much the same vein, learning only those works that he felt would make the most brilliant effect at the piano. (This penchant for virtuosity, along with certain religious factors, would help to explain Liszt's total neglect of Bach's organ chorales.) Consequently, Liszt's knowledge of Bach's organ music was rather limited. He may not really have known more than a dozen works. Yet as a concert pianist, piano transcriber, and piano teacher, he made a decisive impact on the reception of this repertory throughout the nineteenth century.

Liszt's father made sure that his son, to quote Robert Schumann, "knew his Sebastian Bach." Indeed, the boy was required every day to play and transpose (!) six different Bach fugues, presum-

ably ones from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. Upon the family's move to Vienna in 1822, he continued to study the works of Bach under Carl Czerny, who would go on to issue a complete edition of the "Forty-Eight." A year later, the family relocated to Paris, the city that would serve as Liszt's home base over the next dozen years. Little is known about Liszt's Bach reception

during this period, but surely it is significant that one of his closest acquaintances was the organist and Bach champion Chrétien Urhan. Perhaps it was Urhan who introduced the youth to Bach's organ music.

Our first concrete bit of evidence linking Liszt to Bach's organ music dates from early 1836, by which time the twenty-four-year-old's life had changed dramatically: a year earlier, he

had eloped to Switzerland with his mistress Marie d'Agoult, and in December 1835 she had given birth to the couple's first child, Blandine. Three months after the blessed event, Liszt was eager for his mother to see her first grandchild (his father had long since died). In anticipation that she would undertake the long journey from Paris, he wrote to her in March 1836 with the instruction that she bring along two of his musical scores:

Pack in your suitcase two volumes of music with the following titles (they are located in the same section of the library): *The Art of Fugue* by Bach and *Six Fugues with Pedal* by Bach (I am not completely sure whether I still have the latter work).<sup>5</sup>

Considering that (1) no other set of six Bach fugues for any medium was in print at this time and that (2) Liszt occupied himself with this collection his entire adult life, the latter title must refer to the so-called Six Great Preludes and Fugues for organ, BWV 543-48. Liszt's uncertainty about whether he "still" owned this edition suggests that it had been in his possession for several years. No doubt he planned on performing from (and studying) these two volumes himself, but he may also have intended to share them with his pupils at the Geneva Conservatoire. His citation of the Six Great as "fugues" rather than "preludes and fugues" accords with nineteenth-century practice.

During this period, Liszt and d'Agoult counted as two of their best friends the writer George Sand and the linguist Adolphe Pictet. Both were present at Fribourg on 15 September 1836 to hear Liszt test out the newly built Aloys Mooser organ at the

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church of St. Nicholas. According to Pictet’s detailed description, Liszt mesmerized his friends with a lengthy improvisation on this huge instrument, at one point “passing into the fugal style of Meister Sebastian Bach.”<sup>6</sup> His extemporization of a fugue during this performance may be interpreted, in a very broad sense, as a kind of *hommage* to Bach’s organ fugues.

We next hear of Liszt in connection with Bach’s organ music three years later, at which time he and d’Agoult were living in Rome, awaiting the birth of their third child. Here is an excerpt from a letter, only recently published, that he drafted to Pictet in April 1839:

Marie told you, I believe, that I had conceived a beautiful and lasting passion for Lord Byron. But now I am experiencing another enthusiasm. Guess for whom? For Johann Sebastian Bach. Do you know his *Passion* at all well? What a masterpiece, my friend! It is truly prodigious. I recommend to you above all the opening Chorus—the exposition; the way the two Choruses and the Chorale are done is admirable. When we see one another again, I shall get you to touch and absorb these marvels. The *6 Fugues with Pedal* are magnificent too. If you don’t possess them, I shall send them to you.<sup>7</sup>

Again Liszt refers to the Six Great Preludes and Fugues for organ, and his zealous tone indicates more than a passing interest.

In the meantime, Liszt had begun to play actual *works* by Bach on the organ. On 1 May, eight days before the birth of his son Daniel, he played an unspecified Bach fugue on the organ of the church of San Luigi di Francesi at a worship service organized by the French embassy.<sup>8</sup> Despite his admiration of the Six Great, at no point in his life would Liszt have had the pedal technique necessary to negotiate any of these fugues on the organ. Most likely, he chose something from another of his favorite collections, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*.

The year 1839 was a milestone in Liszt’s musical career, for it inaugurated an eight-year period during which he secured his reputation as the leading pianist in the world. He performed everywhere from Ireland to Turkey, establishing the concept

of the piano recital as we know it today. He played the entire spectrum of the keyboard repertory as it then existed as well as a multitude of his own arrangements, the latter encompassing everything from songs by Schubert and Schumann to symphonies by Beethoven and Berlioz. He also performed his transcriptions of organ works by Bach.

Liszt is not known to have played any of his Bach transcriptions in public prior to his concerts in Greater Berlin during the winter of 1841–42. His program at the Singakademie on 5 January 1842 featured an E-minor organ fugue by Bach; four days later, in Potsdam, he played his arrangement of a Bach organ prelude and fugue in A minor.<sup>9</sup> As to the identity of Liszt’s models here, one need look no further than the Six Great Preludes and Fugues, which begin with a work in A minor (BWV 543) and end with one in E minor (BWV 548).

“Lisztomania” was the term coined by the poet Heinrich Heine for the wildly enthusiastic public response to Liszt’s performances in Berlin. The cognoscenti were impressed too. One critic wrote apropos of Liszt’s rendition of the E-minor fugue (known as the “Wedge”) that the artist “played a fugue with pedal by Johann Sebastian Bach, taking the two [actually three] manual voices mostly with the right, and the third [actually fourth] pedal voice with the left hand, without the use of an actual pedalboard, with a cleanliness and clarity that left nothing to be desired, only [the wish] to marvel to an even greater extent at the immense proficiency of the player.”<sup>10</sup> This same writer praised the “clarity” with which Liszt had played Bach’s Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue at his very first appearance in Berlin that season.

For reasons that must involve the gigue-like nature of the fugue subject, Liszt evidently performed the A-minor throughout this entire eight-year period. According to one report, which

concerns Liszt’s sojourn in Montpellier during August 1844, he sometimes resorted to gimmickry when playing the work in front of an audience. Liszt’s official business in Montpellier that month was a series of public recitals, yet he found time one day to call on Jean-Joseph-Bonaventure Laurens, a painter, writer, and organist who was personally acquainted with all four composers

under consideration in this book.<sup>11</sup> What is more, Laurens was one of the staunchest proponents of Bach’s organ music anywhere in France at that time. As a critic, Laurens lauded Bach’s organ works as the composer’s most perfect creations, just as

But now I am experiencing another enthusiasm. Guess for whom? For Johann Sebastian Bach. Do you know his *Passion* at all well? What a masterpiece, my friend! It is truly prodigious.

he lamented that they were completely unknown in France because there were no French organists who could perform such demanding pedal parts.

On the whole, Liszt was warmly received. His host served him lunch and even drew his portrait. Laurens, however, also suspected that Liszt was a philistine. Writing some forty years later, Laurens's brother described the visit as follows:

Liszt appeared in 1844 at the home of J. B. Laurens in Montpellier, with recommendations from Mendelssohn, [Ferdinand] Hiller, etc.

—“You have the reputation,” J. B. stated brusquely,

point blank, “of being as big a charlatan as you are a great artist!” He rather brutally took the bull by the horns. Liszt did not flinch and even took on a spirit of frank and witty amiability. J. B. drew his portrait. They lunched, chatting about so many of the most interesting things and musical celebrities.

—“I have to ask you,” J. B. said at one point, “to play for me a certain piece by Sebastian Bach for organ with obligato pedal, the first in the volume with the six fugues, the one in A minor so difficult that you are without a doubt the only person in the world who can tackle it. This is a unique opportunity for me today that I cannot pass up.”

— “Right now? . . . How do you want me to play it?”

— “How? But . . . the way it ought to be played!”

— “Here it is a first time, as the author must have understood it, played it himself, or intended it to be played.” And Liszt played. And it was admirable, the very perfection of the classical style and exactly in conformity with the original.

— “Here it is a second time, as I feel it, with a slightly more picturesque movement, a more modern style and the effects demanded by an improved instrument.” And it was, with these nuances, different . . . but no less admirable.

“I have to ask you,” J. B. said at one point, “to play for me a certain piece by Sebastian Bach for organ with obligato pedal, the first in the volume with the six fugues, the one in A minor so difficult that you are without a doubt the only person in the world who can tackle it . . .”

—“Finally, here it is a third time, as I would play it for the public . . . to astonish, as a charlatan!” And, lighting a cigar that passed at moments from between his lips to his fingers, executing with his ten fingers the part written for the pedals, and indulging in other *tours de force* and prestidigitation, he was prodigious, incredible, fabulous, and received gratefully with enthusiasm.<sup>12</sup>

This anecdote offers compelling testimony to Liszt's ability to play a single composition in a variety of styles. It also shows, contrary to what has been printed in the secondary literature, that he was capable early in his career of performing a work with the utmost fidelity. On a more technical level, one may conclude that

Liszt first rendered the piece without any crescendos or decrescendos, in simulation of the organ or harpsichord, and that he next played it with an abundance of dynamic shadings. When he played the work a third time, he doubtless subjected it to those “paraphrase” techniques for which he is justly famous, such as scales, arpeggios, trills, tremolos, and glissandos. (The clause concerning his execution of the pedal part “with his ten fingers” may refer to nothing more than octave doublings of pedal solos.) Most spectacular of all, he topped off these pyrotechnics with some literal fire in the form of a lighted cigar. Like Schumann and Brahms, Liszt was an avid cigar aficionado, so this trick may have been another of his trademarks. Indeed, he is reported to have accompanied Joachim in the last movement of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto with a lighted cigar in his right hand the entire time!<sup>13</sup>

Liszt would go on to publish his piano transcription of the A-minor, and he continued to play and teach the piece right up to his death in 1886. His lifelong advocacy of the work is surely one reason for its enduring popularity.

<sup>1</sup>See Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988-97), vol. 2, pp. 340-51.

<sup>2</sup>Letter of 15 November 1857, published in Berthold Litzmann, *Clara Schumann: Ein Künstlerleben nach Tagebüchern und Briefen* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1902-8), vol. 3, pp. 25-26.

<sup>3</sup>For example, in 1895, the year before her death, she told her grandson Ferdinand about the incident. See Ferdinand Schumann,



“Erinnerungen an Clara Schumann,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 84, No. 41 (15 March 1917): 85-88, esp. 88.

<sup>4</sup>See August Stradal, *Erinnerungen an Franz Liszt* (Bern: Verlag Paul Haupt, 1929), p. 73.

<sup>5</sup>See *Franz Liszt: Briefwechsel mit seiner Mutter*, ed. Klára Hamburger (Eisenstadt: Amt der Burgenländischen Landesregierung, 2000), pp. 99-102. Liszt was surely disappointed that his mother, for whatever reasons, never made the trip.

<sup>6</sup>See Michael Heinemann, *Die Bach-Rezeption von Franz Liszt* (Cologne: Studio, 1995), p. 4.

<sup>7</sup>See *Franz Liszt: Selected Letters*, ed. Adrian Williams (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 105. The Passion setting cited by Liszt, obviously, is Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*.

<sup>8</sup>See Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt als Künstler und Mensch* (Leipzig:

Breitkopf & Härtel, 1880-94), vol. 1, p. 518.

<sup>9</sup>Heinemann, p. 42.

<sup>10</sup>Excerpt from an anonymous review published in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, cited in Heinemann, p. 53.

<sup>11</sup>See Marcelle Herrmann, “J. J. B. Laurens' Beziehungen zu deutschen Musikern,” *Schweizerische Musikzeitung* 105 (1965): 257-66.

<sup>12</sup>See Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, “Liszt trascrittore e interprete di Bach,” *L'Organo* 11 (1973): 171-81, esp. 176-77; and Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), pp. 510-11.

<sup>13</sup>Walker, vol. 1, p. 299.

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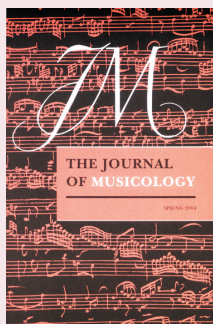
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# Bachfest Leipzig 2005: “Bach und die Zukunft”

By Yo Tomita

“Bach and the Future” was the theme of this year’s Bachfest Leipzig, held from April 29 to May 8. Exploration of this broad topic involved various lines of inquiry, such as, how much influence Bach’s music has had on later generations of composers and how much it will continue to have in the future, who will be the future star performers of Bach’s music, and what broader contributions musicologists will make, as exemplified by the première of J.C. Bach’s opera *Temistocle*, produced by Francisco Miguel Negrin.

As in the past, it was impossible to attend even half of the eighty-seven concerts (thirty-nine were free of charge) that spanned the ten days of the festival. Several performances were truly memorable and worthy of note. My favorite was the concert in the Thomaskirche by the Windsbacher Knabenchor, conducted by Karl-Friedrich Beringer. These young singers performed *Meinen Jesum laß ich nicht*, BWV 124, *Lobe den Herren, den mächtigen König der Ehren*, BWV 137, *Erschallet, ihr Lieder*, BWV 172, and *Jesu, meine Freude*, BWV 227—the last of which was absolutely magical. Even more impressive than the choir’s technical accomplishment were their spirit and powerful desire to sing and communicate. Like a surge of waves, their delicately-shaped phrases followed one after the other, all developed imaginatively and convincingly, creating a larger architectural shape. The Deutsche Kammer-Virtuosen Berlin played their role exceptionally well and covered the choir’s occasional rough edges.

My second favorite concert was the *St Matthew Passion* performance led by Sir John Eliot Gardiner, also in the Thomaskirche. This year’s Bach Medal recipient led not only a well-prepared but also a highly-charged performance. His power of imagination was most clearly felt through his artful shaping of individual movements, especially the chorales sung by the Monteverdi Choir. I was particularly impressed by the manner in which he was able to create and sustain the drama of Christ’s crucifixion from movement 45b, “Sie sprachen alle: Laß ihn kreuzigen,” onwards. The performance also revealed the pros and cons of employing various, some non-professional, soloists. On this occasion, many of the soloists contributed fully to this heart-felt performance by adding

individual character and color, but a few, unfortunately, were not up to the task, and their technical inadequacies were crudely and often embarrassingly exposed. This performance revealed to me the difficulties of staging a totally convincing and coherent rendering of Bach’s Passions. How did Bach manage 278 years ago, when he had to reckon with less competent performers in roughly the same acoustical space?

Particularly symbolic of this year’s theme was Michael Maul’s research seminar on “Von staubigen Kirchturmböden und dunklen Rathauskellern: auf der Suche nach neuen Bach-Dokumenten” (“From dusty church tower lofts and dark city hall cellars: searching for new Bach documents”), which took place in the Bach-Archiv’s Sommersaal. I was encouraged by the high attendance at this seminar by people interested in the latest Bach scholarship—and no one knew at this point that Maul was to discover the Soprano Aria, BWV 1127, in Weimar two weeks later.

Beyond the concerts and seminars, the festival’s additional offerings appealed to various groups. For the organists (and interested tourists), there was a greater number of organ tours than in previous years—to Naumburg, Merseburg, Rötha, Freiberg, and Wechselburg, where the participants also attended church services and gained insight into the nature of worship in Bach’s day. In addition, jazz enthusiasts enjoyed the music of the Stephan König Trio, while opera lovers were treated to the première of J. C. Bach’s *Temistocle* and theater fans to Gunter Fischer’s *Wohltemperierte Bach*.

Having once again been a full participant, I found myself, as in years past, very pleased with the festival. On the day I left Leipzig, I had the overwhelming sense that I had been both educated and inspired by the festival, which I treasure above all. I am already looking forward to returning to Leipzig on May 27, 2006 to participate in Bachfest Leipzig 2006, when the theme will be “From Bach to Mozart.”

# Fear not the *Zippel Fagottist!*

## A Tale of Avoidance and Prejudice

by Sara Botwinick

The “Geyersbach affair”<sup>1</sup> posed a vexing problem for most of Bach’s biographers. Spitta does not mention the incident at all, nor does he refer to the first set of records that gives an account of Bach’s complaint to the Arnstadt Consistory, requesting that the student Geyersbach be “duly punished” for having attacked him with a cudgel. This set of records also contains Geyersbach’s retort in response to having been questioned by a consistory official. Here, he accuses Bach of having initiated the incident by calling him a “Zippel Fagottist” on an earlier occasion.

Did Spitta deliberately fail to report on the Geyersbach affair? To date, this question remains open because it is not clear whether Spitta had access to this first set of records of the Arnstadt Consistory.<sup>2</sup> What we know is that the incident was mentioned for the first time by Wilhelm Weissgerber in 1904 in the context of a celebratory speech at the Arnstadt Fürstliche Realschule.<sup>3</sup> Weissgerber apparently summarized files that were part of a special “archive collection.” It appears that Bach biographers such as Pirro, Schweitzer, and Terry then used the summary in Weissgerber’s speech. According to Hans-Joachim Schulze, the shelf mark (“Faszikel”) of the “Geyersbach files” indicates they were no longer part of an ordered collection, but rather may have been rescued from larger holdings of files destined for destruction. A complete version of the “Geyersbach files” entitled “Joh.:Sebast.Bach Organist in der Neuen Kirchen contra Geyersbachen Schol. Alumnum in puncto injuriae Real. & Verbal 1705” was published for the first time in 1935.<sup>4</sup>

Charles Sanford Terry provides a more detailed account of the incident than Pirro and Schweitzer, but politely avoids translating the term “Zippel Fagottist” into English.<sup>5</sup> Wrestling with how to explain the term and how to translate it properly has become one of the more amusing areas of Bach scholarship. In the first edition of *The Bach Reader*, Arthur Mendel and Hans T. David translated “Zippel Fagottist” as “nanny-goat bassoonist”<sup>6</sup>—most likely the result of confusing “Zippel,” a word in dialect derived from “Zipfel” (tip, point, end),<sup>7</sup> with the word “Zickel” (little goat, also dialect, derived from “Ziege”<sup>8</sup>).

Referring to Grimm’s *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (*DWB*), Konrad Küster speculates that “Zippel” comes from “Zippeler,” a German derivative of the Latin “discipulus” (pupil).<sup>9</sup> (More precisely, however, the *DWB* indicates that “Zippeler” connotes discipleship in a spiritual or mystical sense.) And, indeed, Küster himself seems to have problems imagining what could have been so offensive if the word had the meaning he suggests.<sup>10</sup> Robert Marshall also consulted the *DWB* and came up with the translation “prick of a bassoon player.”<sup>11</sup>

But if we consider the context in which Bach used the expression—presumably following a bungled performance by Geyersbach—the *DWB* supplies a definition for “Zippel” (included among the definitions of “Zipfel,” from which it is derived) that seems to fit this context very well. Here, the *DWB* indicates “Zippel” was originally used to describe “a tall clumsy, somewhat stupid person.”<sup>12</sup> Later, this word was used metaphorically to characterize a person of intellectual and/or moral inferiority, a person who behaves awkwardly or in a silly or coarse manner, or someone who fumbles. Christoph Wolff’s translation “greenhorn bassoonist”<sup>13</sup> comes closer, but given that “greenhorn” is generally used to connote innocence or lack of experience, it misses the nasty, more deeply disparaging and offensive edge of the German expression. In German (or rather Thuringian) usage, the reference is to an awkward outer appearance combined with inferior intellectual abilities, as captured, for example, by such German words as “Tolpatsch” and “Töpel.” Even though English words such as “dumbbell,” “lout,” or “dunce” do not address the physical component, they capture the intent better, and illuminate why Geyersbach was so upset by Bach’s name-calling, which was exacerbated by the fact that Bach, a professional at age twenty, was three years Geyersbach’s junior.

When Geyersbach took revenge on Bach, his battle cry was “Hundsfoth.” Literally this means “genitalia of a female dog,” but the *DWB* instructs us that this invective was used to characterize a “contemptuous and especially cowardly person.”<sup>14</sup> What do we learn from this? Apparently Bach called Geyersbach a “Zippel Fagottist” behind his back. Geyersbach’s response was, therefore, designed to offend and challenge Bach’s manliness, since Bach had not dared to confront him head on. Bach did not take up the gauntlet, however. Instead, he informed Geyersbach “that it would not be becoming to him and his honor to duel with him.”<sup>15</sup> In fact, Bach not only demonstrated he possessed a different ideal of manliness, but also behaved in accordance with his contract, which asked him “to cultivate . . . the love of peace” and “altogether to avoid bad company.”<sup>16</sup>



The term “Zippel Fagottist” has evoked for some Bach biographers obscene connotations—depending on which elucidation they used from the *DWB*. In addition, the fact that Bach drew his sword to defend himself (if push came to shove) seemed disturbing to some biographers. The result is that (with the exception of Pirro) they report Bach’s role in the incident in a more or less condescending tone.

An even graver problem in terms of viewing Bach’s conflicts with the Arnstadt Consistory is created when biographers follow, uncritically, the path that Spitta laid out for them. For Spitta, the conflict with the consistory begins not with the Geyersbach incident, but later, with Bach’s overextended Buxtehude visit and his refusal to work with the student choir from a certain point onward. Instead of being the one who initiated a complaint as an accuser, as in the first set of consistory records, Bach is the one interrogated by the superintendent. Bach is consequently portrayed in an unfavorable light—arrogant and stubborn—while the authorities come across as magnanimous and patient. It occurred to none of the biographers who actually had access to the “Geyersbach files” that Bach’s behavior might need to be seen as a response to the authorities failing him after he had asked them for help in this case. As a result, the avoidance of an accurate and deeper analysis of the Geyersbach incident inevitably led to more prejudice in reading Bach’s conflict with the Arnstadt Consistory.

<sup>1</sup>This expression, which was most likely introduced by Charles Sanford Terry and taken over by several Bach biographers, connotes obfuscation. Charles Sanford Terry, *Bach: A Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), 67. As I will show, these biographers avoid investigating the incident properly. For a more extensive discussion of this issue, see Sara Botwinick, “From Ohrdruf to Mühlhausen: A Subversive Reading of Bach’s Relationship to Authority,” *Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute* 35, no. 2 (2004): 1-59, especially 41-48.

<sup>2</sup>With respect to this issue, I corresponded with Hans-Joachim Schulze of the Bach-Archiv Leipzig, who suggested that historians face the difficult challenge of determining how well-ordered the archives in Arnstadt, Sondershausen, and Rudolstadt were around 1870. Such a determination would involve sorting out which of the holdings were registered and whether the “Geyersbach files” were among them.

<sup>3</sup>Wilhelm Weissgerber, “Johann Sebastian Bach in Arnstadt.” *Festrede zur Feier des 73. Geburtstages Sr. Durchlaucht des regierenden Fürsten, gehalten von Diakonus Weissgerber. Fürstliche Realschule in Arnstadt (Fürstentum Schwarzburg-Sondershausen). Jahresbericht über das Schuljahr von Ostern 1903 bis Ostern 1904* (Arnstadt, 1904). Weissgerber credits the unpublished works of deceased archivist Schmidt.

<sup>4</sup>Date of publication from Schulze. See also, Karl Müller, “Der junge Bach,” in *Arnstädter Bachbuch, Johann Sebastian Bach und seine Verwandten in Arnstadt*, ed. Karl Müller, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Arnstadt: Georg

Stolzenberg, 1957), 105-108 and Werner Neuman and Hans-Joachim Schulze, eds., *Bach Dokumente*, vol 2, *Fremdschriftliche und gedruckte Dokumente zur Lebensgeschichte Johann Sebastian Bachs 1685-1750* (Kassel: Bärenreiter and Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1969), no. 14.

<sup>5</sup>Terry, 65.

<sup>6</sup>Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, eds., *The Bach Reader* (New York, Norton, 1966), 51.

<sup>7</sup>*Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm* [hereafter, *DWB*] (Leipzig: S. Herzel, 1877), 15: 1546.

<sup>8</sup>*DWB*, 15: 900.

<sup>9</sup>Konrad Küster, *Der junge Bach* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1996), 136. Küster refers to *DWB*, s. v. “Zippeler,” 15: 1563.

<sup>10</sup>Küster, 136.

<sup>11</sup>Robert Marshall, “Toward a Twenty-First-Century Bach Biography,” *Musical Quarterly* 84, no. 3 (2000): 501. Marshall cites *DWB*, s. v. “Zipfel,” 15: 1546.

<sup>12</sup>“Zippel: ein grosser, ungelenker, etwas dummer Mensch . . . danach allgemein übertragen auf minderwertige geistige und sittliche Eigenschaften.” The *DWB* also includes more denigrating definitions that might also fit the context: “ein schlechter, einfältiger . . . ungesitteter, grober, treuloser . . . Mensch.” *DWB*, s. v. “Zipfel,” definition 1e, 15: 1548.

<sup>13</sup>Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, eds., *The New Bach Reader: A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents* [hereafter, *NBR*], revised and expanded by Christoph Wolff (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), 44. See also Christoph Wolff *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), 84.

<sup>14</sup>“Schimpfwort für einen verächtlichen, vorzüglich feigen Menschen,” *DWB*, 4: 1934. Terry’s translation of “Hundsfoth” as “cowardly rascal” captures this meaning well. Terry, 65.

<sup>15</sup>*NBR*, 43.

<sup>16</sup>*NBR*, 41.

## BECOME A FRIEND OF THE BACH-ARCHIV LEIPZIG

The Bach-Archiv Leipzig, which offers unique access to primary source materials, is widely recognized as one of the world’s most important centers of Bach scholarship. A non-profit corporation, the Bach-Archiv consists of a research institute, library, museum, and events bureau. It occupies the historic Bosehaus complex at St. Thomas Square in Leipzig. With its vast collection of Bach autographs and sponsorship of numerous activities, such as the Leipzig Bach Festival, the Bach-Archiv contributes significantly to the time-honored image of Leipzig as the German “Bach city.” If you would like to lend your support to the Bach-Archiv Leipzig, please contact: Friends of the Bach-Archiv Leipzig, c/o Bach-Archiv Leipzig, Thomaskirchhof 15/16, D-04109 Leipzig; phone: +49 341 9137 102; fax: +49 341 9137 105; email: info@bach-leipzig.de; internet: www.bach-leipzig.de.

## News From Members

Moravian College, in partnership with **The Bach Choir of Bethlehem**, held the first National Endowment for the Humanities Bach institute—"Bach Across the Centuries"—from July 11 to August 12, 2005. The Institute was host to twenty-five schoolteachers (grades K-12) from across the United States and Italy, chosen by competitive application. The Institute included seminars by distinguished Bach scholars **Michael Marissen** and **George Stauffer**, and a public lecture entitled "Bach and the Enlightenment: The Musical Offering in Context," by James Gaines, author of *Evening in the Palace of Reason*. **Greg Funfgeld**, artistic director and conductor of The Bach Choir, was a member of the faculty and offered a seminar, a lecture/recital, and directed members of The Bach Choir and Bach Festival Orchestra and fellows of the Institute in rehearsals and a performance. The Institute was codirector by Hilde Binford, assistant professor of music at Moravian College, and Paul Larson, professor emeritus of music and chief archivist and curator of The Bach Choir of Bethlehem. The varied topics of the seminar focused on helping teachers of all school levels develop curricula that enrich the classroom experience of students of all ages.

**The Bach Choir of Bethlehem** also began a new and expanded "Bach at Noon" concert series on Tuesday, September 13 at Central Moravian Church in historic downtown Bethlehem, PA. The pilot series of four concerts performed from January to April 2005 met with incredible success. Standing-room only crowds totaling more than four thousand people attended the four concerts. This season, The Choir has expanded the concert series to seven concerts to be held on the second Tuesday of each month in October and November 2005 and from January to March 2006, as well as the third Tuesday of April 2006. Each "Bach at Noon" concert is announced at 11:45 a.m. by The Bethlehem Area Moravian Trombone Choir playing from the church belfry. Each program features members of The Choir and Bach Festival Orchestra and guest soloists in the performance of one of Bach's instrumental works and one of his cantatas. **Greg Funfgeld**, artistic director and conductor, introduces each concert at 12:10 p.m. with an informal talk about the music, which will be concluded by 1 p.m. Admission is free and there is

no need for a reservation. A free-will offering will be accepted to help support the series. For more information on all The Choir's activities, visit [www.bach.org](http://www.bach.org).

During its twenty-ninth season, **The Bach Festival of Philadelphia**, executive director **Guido Houben**, celebrated Bach's 320<sup>th</sup> birthday during Festival Week 2005 with "Masses for the Masses—A Unique Spiritual and Musical Experience." For the first time ever, the Mass in B Minor, BWV 232, as well as the four, little-known "Lutheran masses," BWV 233-236, which consist only of the Kyrie and Gloria and which Bach assembled from his favorite cantatas, were all presented in one week. Each work was performed as an integral part of the service in Baptist, Episcopal, and Anglo-Catholic churches. **Christoph Wolff** united the performances with a lecture on the Masses and their unjustified oblivion. The sections of the Mass in G Major were performed at various points throughout the service at Old Christ Church, where Benjamin Franklin is buried. The Mass in A Major was the centerpiece of a very colorful service at the African-American Bright Hope Baptist Church, while the entire Mass in F Major was performed in the liturgically correct position at the beginning of the service at the Church of the Holy Trinity at Rittenhouse Square (with its acclaimed Tiffany stained glass windows). St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Center City commemorated the sixtieth anniversary of the death of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the great German theologian and Bach connoisseur, with a performance of the Mass in G Minor. The Festival Week found its conclusion at the Philadelphia Cathedral, with a monumental three-hour, incense-filled Anglo-Catholic service that incorporated the movements of the Mass in B Minor. Mass was celebrated by Father Joshua Aalan and Maestro Jonathan Sternberg with guest artist Julianne Baird. For more information on The Bach Festival of Philadelphia, visit [www.Bach-Fest.org](http://www.Bach-Fest.org).

**Richard Benedum**, of the University of Dayton, directed an interdisciplinary institute entitled "Mozart's Worlds" from June 13 to July 8, 2005. The institute was sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and had thirty participants.

**Eric Fung** completed his doctoral thesis, "Johann Sebastian Bach's Overture in the French Manner, BWV 831: A Study in Motive, Harmony, and Rhythm,"

and received his DMA from the Juilliard School in May 2005. Fung is currently teaching piano and theory at Lebanon Valley College in Annville, PA. In October, he will perform the *Italian Concerto* and the *French Overture* as part of the thirtieth anniversary season of The Bach Festival of Philadelphia.

**Jason Grant** completed his dissertation, "The Rise of Lyricism and the Decline of Biblical Narration in the Late Liturgical Passions of Georg Philipp Telemann," and earned his PhD from the University of Pittsburgh in April 2005. Grant will remain at the University of Pittsburgh during the current academic year as a visiting assistant professor of music.

Carolina Baroque, under the musical direction of **Dale Higbee**, continued its 2004-05 Salisbury Bach and Händel Festival with one concert on March 11, entitled "Sacred Music by Bach and Concertos by Bach and Telemann," which included selections from the *Easter Oratorio*, and another concert on May 13, entitled "German Genius: Bach and Händel," which included performances of arias from Händel's "Chandos" Anthems and *Imeneo*. For more information or to purchase live recordings of concerts by Carolina Baroque, including the two concerts mentioned above, visit [www.carolinabaroque.org](http://www.carolinabaroque.org).

Harpichordist **Rebecca Pechefsky** and her ensemble Brooklyn Baroque (Andrew Bolotowsky, baroque flute; David Bakamjian, baroque cello; and guest Gregory Bynum, recorder) recorded a CD of music from the German baroque entitled "Northern Lights" (Quill Classics 1005, released July 2005). The recording includes the Sonata in G Minor for Flute and Harpsichord, BWV 1020, which has been attributed to both J. S. and C. P. E. Bach, as well as music by Telemann, Elias Brunnemüller, and Franz Xaver Richter.

**Curt Sather** (BM, Arizona State University; MM and DMA, Eastman School of Music) will perform the complete organ works of J. S. Bach in a series of recitals on fourteen consecutive Friday evenings, from September to December 2005, at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, Scottsdale, AZ, where he has been organist and choirmaster since 1993. Sather also performed this series at St. Barnabas in the fall of 1995.

## Report from Scheide Research Grant Recipients James Brokaw and Russell Stinson

"Brahms Reading Bach:  
Brahms's Annotations to the Organ and  
Harpsichord Works in his Library"

In the spring of this year, we began our research at the archive of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde (Vienna) by examining Brahms's annotations in his copy of Spitta's biography and in his copies of the five volumes of keyboard music from the Bach Gesellschaft (BG) edition; the latter we copied into our Dover reprints of that edition. We found that the annotations typically concern: 1) performance—fingerings, phrase markings, pedal indications; 2) analysis of form; 3) the marking of themes and motives; and 4) text-critical corrections—pitch, rhythm, concordances. This array is also broadly representative of Brahms's annotations in Bach sources beyond the BG edition. (Ultimately, we intend to include all relevant sources in the Brahms *Nachlass* in our study of his reception of the keyboard music of Bach.)

Based on the work we have just completed, our prospective publication will address Brahms's critical response to the Spitta biography, relations between annotations in Spitta's biography and those in the BG edition, and Brahms's assessment of Spitta's critique of the BG edition of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* edited by Franz Kroll. In addition, we expect to touch on the associations drawn by Brahms between keyboard works of Bach and those of other composers; Brahms's analysis of Bach's keyboard music with respect to the articulation of musical form, harmonic structure, and meter and metric fluidity; and Brahms's manner of handling suspensions. Our publication will include a table of all annotations, underlinings, and other markings referred to in the Spitta biography. We expect to complete an initial draft of our article by the end of this year and have it ready for publication by next summer.

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### Directions to contributors

*Bach Notes* is published twice yearly (spring and fall) and mailed to all members and subscribers. Submissions for the Spring 2006 issue are due by January 31, 2006, and should be in Microsoft Word, employ endnotes, and follow the stylistic guidelines of *The Chicago Manual of Style* (15th ed.). Email submissions (much preferred) should be sent to [bachnotes@americanbachsociety.org](mailto:bachnotes@americanbachsociety.org) and submissions on compact disc (CD), with hard copy, may be mailed to Reginald L. Sanders, Department of Music, Kenyon College, Gambier, OH 43022.



# “Bach Crossing Borders”

## American Bach Society’s Fourteenth Biennial Meeting Bach-Archiv Leipzig, Germany May 11-13, 2006

The conference will include lectures and performances, an exhibition of Bach manuscripts and other Bachiana, as well as excursions to points of interest in the vicinity of Leipzig. The Society has reserved 60 double rooms (135 Euro/night) and 20 single rooms (120 Euro/night, both rates include breakfast) at

The Westin Leipzig  
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Tel.: (011) 49 (0)341 988 0; Fax: (011) 49 (0)341 988 1229  
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Please contact The Westin directly and mention the American Bach Society when reserving your room. Registration materials will be available on the ABS website ([www.americanbachsociety.org](http://www.americanbachsociety.org)) on November 15, 2005.

### Contributors to this Issue

**Sara Botwinick** is a psychotherapist and independent scholar who has published in the field of trauma studies and conducted workshops for mental health professionals on the impact of trauma and trauma recovery. A J. S. Bach fan since her early teens, she became intrigued with the question of how Bach coped with the traumatic events of his life and yet was able to nurture his own creativity. One outcome of her research on Bach’s early years is the two-day workshop “The Young Bach Retreat,” developed in cooperation with pianist and harpsichordist Dmitry Borisovsky.

**Russell Stinson**, Josephine Emily Brown Professor of Music and college organist at Lyon College, Batesville, Arkansas, is the author of numerous publications on Bach’s organ music, including *The Orgelbüchlein* (Oxford, 1999) and *J. S. Bach’s Great Eighteen Organ Chorales* (Oxford, 2001).

**Yo Tomita** is a reader in the School of Music at Queen’s University, Belfast, UK. He recently edited Joseph Groocock’s *Fugal Composition: A Guide to the Study of Bach’s “48”* (Westport: Greenwood, 2003) and, with Anne Leahy, *Bach Studies from Dublin* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004). He is one of the main contributors to *The English Bach Awakening. Knowledge of J. S. Bach and his Music in England 1750-1830*, ed. Michael Kassler (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

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Founded in 1972 as a chapter of the Neue Bach-Gesellschaft, the American Bach Society is dedicated to promoting the study and performance of the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. Annual dues are \$40 (\$25 for students). Membership information and application materials are available online at [www.americanbachsociety.org](http://www.americanbachsociety.org). Interested persons may also contact Matthew Dirst, ABS Secretary-Treasurer, Moores School of Music, 120 School of Music Bldg., University of Houston, Houston, TX 77204-4017, USA.

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