

# BACH NOTES

NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN BACH SOCIETY

## TINY BACH CONCERTS

The American Bach Society is pleased to introduce Tiny Bach Concerts, a new video series launched in September 2020. Each episode, planned for monthly release on our new YouTube channel, will feature a video performance of a Bach work and a spoken introduction by an ABS expert. Our aim is to pair well-informed and engaging presentations about Bach's music with compelling performances of the repertoire.

The series is meant to help the ABS reach a broader constituency, including general audiences and performing organizations. We also hope to promote the work of performers and ensembles cultivating Bach's music. Recent pandemic-imposed limitations on concerts have shown that there is a large appetite for music online, and it seems likely that this interest will continue. We thus anticipate that Tiny Bach Concerts will be a part of the ABS's work even after in-person music making resumes.

Each video will be accompanied by a transcript of the spoken portion. This will be of use to instructors who need approachable and accessible Bach-related material, and it will help non-specialist viewers as they encounter new terms and names.

Our inaugural episode features two beautiful performances by the Washington Bach Consort directed by ABS Advisory Board member Dana Marsh. Their remotely-recorded versions of the "Gloria in excelsis/Et in terra pax" and

### American Bach Society TINY BACH CONCERTS



#### Episode 1 *Mass in B minor, BWV 232*

"Dona nobis pacem" from the Mass in B Minor are introduced in a talk by former ABS president George Stauffer.

The ABS is fortunate to have Carrie Allen Tipton serving as coordinator and producer of Tiny Bach Concerts. Dr. Tipton trained as a musicologist and ethnomusicologist, and ABS members know her as the creator and host of the Bach Society Houston's "Notes on Bach" podcast, now in the planning stages for its fifth season.

Upcoming episodes of Tiny Bach Concerts will include performances by Matthew Dirst (ABS board member and faculty member at the University of Houston) and Ars Lyrica Houston, by the Bloomington Bach Cantata Project, and by Kola Owolabi (professor of organ at the University of Notre Dame); and talks by Dirst, by Ellen Exner (ABS Vice President and faculty member at the

New England Conservatory), and by Paul Walker (ABS board member and retired faculty member at Notre Dame).

The ABS welcomes suggestions from its members for future episodes of Tiny Bach Concerts. Please get in touch with Carrie Tipton at [tipton@americanbachsociety.org](mailto:tipton@americanbachsociety.org) to suggest performances we should consider featuring, or if you are in a position to offer commentary in an episode. Please also share the series with friends and colleagues.

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## Barbara Wolff (June 23, 1936–June 24, 2020)

With the passing of Barbara Wolff on June 24, 2020, the world-wide Bach community has lost a beloved member.

A music bibliographer and cataloger at Harvard's Houghton Library, Barbara embraced the roles of career woman, spouse, mother, and hostess to a greater degree than any woman I know, all while maintaining a beautiful home and garden. The wife of Professor Christoph Wolff, Barbara was the mother of three daughters and a grandmother of five. Fluent in both German and English, she was equally at home in Germany and in the States.

She took a genuine interest in the pursuits and welfare of Christoph's students and regularly welcomed them into their home. A wonderful cook, she hosted gatherings with consummate ease and grace, giving every evidence that it brought her great pleasure. She could hold her own in any conversation and invariably spent more time listening to others than speaking herself. Comfortable in the highest echelons of academe, she also counted world-famous performers among her closest friends. She was devoid of any pretense, and was invariably



warm, gracious, and friendly to all she encountered. She recognized that she was in a unique position to build bridges and was a member of the German-Jewish Study Group for many years.

Barbara attended numerous Bach conferences and academic meetings in Europe and the States and was well known to generations of Bach scholars. An organist by training, she sang in the Harvard-Radcliffe Chorus for many years and loved attending performances—including many by her own children and grandchildren. She loved nature and, during the spring of 2020 when she and Christoph were unable to travel abroad due to Covid, apart from her daily chats with her daughters, I think her happiest hours were spent walking around Fresh Pond or among the flowering trees and shrubs in Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge with Christoph. Diagnosed with advanced pancreatic cancer on June 9, Barbara died just

two weeks later, a day after her 84th birthday. She will be sorely missed.

Mary J. Greer

## Bach Beats Corona – Streaming the Music of Summer Festivals

### Alannah Rebekah Franklin (Florida State University)

The coronavirus pandemic of 2020 presented music festivals and arts organizations with a conundrum: how could live music continue with strict social distancing practices in place? How could event organizers provide safe and engaging concert and festival experiences for audiences and performers? Live music thrives on performer and audience interactions in the moment, enhanced by the social atmosphere of concert halls and other spaces. In response to these issues, Bach festivals across the world quickly adapted their goals and ideas to the new global, increasingly digital environment fostered in the wake of the pandemic, forging communal bonds over internet connections rather than physical ones. Thanks to the creative minds and determined plans of music administrators and festival performers, the live performance of Bach's music has thrived to a level that would not have seemed possible at the beginning of the pandemic. This past spring and summer saw several digital performances of Bach's music, including the *St. John Passion*, livestreamed by the Bach Collegium Japan on March 15; the "We are Family" *St. John Passion* concert presented on Good Friday, April 10, by the Bachfest Leipzig; and the Bachfest's subsequent Bach Marathon over two weekends in June. In addition, several prominent American Bach festivals have explored strategies for making and sharing music virtually in the midst of the pandemic.

An early taste of "pandemic performance practice" occurred on March 15, with the livestream of Masaaki Suzuki and the Bach Collegium Japan performing the *St. John Passion* without a live audience. (Hosted on the Cologne Philharmonic's web page, [www.philharmonic.tv](http://www.philharmonic.tv), and [Facebook Live](https://www.facebook.com/cphilarmonic).) The livestream opened with introductory remarks by Louwrens Langevoort, manager of the Cologne Philharmonic, after which viewers saw a written announcement encouraging them to donate the cost of their now unusable tickets for the performance to support the artists, ensembles, and institutions connected to the Cologne Philharmonic. The Facebook



Live description elaborated: "The current crisis is global. All areas of social life are under great strain. In crises, however, people have always found strength, especially in music. It is all the more important that we make every effort to bring music into the world at times when we are not even allowed to hold concerts anymore."

As the text scrolled on the screen, the soloists and conductor walked onstage accompanied by silence instead of live applause. Throughout the concert, Masaaki Suzuki conducted with an intricate depth of feeling, drawing out the lyrical passages and wealth of emotions underlying the *St. John Passion*. The chorales were especially moving, as Suzuki led the choir in careful articulation and text-inspired gesture. Evangelist James Gilchrist guided the audience through the story skillfully, singing with musical conviction and careful affect, while the other soloists—soprano Hana Blažiková, alto Damien Guillon, tenor Zachary Wilder, and bass Christian Immler—contributed to the emotional depth of the concert through their arias.

Several marked differences separated this virtual experience of the *St. John Passion* from a regular concert. Audience members could comment through Facebook Live's chat feature, as well as by email and other means of remote communication. Instead of immediate applause or shouts of "bravo" at the end of the work, the audience responded throughout the performance with a torrent of comments and emojis. This resulted in a deeper level of involvement between the audience members themselves; as people "entered" the concert, they introduced themselves and shared where they were from. People greeted each other, asked questions, and commented on the music together. At the end of the livestream, many viewers expressed gratitude and excitement for the opportunity to attend the concert virtually. The soloists and conductor also bowed and received flowers, and the audience could see a camera operator walk onstage to shoot closeup images. The ensemble acknowledged the invisible audience by waving toward the camera. A few chuckled at the strangeness of waving





to an empty concert hall. As the performers and conductor exited the stage, the opening text faded in again as a clap track played in place of a live audience's response.

I tracked the Facebook Live numbers during the concert, and there were generally between 1,500 to 1,700 viewers at any given time, although the numbers were constantly changing. Some people viewed the entire concert, while others joined and re-joined the live stream between other responsibilities. Audience members who could not attend a regular Bach Collegium Japan concert were now able to view this one in unprecedented numbers from locations across the United States, Central and South America, Canada, Europe, and Japan. I suspect that there were viewers from an even broader array of geographical locations who did not announce their location. On Facebook alone, viewers shared the concert 1,315 times. Still more viewers participated via the [philharmonie.tv](http://philharmonie.tv) website rather than the Facebook stream. The concert is still available on Facebook, where it has over 24,000 views and 1,300 comments, as well as YouTube ("[Bach Collegium Japan performs Bach's St. John Passion,](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)" April 8, 2020), which has over 250,000 views worldwide. Far from a poor substitute for a regular concert, the overall format of the online presentation created a much broader and more inclusive virtual community than is possible at a traditional in-person presentation of the *St. John Passion*.

Bachfest Leipzig's livestream of the *St. John Passion* on April 10 fostered similar connections to an equally broad audience through [Facebook Live](https://www.facebook.com/BachfestLeipzig/), later also posted to [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...); the promotional posts featured the hopeful hashtag #BachBeatsCorona. The Bachfest had already planned to offer a novel arrangement of the *St. John Passion* for their summer festival, featuring a trio of performers. When the pandemic hit and traditional Good Friday Passion performances had to be cancelled, the festival broadcasted this smaller-scale arrangement as a substitute, a scoring lending itself easily to social distancing. In this arrangement Benedikt Kristjánsson, tenor, sang not just the Evangelist's role but also all solo roles as well as the soprano parts in the choruses, changing his timbre and expression

to convey the different characters within the story. Elina Albach covered the basso continuo lines on harpsichord and organ, while Philipp Lamprecht filled in the other orchestral instruments' lines and harmonies with marimba, vibraphone, xylophone, and other percussion instruments.

Kristjánsson sang each movement of the *St. John Passion* with stunning expressiveness, often with his eyes closed, and entirely from memory, which allowed him to add arm gestures for effect. His rendering of the Evangelist's lines in particular were full of energy, moving the narrative forward. He began the concert by turning toward the front of the Thomaskirche, facing the crucifix, signaling his recognition of the church as both a place of worship and the location of Bach's grave. As the concert progressed, he turned toward the nave, facing the virtual audience. The vocal solos required transpositions in a few instances to adjust to the tenor register, but Kristjánsson handled these masterfully. Though singing the soprano lines of the choruses, in the so-called *turba* choruses, he turned to *Sprechstimme*, allowing the pitched percussion to play Bach's musical lines as written. This was initially surprising, but the approach imparted the choruses, typically performed in an angry and aggressive matter, with a new color and shape, providing listeners with the opportunity to hear the text—and Bach's expressive text setting—afew. Lamprecht carefully selected percussion timbres to enhance each moment, harsher membranophones for militaristic moments and gentle marimba textures for lyrical passages. Similarly, Albach alternated harpsichord to organ to match each new text with suitable color and dynamic changes.

The festival's original theme, "We are Family," remained quite central to this virtual performance, even with the small number of performers. Choirs who had planned to participate in Bachfest later in the summer—the Ottawa Bach Choir, J. S. Bach-Stiftung St. Gallen, members of the Thomanerchor Leipzig, the "Bachfest-Family-Chor," and the Malaysia Bach Festival Singers and Orchestra—all prerecorded the chorales, which were then edited into the livestream at the appropriate moments in the Passion. (The Bachfest Family Chor personnel included some familiar faces: Miriam Feuersinger (soprano), Reginald Mobley (alto), Martin Petzold



(tenor), Klaus Mertens (bass), Michael Maul (violin), Rudolf Lutz (piano), and Ton Koopman (organ)). The concert, moreover, was book-ended by two motets performed by a small vocal ensemble led by Thomascantor Gotthold Schwarz: the anonymous motet *Tristis est anima mea*, and Jacobus Gallus' *Ecce quomodo moritur Justus*.

The most shocking and, for many, most moving moment of the concert came at the very end. Kristjánsson performed the chorus "Ruht wohl, ihr heiligen Gebeine" completely a cappella, singing the upper instrumental lines at the beginning and transitioning to the vocal lines, using sustained vowels throughout the A section, only singing text when he reached the words "Das Grab, so euch bestimmet ist." He again sang vowels upon the return of the A section at the end of the movement. The silent, lonely, yet awe-filled moment was utterly captivating. Rather than a community of believers singing a lullaby to Jesus, Kristjánsson's solo voice reflected the loneliness of the cross and tomb. The final chorale, "Ach Herr, lass dein lieb Engelein," was also sung a cappella with Albach and Lamprecht leaving their instruments to stand and sing with Kristjánsson. They alternated the text, one singing the melody with text while the others filled out the harmonization on sustained vowels, all joining together on words for the second section, "Alsdenn vom Tod." There was a beauty in the rawness of this moment. The Facebook Live comments exploded.

Like the online *St. John Passion* presented by the Bach Collegium Japan, this concert was accessible to many more people through technology, dwarfing the audience at a standard concert in the Thomaskirche. The total number of viewers surpassed 500,000, taking into account the various viewing platforms and individual clicks into the concert. The performance has since been nominated for the prestigious Opus Klassik award. When I asked him about the event, Michael Maul could count at least seventy-four countries from which viewers watched. But unlike most other livestreams, here the festival encouraged further audience participation by inviting viewers to submit recordings of themselves singing along with the chorales. Festival administrators then made collages of these videos, again highlighting the fact that "We are Family" even when far apart.

Those collages accompanied a second broadcast of the Good Friday *St. John Passion* livestream, this time during the "Bach Marathon" where it accompanied a similarly collaborative performance of the Mass in B Minor. (This "Johannes-Passion à



trois 2.0 – Extended Edition," from July 1, can be found on [YouTube](#).) Bachfest Leipzig's "Bach Marathon," held on two weekends originally scheduled for Bachfest 2020 (June 13–14 and June 20–21), became a way to celebrate Bach's music in a time of social distancing. Both programs were livestreamed from the Thomaskirche and Nikolaikirche, now posted along with many other performances to the Bach-Archiv website: [www.youtube.com/user/BachArchivLeipzig/](http://www.youtube.com/user/BachArchivLeipzig/)

[videos](http://www.youtube.com/user/BachArchivLeipzig/videos) and [www.facebook.com/bacharchiv](http://www.facebook.com/bacharchiv).

Each day of the Bach Marathon featured musical events and discussion with scholars, fostering a festival-like atmosphere. Viewers were welcomed into the "We Are Family" theme in multiple ways by hearing the music, learning about Bach's musical world, and exploring the modern infrastructure for performers and administrators who make the Bachfest Leipzig possible. The four days were organized by theme, and each included six hours of musical events, totaling twenty-four hours, each day beginning with "Warmups with Bach Chorales." Afternoon events included musical greetings from members of the "Global Bach Family," including the Malaysia Bach Festival Singers and Orchestra, the Bach Choir of Bethlehem, and Emmanuel Music Boston, to name a few.

The first day, themed "We thank you, God, we thank you," began with an introductory concert featuring "Wir danken dir, Gott, wir danken dir" (BWV 29), the Toccata and Fugue in D minor (BWV 538), and "Lobet Gott in seinen Reichen" (BWV 11). The events continued with two motet concerts, one with audience participation, as well as a meditative chamber music concert entitled "As a Line of Dark Blue Silence." Mahan Esfahani also presented a lecture recital on the partitas, titled "For the Amusement of the Mind." The second day, themed "Passion with fervor," featured the *St. John Passion* from Good Friday in the evening, and chamber music by members of the Bach family, the *Musical Offering* (BWV 1079), and a worship service. Michael Maul also presented a workshop with Rudolf Lutz on Bach's various versions of the *St. John Passion*, enriching the experience of hearing the work.

The theme of "Consolation for the Soul" governed the festival's third day. The Sing and Sign Ensemble presented a "Bach–Hear with your Eyes" concert, where the vocalists not only sang the cantatas, but used sign language to convey the text of each piece with visual beauty. Day three also included concerts by amarcord singing some of the oldest repertoire from the music library of the Thomasschule, Opella Musica performing spiritual madrigals from J. H. Schein's *Israelsbrunnlein*, and a concert entitled "At Bach's

Home,” with Klaus Mertens and Ton Koopman featuring pieces of meditation and personal devotion, and other works found in the *Musicbook for Anna Magdalena Bach*.

The final day, “Confidence, from B minor to D major,” included a preview of Bachfest 2021 and an evening performance of the Mass in B Minor, with parts provided so that audience members could sing along. Again, viewers across the world could submit videos, as they did with the *St. John Passion*. The performance, available on [YouTube](#), is split into individual movements to assist audience members in practicing and recording individual chorales. The final, edited version of the Mass, along with audience videos, will be livestreamed on St Cecilia’s Day (November 22, 2020).

Like the earlier virtual performances of the *St. John Passion*, this Mass performance incorporated “pandemic performance practice.” In promotional social media posts, Bachfest described the event as the “world’s smallest Mass in B minor.” This version was arranged by Gregor Meyer for two sopranos, alto, tenor, bass, trumpet, kettledrums, transverse flute, oboe, bassoon, strings, and basso continuo. Performers on period instruments including natural trumpet were spaced apart in the anterior of the Nikolaikirche with microphones placed conspicuously throughout. From the



audience’s standpoint, the performance felt collaborative and intimate, as though the ensemble were inviting the viewers into a dress rehearsal, a recording session, or a private performance. The sparse performing

forces also allowed for greater perception of individual color and expression, even in movements for full ensemble. The careful interweaving of vocal and instrumental lines, and the affective gestures of the performers were audible. The fugal moments were especially intriguing—each subject and answer sounded as a single, traceable thread being braided, rather than the dense, tour de force textures created by larger ensembles. With social distancing on the minds of many, thinly staffed fugue lines weaving together into a unified, greater whole seemed like a timely metaphor. Another striking performance decision occurred in the “Crucifixus,” where each instrument and singer articulated the syllables of the word “crucifixus” with a distinct harshness in tone. The intimate nature of the performance, combined with this emphasis, imparted the words with the sonic quality of individual hammer strikes nailing Jesus to the cross. It was initially chilling but slowly softened in articulation and dynamic toward the end of the movement. The “Et resurrexit” movement offered a joyful contrast, with the natural trumpet lending grandeur to the soaring melodic lines. The quiet voicing of the “Dona Nobis Pacem” closed the Mass

in an awe-inspiring way, as each individual voice and instrument blended upward into the open, empty space of the Nikolaikirche. The entire Bach Marathon proved that Bach’s music can provide comfort, catharsis, and hope to a global community affected by the pandemic.

Here in America, festivals are adopting similar methods for the virtual presentation of concerts and even entire festivals, and social media plays a vital role in this transition, as I demonstrate further in my dissertation research. The Oregon Bach Festival, for instance, streamed a “Radio Festival” from June 26–July 10, 2020, highlighting concert recordings from the past five decades to celebrate their fiftieth anniversary. (Parts of this event can be accessed at [www.facebook.com/oregonbachfestival](http://www.facebook.com/oregonbachfestival).) The Carmel Bach Festival also provides access to various online content, such as performances streamed from musicians’ homes, shared livestreamed concerts, historic festival recordings, Facebook Live interviews with festival musicians, and short virtual performances and lectures, the latest of which have been named “Operation Bach” (See [www.facebook.com/bachfestival](http://www.facebook.com/bachfestival). The “Musician Interviews” and “Operation Bach” recordings can be found at [bachfestival.org](http://bachfestival.org).) Recently, the Baldwin Wallace Conservatory began a virtual concert series, and the Baldwin Wallace Bach Festival took this opportunity to create a virtual festival experience involving a pre-recorded 2019 performance of “Suites and Motets,” and a 2016 performance of the *St. Matthew Passion*. The virtual festival also included a number of student performances, a live virtual tour of RBI exhibits, and other special topics. (See [www.facebook.com/bwbachfest](http://www.facebook.com/bwbachfest) and [www.bw.edu/schools/conservatory-music/bach-festival/](http://www.bw.edu/schools/conservatory-music/bach-festival/)) The Bach Festival Society of Winter Park also recently began a series called “Musical Moments” through their Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/BachFestivalWP](http://www.facebook.com/BachFestivalWP)), with posts highlighting a particular piece along with links to recordings by the Bach Festival Choir and Orchestra, supplemented by program notes written by conductor John Sinclair. The American Bach Soloists’ “ABS at HOME” series, highlighting past recordings, and “Fridays with Friends,” featuring messages and performances by society musicians, has been similarly successful. ([www.facebook.com/americanbach](http://www.facebook.com/americanbach) and [americanbach.org/ABS-at-HOME.html](http://americanbach.org/ABS-at-HOME.html)) Social media has also been important to the Bach Society of St. Louis’s community engagement strategy: administrators regularly post favorite moments from past performances, and they create virtual concert experiences featuring older recordings, livestreamed concerts from musicians’ homes, and “Trivia Tuesdays” and “Musician Mondays” events. ([www.facebook.com/BachSocietySTL](http://www.facebook.com/BachSocietySTL) and [www.bachsociety.org/virtual-experiences](http://www.bachsociety.org/virtual-experiences)) Along with the new resources from the American Bach Society itself, such as the Tiny Bach Concerts series (<http://www.americanbachsociety.org/videos.html>), these social media initiatives make 2020 an excellent year to start engaging with the creative strategies and content offered by Bach societies across the globe. Even in these unusual times, Bach’s music is thriving in virtual community. #BachBeatsCorona, indeed.

## Review: Translating an Institutional History Chad Fothergill (Birmingham, AL)

Michael Maul. *Bach's Famous Choir: The St. Thomas School in Leipzig, 1212–1804*. Translated by Richard Howe. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2018. ISBN 978-1-78327-169-6 (hardcover).

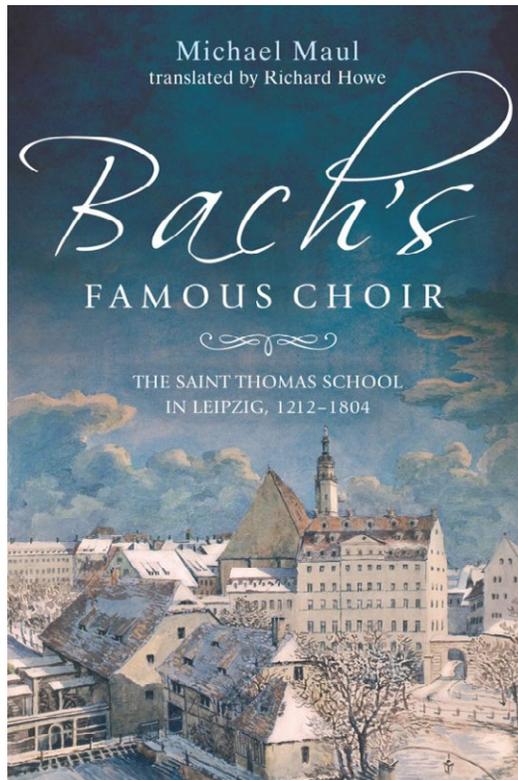
In ancient Sumerian, the cuneiform script for the word “translator” signified the work of a “language turner,” a meaning echoed in verb forms eventually used in classical Latin (*vertere*), Finnish (*kääntää*), and the creole language of Papua New Guinea (*tanimtok*). In other languages, to translate means to bear, carry, lead, or put across: such is the case in German (*übersetzen*) and Swedish (*översätta*). In any translation, of course, intent and meaning can be gained, lost, or seen in new light.

Here, Richard Howe has undertaken the herculean task of translating into English Michael Maul’s German-language history of the St. Thomas School, an account replete with its own web of translations from sources in archaic Latin and German. For this task, Howe deserves both gratitude and praise. The front matter even credits him as the book’s designer and typesetter! Maul’s original book, *‘Dero berühmter Chor’. Die Leipziger Thomasschule und ihre Kantoren, 1212–1804* (Leipzig: Lehmsstedt, 2012) has been put across in English as *Bach’s Famous Choir: The St. Thomas School in Leipzig, 1212–1804*. The insertion of Bach as a titular subject—whether by Howe, an editor, or savvy marketing specialist—is not wholly misleading, for his Leipzig tenure does comprise a substantial portion of the book. Yet lost in the English title is a nod to the rich and colorful history of Bach’s predecessors and successors whose tenures both contextualize and enrich a broader understanding of such topics as the cantor’s office at St. Thomas and in wider Lutheranism, of cantorial politics, and of Bach’s eventual conflicts with colleagues and superiors. In one sense, Maul, too, has engaged in an important work of translation, of turning copious archival material, financial records, and newly discovered sources into a masterful, engaging narrative that explores the intricate mechanics that have powered this particular musical engine for 800 years. The book is also an exemplary model for any student or practitioner who asks, as Maul does in the introduction, developmental questions—*why?*

*how?*—that are vital for understanding institutions, occupations, and music in a particular time and place.

Although the first (and shortest) chapter moves swiftly through almost four centuries of the St. Thomas School’s early history (1212–1593), Maul provides important foundations for the narrative that follows, among them: the establishment of the cantor’s office in the thirteenth century; ties to Leipzig University after its founding in the early fifteenth century; the relationship with St. Nicholas Church; and the integral role of civic authorities in the school’s governance. After Leipzig’s adoption of the Reformation in 1539, the first cantors at St. Thomas held short tenures. As Maul rightly observes, they, like many cantors in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, were inclined to view the office as a “way station” (22) that led to more prestigious posts as pastors. The tenure of Valentin Otto (cantor, 1564–94) was a notable exception and saw the establishment of alternating choirs for St. Thomas and St. Nicholas as well as the practice of street singing (*currende*), both of which eventually became problematic for subsequent cantors.

The second and third chapters trace seventeenth-century developments, particularly attempts to preserve the school’s musical integrity despite financial hardship brought about by war and pestilence, as well as attempts by rectors to restore prominence to academic studies. At first, the school and its music were generously supported by donations from city officials alongside “inn keepers, tailors, tanners, coopers, bakers, butchers, and carpenters” (30). But throughout much of the century (1627–88), the town’s finances were overseen by representatives of the Saxon electorate in Dresden who scrutinized disbursements with zealous intensity, even diverting earned interest from the school’s endowments and making it, according to Maul, “the greatest victim of the town’s bankruptcy” (52). Yet even in dire straits, appeals to the citizenry helped the school maintain its musical celebrity. Maul’s intricate discussion (76–87) of the four St. Thomas cantoreys—their structure, finances, and interactions with city residents—yields a richly woven image of the city’s urban soundscape. Maul also carries this discussion beyond Leipzig by documenting a wide-reaching network of St. Thomas



Cover image courtesy of Boydell & Brewer

alumni who were employed as cantors and organists in nearby towns such as Eilenburg and Wurzen (74–76).

Maul's chronicle also dwells extensively on the school's 1634 regulations which provided the cantor with time for composition while bolstering the authority of the rector. And yet, some faculty begrudged the cantor "on account of his light academic teaching load as well as his ongoing lion's share of the school's income from singing on sacramental and other occasions" (66). Though echoes of such squabbles can be found earlier in the book, here begins a veritable theme and variations that persists across subsequent pages, a pathway that eventually leads to Bach's *Entwurf einer wohlbestallten Kirchen Music* of 1730.

While the latter half of the seventeenth century is characterized as a "happy symbiosis" (90) between cantors, rectors, and music-loving members of the town council, the wide-ranging activities of St. Thomas students and disagreements about the cantor's teaching responsibilities began to churn beneath an otherwise tranquil surface. In 1657, the (unsuccessful) cantorate applicant Adam Krieger expressed his preference to be relieved of teaching duties with a dramatic diagnosis, one of several amusing anecdotes—sometimes quoted verbatim, sometimes paraphrased—that attests to Maul's talents as both researcher and storyteller: "the example of your cantors up until now attests to the fact that they almost all have become arthritic and unhealthy, probably as a result of their teaching load, its demands, and its frustrations" (101). Toward the end of the century, such conflicts—both territorial and stylistic—intensified during the cantorate of Kuhnau who, after the New Church became an independent musical entity in 1704, slipped into what Maul depicts as "trench warfare in Leipzig with those who encroached on his freedom," adding: "seen in this way, Bach too would step into the shoes of his predecessor" (139).

The final two chapters—comprising more than half of the book's prose—consider eighteenth-century developments on either side of the year 1730. Maul appropriately begins the discussion here with an exasperated Bach venting his frustrations to former Ohrdruf classmate Erdmann in a letter dated 28 October 1730. One may be tempted to view this as the climax of the story, the point where "ominous" (143) signs surveyed in preceding pages blossom into full-fledged conflicts whose seeds were sown in previous decades—compensation disparities among junior and senior faculty, cantors and rectors jostling for influence, and disagreements about whether the St. Thomas School should primarily serve out-of-town musicians or local children in need. In a literary flashback, the 1634 school regulations are brought into relief concerning the protracted revisional process that culminated in the 1723 regulations presented to Bach as terms of his employment. Here Maul begins untangling a labyrinthine network of pathways that converged at this moment, among them the personal history and Pietistic sympathies of the presiding mayor, a doubling of the Leipzig population between 1697 and 1727, and even the protracted search for Kuhnau's successor in 1722 after failing to

secure Telemann or Graupner for the post. In short, Bach quickly became aware of the underhanded machinations that positioned him both unfairly and uncomfortably in what had once been a lucrative and prestigious post. As Maul notes, "it is understandable that Bach went on the offensive and sought to win both the administration and the community over to his side with exceedingly ambitious church music" (187). Maul's discussion also contextualizes Bach's 1730 *Entwurf* as part of a longer pattern—perhaps even a tradition—of cantors at St. Thomas issuing memoranda about circumstances and decisions that they saw as impediments to their work and the notoriety of the school.

The tensions that led to Bach's palpable frustrations of 1730 were ameliorated, in part, by the arrival of rector Gesner, whose tenure seems to have "upheld the traditional musical character" (214) of the school which, in Maul's view, corresponds to the uptick in Bach's output early in the decade. But after Gesner's 1734 departure, Bach quickly found himself in conflict with new rector Ernesti over rehearsal time and the appointment of choir prefects. Their hostile relationship set the tone for their eighteenth-century successors, one of cool (if not frigid) compromise. Like the beginning of the book, a short epilogue that ends the fifth and final chapter briskly surveys nineteenth- and twentieth-century developments, particularly the influence of Bach's growing legacy on decisions made about the "famous choir" and the school that housed it. Any reader desiring a more substantial account of activities of St. Thomas cantors after 1750, one that mirrors the scope and detail of Maul's previous chapters, would do well to consult Jeffrey Sposato's *Leipzig After Bach: Church and Concert Life in a German City* (Oxford University Press, 2018), a study that Maul likewise entrusts to readers in his note on the English translation (xvi).

In addition to the five chapters and appendices that list the cantors, rectors, and overseers of the St. Thomas School, the book is generously stocked with 68 grayscale plates (reduced from 92 full-color plates in the original German publication) that include the March 1212 deed establishing the St. Thomas Foundation, receipts for music library purchases, a 1592 class schedule, and portraits of the *dramatis personae* who feature prominently throughout its pages. Though at times a dense and labyrinthine journey, Maul's account reflects the genuine complexity of institutions, places, people, and their music. Those who encounter this story today—cantors, rectors, pastors, academics, and more—may even find all-too-familiar characters, heroes and villains espousing strengths and flaws borne by Maul and Howe across barriers erected by time and language to present day circumstances. Readers are invited to see the St. Thomas cantors not just as producers of music, but as musicians, citizens, and people in and among the circumstances, traditions, friends, foes, and institutional memory that shaped their lives and vocations. As Maul notes in his final paragraph, the book is not so much a celebration of institutions themselves, but of the everyday people who form, challenge, and continue to sustain them.

**Before the Downbeat: Performing Bach's *St. John Passion***  
**A Webinar hosted by the Center for Early Music Studies at Boston University**  
**23 May 2020**

As the wave of disruptions due to COVID-19 swept across 2020 calendars, the Boston University Center for Early Music Studies (CEMS) fared no better than anyone else. Dedicated to bridging the divide between scholarship and performance in early music, the CEMS, directed by Prof. Victor Coelho and Brett Kostrzewski (pro tempore, Spring 2020), had planned a two-day workshop on “Performing Bach’s *St. John Passion*,” led by Prof. Joshua Rifkin. After the workshop’s cancellation, we transported some of the material to an online webinar format, opening it to the general public. The response was overwhelming: with over 400 registrants and 200 live participants, the webinar was able to reach a much broader audience than would have ever been possible as a live workshop.

In the 3.5-hour webinar, Rifkin was joined by Profs. Daniel R. Melamed (Indiana University) and Ellen Exner (New England Conservatory) for a wide-ranging set of presentations and discussions on the many fraught questions surrounding the *St. John Passion*. Thanks to Oxford University Press, registrants were granted free access to the digital version of Melamed’s fundamental monograph, *Hearing Bach’s Passions*, for the weeks leading up to the webinar.

Rifkin opened the webinar with the session “From Source to Sound: The Preparation and Use of Bach’s Performance Parts, 1724–2020.” Rifkin surveyed his well-known research on the disposition of Bach’s vocal ensemble, identifying the many specific ways in which Bach’s extant performing parts for the *St. John Passion* suggest his use of just eight singers—four concertists, including the roles of the Evangelist and Jesus, joined by four ripienists plus some incidental named character parts. Facilitated by the high-resolution facsimiles available via Bach-Digital, Rifkin was able to quickly move among different parts and zoom in on key passages to make his case.

In the second session, Melamed asked, “Which *St. John Passion*? On Versions, Editions, and Reception.” Melamed surveyed the work’s complex performance history during Bach’s lifetime, where it received no fewer than four performances—probing not just historical and practical implications, but also theological ones. Melamed further examined the difficulties posed by the sources in attempting to determine Bach’s preferred version, as well as the legacy introduced by Arthur Mendel’s foundational edition for the *Neue Bach Ausgabe* which does not resemble any one of Bach’s performances.

The final session was a one-hour open question and answer session featuring Rifkin, Melamed, and Exner, in advance of which participants were invited to submit their questions via



email. The session covered such broad topics as the implications for versions in historical performance, as well as more specific questions such as the composition of Bach’s continuo group. After the webinar, the CEMS created a Facebook group for participants and other interested parties, attempting to create as best we could the sense of community lost in the wake of so many canceled workshops, conferences, and concerts. In addition, a complete recording of the webinar is available on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/ViemEpoHJAA>), where it currently has over 500 views (and counting).

Brett Kostrzewski (Ph.D. candidate, Boston University)

## Announcements

### The Frances Alford Brokaw Grant

James Brokaw has donated an additional \$5,000 for the Frances Alford Brokaw Grant, which allows the ABS annually to sponsor the work of an undergraduate student for research at the Riemenschneider Bach Institute at Baldwin Wallace University. The added donation will now allow the ABS to fund recipients up to \$1,000. Undergraduates of any nationality studying at colleges, universities, and conservatories in the United States and Canada are eligible to apply for the grant. Applications should include a statement of interest no more than two pages in length, a CV, and a letter of reference from an established musicologist/music theorist, most often a faculty member at the student's home institution. Grants will be awarded for research to be completed during the calendar year 2021. To apply, please send your materials by **February 15, 2021**, to the ABS Vice President at [vicepresident@americanbachsociety.org](mailto:vicepresident@americanbachsociety.org). References should be sent under separate cover.

### Virtual Conference: Late Style and the Idea of the Summative Work in Bach and Beethoven (April 23–24, 2021)

Artistic lateness is often characterized by complexities and contradictions that consolidate a lifetime of achievements and accumulated experience into summative works that seem to live on outside of place and time. At the same time, a composer's late style has frequently been seen as transcending nostalgia and generating new directions for the next generation of composers. Late works by J. S. Bach and Ludwig van Beethoven are often historically interpreted as summative capstones, while, at the same time, providing foundations for subsequent repertoire. This symposium with keynote addresses by Scott Burnham and Robert Marshall, brings together scholars from diverse perspectives to elucidate: (1) the multiple meanings of Late Style in the music of Bach and Beethoven and (2) how their summative late works have been understood and received by composers, performers, theorists, historians, philosophers, critics, and others.

Website: <https://blogs.umass.edu/bach/>

### Virtual Conference: Bach and Italy (November 22–28, 2020)

All over the world, the COVID situation has led musicians, listeners and musicologists to radically revise their plans, and, very frequently, to face cancellations of long-awaited events. After much pondering, the Italian Association JSBach.it decided to maintain its conference on Bach and Italy, but held virtually from November 22nd to 28th, 2020. Despite obvious disadvantages, especially the lack of direct live interaction among participants, the online version offers an opportunity to gather a much larger and diverse community around the theme of Bach and Italy.

The entire program will be streamed on social media channels

totally free of charge and will remain available worldwide after the conference. The global Bach community will therefore have at their fingertips a huge repository of high-quality videos with cutting-edge Bach research useful for study, education, and teaching.

These will include nine thematic sessions, three entirely in English, with 56 presenters: topics include “Bach and the Italian Cinema” (a panel presented by the Fondazione Levi of Venice), “Bach and Italian Music,” and sessions about the Italian reception of Bach, one chaired by Erinn Knyt. These sessions will also feature lecture-recitals, bringing to light, among others, the fascinating works by Italian contemporary composers and arrangers who have taken on the creative challenge offered by Bach's music.

Keynote speeches will be delivered by Michael Maul of the Leipzig Bach Archiv and BachFest and by Raffaele Mellace, a leading Italian scholar in the field of Bach studies. Moreover, one of the high notes of the conference are the three roundtables, two held in English, gathering leading international scholars. One will discuss the reception of Bach's sacred works in a Catholic country: among the invited speakers are Jeremy Begbie, Albert Clement, Ton Koopman, Robin A. Leaver, Michael Marissen, and Richard Rouse. The other will focus on Bach Associations worldwide, and will include Daniel R. Melamed of the American Bach Society, Willemijn Mooij of “All of Bach” and The Netherlands Bach Society, Aryeh Oron of the Bach Cantatas community, Ruth Tatlow of Bach Network, Carrie Tipton of the Bach Society Houston, and other distinguished guests.

Fringe events will include concerts, an exciting opening ceremony broadcast from some of the most impressive Baroque venues of Piedmont, the region where the conference will be presented, and specially-designed episodes of the series “A coffee with JSBach.it,” where Drs. Chiara Bertoglio and Maria Borghesi, the founders of JSBach.it, interview some of the leading Bach scholars and musicologists worldwide.

The conference is organized jointly by JSBach.it, by the Conservatory of Turin and by the Istituto per i Beni Musicali in Piemonte, in cooperation with VisitPiemonte and with the auspices of important cultural, social and musicological associations. The entire program can be viewed at [www.jsbach.it/bach2020](http://www.jsbach.it/bach2020) and followed on social media. For information: [info@jsbach.it](mailto:info@jsbach.it)

### Bach Network News

Although the Bach Network could not fulfill its original plans for 2020, it has been actively networking and planning behind the scenes, connecting with friends and colleagues through weekly Zoom tea-times, and continuing smaller-scale virtual research discussions. Upcoming highlights for the fall and into the new year include:

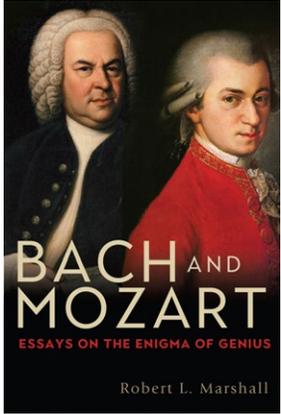
**1. *Discussing Bach*:** The first issue of a new publication venture, *Discussing Bach*, will be launched in autumn 2020 (<https://bachnetwork.org/discussing-bach/>).

**2. Leipzig Bachfest 2021:** Bach Network will contribute

a session of roundtables and short talks under the title “Bach Network in Dialogue: Bach and Redemption” on 17 June 2021. They will also contribute a similar session to the Bachfest 2022 “BachWeAreFamily.”

**3. Tenth Dialogue Meeting 2022:** The Dialogue Meeting has been postponed by a year! It will be held at Madingley Hall, Cambridge, England from Monday 18 to Friday 22 July 2022.

## Recent Publications



**Robert L. Marshall. *Bach and Mozart: Essays on the Enigma of Genius*. Eastman Studies in Music. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2019. ISBN: 9781580469623.**

Prologue: The Century of Bach and Mozart as a Music-Historical Epoch: A Different Argument for the Proposition.

1. Young Man Bach: Toward a Twenty-First-Century Bach Biography
2. The Notebooks for Wilhelm Friedemann and Anna Magdalena Bach: Some Biographical Lessons
3. Bach and Luther
4. Redeeming the St. John Passion—and J. S. Bach
5. Bach's Keyboard Music
6. The Minimalist and Traditionalist Approaches to Performing Bach's Choral Music: Some Further Thoughts
7. Truth and Beauty: J. S. Bach at the Crossroads of Cultural History
8. Bach at Mid-Life: The Christmas Oratorio and the Search for New Paths
9. Bach at the Boundaries of Music History: Preliminary Reflections on the B-Minor Mass and the Late-Style Paradigm
10. Father and Sons: Confronting a Uniquely Daunting Parental Legacy
11. Johann Christian Bach and Eros
12. Bach and Mozart: Styles of Musical Genius
13. Mozart and Amadeus
14. Bach and Mozart's Artistic Maturity
15. Mozart's Unfinished: Some Lessons of the Fragments

Epilogue (ossia Postmortem). Had Mozart Lived Longer: Some Cautious (and Incautious) Speculations

## BACH: Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute

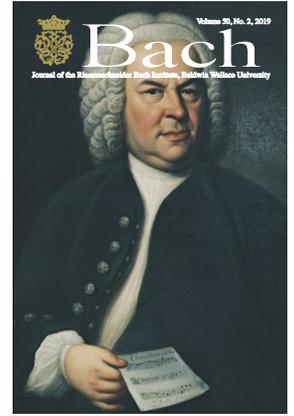
Volume 51, No. 2

Edited by Christina Fuhrmann

### 50th Anniversary Issue

#### BACH and the Riemenschneider Bach Institute

*BACH* at 50: Some Anniversary Thoughts by Steven E. Plank



Johann Philipp Bach and the *Aria Scotese con Variazione*: Twilight of the Bach Dynasty? by Stephen A. Crist

#### Listening to and Performing Bach

Distributed Listening: Aural Encounters with J. S. Bach's Sacred Cantatas by Bettina Varwig

Notational and Performance Issues in J. S. Bach's Preludes and Fugues for Organ by Don O. Franklin

The Partita in A Minor for Unaccompanied Flute BWV 1013: Problems and Possibilities by Mary Oleskiewicz

#### Reviews

*Musical Authorship from Schütz to Bach* by Stephen Rose  
Review by Daniel R. Melamed

*Bach and Mozart: Essays on the Enigma of Genius* by Robert L. Marshall  
Review by Marshall Brown

#### Special Review Section: Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach: The Complete Works

*Series I, 10 vols.: Keyboard Music*

*Series II, 5 vols.: Chamber Music*

*Series VI, 13 vols.: Orchestral Music*

Review by W. Dean Sutcliffe

*Series IV, 7 vols.: Oratorios and Passions*

*Series V, 6 vols.: Choral Music*

*Series VI, 4 vols.: Songs and Vocal Chamber Music*

Review by John Butt

## MEMBER NEWS

**Graydon Beeks** published the articles “‘Thy Hand, Belinda’: Characterization, Contrast and Maturity in *Ariodante*” in the *Händel-Jahrbuch* 66 (2020) and “John Langshaw as a Handel Copyist” in the *Newsletter of The American Handel Society* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2020).

**Pieter Dirksen** published two articles, “Buxtehude und Bach: Neue Perspektive,” in *Buxtehude-Studien* 3 (2019), and “Johann Sebastian Bach’s chorale partita *Ach, was soll ich Sünder machen*, BWV 770” in *The Organ Yearbook* 48 (2019).

**Beverly Jerold**, published an article, “A 1760 Dream for Better Performance Standards,” in *The Musical Times* 161/1952 (Autumn 2020). It recounts an anonymous writer in the *Kritische Briefe* (probably the J. S. Bach student J. F. Agricola) who describes in detail a dream in which he visits a city with outstanding music performances, implying that his own is inferior.

**Robin A. Leaver** announces that Cambridge University Press has now issued in paperback *Exploring Bach’s B-minor Mass*, which he co-edited with **Yo Tomita** and Jan Smaczny (ISBN: 1108749968). *The Routledge Research Companion to Johann Sebastian Bach* (2017), which he edited, has also been issued in paperback.

The Bloomington Bach Cantata Project, directed by **Daniel R. Melamed**, is presenting an online season of cantata performances modeled after Bach’s own, on its [YouTube channel](#).

**Peter C. Reske** announces the publication of the hymnology compendium *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Hymns* (Concordia, 2020), co-edited with Joseph Herl and Jon D. Vieker, with chapters by **Robin A. Leaver** (“Britain and Ireland from the Reformation to 1960”) and **Daniel Zager** (“Hymns and Their Musical Elaborations”).

A radio interview and joint harpsichord recital by Joyce Lindorff (Temple University) and **David Schulenberg** (Wagner College), recorded May 30, 2019, at the Radio 4 studio in Hong Kong, is now available on the station’s website at <https://www.rthk.hk/radio/radio4/programme/musicofriends/episode/697586>. The program includes solo works by J. S. and C. P. E. Bach and a four-hand sonata by J. C. Bach. This summer, Oxford University Press released his new biography of J. S. Bach, part of the Master Musicians Series. The [companion website](#) is available free of charge.

**Russell Stinson’s** book *J. S. Bach at His Royal Instrument: Essays on His Organ Works* (Oxford University Press, 2012), will be reissued in paperback this fall.

**Ruth Tatlow** has been elected into a Derek Brewer Visiting Fellowship at Emmanuel College, Cambridge for the Michaelmas term 2021. She will continue research on the project “Reading Belief through Compositional Unity, 1685–1850.”

**Paul Walker** transitioned to emeritus status at the University of Notre Dame on July 1, 2020, although he will continue to teach a few organ lessons and serve on an occasional doctoral thesis committee in the program of Sacred Music. His book *Fugue in the Sixteenth Century* is scheduled for release by Oxford University Press in November 2020.

## DIRECTIONS TO CONTRIBUTORS

*Bach Notes* is published twice yearly (Fall and Spring) and mailed to all members and subscribers. Submissions for the Spring issue are due by 1 February, and should be in Microsoft Word, employ parenthetical citations, and follow the style guidelines of *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Submissions should be sent to Derek Stauff, [dstauff@hillsdale.edu](mailto:dstauff@hillsdale.edu).

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Founded in 1972 as a chapter of the Neue Bachgesellschaft, the American Bach Society supports the study, performance, and appreciation of the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. Annual dues are \$50 (\$25 for students). Membership information and application materials are available online at the website listed below. Interested persons may also contact Reginald L. Sanders, Kenyon College Music Department, Storer Hall, Gambier, OH 43022, USA, or [sandersr@kenyon.edu](mailto:sandersr@kenyon.edu).

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