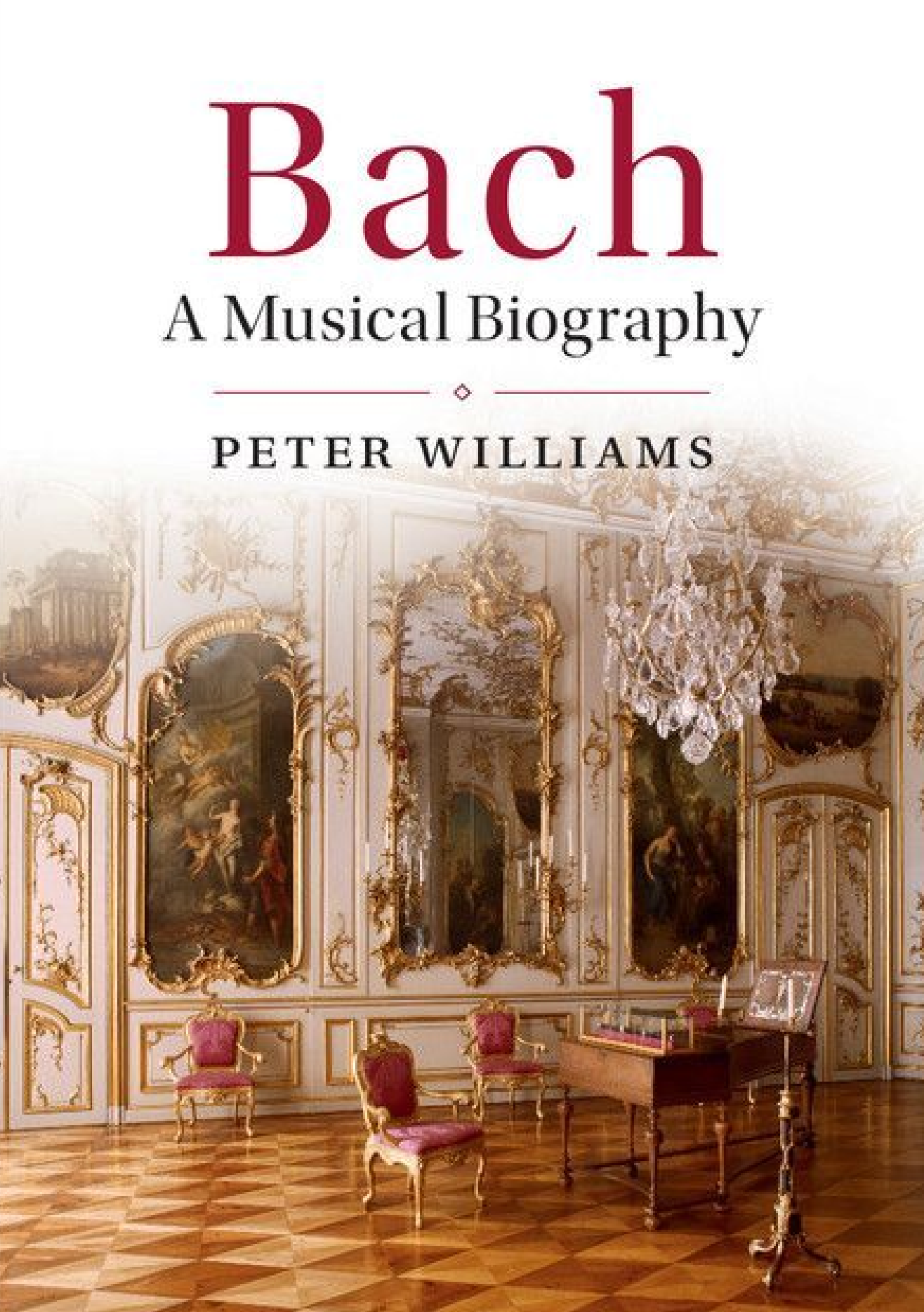
Bach

A Musical Biography

PETER WILLIAMS



Bach – A Musical Biography

J. S. Bach composed some of the best-loved and most moving music in Western culture. Surviving mostly in manuscript collections, his music also exists in special and unique publications that reveal much about his life and thoughts as a composer. In this book Peter Williams, author of the acclaimed *J. S. Bach: A Life in Music*, revisits Bach's biography through the lens of his music. Reviewing all of Bach's music chronologically, Williams discusses the music collection by collection to reveal the development of Bach's interests and priorities. While a great deal has been written about the composer's vocal works, Williams gives the keyboard music its proper emphasis, revealing it as crucial to Bach's biography, as a young organist and a mature composer, as a performer in public and teacher in private and as a profound thinker in the language of music.

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Preface

In addition to its size and much fuller content, this book differs from my previous attempts at Bach biography, *A Life of Bach* (2004) and *J. S. Bach: A Life in Music* (2007), in three particular ways. First, it brings the biography more up to date and asks further questions about the agenda of the sources. Secondly, often now with new sections beginning 'A note on', it discusses the music to a far greater extent than before, collection by collection. These major sections, placed more or less chronologically, aim not at providing analytical programme-notes but at indicating the composer's development, interests and priorities at those points. Hence the phrase 'a musical biography'. Thirdly, the book gives some emphasis to the keyboard music, seeing it as crucial to Bach's biography, as a young organist and a mature composer, as a performer in public and a teacher in private.

Giving due weight to the keyboard music also has the aim of counterbalancing the constant stream of writings, both scholarly and popular, on Bach's vocal works. The cantatas (qv), Passions (qv) and Masses, having words, are frequently mined for ideas about 'Bach's beliefs', 'Bach's feelings', 'Bach's theology', etc., and a writer's enthusiasm comes from delight in those works. They were conceived to instruct, affect, alert, startle and entrance the listener, originally doing so mostly in church services but today anywhere; and they amount to a good half of the composer's entire surviving output. Yet focusing on them and their expressiveness not only takes music's meaning for granted (see the final section, 'A brief note on aesthetics') but might neglect the composer's profound consideration of music's language, how its notes behave and what they can be made to do. This becomes clearest, I believe, in the keyboard music and in works often treated as if of only marginal interest, such as the canons.

The Obituary

Like the earlier versions, this book includes newly translated excerpts from the composer's Obituary of 1754, now increased in number and used more fully as a thread through the maze of fact and conjecture about him. An

aim of the Obituary too was to give a major emphasis to the composer's keyboard activities. It is about these that its few anecdotes are told at some length, from the first (the confiscated notebook) to the last (playing the piano to the King of Prussia). It appears also to make use of printed reports of Bach's public appearances as a player.

The document now usually called 'Bach's Obituary', or *Nekrolog*, was first entitled a 'Memorial' (*Denkmahl*) and later 'Some Reports and Thoughts' (*Einige Nachrichten und Gedanken*: Forkel 1802). Though 'Memorial' is a more appropriate term, I have kept to 'Obituary' because of its familiarity. I have also followed its very convenient plan of writing about a composer by largely separating off chronological narrative (Part I) from critical observations (Part II). The closing epilogue here corresponds, in a sense, to the Obituary's third section, which was a cantata-text in Bach's honour.

Drafted in the months following his death, ready by March 1751 but not published until some three years later (Dok. III, p. 7), the Obituary joined two other memorials in a musical periodical edited by a former Leipzig student, Lorenz Mizler, who twenty years earlier had dedicated his university dissertation to Bach, among others. (See 'Obituary' in the list of references.) The two other capellmeisters (qv) being honoured by Mizler are less well known now but were significant figures of the time, G. H. Bümler and G. H. Stölzel, members of Mizler's 'Society for Musical Sciences' to which, like Bach, they made musical contributions of one kind or another. A delay of four years for such a memorial as Bach's was not then unusual and need not imply low public interest, for Bümler had died much earlier (1745) and Stölzel also before Bach (1749). Nevertheless, given that someone is being uniquely described as 'world-famous', one wonders whether there had been some difficulty in getting it published or whether it had been written for some other, unrealized purpose.

Each of the Obituary's two sections is attributed in the documentation to a former Bach pupil: the biographical part to the composer's second surviving son Carl Philipp Emanuel (here 'Emanuel'), the evaluatory part to his pupil and Emanuel's colleague in Berlin, Johann Friedrich Agricola (here 'Agricola'). There follow some memorial verses, laid out as a cantata-text and written by Georg Venzky, another member of Mizler's society but closely connected neither with Leipzig nor, it seems, the composer. (The two accompanying obituaries also closed with a cantata-text in homage, but by Mizler.) Like any biography, the Obituary had an agenda, relating some touching incidents told presumably by the hero-subject himself while ignoring others less touching; and it gives details that its university-educated authors would find important about a man they understood only

in part. In effect, they laid a path trodden by his admirers ever since, so that what they say and, especially, do not say has become and still is to this day a crucial part of the Bach picture.

'A musical biography'

Both the newly enlarged Parts I and II of this book raise many questions to which no one has an answer, although in their wording such questions sometimes imply one answer rather than another.

The observations in Part II would range more widely if I pursued some of the more theoretical aspects, particularly theology and philosophy. But the book's emphasis is on the musical background, with more references to other composers and repertories than is the case in many Bach biographies. Despite uncertainties about other music that Bach knew and when he knew it, I feel that such emphasis reveals the activity of a unique musician more intimately than excursions into political history, social history, religion, theology, philosophy, literature, rhetoric, numerology, theatre, dance, architecture, esoteric schemes and even word-setting. Such topics are part of the picture, of course, as they were for many others at the time, and I do not mean to dismiss them casually. But I do feel that what precisely the influence of these topics was on Bach's music *qua* music is less obvious than modern studies often imply.

Also unimportant for the purposes of this book, except where it impinges on the record, is 'Bach reception', how other people posthumously received Bach's music. More important here is how Bach himself received other people's music. What he learnt from a variety of repertories – traditional vocal and keyboard music of the Lutheran organist, classical vocal styles of the old Italian masters (especially Masses), newer Italian trios, Venetian concertos, French *ouvertures* (qv) and *suites*, formal arias, popular songs and especially the best Italian and German keyboard counterpoint – all this gives some idea of his own musical priorities and underlines the breadth of his knowledge. The gradual awareness in recent times of how much Latin music by Roman Catholic composers Bach copied, adapted and prepared for various possible uses has revealed a major activity still far from being fully assessed.

Not only is Bach's music for keyboard the most widely known of his work but it was by far the most music he ever published, and that in which he could be said to be most alone with his thoughts about music. Although it would be an exaggeration to think that the choral works were important

only to 'Bach the Salaried Church Cantor' (qv) and, likewise, that the chamber music was of interest only to 'Bach the Freelance Secular Composer', there does seem nevertheless good reason to 'feel the heart of the man' at its clearest not in either of these but in keyboard music, ultimately in the Art of Fugue. Whatever his achievements in choral music, a composer who appears to rejoice in the very compass (qv) of the keyboard – I am thinking of the special use he makes of the top d''' in the 'Goldberg Variations' or the bottom pedal C in several organ works – is one for whom it was and remained the prime mover. The critic of 1737 who, while admiring Bach's performing skills, accused him of requiring singers and instrumentalists to do what he could do on the keyboard (Dok. II, p. 286) was not far wrong.

This volume

Although this book places the collections of Bach's music in roughly chronological order, most of it is referred to in more than one connection. For example, Book 1 of the Well-tempered Clavier (WTC) has its own brief account ('A note on . . .') but also crops up in other connections: biography, musical context, making collections, developing harmony, shaping movements, teaching students, tuning harpsichords, playing keyboard. For such scattered references, see the Index of works.

The musical examples are as before, and I have baulked at adding more to demonstrate the scope of this massive oeuvre. To do this fairly would require dozens of additions, presume on the reader's confidence with notation and also tempt the musician (whose eye leaps to any musical notation on the page) to skip the text. Above all, it would deny the maxim I have always believed, that 'examples do not prove, they only illustrate'.

The earlier version of this book had a cover reproducing a lively Viennese court-scene in *c.* 1760, showing an instrumental ensemble of musicians in bright uniform playing to a well-dressed but inattentive throng. This was to get away from the usual dour image of Bach conveyed by the official portrait (which followed portrait-conventions of the time and place) and to show a court-scene not so very different from any that he knew in Dresden or Berlin, or even in Cöthen and Weimar except in scale. Hapsburg and Wettin-Albertine banquets were grander, no doubt. For the cover of the present edition, the view of a room in Frederick the Great's Sanssouci Palace is meant to suggest various things typical of the day: the royal or aristocratic settings for a great deal of chamber music, including

Bach's; the increasingly 'high profile' enjoyed by keyboard-players in public; the styles of architecture and furnishings familiar to the composer; and in all respects, a world quite distinct from church. From the familiar engravings of the Lutheran towns and churches of Leipzig and Eisenach, it is not easy to envisage how cosmopolitan were Bach's interests as a musician and how varied his experiences.

Abbreviations and bracketed references (name, date and page-number) are expanded in the list of references, while (qv) refers to an entry in the glossary. The separate movements of a work are identified by small Roman numerals, for example BWV 196.iv and BWV 769.x. Keys are usually spelt out but for brevity are sometimes written as C (major) and c (minor). Original work-titles are left italicized in German (e.g. *Clavierübung*) or left plain in English translation (e.g. St Matthew Passion) but put in quotation marks when the title is not (or not known) to be the composer's own, as in 'Mass in B minor'. This should also be the case for the usual titles 'Cantata No. 1', 'Cantata No. 215', etc., neither the title nor number of which is Bach's, but for which it would be otiose to use quotation marks each time.

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The excerpt in Example 1, transcribed from the MS LM 4708, appeared in the first edition by kind permission of the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Yale University.



1 Map of northern Germany in the time of J. S. Bach



2 Map of Thuringia and Saxony in the time of J. S. Bach

PART I

Life and works

1 | Early years, 1685–1703: background, family, studies

The Obituary is headed 'the Honourable Johann Sebastian Bach, world-famous in organ-playing, Royal Polish and Electoral Saxon Court Composer and Music Director in Leipzig', and begins

> Johann Sebastian Bach belongs to a family in all of whose members equally a love for and skill in music seem, as a common gift, to have been imparted by nature.

Emanuel Bach, presumably responsible for these words, was familiar with the outlines of his family's musical history, since quite apart from any anecdotes about it that circulated in the family, his father had spent time around the age of fifty compiling on paper a selective genealogy. This is the 'Origin of the musical-Bach family', *Ursprung der musicalisch-Bachischen Familie* (Dok. I, pp. 255–61), a Genealogy known to Emanuel in whose household it was later copied: a unique source of information about the family tree and, in the sparseness of other evidence, used ever since in all kinds of connections. This is a document, often since referred to as a 'table', into which something can be read about the composer, his interests, his industry, even now and then his opinions.

Although for reasons that can only be guessed Bach contributed little to the published biographies and autobiographies of the day, he did compile a genealogical list either from scratch after many time-consuming enquiries or, more likely, by revising and enlarging an older document begun by a previous member of this large family. There remained some gaps waiting to be filled, signs of some haste (Dok. I, p. 263). Still an indispensable source, it numbers fifty-three Bachs in the course of two hundred years or more, many of them professional musicians well known in central Germany (qv), though only a few became so in a larger Europe – Sebastian himself and, as perhaps he was anticipating by the 1730s, several of his sons. Emanuel added to the Genealogy in which he and five brothers figured. It also enabled him to begin his 'Memorial' more tellingly, even proudly, than John Mainwaring was able to begin his biography of Handel ('George Frederic Handel was born in Halle').

Since the 'Memorial' or Obituary opens in the present tense, the question immediately arises whether it was prepared during the composer's

lifetime, perhaps shaped like a curriculum vitae or a biography for one of the several lexicons being published in Leipzig which did not, however, include him. The two other obituaries printed along with it begin less ambiguously by referring to their subjects as deceased. And as Emanuel's narrative continues, a further point might strike the reader: now and then one has the impression that he was citing from press cuttings at his disposal, leading one to wonder further whether his father had collected and preserved them along with the genealogical table. Possible instances of such cuttings are identified below as they occur.

It is easy to imagine personal reasons why a composer would compile such a Genealogy at or near his own half-century, when Scripture itself had ordained that one's fiftieth was a jubilee year, with family celebration (Leviticus 25:10). In Bach's copy of the Calov Lutheran Bible, various marginalia in the chapters to do with such observances and rules suggest that he had more than a casual interest in such things (e.g. Cox 1985, facs. 66). And there were also likely to be personal reasons for the Genealogy, including both a birth and some deaths: the recent birth of Johann Christian (the 'London Bach', in September 1735, his last son, as it happens) and the loss of so many close relatives, from early childhood on. Deceased close relatives were his parents (mother at her own half-century, father two days short of it), gradually all seven of his siblings (one before he was born, two while he was a small infant), his first wife (she too had been an orphan), ten of his twenty children (an eleventh died later, aged twenty-four in 1739) and a particularly beloved employer. His brother and former guardian Johann Christoph had died in his fiftieth year, as had his sister Marie Salome in her fifty-second.[1]

This catalogue of bereavements may have been larger than was usual among such classes. For example, by his late fifties Telemann had lost only two of his surviving seven children. But the wider the extended Bach family was, the more constantly news of deaths within it must have circulated among relatives or, just as bad, been taken for granted. For example, ten of the eleven children of Johann Günther, great-great-grandson of Sebastian's great-grandfather, died before their mother. Sebastian's first conscious family bereavement was when he was six years old (brother Balthasar),

[1] It seems that fifty was a significant age in Thuringia and Saxony. At fifty, Handel apparently planned a visit to his native Halle (HHB 4, p. 254); later in Weimar, at about that age, Goethe drafted *Der Mann von fünfzig Jahren* ('the man of fifty'). Also probably belonging to 1735 is the 'Bach goblet', on which are engraved the *JSB* monogram, several inscriptions including *Vivat*, and motifs including B A C H (qv) (Dok. II, p. 264; Dok. IV, p. 278): a jubilee gift?

his last within nine months of his own death (grandson Johann Sebastian Altnickol); and not only relations – during Bach's time at Leipzig, no fewer than seventeen students in the choir-school died. All this implies that when Bach's own entry in the Genealogy says he is still living 'by God's will', this is no empty formula.

There is another relevant point: in working on the Genealogy when he did, with whatever personal or religious urges he may have had, the composer was knowingly or otherwise following the day's taste for family tables. In the book-centre of Leipzig such tables were well known throughout the 1720s and 1730s. Johann Hübner was publishing aristocratic and other tables for a ready market, one of them with some 333 tables (meant to be an evocative number, no doubt), and these could have encouraged Bach to work on a list of the 'musical Bachs', perhaps even to think of publishing it. His careful assemblage of materials confirms that he was a born collector and portfolio-organizer, even implying that he was more of a letter-writer than is now known or than he was said by Emanuel to have been (Dok. III, p. 290). Both the various blanks he left in his table (e.g. when a date of birth was unknown) and the musical specifics he included (e.g. that Johann Günther Bach was singer and schoolmaster at a church in Erfurt) suggest that he had a lively variety of sources: existing information, correspondence, conversation, visits to and from, hearsay.

In listing the musicians of the large and well-distributed clan to which he, an early orphan, belonged, Bach accomplishes several things: he establishes the story of an exceptional family, omits mere family-lore anecdotes and salutes an art practised to the greater glory of God. The story is not a fairy tale but sets out an (as it were) apostolic succession, one not entirely unlike the genealogical tables in two of the New Testament Gospels and parts of the Old Testament Pentateuch – another biblical allusion, in other words, whether or not a conscious one. So well read in both Old and New Testaments were genealogists, including J. S. Bach, that there cannot have been much difference between conscious and unconscious similarities in all such compilations.

The first name, Veit Bach, was that of a man said in both Genealogy and Obituary to have fled Hungary in the sixteenth century on account of his *Religion* (Obituary: Dok. II, p. 80), specifically his *Lutheran Religion* (Genealogy: Dok. I, p. 255). Although the latter phrase, like its antithesis *Roman-Catholic Religion*, was used commonly enough in mid-century Dresden and elsewhere, since 'Hungary' (meaning present-day southern Slovakia) was already predominantly Protestant at the time, Bach's Genealogy might have been making an assumption. Perhaps *its* source was

referring to Christianity itself, which at that period was under serious threat from Islam and Turkish Muslims. (Also threatened in the early sixteenth century were Jews in that region, when it was finally divided into Hapsburg, Ottoman and Transylvanian sections. The Jews' *Religion* was another one to be shunned?) The Turks were still being fought centuries later by the Swedish army to which Sebastian's brother Johann Jacob belonged (Dok. I, p. 259). Elsewhere in German literature 'Hungary' featured as a haven for anti-Papist musicians, as in Daniel Speer's *Ungarischer oder Dacianischer Simplicissimus*, 1683.

The entry on Veit Bach, a *Weißbecker* ('fancy baker'), is fuller than for some others, for from him a Tree of Jesse springs, branches of a Protestant tree flourishing over generations. Partly as a result of this Genealogy, the Bachs have become the best known of all musical dynasties, though positions of higher prestige were occupied in Paris by some of the Couperins.

It seems that a few years later, the Genealogy was joined by another family document of sorts, the Old-Bach Archive (*Alt-Bachisches Archiv*), a surviving collection of choral works by older family members, and today deposited in the Staatsbibliothek, Berlin. Now constituting some two dozen pieces, but once perhaps many more, the collection includes music by Johann Christoph, the organist in Eisenach admired by Sebastian (his father's cousin); Georg Christoph (Sebastian's uncle); and Johann Michael (Sebastian's first father-in-law, also praised in the Genealogy). Some of the copying of scores was done by this Johann Christoph, some performing parts and a text by Sebastian's father, but the biggest contributor-copyist has been identified as not a Bach but Ernst Dietrich Heindorff, cantor in Arnstadt, who died in 1724. This suggests that the archive was first assembled as a 'repertory for use in Arnstadt, during Heindorff's cantorate' rather than as a Bach family document, and that it passed complete or incomplete to J. S. Bach when the organist there, his first cousin Johann Ernst, died in 1739 (BJ 1998, pp. 138, 147).

In the following years Bach then added to the Archive himself, *perhaps* contributing or intending to contribute such autographs as the score or parts of various early cantatas (qv) (Nos. 71, 4, 106 and 131), fit representatives of his early successes. He also wrote much of the text underlay for Johann Christoph Bach's twenty-two-part motet 'Es erhub sich ein Streit' and parts for another, 'Lieber Herr Gott, wecke uns auf'. This last, in which Bach was helped by a student, dates from his final months and could have been prepared for his own funeral. So it seems that the Archive continued to be made up piecemeal over the years and was meant to be enlarged further, even after Emanuel appears to have taken charge of it under the

name *Alt-Bachisches Archiv* (Dok. III, p. 502). It was also Emanuel, presumably being reliably informed, who spoke of his father performing Johann Christoph's motet in Leipzig (Dok. III, p. 292).

As well as how, quite why Bach should carefully preserve such an archive, provide some title-pages for its music, complete some texts, insert corrections and even make some performance materials from it, is an interesting question. Likely, of course, is 'family loyalty': preserving work by other Bachs, a further and natural step in his work on the family tree. And just as his own name featured in the Genealogy, so representative manuscripts of his own music could have been added to the Archive, or were planned to be. Was this one of the reasons that in his maturity he made certain fair copies, such as the late collection of organ-chorales, and even that it was for this that he completed the Mass, an archive in more senses than one? Also likely is that the Archive was still supplying him with service-music from time to time in his final years, despite its out-of-date styles. For it is often forgotten that as well as modern cantatas, a good deal of much earlier music was sung in the main Sunday services in the larger churches – motets, chorales, chant. Presumably by the time the Archive passed to Emanuel along with the main copy of the Genealogy, its value for the family was mostly (but not entirely) antiquarian. But this was something not at all insignificant for the wider Bach family, judging from a letter of 1728 written by another Bach, Johann Nicolaus, who was aware of the family's tradition that it had come originally from 'Hungary' (BJ 1989, p. 213). So was J. G. Walther when he included a biographical entry on J. S. Bach in his *Lexicon* in 1732.

To imply in the 1730s that music was an honourable family trade was a reflection of the growing national respect for 'art and the artist', *Kunst und der Künstler*. These very words appear often in the Obituary itself, indeed conspicuously so, and became deeply respected over the German Enlightenment and Romantic periods. After all, this was not a dynasty of shoemakers or bakers but, as the Genealogy's title said, 'musical Bachs', which included not only composers and performers but also those who were active in devising new musical instruments. Walther (1732, p. 64) suggested that those called Bach were devoted to music since their very name was melodic (B A C H, qv). A surgeon and a shopkeeper who qualified for inclusion in the list of 'musical Bachs' were, one assumes, gifted amateurs – and therefore in principle very different from one early Bach who had been a different kind of musician (a court jester/fiddler) and is not listed, despite Sebastian's probable knowledge of him. (His portrait had even been engraved and published: see Geiringer 1954, plate iv.)

Unlike true family trees, the genealogical table lists few mothers, wives or daughters, mostly in earlier generations, although the best surviving source of it is a copy made by Sebastian's granddaughter. The table does mention the 'four unprovided-for daughters' of Johann Michael Bach of Gehren, one of whom was Maria Barbara Bach, Sebastian's first wife; but, curiously, she is not named. Nor are his wives mentioned under his own entry, any more than his second wife is in the communicant lists at Leipzig when they name Bach and with him, fairly regularly, one or more of his sons. Such a formal church document is unlikely to name women even though the formative table in Matthew 1 includes Mary (an actual personal name?), and baptism-records list godmothers, usually by defining their status ('wife of . . .'). In a letter of 1730 discussed further below, Bach makes a point of mentioning the current professional position of three sons, noting also that his wife sings well and that his first child, Catharina Dorothea, is unmarried and plays 'not badly' (*nicht schlimm*: Dok. I, p. 68). In a further letter of 1748, he informs a cousin about Emanuel's 'two male heirs' but does not mention their sister, for it was through boys that the list of 'musical Bachs' contained in the Genealogy might gradually grow longer.

Yet Bach's own mother was undoubtedly musical, being a member of the family Lämmerhirt, closely involved with music in Erfurt and even mentioned in the Genealogy (Dok. I, p. 256). Erfurt was the area's largest town and a Hanseatic (qv) city with allegiances far afield, and it happens that Elisabeth Lämmerhirt was also related to two other prominent musicians in Thuringia: J. G. Walther (she was Walther's grandfather's half-sister) and J. H. Buttstedt (she was his wife's second cousin). These were composers to whose music her gifted son was to respond later in one way or another and, clearly, a mother's connections could be important to a musician. Telemann in his autobiographies claimed that his musical gifts came from his mother, as something surely had come to Johann Sebastian Bach from his. Both of Bach's wives had belonged to professional musical families and must have contributed to the musical gifts of the children, as also no doubt to their daily musical studies.

'Honourable Thuringians'

After listing various musical members of Veit Bach's 'race' (*Geschlecht*), the Obituary continues

> It would be something to wonder at that such fine men should be so little known outside their fatherland if one did not bear in mind that these honourable Thuringians were so content with their fatherland and their standing [there] that they would not venture at all far from it, even to go after their fortune.

There is something approaching an apology here. Emanuel is speaking of earlier Bachs, 'worthy men' the memory of whom deserves to be kept fresh, musicians he had learnt about from the Genealogy and the Old-Bach Archive. Whether he is fairly representing his father's views as they had been expressed at various times, perhaps at some moment of particular discontent in Leipzig, cannot be shown. Emanuel would certainly have known how much travel and such experiences had featured in recent biographies of contemporary composers (in Mattheson 1740) and for his readers, the relevance of what he says to the biography that follows would not have been missed. Especially the musicians among them would assume that normally a musician's highest status could be measured only by two kinds of success which Bach, unlike Handel, never achieved: leaving home to study abroad, especially Italy; then occupying a position of prestige in a court or capital city such as Hanoverian London or Prussian Berlin. (It was in Berlin that Emanuel and Agricola were working by the time the Obituary was published.)

A general and keen interest in a musician's early studies and later career is clear from Johann Mattheson's collection of biographies published a few years earlier, the *Ehren-Pforte* of 1740, which generally addressed the question of where and what a composer had studied. This is a most important book to bear in mind when reading the Obituary. Emanuel knew that Mattheson had not published a biography of Bach to compare with those of Handel or Telemann, whose travels, meetings with the elite, engagement with opera, concert-going in important cities and so on, were described there. An upper-middle-class boy, Telemann had been a university student in Leipzig, had good and continuing contact with Handel, had travelled, had enthusiastic contact with Polish music, became opera- and church-director for the free city of Hamburg, visited Paris and actually declined the job of cantor in Leipzig. Altogether, such a varied and productive musical life of fame and obvious success as Telemann's was surely in the mind of Emanuel Bach, his own godson, as he drafted the Obituary.

There were many German musicians of the time with wider experience than Bach. Two very respected musicians trained in Leipzig and whose biographies were published, Fasch and Graupner, had branched out either in or beyond Germany, although Fasch was said to have been unable to afford to study in Italy. (Handel funded his first Italian visit himself from earnings he made in Hamburg, as reported by Mainwaring (1760, p. 42), probably wrongly.) Bach's successor at St Thomas's, Gottlob Harrer, had 'spent some time in Italy' and learnt composition there as well as the job of cantor (Dok. II, p. 480). These were the kind of travels that Emanuel, who had by then applied to succeed his father, later admitted he had never

made himself (Dok. III, p. 255). The 'Jena Bach', Johann Nicolaus, had spent some time in Italy, as Walther's *Lexicon* of 1732 informed its readers. At about the time the Obituary was published, Emanuel's younger brother Johann Christian was leaving to study in Italy, and was soon to find success in Milan and London, freelancing in the modern way. But the biggest *éminence grise* behind this and other statements in the Obituary, more than is often now recognized, is surely Handel. For some decades the garrulous Mattheson had been lionizing Handel and reporting on his successes, and no doubt news of his great if fluctuating wealth in England had reached his native city of Halle and nearby Leipzig. Furthermore, Handel was not a native Thuringian, the focus of Emanuel's remarks (Halle was within the march of Brandenburg).

To what extent Emanuel is reporting his father's views on 'not venturing far' can only be guessed: his various grumbles over pay and conditions, particularly in Leipzig – grumbles presumably made aloud in the family – may have led all of them to feel a need to justify the fact that he remained there until he died. 'Not venturing far' is an aspect of the biography more important than it is often taken to be. For there is a big contrast here with G. H. Stölzel's obituary that accompanied Bach's, where pages are devoted to Stölzel's travels and experiences, surely affecting Emanuel had he seen it before publication, which is possible. Yet Sebastian himself, at a point in his Genealogy, refers to a certain family member as one who

> never took a job [*function*] but sought most of his pleasure [*Plaisir*] in travelling (Dok. I, p. 260)

– an expression of disapproval, even sarcasm? The offender was none other than the son of the Eisenach organist Christoph admired by Sebastian, another Johann Christoph (b. 1676), who became active as a keyboard-player in London, as did other Germans such as J. C. Pepusch. This Bach was probably employed as a theatre musician – another source of disapproval?

For it to be true that J. S. Bach had the chance to achieve fame abroad but chose not to, he would have had to have removed himself more permanently from his native province in his teens or early twenties than he ever did. Handel and Christoph Graupner had done so, one from Halle and one from Leipzig. Or, to match them, he would have had to treat the Leipzig cantorate as a stepping-stone to Dresden or elsewhere, and if he had tried to do this, without success, the Obituary authors would surely know about it. To put it no more strongly: there is little evidence that Bach wanted to stay in Leipzig or was happy as long-term cantor of St Thomas, certainly not in his later years when Emanuel was occasionally with him.

But the theme of contentment with one's home country was not unknown in biographies of other German heroes familiar to Bach and his sons, such as Camerarius's life of Melanchthon, the early reformer and revered colleague of Luther. Melanchthon too was orphaned (aged eleven), expressed fidelity to his fatherland and place of origin, was headstrong and educated himself by assiduously studying what others had written: all motifs to occur in the Bach Obituary. By 1700, several editions of Melanchthon's *Life* had been published in Leipzig, and he remained influential through his practical directives on preaching. (Melanchthon's portrait had been drawn by Albrecht Dürer, who, though well travelled, similarly let it be known that he preferred remaining in Nuremberg to seeking fame and riches elsewhere – as Italian painters did? Dürer's family too was said to have originated in 'Hungary'.) Both Bach and Melanchthon strove 'for God and their neighbour' and parallels between them as musician and theologian were close: a cantata's musical rhetoric was equivalent to a sermon's verbal rhetoric.

Though it could be true that Thuringia was less confined culturally than either Hamburg in the north or Munich in the south, it may be rather wishful thinking to see it as an important cultural crossroads, as some have done. On the contrary, signs of any impending Enlightenment are hard to find in writings and other evidence from an area characterized by a kind of residual medievalism only partially leavened by the Reformation. Travel overland being as difficult as it was, really lively contact between cities on major water-routes such as Amsterdam–London or Dresden–Hamburg would have been easier than, say, Dresden–Eisenach. Yet a province's very narrowness is not a disadvantage when its traditions are healthy and lively. Self-contained Thuringia was a province of marked character and traditions, culturally alive, competitive from city to city and vigorous in a range of artistic endeavour. Here, in such a province, an exceptionally gifted and voracious boy could well have been stimulated both to learn what he could from elsewhere and to rely on his own achievements. Of course, local or national pride can mean underrating the foreign, as it clearly did later in Emanuel's sarcastic reference to the celebrated French organist Louis Marchand. Nevertheless, it was far more common for a Protestant boy in 1700 to be receptive to foreign influences, to seek personal development abroad or in some other way take in what other musical cultures have to offer his education, than it was for a young Roman Catholic boy.

When it says 'fortune', the Obituary seems to mean both financial and artistic success. Certainly the various Bachs including Sebastian did progress financially over their careers, doing so without the kind of risks that

Handel, never a family man, took. In regular income, as a young court musician J. S. Bach earned 28 guilders, as a minor parish organist 50 then 85, as court organist 150 then 200, as concertmaster 250 to 300, as court capellmeister to 450, as cantor about 800, plus not insignificant payments in kind at each stage, as was customary for those with organists' positions in Protestant Germany (lodging, fuel, cereals, etc.). Whether, like some organists in northern cities, Bach was able himself to hire out seats in the organ-galleries of the churches he served is not, and probably never was, clearly recorded. Nor is his income from teaching known in more than occasional detail, but it is not unlikely to have been larger at most stages of his life than his actual salary, though 'off the record'.

Nevertheless, obviously Bach's fame and fortune did not match Handel's. How well situated financially the family was by 1730 or so, with six children at home including one at the university, is a question the composer himself may not have known quite how to answer. As is clear from Telemann's story in Hamburg, there was nothing unusual in a composer-cantor supporting a large household and at the same time devoting vast energies to composing and directing musical events, all without either the large reward or the occasional disaster known to many an opera-composer.

When it praises those 'honourable Thüringians' staying at home and aiming to please loyal countrymen rather than a few and 'perhaps even envious' foreigners elsewhere, a provincial-nationalistic element creeps into the Obituary. The accusation of 'envy' is puzzling, but something similar was still there when later on another Leipziger, Richard Wagner, complained bitterly of those fond of fame and wealth abroad while having no real fatherland themselves, e.g. Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer (Wagner 1907, 2, p. 35). But it is not at all certain whether the young J. S. Bach would have agreed with the Obituary authors, when for all anyone knows, he had (or had once had) the broadest of horizons. It would be dreadful to imagine him towards the end of his life regretting how he had spent it, feeling very provincial, wondering what he had missed in the musical centres of Europe and willing himself to be content with what he had done in his home country 'for God and his neighbour'.

Birth, family

Only after summarizing the family background does the Obituary turn to its main subject:

Johann Sebastian Bach was born in 1685, on March 21, in Eisenach. His parents were Johann Ambrosius Bach, Court and Town Musician there, and Elisabeth *née* Lemmerhirt, daughter of a town official in Erfurt.

From those two brief sentences its readers would have learnt a great deal more about the background. Where Emanuel found the information is not certain: records in a family Bible, perhaps, though not the Genealogy itself where only the father is mentioned. Although the cultural significance of Eisenach, a city of about 7,000 inhabitants, is today established by its associations – with a medieval Minnesinger (Tannhäuser), a famous 'combat' between minstrels, a saint (Elizabeth of Thuringia), Martin Luther (a native, translating the New Testament while sequestered in its castle) and J. S. Bach – only the last two would have been in the forefront of Obituary readers' minds. Probably more familiar to them were the brief biographies of Bach and Handel in Walther's *Lexicon* of 1732, where they could have learnt that 21 March was barely four weeks after the birth of *Georg Friedrich Hendel* in Halle, a bigger town than Eisenach and by the time of the *Lexicon* also the seat of a notable university.

Johann Sebastian was the youngest of eight children in the family, the last-known child born to his mother, then aged forty-one and, in Lutheran tradition, not present at his baptism two days later. After the common family name Johann, the second came from his main godparent, as was customary. Sebastian Nagel was *Stadtpfeifer* (qv) or municipal musician in Gotha and a colleague of the infant's father, Ambrosius, both of them members of musical ensembles active in the usual way in the local court, town and churches. By the time of Sebastian's birth, his father had been director of the municipal music in Eisenach for fourteen years, a violinist who had earlier served the city of Erfurt. There in the Erfurt Kaufmannskirche, on 8 April 1668, he had married Elisabeth Lämmerhirt, a young stepsister of Ambrosius's uncle's wife, daughter of a town councillor and thus bourgeois by class.

Had Ambrosius succeeded a few months before March 1685 in obtaining the release he sought from the local duke and town council at Eisenach in order to return to Erfurt, Johann Sebastian Bach would have been born there, as his elder brother Christoph had been – the brother who was to take him in as an orphan about ten years later. It was also to Erfurt relatives that his sister Marie Salome was to return when their mother died. At least indirectly, Erfurt played a big part in Johann Sebastian's musical background, and it is rather surprising that he is not recorded as ever having sought a job there. Its musicians over the years included Pachelbel

(who taught Sebastian's brother Christoph there from 1686), Nicolaus Vetter and J. H. Buttstedt (Pachelbel pupils), Johann Effler (Sebastian's predecessor in Weimar), J. G. Walther (a Buttstedt pupil) and J. Adlung (an organist and influential writer on organs) – all well-known names in the world of German organists and organ music for the best part of a hundred years.

In the Erfurt Kaufmannskirche over the decades, no fewer than sixty-one infants with the name Bach were baptized. For Johann Michael Bach, who was to become posthumously Sebastian's first father-in-law, Erfurt would have been the local capital city, and there too various Bachs remained prominent town musicians until Napoleonic times. In 1716 Sebastian returned to the city to test (and possibly inaugurate) a new organ in the Augustinerkirche, the Augustinian church or 'Austin Friars', where Martin Luther himself had been ordained priest in 1507. This organ was the work of the privileged Erfurt builder J. G. Schröter, with whose family Sebastian remained in contact, and whose pupils included Franciscus Volckland, builder of several instruments in and around Erfurt still in recognizably historical condition today. It is quite possible that an abiding sense of pride in Erfurt's and Eisenach's associations with Luther was still with the composer in 1739, when for the very first time he published some organ music. This was *Clavierübung III*, which made a point of drawing on Luther's hymns and their melodies in a year of special significance to Lutherans in Leipzig – 200 years since Luther preached in the Thomaskirche, which also was originally an Augustinian church.

As a civic musician (*Hausmann*) in Eisenach, Bach's father seems to have been unusually gifted, was officially praised as a versatile and effective music director (BJ 1927, p. 141), was better paid than his predecessor, employed four musical assistants (two journeymen, two apprentices) and was presumably a good violinist. His musical handwriting itself suggests an accomplished musician, but there is no clue as to what if anything his youngest son learnt from him except, presumably, from observation. Ambrosius's duties in the town included playing in the wind band twice a day from a balcony or tower of the town hall, participating in the main service and vespers (qv) on Sundays and feastdays in the Georgenkirche (St George's Church, where Sebastian was baptized) and playing at various ceremonial events civic or private, for which he had the *privilegium* (privilege, qv). Whether such civic musicians as Ambrosius considered themselves primarily wind- or string-players is not clear or very significant, but judging from the support shown to his eventual widow by his senior colleague, the cantor of the Georgenkirche, he was much respected (Dok. II, p. 4). So, consequently, was his family.

Although the local cantor, A. C. Dedekind, would have been very well known to the boy, both as a composer of music for various occasions and as his class teacher in 1694–5, a more certain influence on him was also the church's organist at the time, Ambrosius's cousin and colleague, Johann Christoph Bach. This is the Bach uniquely and conspicuously called in the Genealogy 'a profound composer' (*ein profonder Componist*), one of whose expansive and carefully wrought motets Sebastian, as noted, might have planned for his own funeral. If so, one might see in this a further sign of Bach's sense of family and tradition, wishing to acknowledge in death his having belonged to a proud dynasty of church musicians.

It is often now conjectured that it was Ambrosius's cousin Johann Christoph, described a few years after his death as 'a real wonder of an organist' (BJ 2004, p. 158) and active as organist and composer (neither of which Ambrosius is known for certain to have been), who allowed the boy Sebastian to learn as many basics of organ-playing and organ-construction as he could. Johann Christoph laboured for many years to get the large organ in the town's major church improved, and it is possible that the boy was as much interested in this ongoing work as he had been in accompanying his father to *his* various duties. Also, because this Christoph lived eight years longer than Ambrosius, his influence on Sebastian could have continued over his early teenage years even at a distance, this becoming a further reason – over and above its quality – for the music at Sebastian's funeral. Had Sebastian been a pupil of Christoph in any formal sense, however, one would expect the Genealogy to say so. It did mention his brother Johann Jacob's teacher, Ambrosius's successor in Eisenach, but it lists only Sebastian's later appointments. The Obituary barely hints that he learnt much from his father.

Presumably, Ambrosius's sons sang in the *Schülerchor*, the schoolboy choir providing music in the three churches of Eisenach, including the Georgenkirche, whose recorded repertory of choral music included some works by Josquin, a composer known to have been admired by Luther himself and therefore especially appropriate to Eisenach. The choir also sang twice a week in the streets of the town, in music at special events and even perhaps now and then in a Passion on Good Friday (BJ 1985, p. 53). The kinds of contact between the town's musicians and members of musical families are not difficult to imagine, although where exactly J. N. Forkel in 1802 got his information about convivial family gatherings over this period, when apparently siblings and cousins met annually and sang chorales, quodlibets (qv) and popular songs, he does not say. A second- or third-hand report from one of the Bach sons? It is a plausible picture, however, and Forkel had probably seen some physical evidence of one Bach-family

gathering: the copy of a vocal work for some birthday celebrations of Bach's father and uncles in 1689, preserved in the Old-Bach Archive.

Sebastian's schooling is not documented before 1693 when he entered the Latin school in Eisenach where Luther had been a pupil almost exactly 200 years earlier, a boys-only school which taught German and Latin literacy, confessional study such as the Catechism and psalms and no doubt some degree of numeracy. For boys from five to (finally) twelve years old, attendance at a different, mixed primary 'German school' was compulsory in the dukedom (BJ 1994, p. 180), either providing them with the first part of the more senior Latin school's curriculum (except for the Latin) or instead, eventually releasing them into the world of apprenticeships. One of the German schools of Eisenach was to be found in the street in which the Bach family lived, its schoolmaster a professional colleague of Ambrosius. Sebastian's early admission to the Latin school suggests that he had been 'fast-streamed'. Telemann too had been a pupil of the 'high school' in Eisenach, describing later how it was that there he had come to a 'true foundation not only in various things pertaining to music' but also in Christian teaching or *Christenthum* (Mattheson 1731, p. 166). For the young Bach, doubtless the most familiar book was one or other local hymnal, such as the Eisenach *Gesangbuch* of 1673.

That Sebastian was younger at entry than his brothers had been, went straight into the fifth class (above the sixth), by 1695 was placed higher than his elder brother Jacob and again above others later in the Lyceum at Ohrdruf (see below), suggests him to have been a brighter than average child and one already well taught by somebody in Eisenach. Also, living far longer than any of his siblings, who had died or were to die at six months and age eight, ten, eighteen, forty (Jacob), forty-nine and fifty-one (Marie Salome) respectively, he seems to have been the fittest physically, as indefatigable in body as in mind – although a child born to a mother at an age rather advanced for that period could just as likely have turned out to be a weakling, physically and mentally. The many half days he was absent from school over three years, according to the register (96, 59 and 103 times: Dok. II, pp. 3f.), are less likely to have resulted from ill health than from being busy assisting his father in some way.

Loss of parents

Bach's mother had died before his father, about 1 May 1694, so at that point there was less of a financial problem than there would be nine or

ten months later. Until then, Sebastian and Jacob had remained with their father who remarried later in the same year (27 November 1694), only to die not long after that (20 February 1695), leaving a widow who already had four children of her own. Ambrosius's last-known signature of 21 January 1695 has been interpreted as showing an unsteadiness of the kind discerned in his son Sebastian's handwriting half a century later (BJ 1995, p. 181), raising the question of whether they both suffered from diabetes. Emanuel's coverage of this difficult moment is brief:

> Johann Sebastian was still not ten years old when he saw himself deprived of his parents by death. He made his way to Ohrdruf to his eldest brother, Johann Christoph (organist there), and under his guidance laid the foundations for his keyboard playing. (*Obituary*)

One cannot tell for sure whether Emanuel intended any pathos with his words 'made his way' (*begab sich*) while 'still not ten years old' (only a month short of this, however) and, if he did, whether it came from the composer himself. But considering how common the death of relatives was – Sebastian would have known only four of his siblings and Handel lost three of his before he was thirty-three – to have 'seen himself deprived of his parents by death' does seem a more evocative way of saying 'his parents had both died'. There was no such shade of meaning in the entry on Bach in Walther's *Lexicon*, which merely recorded that his eldest brother instructed him in 'the first principles' (*principia*) of keyboard-playing. Nor was there in the autobiography of the flautist J. J. Quantz, who reported that his mother had died when he was five and his father five years later, aged forty-eight, he having (like Bach's father) married a second time.

Several of Ambrosius's sons must have taken part in the funeral procession of both parents in Eisenach, either as family mourners or as choristers, and certainly at the moment of their father's death neither Jacob's nor Sebastian's prospects can have been good. Their Ohrdruf brother Christoph, still in his mid-twenties, was only modestly situated himself, though content enough there to decline a job at Gotha a year later (BJ 1985, p. 60). Perhaps Emanuel did not know that his father's elder brother Jacob, also orphaned, went with him to Ohrdruf, and that their first cousin Johann Ernst was in the same school at the time. (Or he did know and wished not to endanger the potential pathos?) Nor of course is reference made to Christoph's wife Johanna Dorothea, who must have borne the brunt of housing two young orphans and passed on her name as godmother to Sebastian's first child, Catharina Dorothea, twelve or so

years later. Exactly when the boys moved to Ohrdruf is not certain, for their stepmother in Eisenach received the usual six-month extension of a deceased town musician's salary. Their new school register lists them from July 1695 (Dok. II, pp. 4–7).

Even if, as is just possible, the father left Christoph money to take in the younger boys as 'family-member apprentices', the costs of a regular apprenticeship under an established master elsewhere were surely now out of their reach. Whether in Sebastian's case the loss affected him in such a way as to lead to the single-mindedness, defiance and even irascibility that people have read into the pitifully small number of later documents concerning him is another big unknown, except perhaps to Freudians. Handel lost his father just before his twelfth birthday, but his biographer notes only that this 'produced a considerable change for the worse in the income of his mother' (Mainwaring 1760, p. 29), a remark that was probably owed to Handel himself. At this period, it is not personal feelings but practical circumstances that were the business of biography.

To lose both parents within a year at the age of nine could have been mitigated only by warm relations within the remaining step-family, but nothing of this kind is recorded or is likely to have been the case. It is under Sebastian's stepmother's name that a curious request was made on 4 March 1695 to the town council of Eisenach, in which, having quoted the local ruler as saying 'he should and must have a Bach again' for a position once held there by another Johann Christoph, Ambrosius's twin (d. 1693), she went on to say that this was not possible because 'in the last few years the musical species of Bachs has withered' (Dok. II, p. 5). Perhaps this was to strengthen her case for a pension, for by 1695 she must have known that her elder stepson Johann Christoph, Sebastian's brother, was already a professional organist, as indeed he had been briefly in Arnstadt (BJ 1985, p. 60). If by 1695 Sebastian was showing great musical aptitude – something that cannot be taken for granted, however – was she following convention in ignoring a child of nine–ten years old? Or there was little love lost between herself and her three younger stepchildren? All three soon moved on to other relations and the other side of the step-family fades from familiar history.

So common was bereavement and so normal was it for relations to take in family orphans – Sebastian's parents had done so while he was a child (two cousins, perhaps more) and both he and his children Emanuel and Elisabeth were to do so – that one can only guess how the death of parents was taken. How anxious financially Christoph was when he became responsible for two younger brothers in Ohrdruf, and how hard life was

in any respect for any of them, can be imagined: Christoph himself was only twenty-three at the time and had been married less than a year. When exactly he took in his younger brothers is not recorded, but it would have to be before the end of March 1695 if Sebastian was not yet ten years old, so within a month of their father's death. Although any intended pathos leaves one doubtful about this, we can safely assume that Christoph took him in some months before the birth of his own first child on 21 July 1695.

It was probably also Christoph who arranged for them to receive charity income (free board with him) as poor scholars, Sebastian for a longer period as a chorister in Christoph's church at Ohrdruf, St Michael's. Exactly how the charity was managed is not known, but the position of chorister may also have brought in other moneys from municipal events and appearances in the *Schloß* over the way, but so far no details of these activities have surfaced.

Earliest musical activities?

Whether, as the Obituary said, the 'foundations for Sebastian's keyboard playing' were laid by his brother Christoph in regular lessons or as circumstances allowed is not recorded, though it may be wrong to assume that a young musician merely picked up what he could within an active musical family. Regular lessons or not, in Ohrdruf there would have been music-copying to do (and to have checked), spinets to learn to tune, playing techniques to practise, services to help in, perhaps odd jobs in connection with work on the organ of St Michael's. While various musical performances in Eisenach and, presumably on a more modest level, in Ohrdruf can be pieced together – church motets and other choral works, organ and keyboard music, instrumental and vocal music in the town square or in a chamber in the neighbouring castle – it can only be conjectured what contribution the young Bach made to any of them, in either town. At much the same time, and at the same age, Handel was taking lessons with a distinguished musician in a major city, Friedrich Zachow in Halle, but again, details of the lessons are lacking. Probably, the Obituary authors say little because what Bach was learning or being taught would not have been mysterious to readers.

The little that is known about Christoph Bach does suggest a noteworthy musician. At the early apprentice age of fourteen or so, presumably at some cost to their father, he had studied for three years with Pachelbel in Erfurt and, to judge by his later and impressive manuscript albums of keyboard

music, had become a player of wide interests, indeed 'a very good craftsman' or *optimus artifex*, in the words of his church's registers. Perhaps it was from Pachelbel, or from a natural alertness to the new and the challenging, that Christoph acquired an interest in copying French music and in effect passed it on to his younger brother. His marriage in October 1694 had been the occasion for some music in which their father had participated along with Pachelbel, whom one can suppose the boy Sebastian heard play on that occasion, and perhaps by whom he was himself heard. Christoph's reported contentment with his position at Ohrdruf was justified by the high reputation of the school and church, as well as their proximity to the local court and its functions. The school at Ohrdruf was an exceptional foundation (see also chapter 2, note 1, p. 65) and its cantor Herda was apparently helpful to pupils of promise.

Although Ohrdruf was a minor town in comparison with Eisenach, the Michaeliskirche was known to be one of the oldest church-foundations in Thuringia, and for 125 years members of the greater Bach family were organists here. There was also an important lyceum attached (a 'Latin school', the most eminent in the dukedom of Saxe-Gotha), a church library better than many and a new organ that was meant to be up to date and to deal competently with all the relevant repertory. It was normal for a new organist to be involved in the work on the organ, as later was Sebastian in his first appointments, at Arnstadt and Mühlhausen; Christoph too was young, barely twenty in 1690 when he was appointed (BJ 1985, pp. 68ff.). On completion, the Ohrdruf instrument was to have two manuals and twenty-one stops, including a pedal stop for bringing out the hymn melody in the chorales and, like any new, well-working organ, would have inspired and positively excited any young musician keen to learn. But not only the organ was important. It is feasible, though without evidence in support, that Christoph's wide knowledge of harpsichord music shown by surviving manuscripts was sometimes put to good use in concerts in the castle across the way. It would certainly have kept the brothers in practice.

A big tantalizing unknown in the Bach biography is how gifted Christoph was and how deep his influence. Some decades after the Obituary Emanuel repeated in a later letter that his father learnt the 'first principles' in keyboard-playing from this brother, a point also made earlier in Walther's *Lexicon*, which probably derived from Sebastian himself. Emanuel added that Christoph instructed Sebastian as an organist 'and nothing more than that' (Dok. III, p. 288), as if to say that whatever Walther had been implying, the boy taught himself to compose. This was part of Emanuel's picture that Sebastian owed little of his eventual achievement to any teacher.

In broad terms all this might be true, but such self-reliance is something a little too consistently implied by Emanuel to be wholly persuasive. (So little did Emanuel know of his father's Ohrdruf period that he thought that Christoph died in 1700 and left Sebastian to make his own way: see below.) Certainly the two brothers came to have a common interest in both local and foreign keyboard music, an interest that possibly went back to the years before 1700.

It is possible that had his father lived longer, the young Sebastian would have worked more on the violin and begun to compose string music. Perhaps he did. As it is, however, the praise given in the Genealogy, the Obituary and elsewhere to another Christoph Bach (the elder Johann Christoph of Eisenach) could mean that this eminent organist had a deep and more lasting influence on both brothers in Ohrdruf. Emanuel, by then knowing some of his music from the Old-Bach Archive, singles out more qualities in it than he does for the music of any other family precursor (Dok. III, pp. 80–1):

> he is strong in the invention of beautiful ideas
> also in expressing (*im Ausdrucke*) of the words
> composed as elegantly and melodiously (*galant und singend*) as taste at the time allowed
> produced some uncommonly full-voiced music
> played organ and *Clavier* (qv) in never less than five real parts.

While some of these statements are vague, and none is directly related to his father, Emanuel's last points are surely repeating what he had heard his father say: that it was important for an organist to gain mastery of the 'full-voiced effect' (as indeed it is). Emanuel must have studied some of Johann Christoph's scores, for he gives as an instance of his inventiveness a courageous use of a particular chord much favoured by Emanuel's own generation (the augmented sixth). He also remarks of the motet in twenty-two parts that it was composed 'without any detriment (*Eintrag*) to the purest harmony' – another quality one imagines being recognized and imitated in Sebastian's early efforts.

In effect, through his references to the two Johann Christoph Bachs, senior and junior, Emanuel is listing qualities not only desirable in themselves for composers but prominent throughout his father's oeuvre. He learnt keyboard (which normally included skills in harmonizing, realizing figured basses, transposing, handling clefs, transcribing); studied and copied scores; composed by inventing ideas; and mastered harmony enough to create full-voiced music. Unfortunately, when and in what order he did

any of this are too uncertain for it to be clear how he developed and what models he took at what stage, but some hints do emerge from time to time. Copying other composers' music, for instance, was crucial.

Copying music and the 'moonlight episode'

Brief and very selective though the Obituary is, it still gives generous space to an incident from the Ohrdruf period and reveals something about how the young Bach learnt:

> The delight our little Johann Sebastian took in music already at this tender age, was uncommon. In a short time, he had mastered completely ['brought under his fist'] all the pieces which his brother had voluntarily passed to him to learn. A book full of keyboard pieces by the then most famous masters Froberger, Kerll and Pachelbel, which his brother owned, was however denied him, in disregard of all entreaty, and who knows for what reason . . . At night when everyone was in bed, he copied it out by moonlight, never being allowed a light. After six months this musical booty was happily in his own hands. With exceptional eagerness he was secretly attempting to put it to use when, to his greatest dismay, his brother became aware of it and without mercy took from him the copy he had prepared with such trouble. A miser whose ship on the way to [and from] Peru sank with a hundred thousand thalers might give a vivid idea of our little Johann Sebastian's distress over this loss of his . . .

Surely this was a story that Bach himself told (more than once?) and even loomed large in family lore – but perhaps only after 1721, when Christoph died and when, the Obituary goes on to say, Sebastian got the book back.

Characteristic of the Obituary are the ill-concealed suing for sympathy and the reference to money, two motifs to appear later in another important anecdote it recounts in detail, the aborted competition at Dresden in 1717. The attempt to give the story verisimilitude is shown further in a description of Sebastian's little hands being able to extract the rolled-up manuscript through the latticework front of the bookcase. Note, however, that the phrase 'tender age' here could mean anything between ten and fourteen. Despite this uncertainty, and considering how rarely any intimate detail appears in the Obituary, the anecdote is also useful in touching on motifs familiar in a musician's life, especially the glimpse it unwittingly gives of the importance for a young musician of copying music, and how proprietorial a professional organist could be with the copies he himself had made or purchased. At least it credits Christoph with having already 'voluntarily passed on' other music to his brother.

Several things can be learnt from the anecdote, therefore, such as that the manuscript was unbound (a convolute made up of local Ohrdruf paper?) and devoted to keyboard music. If it took six months to copy, either it was very extensive or the moonlight was good enough for only a few nights each month – perhaps the former if it provoked such a reaction. In containing work by admired southern composers (Froberger and Kerll were Roman Catholic, Pachelbel was by now working in Nuremberg), its repertory is unlikely to have been a Thuringian organist's service-music, rather a miscellany of harpsichord suites, preludes, toccatas of various kinds, etc. Such a repertory was of interest to a professional musician and of use in his teaching and keyboard-playing. So was another miscellaneous manuscript known about from this period and region, associated with another young musician (Handel) but now lost, and once containing work of a similar repertory.[2]

If the copied music by Froberger originated in either of his recent publications of keyboard suites (Mainz 1696 and Amsterdam 1698), then Johann Christoph was well up to date – and therefore all the more justifiably proprietorial about his hand-made copies. That at this point in the Obituary's remarks Buxtehude's name does not appear is particularly striking. By or before the age of fifteen Sebastian was copying some Buxetehude, if one can reliably judge by his tablature (qv) fair copy of a fantasia based on a chorale ('Nun freut', BuxWV 210) and recently found in Weimar. Of course, this was organ music. Perhaps the album confiscated by Christoph had no church organ music and contained no Buxtehude; or it was yet earlier in date and was made for use in playing, which is less likely to have been the case with the Buxtehude tablature.

The manuscript's repertory as reported might support the idea that when Sebastian eventually moved on from Ohrdruf, not south to Nuremberg but north to Lüneburg, one of the various reasons was a wish to learn other kinds of music, something more expansive than could be found in a keyboard album of 'Froberger, Kerll and Pachelbel'. Perhaps by then he had an idea of Buxtehude's abilities also from a copy made by his brother, or someone else, of an outstanding and versatile work that seems to have been known for some time in central Germany, Buxtehude's G minor Praeludium, BuxWV 148. Its bravura moments alternating with sound fugal counterpoint would impress any inventive young musician, especially one inclined to learn by imitation. Many a Buxtehude fugue (qv), especially

[2] Reported as containing music by Zachow, Alberti, Froberger, Krieger, Kerll, Strungk and others (HHB 4, pp. 5, 17), names which imply a more 'domestic' repertory than for organ.

of the rattling *canzonetta* type, has left traces in Bach's own keyboard works, including his dashing and demanding organ Fugue in D major.

Another significant detail that Emanuel gives is that the brother's manuscript was valued enough by its owner, a professional keyboardist, to have it under lock and key. Quite how little hands got it out is not easy to envisage, and it could be that like this detail, the reference to the 'six months' it took to copy is an ageing man's embellishment for increasing the pathos. Most importantly for the Obituary's agenda, the story gives a picture of how industrious and single-minded the young orphan was, how deep his musical feelings were, how much he deserved our sympathy despite this act of deceit. The story is thus revealing on several fronts, but how far it was meant to malign the elder brother is uncertain. Emanuel could be to blame for conveying in the story no sense of the loyalty he or his father should have had to Christoph, and nor does Emanuel give any consideration to Christoph's children, at least four of whom were still living.

As for Christoph himself, according to his curriculum vitae (where he mentions only his late parents and godparent: see BJ 1985, p. 60), he seems to have been content to remain an organist-schoolmaster. Of the copies he made of German, French and Italian music in two large surviving albums (see below, p. 46), it has been justly said that he 'offers extremely reliable texts ... for virtually all the pieces he collected' (Hill 1991, p. xii), and he certainly showed discernment in the number of high-quality pieces he chose. One could read into his confiscation of the younger brother's work several things: personal envy, genuine solicitude or (most likely) sheer annoyance. Unauthorized copying of valuable and hard-won professional materials was improper, especially if they were then put to use, as Emanuel, insensitive to the implications, says they were. Was the boy presuming to play suitable excerpts even in his brother's church?

Copying was a serious business. Telemann, hinting that he too as a student was deceitful in this way, had already described in print copying voraciously whatever his teacher left lying around (Mattheson 1740, p. 355). Bach's own practice after childhood reveals a little more about the copying of a teacher's music, though whether he charged pupils to see his materials, as Walther said his teacher Buttstedt had charged him (Beckmann and Schulze 1987, p. 68), is not documented. (As it would not be, whether they paid in cash or labour.) Bach pupils copied sections from manuscript collections (or drafts) of keyboard works such as the suites, the *Orgelbüchlein* or the organ sonatas, but few if any of these are complete single copies in the order of Bach's own manuscripts. It rather looks as if he 'controlled' what of his music pupils were allowed to copy for their own

use, even possibly keeping some of the best away from them – like sword-instructors of the time, who kept the best moves to themselves, according to a contemporary book for prospective cantors (Johann Kuhnau's *Der musicalische Quacksalber*, Dresden 1700). A single concerto here, a selected group of chorales there: was no complete set of anything permitted for a student's own use?

Copies of Bach's later keyboard works made in the 1720s by J. P. Kellner seem to have been made singly and grouped together only later. Walther too made copies well after their years together in Weimar. More substantial copies made by pupils, particularly of a complete set such as J. Schneider's later copies of the 'English' and 'French Suites', could have been commissioned for sale to a client or for some other special purpose. It is not difficult to imagine how sharp Bach's own reaction would have been to find a pupil copying a valuable manuscript of his without permission, and doing it by moonlight to avoid detection. This would be so even if accredited pupils did have access to his music, as one of them later claimed (P. D. Kräuter). If Sebastian was in effect apprenticed to Christoph, permission to copy would have been granted only in certain connections. A few years earlier, a student of Pachelbel's, J. V. Eckelt, had gathered a collection of the copies he made, and in it made notes of which of the pieces he had purchased from Pachelbel. This in turn implies that payment for lessons covered the making of some copies only.

The Obituary says that Bach had his 'moonlight' copy returned to him only on his brother's death, and if this did happen, it could have been via a nephew, Johann Bernhard, even perhaps as a fraternal bequest. Judging by the albums he compiled, Christoph had a wide interest not only in music of different origins but also in music of all the common genres: suites, fugues, chaconnes, toccatas, airs and variations, overtures, preludes of several kinds, programmatic sonatas, opera interludes. As for continuing contact between the brothers, as Christoph's wife became godmother to Sebastian's first child, so in 1713 Sebastian was godfather to one of Christoph's twin sons, named after him, Johann Sebastian. Johann Bernard, another of Christoph's sons, came to Weimar in 1715 to study with (or serve as apprentice to) his uncle, going on to an appointment at Cöthen in 1719, no doubt with his support (Dok. II, pp. 47, 202–3). And in 1724 another son, Heinrich, came to him in Leipzig for some years. Although the Obituary does not say so, there was also something improper in a young ward defying and deceiving a guardian *in loco parentis*, one solicitous, among other things, for the boy's eyesight. (On whether excessive copying as a young musician did have any effect on his later eye problems, see p. 456.)

Nor, more generally, was it rare at the time for the responsible adult to resist a young child's musical preoccupations: this is found again in Mainwaring's biography of Handel, whose father

> said it was easy to foresee, that if [the boy's love of keyboard music] was not subdued very soon, it would . . . wholly disconcert the plan that had been formed and agreed on for his education (Mainwaring 1760, p. 57)

i.e. probably towards becoming a lawyer or surgeon. Perhaps this was the line taken by Johann Christoph Bach towards his ward. Handel's father

> forbad him to meddle with any musical instrument . . . [but he] found means to get a little clavichord privately convey'd to a room at the top of the house. To this room he constantly stole when the family was asleep. (Mainwaring 1760, p. 5)

And presumably he did so by moonlight, as Telemann must also have done when he spoke of spending many nights as a child with a pen in hand (Mattheson 1731, p. 162). There is a recurrent leitmotif here.

Perhaps there was a more musical reason for Christoph's action. The brothers' father had been a violinist active in various spheres; Jacob became an oboist and Sebastian, if encouraged to devote as much time to the violin as the keyboard, could look forward to becoming more than a church organist. His brother the oboist travelled far, even with the Swedish legation to Constantinople by 1710 or earlier. The education and the later compositions of Bach's eminent German Protestant contemporaries (Handel, Telemann, Mattheson, Fasch, Graupner) were all far less dominated by keyboard music than his were, though by all accounts they too were exceptionally able keyboard-players. If Bach developed as a string-player, as might have been his father's wish, it was open to him to become capellmeister to a great king or, better still, opera and music director in an important city. If he pursued keyboard music too single-mindedly he could expect only positions as an organist, at best the cantorate of a major church . . .

So an exceptionally gifted and strong-willed child conquers family resistance, and for his biographer this persistence becomes an important part of his distinction. So it was when Handel's biographer Mainwaring referred to the mathematician Pascal, another child prodigy pursuing studies 'against the consent of [his] parents, and in spite of all the opposition'. A parent's preference for a son to become other than a musician is a motif in not a few autobiographies of the time, such as Telemann's, Quantz's and Kellner's (see list of references). In Bach's case, neither the brother nor other family members need have been as discouraging as Emanuel is

implying: his return aged seventeen to Thuringia and to an organ-world peopled by his relations suggests the contrary. So, in the following year, do his inauguration of the organ in Arnstadt and his appointment as its young organist.

A footnote: how feasible it is to copy by moonlight, presumably only for the few nights that the moon is full and high, is more than doubtful. The tale's piquancy is unmistakable. Even here, however, was one of biography's conventions: studying by moonlight was a valuable detail in the biography of an orphan, appearing again a couple of centuries earlier in Philipp Melanchthon's, a classic and influential text of the early Reformation. There too it suggested a young spirit, ardent, self-reliant, serious, never afraid of hard work and of self-improving study, all for the sake of mastering the chosen field.

The move to Lüneburg

Fortunately, the registers of the Ohrdruf Lyceum, a school going through troubled times when Bach was first there,[3] show him to have been successful in schoolwork, being fourth in the *prima* class (largely for eighteen-year-olds, and with a wide curriculum) when he left aged almost fifteen, in March 1700. Another sign that he was smarter or more engaged than most?

Having wondered rather obliquely, on the basis of the moonlight anecdote, whether the boy's evident industry and passion to improve himself played a part in his eventual death, the Obituary continues:

> After his brother had died, Johann Sebastian made his way, in company with one of his schoolfellows called Erdmann (who, Baron and Imperial Russian Resident in Danzig, departed this life not long ago) to Lüneburg and to the St Michael Gymnasium there. In Lüneburg, our Bach, because of his unusually fine treble voice [*Sopranstimme*], was well received.

It is likely that the phrases 'in company with', 'unusually fine treble' and 'well received' were owed to Bach himself when recounting this period in his life, as were some following remarks about his voice breaking. Presumably, the information about Erdmann's death is given in the interests of

[3] Terry 1928, pp. 26–7 reports on the removal in 1697 of the *gottlos* cantor and Latin teacher, after various problems possibly affecting the boy's class (the *tertia* or third form).

name-dropping, quite unnecessarily since it happened nearly twenty years earlier (1736). It is also a sign, however, that the family had continued to receive news from far and near.

Emanuel gives no date for the move to Lüneburg and guesses that it occurred after the death of Christoph. Yet Christoph did not die for another twenty-one years: Emanuel must have misunderstood, for his father certainly knew Christoph had not died in 1700, having later taken in two of his sons, one of them after his death in 1721. Emanuel was still at home on that later date, presumably learnt that Johann Heinrich's father had died and later misremembered. Or he was speculating, relying on his father's genealogical table which happened to leave blank Christoph's dates of birth and death (Dok. I, p. 259), and unable to imagine any other reason for the departure to Lüneburg. Or he knew that Christoph had taken on duties in the school in 1700, making it an especially appropriate time for his younger brother to leave. Or – and this could be so in any case – perhaps Emanuel was suing for sympathy in demonstrating his father's initiative, for in itself there was nothing unusual in a fifteen-year-old going away as an apprentice, often at some remove from the family home. Normally made possible one way or another by parents, arranging a regular apprenticeship must have been problematic for an orphan.

Considering how few people are named throughout the Obituary when one compares it with other biographies published around 1750, it is surprising that it would name the teenage friend Erdmann, who was in the same class in 1700 but three years older. But Bach remained in contact with him for many years, still in 1726 addressing him as 'most worthy brother', 'school comrade' and, significantly, 'travel companion' (*werthester Herr Brüder*, *SchulCammerade*, *Reisegefährte*: Dok. V, p. 85). Companionship at a key juncture of anybody's life might well remain something never forgotten, but there are several significant points in the Obituary's sentence above. It suggests that the boy had formed a close friendship with an older, professionally successful person (later with a title) and continued to talk of it in later years. It also shows a degree of drive and courage in its subject. Here was a coming together of talented teenagers, one of them something of a mentor to the other, perhaps, both of them adventurous and ambitious. It seems they were leaving a well-regarded middle school, with good musical training, for a notable senior school with a special musical reputation.

The school register reports Bach leaving Ohrdruf on 15 March 1700, before the end of the school year and still before his fifteenth birthday, and this *ob defectum hospitiorum* ('on account of a failure of hospitality';

Dok. II, pp. 7–8) – probably indicating that his free boarding or subsistence as a charity boy had expired, as it would have done at age fifteen in any case, unless he were kept on in the school as some kind of assistant. The same phrase had been used for Erdmann two months earlier and need not imply that Christoph was refusing his brother board and lodging at home, though it might, for Bach was noticeably younger than Erdmann when his charity support was withdrawn. The register said that Bach 'took himself off' to Lüneburg (*se contulit*), but only that Erdmann had left (*abiit*), which looks like a significant distinction: Erdmann left school in the usual way, Bach took responsibility for himself before his fifteenth birthday, perhaps at Erdmann's urging?

Whether or not their departure was prompted by some epidemic of the kind documented in Ohrdruf early in 1700, and whether they actually went together, as implied by the not unambiguous reference to Erdmann as 'travel companion', some important friendship between them can be supposed. The Lüneburg school had its procedures guided 'by the ducal chancery in Celle' nearby (Maul and Wollny 2007, p. xxxii), and perhaps through family contacts Erdmann had somehow had a hand in the choral scholarship for his younger friend, hence the exceptional nature of the Obituary's reference to him. Was it Erdmann who was responsible for Bach moving to Lüneburg rather than, say, Nuremberg? When Bach heard French musicians at Celle (see below), this too could have been through Erdmann.

Fifteen, or even fourteen, was an age when generally boys did become more independent, and the move looks very much as if it were pre-planned, conceivably as a fifteenth-birthday 'gift'. At about that age Christoph had gone to Pachelbel, and at fourteen Jacob had already left his brothers in Ohrdruf and returned to Eisenach as apprentice to his father's successor. For another young musician who had a quite different career, J. J. Quantz, there had been a quite different curriculum: he reports that when eleven years old he became a *Lehrbursche* (junior apprentice?) for five and a quarter years, then *Geselle in Condition* (indentured journeyman?) for two and a quarter. This was to the town musician of Merseburg, who had succeeded the uncle to whom Quantz had gone as soon as he had lost his father (Quantz 1755, p. 199). Sebastian seems to have taken the opportunity of his good treble voice to leave Thuringia before his voice broke, and enter an important establishment in the north, a decision both personal (friendship with Erdmann) and musical (better composers in a bigger northern city).

Lüneburg had not been the only plausible destination for such a boy. Not only was Nuremberg, in the south, so much nearer to Ohrdruf but

Johann Pachelbel was there, writing more imaginative music than he seems to have done while still in Thuringia. Pachelbel had recently looked north for a good teacher for his own son, though judging by a surviving album of pieces probably written under his guidance by another pupil, J. V. Eckelt, the great northerners had no monopoly on what was taught farther south. It rather seems that by 1700 there was something of a south/north divide in a Protestant boy's training: the choice for him could be either Nuremberg/Darmstadt or Lüneburg/Hamburg. The latter being farther away made it desirable for him to be accompanied by an older friend.

In several Thuringian towns en route to Lüneburg various makers of ingenious instruments and mechanical toys were to be found. A place of particular interest to organists was Halberstadt, whose late-gothic organ in the cathedral had been famously described by Michael Praetorius in 1619, the only such organ ever described in detail. Although little if anything was left of it by 1700, in the Martinikirche of the same city the organist was Andreas Werckmeister, author of widely influential books about organ-building, including the *Orgelprobe* almost certainly known to Bach (see p. 97), as well as studies relating music to theology and arithmetic. In 1700, there was no figure comparable to Werckmeister elsewhere in all of Europe, and though various suggestions have been made about the young Bach's actual route from Ohrdruf to Lüneburg, it must remain possible that it lay through Halberstadt – or at least the return journey in 1702 did, when Bach was probably alone.

Many seeds of curiosity and even of lifelong interests could have been sown by a visit to Werckmeister, an expert in keyboard temperaments (qv) and known to possess manuscripts by the renowned Michael Praetorius. (He claimed the last in a book describing a typical piece of German musical-technological ingenuity, the late-Renaissance organ in the castle at nearby Gröningen.) Shortly after Bach's return, in 1703 J. G. Walther is known to have visited Werckmeister and to have come away with various materials of interest, this a few years before he and Bach became colleagues in Weimar. The *Orgelprobe* is a book Thuringers would take pride in as a local product, and it must have whetted many a musician's appetite for those big instruments with colourful effects built farther north by the peerless builder Arp Schnitger, who wrote a dedicatory poem for the book. Other cities potentially on Bach's route included Sangerhausen, where he was soon to seek a position, and Brunswick, where a distant relative mentioned in the genealogical table was cantor (Dok. I, p. 256).

But if the boys had not already left Ohrdruf before 15 March and were in Lüneburg in time for its Easter rehearsals in late March (see Wolff 2000,

p. 477), there cannot have been time for extensive visiting en route, either professional or private. The return journey was more open. For a boy just fifteen years old to be 'well received' in his new position, as Emanuel alleged, meant that his gifts were recognized. Even if this claim was made only much later, it was an important one for Emanuel and his father to make in view of Lüneburg's prestige. As a claim, it was comparable to the later praise given to the mature Bach by the doyen of northern musicians, Adam Reinken in Hamburg – another event reported in the Obituary (see p. 208).

It has been supposed that the new and effective cantor in Ohrdruf, Elias Herda, a trained theologian, had encouraged or arranged for the two friends to try Lüneburg, having been a chorister there himself for some years. Such an encouragement is more than likely, especially as Bach went on to sing treble in the special 'matins choir' (*Mettenchor*) of the Michaeliskirche, where he was given free board, a small monthly honorarium and instruction in the school (Dok. I, p. 69), all of which suggests there had been an audition of some rigour for what we would now call a 'choral scholarship'. Two of the St Michael's School's requirements for supporting a boy were clearly satisfied: that he had no other means and that he had a good voice (see Maul and Wollny 2007). He joined in time for the Holy Week and Easter services of 1700, the point at which the Lüneburg school year began – something he or Herda had known about and kept in mind, presumably. But soon, his 'unusually fine treble voice' broke, and for eight days he could only sing and speak in octaves. Emanuel, who is surely quoting his father's account here, says this occurred 'some time after' the move to Lüneburg, a detail which could be read as anticipating the reader's suspicion that he had gone there on false pretences, knowing his voice was near breaking. But the chronology is uncertain, and since voices often broke later than nowadays it was not unknown for boys fifteen or older to expect to remain in a choir and its choir-school for some years.

Despite their respective ages, both Bach and Erdmann were listed among the trebles in April and May 1700 (*Diskantisten*: Dok. II, p. 9), and it is unlikely that Sebastian's voice settled so quickly that he sang bass soon after it broke. A faint question arises whether the Obituary's term *Sopranstimme* actually meant adult male soprano, and thus whether the seventeen-year-old was still singing falsetto with the trebles: either way, he lost 'his beautiful voice'. Unfortunately, the terms are not reliable enough to form a view on a bigger question concerning practices in general: how regularly, if at all, adult males sang treble in church choirs. 'Soprano' is the usual label for treble parts in the cantatas and may or may

not intend to denote something different from treble, for it is an Italian term appropriate for an Italian genre. When in 1740 Bach praises a former boy of the St Thomas School, Leipzig, for his contribution as a *Sopranist* (C. F. Schemelli, then twenty-six years old: Dok. I, p. 145), he could be referring to him either as a former boy-treble or as a more recent adult falsetto-soprano. Presumably the top part of the later 'Phoebus and Pan' cantata (1729) was sung by such an adult falsetto-soprano.

At Lüneburg, Bach had remained a scholar in the top class (the *prima*) until 1702, in a school known to have had a distinguished humanist curriculum, including rhetoric, Greek and German verse. The good repute of both the Ohrdruf Lyceum and St Michael's School, Lüneburg, raises the question whether Bach was regarded as too intelligent and advanced for his age to have gone the common route of serving as apprentice to a church organist, but was meant for higher things. The church library at the Michaeliskirche was exceptionally well stocked, one of the best in Protestant Germany, with not only Protestant choral music (including Schütz, Buxtehude and Weckmann) but Italian (Monteverdi, Carissimi) – though as anyone who has been a chorister knows, what impact a church's library might have on the boys depended on what use their master made of it.

The 'matins choir' consisted of fifteen of the more gifted musicians, probably SATB or SSATB, part of the bigger instrumental-vocal ensemble of a well-appointed church, and with the special duty of singing daily matins, corresponding to daily evensong in an Anglican cathedral or collegiate chapel today. This was in addition to the Saturday vespers and the Sunday services in which the whole choir took part. Such were heavy new duties for a boy whose voice was about to change, especially as one supposes from the reference to an 'unusually fine treble voice' that once there he was singing solos. The Ohrdruf cantor Herda, who had left Lüneburg in 1695 aged twenty-one, had been singing bass in his last two years there (Fock 1950), as presumably Bach, leaving age seventeen, did not, at least to such an extent. Another difference between Herda and Bach, perhaps indicating Bach's need to be off to earn a living, was that Herda had then gone on to the University of Jena. His studies there were what had qualified him to be cantor in Ohrdruf by 1698, above the organist Johann Christoph there, though Herda was younger than he.

Composing in Lüneburg?

The year 1698 was also when the eminent composer Georg Böhm became organist at the Johanniskirche, Lüneburg, which had a famous instrument

by then in faulty condition (to be rebuilt 1712–14) but well able to inspire a boy interested in 'northern' music. By 1700 neither Bach nor Herda can have been ignorant of Böhm's presence in the city, in a house next to their own church, the Michaeliskirche.

This is the moment, perhaps, to point out that whatever has been traditionally assumed by Bach's biographers, Georg Böhm's influence on Bach is easier to pin down than Buxtehude's. Surviving keyboard music of Böhm, such as the suites reminiscent of French styles and chorale-variations typical of German, have their equivalents in Bach's early works. The number and quality of Buxtehude's major organ works have rather misled later historians into supposing their influence to have been greater than can be easily demonstrated. That (some of) Bach's earlier organ works are similar in shape or in principles of construction to Buxtehude's need not mean they were directly or only influenced by them, since those principles were not unique. Böhm's predecessor in the Lüneburg Johanniskirche, Christian Flor, is also well represented in Johann Christoph Bach's albums, and the French pieces there, including Böhm's suave F minor Suite, suggests further musical connections between Lüneburg and the brothers Bach. If there had ever been a comparable album of organ music in the form of collected chorale-preludes and fantasias by Böhm or Flor or indeed Buxtehude, which is not unlikely, it is long lost.

Other documentation about the early years being so scant, a discovery made in Weimar in 2005 of some manuscript leaves bringing together Buxtehude, Reinken and Böhm is most significant. Some key facts about this, a previously unknown keyboard tablature in the young J. S. Bach's hand and evidently from Lüneburg (see Maul and Wollny 2007), are:

- Two substantial chorale-fantasias, Buxtehude's 'Nun freut euch lieben Christen g'mein' and Reinken's 'An Wasserflüssen Babylon' were copied, the Buxtehude possibly before 1700 (paper and writing suggest Ohrdruf *c.* 1698), the Reinken signed and dated 1700 by Bach (on paper associated with Böhm).
- An inscription under the latter, *Il Fine / â Dom. Georg: Böhme / descriptum ao. 1700 Lunaburgi*, has given rise to speculation whether Bach not only copied the work at Lüneburg with Böhm's approval but even under his tutelage, as a pupil or quasi-apprentice copying the master's handwriting characteristics. Accordingly, Bach was (i) using tablature in his mid-teens, as no doubt he was earlier, and was (ii) acquainted with big chorale-fantasias while still with his brother in Ohrdruf.

Three smaller works by Pachelbel (under the same library number) were copied by another hand, perhaps J. M. Schubart's, a pupil or assistant of Bach later on, from 1707. Some of the many questions raised by the discovery include these:

Dom. is short for *dominus* (master) not *domus* (house)?

Either way, does *â Dom. Georg: Böhme* indicate he was the boy's teacher?

Why would a fifteen-year-old copy Reinken's long, demanding chorale-setting?

To study it and the tablature under Böhm's guidance? Do some corrections in the manuscript mean anyone played from it?

Was the Buxtehude copy made yet earlier (at the age of thirteen)?

Made to play and/or to emulate? At Christoph Bach's request?

Some further speculations about the young Bach are:

Since the contact with Böhm appears soon after the move to the Lüneburg school, this had been the main reason for his leaving Ohrdruf at apprentice-age.

The boy's return to Thuringia in 1702 meant he had had no offer in Lüneburg and Hamburg (which he had visited). Or he could not afford to pay Böhm.

The relative brevity of two early organ-chorales attributed elsewhere to Bach (BWV 739, 764) could mean that either he or churches in Thuringia had little use for the long fantasias he met with 'in the north'.

Since other works (chorale-variations) of Bach have many details in common with Böhm's, perhaps they resulted from study with him, then or soon after.

These manuscripts held in the Weimar library were left behind, willingly or unwillingly, on Bach's dismissal from Weimar in 1717.

Despite the uncertainties, there are useful hints here of the boy's activities, his methodical approach and indeed of his meticulousness. The Buxtehude copy supports the idea that he was singularly gifted at an early age, although too little is certain about this tablature to base very much on it. Its crammed appearance makes it unlikely to have been used on an organ's music-desk: more likely, as with other manuscripts of the time, it was a reference or archive copy, to be recopied if needed for practical purposes, possibly in more than one version, i.e. to be written out more spaciously in stave-notation and adapted to take advantage of

a particular instrument at hand. This, in a nutshell, must have been the fate of many a manuscript of the time.

It is not unlikely that in Ohrdruf before 1700 Christoph Bach had acquired copies of Buxtehude, but the date 'pre-1700' for the tablature is not certain enough for one to conclude that his young brother had intended to visit Buxtehude in Lübeck earlier than he actually did. A couple of years earlier another Johann Christoph, the son of the Eisenach organist admired by Sebastian, had also been to Lübeck, visiting or learning or copying, an event surely known to his young cousin and possibly giving him the idea. Other important questions about Bach's biography also arise: was he a schoolboy at St Michael's for the full two years (there is no record of his leaving)? And if so, had he by 1700 become or aspired to become apprentice in Böhm's own church? In either case, what could the reasons be that he moved back to Thuringia after two years at, it is said, age seventeen? Because the 'apprenticeship' was complete? Because he had failed to find a position in Lüneburg? No money? Or was there a personal reason for preferring Thuringia, including family networks?

Above all, it cannot be simply assumed that the young Bach had an overwhelming desire to study the church music and organ-playing of north Germany in particular, not even that he admired 'northern' music and the region's organs to any exceptional degree. His first recorded job was as a court musician back in Weimar. How strongly his cantor in Lüneburg, August Braun, exerted a musical influence on the teenager is also conjectural, though the absence of written references to this may be significant. (That broken voices could leave boys at the mercy of cantors is described in a satiric novel some years earlier, Johann Beer's *Die kurzweiligen Sommer-Täge*, 1683.) It is not impossible that the teenage Bach left school early and studied privately with Böhm, sought an apprenticeship, found time for the trips to Hamburg (for similar reasons) and applied for jobs which did not materialize. For such purposes, Lüneburg was an interesting choice and had come about because of personal contact of one kind or another. One can suppose, after all, that far more convenient for a boy from Ohrdruf had been either the city of Halle, where quite recently the famed Zachow had been teaching the young Handel (HHB 4, p. 17), or the city of Leipzig, where Kuhnau was an admired and influential figure. That Pachelbel's Nuremberg was also nearer than Lüneburg has already been remarked.

It could be that the Pietist form of Lutheranism in Halle, by now a university town, was too 'Low Church' and that Zachow was too

closely associated with it. Or Bach was already exercising critical judgement: in Leipzig, Kuhnau's published work was just not imaginative enough, whatever his status in the Kingdom of Saxony. It is quite believable that Georg Böhm's keyboard music made a stronger impression on the young Bach than did that of the other eminent organists of the time, Pachelbel, Kuhnau, Zachow and Reinken. Also probably significant was that Böhm had connections in and around Ohrdruf, his own birthplace, and it is not hard to imagine J. S. Bach both exploring family connections and also following where a discriminating taste led him.

Yet questions remain. If, at an age when other boys entered regular, even humble apprenticeships, young Bach (on his own initiative?) went instead to a fine school far away with a distinguished friend, was it to look into the possibilities of a profession other than in music or in the church? After the Gymnasium the friend, Erdmann, returned south to enter eventually the University of Jena, from where he went on to develop a diplomatic career. It may be significant that of the two schoolboys it is specifically Bach's fine voice that the Obituary refers to, almost as if this was to foretell a very different career from Erdmann's. Perhaps for Emanuel it did, but there is no clue whether Bach similarly at this stage had hopes of university – nor, consequently, whether it was poverty or inner conviction that pulled him later but irresistibly towards the life of a church musician.

Visits to Hamburg

From Lüneburg he travelled from time to time to Hamburg, to hear [*hören*] the then famous organist of St Catharine's, Johann Adam Reinken. (*Obituary*)

If one reason for the move to Lüneburg had been to study formally under a northern master, it is difficult to see how this would materialize for a teenager with no means to buy an apprenticeship. The reference to Reinken suggests ambition on the part of the boy, and such visits serve as a substitute for the apprenticeships which a biographer would normally, at this juncture, be able to report for a young composer. Why Bach should visit Reinken in Hamburg rather than the more gifted Buxtehude in Lübeck, as he did later, is not obvious: perhaps because Hamburg was nearer for such visits 'from time to time' or because Reinken's ensemble music was widely known and admired, some of it having been published. His string music could have been of particular

interest, even if Emanuel would not know this so much later or find it important to say so in the Obituary.

It is also the case, however, that for musicians and organists of Emanuel's generation, Reinken's longevity made him better known than Buxtehude and still able to bestow special credit-by-association on any young learning musician. Moreover, the Obituary authors' personal experience of Bach's mature virtuosity led them to refer to his involvement with organs or organists whenever they could, in fact doing so rather to the neglect of his music overall. They did not question how easily he could make the demanding journey to Hamburg while he was supposed to be a schoolboy in Lüneburg with very brief church and school holidays – nor whether, on the contrary, he had left school at some point, was then *in statu pupillari* privately to Böhm and had been actively encouraged by him to make study-trips to Hamburg from time to time. The ambiguity of whether 'to hear' includes 'to study with' could well be deliberate, implying something either positive (Bach learnt by careful observation, no one *taught* him) or negative (there was sadly no money for lessons or an apprenticeship).

Although the Obituary specifically said that Bach went to Hamburg several times, it says nothing whatever about what was a major attraction for visitors to Hamburg – the opera. This was by now in the hands of the admired Reinhard Keiser whose directorship was very soon to draw the young Handel to the city which, however, he soon left for a very different career in Italy. Handel certainly offers a vivid illustration of how a gifted young composer could develop his ambition if he had help of the kind Bach never had (in Handel's case, allegedly from a Medici prince at this point: see HHB 4, p. 25). When Walther's *Lexicon* of 1732 spoke of another composer, Georg Leyding, visiting Reinken for instruction, are we to believe that these young musicians had no interest in Hamburg's theatre music? The city was after all the second largest in the empire after Vienna, and a very flourishing period for its opera is well documented for the very years around 1702. Also documented are performances by opera-singers in the churches of Hamburg: any young visiting Thuringian student would have been exposed to 'theatrical' music in church services to a degree he would never have been in cities nearer home.

Published biographies of the time often show that their subject as a young man made a point of hearing opera where and when he could: Telemann in Berlin, Stölzel in Florence, Quantz in several Italian cities – three significant composers with whom Bach and Emanuel were well acquainted. For the Obituary to make no mention of one of the things Hamburg was most famous for suggests an agenda on somebody's part,

the composer or the obituarist. Bach's first job as a court musician (see below) might mean that at that moment at least, he was or had been looking towards courts and theatres for a future profession. Any Hamburg opera by Keiser would have given him useful insight into setting words rhetorically, writing recitative, creating melodies, planning a sequence of movements, writing appropriately with instrumental colour and so on. But Emanuel does not (care to) say so.

So there are many possible questions which, were one to know the answer, would give some idea of the kind of young musician Bach was, whether he planned his career carefully, whether he made decisions for professional or personal reasons, whether he was at the time, or indeed ever, as dominated by church and even keyboard music as the Obituary authors wished to suggest. Or it could be that he did come to recognize Buxtehude as the most important master for church and keyboard music, hence a couple of years later travelling to Lübeck for the express purpose of visiting him. The Eisenach organist Johann Christoph Bach, already mentioned several times, had meanwhile died (1703) and it would not be surprising if in 1705 Buxtehude had been viewed as a kind of 'successor as mentor' by a young musician, then twenty years old and by then professionally employed.

Since so many readers of the Obituary would have known that Handel and Telemann went to Hamburg as young musicians for the very purpose of learning about opera, they too might have found it puzzling to find no mention of this in connection with Bach. Nor was there any mention when Bach was again in Hamburg in 1720 for a position at the Jakobikirche. Yet it is still difficult to believe that the whole attraction of Hamburg, on both occasions, was Reinken and organ music. If Emanuel had obtained the impression over the years that his father had consciously rejected the theatre and had freely chosen the world of church musician and cantor despite the inevitable irritations, that need not be at all a fair picture of him in his teenage years. Nor, as will emerge from later events, would it be an entirely fair picture of him as a mature composer.

A musician for church or for theatre? On one hand, Emanuel makes it clear that his father was proud of having later become chamber musician to the prince of Cöthen, and therefore active in areas of music-making very different from those of an organist or cantor. On the other hand, both at Weimar and much later in Leipzig, when Bach helped prepare performing parts of notable works originating with the Hamburg opera-composers, it was for sacred works (Handel and Keiser's Passion oratorios) not for their operas.

Influential composers: Böhm and Reinken

Though having no clear or direct connection with Bach's choir at the Lüneburg Michaeliskirche, Georg Böhm was nevertheless the most gifted composer the boy could have come across so far, with an unusual melodic flair for setting chorales and a sense of drama in other works. The two men were still in contact in 1727, when Böhm had copies of two of Bach's printed harpsichord partitas (qv) for sale, confirming their common interest in keyboard suites, an interest that could well have gone back to those early years and been sustained, for all anyone knows, in intervening years.

In a much later letter about his father, Emanuel actually crossed out the phrase 'his Lüneburg teacher Böhm' to replace it by 'the Lüneburg organist Böhm' (Dok. III, p. 290), but why is unclear. The change of words conforms too closely to the image of his father as self-taught, learning *sine duce* ('without a guide'), something that was also said of the preacher Melanchthon during the early years of the Reformation. Writing shortly after the Obituary was published, Quantz too claimed to have taught himself both in composition and in playing a whole range of string and wind instruments, mostly not to any great extent but, as he said, such as was 'necessary, even indispensable' to a composer of church music (1755, pp. 199–201). In Quantz's case, however, teaching himself was something he did despite being a formally instituted apprentice, as Bach is not known to have been. Quantz's clear description of how useless apprenticeships could be – especially for an unusually talented teenager? – goes some way to suggesting one of the reasons why neither Handel nor Bach travelled this route to professional qualification.

It is possible to infer that Böhm had some influence on the young Bach's compositions, either through observation or actual instruction, though not necessarily at this very early stage. First, several of Bach's earliest surviving organ works (Praeludia in C major and D minor, BWV 531 and 549a) are both in shape and melody generally like Böhm's works of this kind, unaware of this though Emanuel very probably was. It seems from these two works and others that while still a teenager, or at least before taking the Weimar job in 1708, Bach had grasped important musical ideas: the rhetoric peculiar to toccatas (pregnant pauses, repeated groups of notes, flashy runs, a sense of continuity), the stretching-out of fugues (harmonizing the theme variously) and above all the art of 'diverting' through modulations and chromatic touches (both often sudden). Because of the difficulty in dating such early works and the uncertain status of extant copies, one can only guess that certain early organ praeludia (qv) (G minor,

BWV 535; G major, BWV 550; D major, BWV 532) have absorbed certain details from Buxtehude as well, including a playful and highly inventive treatment of the basics – scales and arpeggios. One can make similar points about the toccatas for harpsichord, all works that fit uncannily in the two hands, even sufficiently to make one think they were composed actually at the keyboard.

Secondly, the quality itself of Böhm's harpsichord suites, not dated with certainty but likely to have been written by *c.* 1700–2, could have been the most persuasive models of French style by a German composer of the time. Uncertain authenticity, unreliable sources and conjectural dating make it impossible to trace direct influences at a time when up-to-date publications of French music from Paris were also circulating in Germany. Böhm's influence might be discerned in the more adventurous approach to chorale-preludes and chorale-variations that can be sensed in Bach's early examples, including one or two in a collection of chorales discussed below (the 'Neumeister'). Reverse influences from Bach to Böhm cannot be discounted, though it is seldom asked even today whether or how far the young Bach might have influenced his elders.

In the case of Reinken, whether any strong influence on the young Bach was entirely beneficial is another matter. Reinken is a thoughtful composer, conscientious and thorough in going through the motions and the conventions of genres popular at the time (preludes, fugues, suite-dances) and he probably inspired a few details in Bach's earlier keyboard works. One of Reinken's few extant toccatas (in G minor) anticipates the sections and melodic details found in Bach's early harpsichord toccatas, always assuming these came later. Emanuel, knowing his father's early toccatas, may himself have realized how Reinken's motoric and rather prosaic keyboard style had fundamentally influenced such early works, and possibly his father had acknowledged it himself in later years. But Reinken's thoroughness could send a learner in the wrong direction, and there is a sensuality to the younger composer's harmony (as in the *Adagiosissimo* of the D minor Toccata, BWV 913, *c.* 1707) hard to find in the older composer's rather vacant note-spinning.

In more than half a dozen early Bach fugues, one hears Reinken's rather long, rattling type of theme. Copies of keyboard transcriptions, attributed to Bach, of two of Reinken's chamber sonatas (BWV 965, 966) were being made by J. G. Walther a decade or more later, but whether Bach had kept up an interest in such music in his later twenties is not known. Many a minor composer like Reinken is at his best when he is closely imitating one of the more conventional styles – a French *suite* or an Italian

allabreve (qv) – and his gigues, though relatively unprepossessing, could well have been a model for several of those in Bach's later 'English Suites'. Significantly, Bach seems to have recomposed the fugues in these Reinken sonatas and added many other details such as chromatic notes in a gigue. Though it cannot be certain that his source was the known prints of these works, nevertheless the additions and new counterpoints are in typical style and are similar enough to the 'additions' he felt free to make to Vivaldi concertos.

As far as the harpsichord toccatas are concerned, quite as widely influential a composer as any of the 'northerners' was the French-Bavarian Georg Muffat, whose *Apparatus musico-organisticus*, first published in Salzburg in 1690, gives many ideas on how to write for keyboards. Its pieces were more widely known over swathes of Europe than Reinken's suites or, indeed, Bach's toccatas. Muffat's idiom has a suavity that must have appeared more up to date, especially in the way he was adopting French *manières* and implying that he had learnt subtle keyboard articulations. It might have been because of what Walther said of Bach in his *Lexicon* of 1732 that Emanuel similarly emphasized Reinken rather than Böhm or Muffat.

Though not as elderly as was later thought, Reinken was also famous for presiding at the great organ of St Catharine's, Hamburg, which Bach was to play in 1720. The Obituary's co-author Agricola said later in another of his books that Bach admired not only this great Hamburg organ and its reeds but the fine condition in which Reinken kept it (Dok. III, p. 191). In other words, Reinken was a master such as the Obituary authors themselves evidently admired: one who was both an artist and a practical man, both a creative musician of string and keyboard music and a skilled player with technical knowledge. But Böhm also had an unusually fine organ in St John's, Lüneburg, and it would have been strange if he were not just as careful a curator of it.

In more ways than one, the northern composers surely left their mark. In addition to arranging or recomposing chamber sonatas by Reinken for keyboard, Bach came later to copy/arrange another Hamburg work, the anonymous St Mark Passion performed in Hamburg in 1707 (attributed to one 'R. Kaiser' on Bach's copy).[4] This may be a token of other works that somehow wended their way from Hamburg. More importantly, perhaps,

[4] The printed textbook for the Passion refers to the work as *abgesungen* ('sung', 'performed', perhaps 'performance put on') by F. N. Brauns, *Direct. Mus. Instrum. Hamb.*, not as composed by him (BJ 1999, p. 45).

Bach also came to compose arias in the shape made especially popular in Hamburg operas, the so-called ABA (qv). How soon he did this, however, and whether the influence was quite so direct is uncertain. His experience as a teenager in several important types of Italian and French music, and again in his late twenties with Vivaldi concertos, certainly helped him open up otherwise limited horizons, and not only in the realms of instrumental music. Only a vastly widening experience could have stimulated the kind of development that every player feels must have come between, say, the early Capriccio in E major, BWV 993, and the mature 'Chromatic Fantasia'.

As to any organ music Bach may have improvised or drafted or composed on the big organs of Lüneburg, Hamburg and Lübeck, their essentially traditional if regularly updated contents made it desirable for their players to keep to traditional types of organ music. These included both the simple chorale-settings and longer chorale-fantasias, the 'stereophonic' toccatas (pitting one part of the organ against another), and especially the often quite long chorale-variations based on common-property formulae. And these would have contrasted with the more modern string music making its way into certain services at certain times, such as chamber sonatas imported from Venice and Rome or italianate sonatas published in Hamburg, some of which were surely transcribed by organists. Whenever it was that Bach made arrangements of Reinken sonatas, BWV 965 and 966, the busy counterpoint in this music, its limited harmonic and rhythmic invention and its purely conventional rhetoric cannot have stirred a dormant genius as powerfully as would any of the showy and stirring string music of Corelli or Bononcini that he came across. Again, however, the Obituary authors might not have known this.

Johann Christoph's albums and some early compositions

The miscellaneous nature of this section rather reflects a double uncertainty about the 'early compositions': how reliably in some cases they can be attributed to Bach, and how reliably in all cases they can be dated. Much depends on how closely involved Bach was with two albums of keyboard music copied predominantly by his brother Christoph, and this cannot be certain. Compared with the big vocal masterworks for Leipzig, the 'early compositions' are minor and rather isolated but must give some idea of the young composer's interests and priorities.

If a curious little work like the sectional fantasia, BWV 917, copied by Christoph in one of his albums is trustworthy, then Bach's earliest works
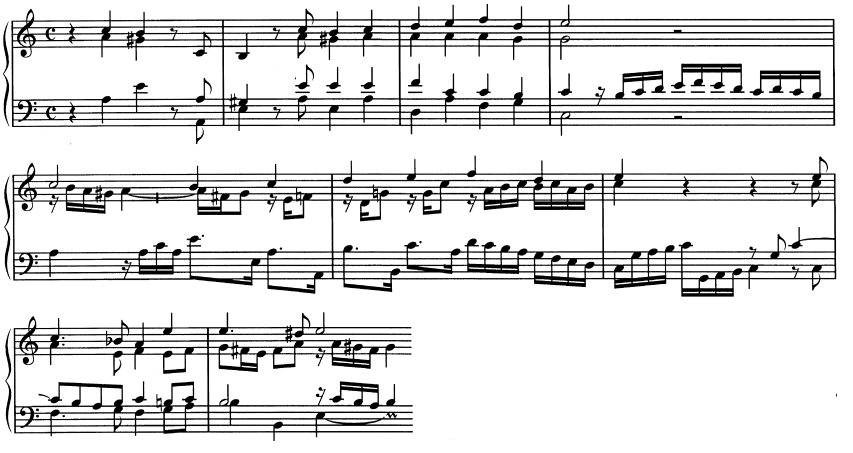
give a picture of the grammatical details he was trying to master, one or two in each piece. In this fantasia he is mastering suspensions (qv) while the praeludium BWV 921 is giving him practice in creating sequences (qv). There are other 'grammatical details', of course rather technical: in the fantasia a few toccata-like scales, a conventional fugue *duobus subjectis* (actually three not two), simple ornaments on the beat and a neat final cadence. All these were elements of musical grammar needing to be learnt. In the manuscript containing it, a continuous Sonata in A minor (BWV 967) is exploring something quite different: a particular shape (ritornello, qv) not unlike that of certain so-called sonatas of the young Handel, who had been composing such shapes since he was a late teenager. Sustained length is aimed at by the Fugue in A major (BWV 949), in which a young composer considers how to modulate, where to bring in the subject, how to write a countersubject, how to suspend the action in episodes and, not least, how to leave the whole piece playable by two hands. Another fantasia, BWV 922, explores ideas obsessively as if by way of experiment. In other apparently early works too, a certain repetitiousness, even pedantry, can often be heard. None of them, however, depends entirely for its interest on how well each particular 'grammatical detail' is being exercised, for these are no mere textbook examples and have resulted in genuine, if modest, pieces.

The Toccata in F sharp minor (BWV 910) is taken to be a later work because each of its five sections shows occasional sparks of a kind rare in works by acknowledged masters of the region, Pachelbel, Kuhnau or even Buxtehude and Reinken. Its qualities (no longer teenage music?) derive not from novelty but from handling in a new way so many of the old conventions, such as broken chords or chromatic themes. Such new ways to work old conventions suggest an intelligent observer. So do certain extant organ-chorales (qv) which, if correctly attributed to J. S. Bach, must date from about the time he left his brother's house at age fifteen. These could include some of those found in the so-called 'Neumeister Collection', BWV 1090–1120, an album of over eighty chorales copied or compiled from unknown origins in the late eighteenth century, by an organist-schoolmaster, J. G. Neumeister. Thirty-eight chorales are attributed to J. S. Bach, including six more reliably authenticated elsewhere. The rest are not always distinguishable from work of Pachelbel's pupils, and if not quite safely attributed to Bach, or to any single period, some do look like the work of a gifted and responsive if still immature composer.

Some of the 'Neumeister' settings attributed to Bach are more than faintly similar to settings in the same manuscript by the organist of nearby

Gehren, Johann Michael Bach, Sebastian's father-in-law to be. Whatever their personal connections were at this time, the many contacts and professional exchanges between Bach-family members are easy to imagine. Consequently, the more trustworthy are Neumeister's attributions, the clearer it becomes that as a teenager Sebastian was endeavouring to imitate the music of his Thuringian elders. And yet at the same time, among the more original chorales in the collection there are instances of both a sure harmonic touch and an imagination in the details, even a waywardness, that are exceptional among Thuringian composers of *c.* 1700 – interesting repetitions, changes of direction, brief cadenzas (qv), effective closes, unfamiliar textures, reliable and pleasing harmony and not a few surprises. One would dearly like all of them to be proved authentic, but proof there will never be.

Some settings give the impression of being a written-down improvisation of the kind an adventurous teenager could produce when he was responding to the hymn-tune, sometimes quite unpredictably. However they are treated, the chorale's melody and harmony are so faithful to the basic hymn as to suggest an organist habitually embroidering as he played. Example 1 shows three ways of treating a melody: in bb. 1–4, a simple harmonization is broken up with an 'echo' at the octave below; in bb. 5–7, line 1 of the hymn-tune is accompanied by note-patterns (qv); in bb. 8–9, the chorale-verse's second line is a four-part harmonization with passing notes (qv). Though on a tiny scale, these are three specific techniques of



Example 1 Organ-chorale, BWV 1092, opening; B. 8, *sic*. The single flat was added by the late copyist, unsure of the early original harmony, which needed no flats.

which the second and third will characterize so much of Bach's music to come, including large-scale cantata movements. All three suggest a composer already with a well-taught grasp of what can be done, not always in such quick succession as here and not often with such an imaginative little 'echo', but grammatically perfect all the same. All that is missing so far is a sustained shape, as if the composer is responding to each line of the chorale in turn and as yet not concerned to integrate the whole.

At other moments in the 'Neumeister Collection' there are ideas much more likely to have been worked out carefully on paper first, particularly the moments of purer counterpoint and some unusually inventive paraphrases (qv) of the hymn melody. Generally, the scale is not expansive, and the idiom does not go beyond the simple ambitions of an organist-functionary; but with suitably optimistic hindsight we do have a glimpse of the future composer's lifelong search for ever-newer ways to set a chorale-melody. Among predecessors' work that the putative young composer may have had in mind is Pachelbel's publication of chorales in 1693 (*Acht Choräle*, Nuremberg), which illustrated the traditional ways of using a hymn melody. The 'Neumeister Collection' as a whole looks like the kind of repertory aspired to for decades by organists in relatively humble positions, men for whom Bach's later and large-scale collections cannot have been very useful, being the challenging works of somebody who had moved on.

Keyboard music other than organ-chorales is also hard to date and place. Quite where Forkel learnt that the young Bach, when improvising, 'ran or leapt up and down on the *Instrument* ... until some resting place was caught by chance' (1802, p. 23) is unknown. It sounds like a guess. But a further remark, that this was common to 'all beginners', suggests that Forkel had concluded something of the sort from early toccatas he knew or had seen, where indeed there is a considerable amount of running up and down the keyboard. '*Instrument*' in such a context probably meant harpsichord, or perhaps keyboards in general, as distinct from church organs playing chorale-settings. Various 'early signs' such as short phrases and persistent short motifs (melodic cells, qv) can be found in a harpsichord toccata (D minor, BWV 913a, dedicated in a copy to his 'brother Johann Christoph') and in two chorales (BWV 764 and 739, some details of which also appear in works of Pachelbel). Short and pretty sequences are still found in the melodies from Bach's early twenties, such as the Adagio of the organ Toccata in C major and the Cantata No. 106. The chorale BWV 739 has another 'early' characteristic: one can never be sure whether it will shoot off in some other direction.

Tablature or letter-notation, learnt by many a young organist, leaves one to suppose that other early works were written out in this way, never transcribed and subsequently discarded. Not discarded, however, presumably because of its dedication (to one or other Johann Christoph), is the Capriccio in E major, BWV 993, a formless, turgid work whose harmonic poverty suggests not only an early date but that the young composer had a propensity to experiment for the sake of it. (His own propensity, or was he imitating Christoph's?) It must predate the Passacaglia in C minor by several years. Assuming its title to be authentic, this capriccio is so different from another early piece with this title, the six-movement capriccio in B flat, BWV 992, as to confirm something implied by the already mentioned Toccata in D minor: that Bach's interests were ranging widely as he tried to sustain movements but was not yet achieving much in the way of harmonic tension. BWV 993 also suggests that he was already interested in something else of importance: creating sheer length, sustaining a movement that did not have the prop of a text or a programme. From what survives of Bach's earliest work, it does look as if each piece that survives is a self-given study or exercise.

Were the dedicatee of BWV 993 to be Christoph the elder (d. 1703), one could read into it Sebastian's respect for him, perhaps *in memoriam*; were its dedicatee proved to be Christoph the younger, Sebastian's brother and temporary guardian, it would suggest a good contact between them despite the moonlight episode. This last is also suggested by Christoph possessing copies of his brother's harpsichord toccatas (written in part for him, perhaps) and by the two rich manuscript collections of music (the Möller manuscript and the Andreas Bach Book). To these, Sebastian might over time have contributed some of the music by other composers, and well after he had left the Ohrdruf home. From these big manuscript collections, it is clear that other composers known to one brother and probably both include Buxtehude, Böhm, Buttstedt, Flor, Kuhnau, Pachelbel and Reinken, French composers Lebègue, Dieupart, Lully, Marais and Marchand (Suite in D minor) and the Italian, Albinoni. Not all of the contents in the two manuscripts are distinguished and some of it (such as Marin Marais's long *Ouverture Alcide*) served rather to supply patterns as in a pattern-book: samples of particular dance-types rather than fine music *per se*. Nevertheless, the manuscripts give a wider survey of composers and genres than is found in collections of keyboard music in other parts of Europe at the time except, oddly, England, where a significant amount of foreign music was available.

Other Bachs from Thuringia, including another Johann Christoph (b. 1676) and the Johann Ernst (b. 1683) who had been at school in

Ohrdruf, had wide contacts and could also have served as a supply route for many pieces in the two albums. Consequently, there is a tantalizing uncertainty about what the brothers Sebastian and Christoph (b. 1671) could have learnt from each other and indeed from other Bachs, and thus what the younger brother might have been composing. But since both brothers made use of Albinoni's Op. 1 *Sonate à 3* (qv), a 'lively interchange' of ideas between them seems very likely. Whoever composed the Sonata in A minor, BWV 967, copied by Johann Christoph, seems to be taking steps towards something noted above and of great potential for the future in instrumental music and subsequently choral. This was the so-called 'ritornello' form. Doubtless originating in Italian (Venetian) opera, the way of shaping a movement was there for anyone to see in the concertos of Albinoni, *Sinfonie e concerti* (Venice 1700).

Two sonatas of Albinoni appear in Christoph's manuscript, and three of his fugue subjects are made use of by Sebastian in well-paced fugues, including a pair in B minor, BWV 951 and 951a, whose subject is surely the most beautiful either brother had yet come across. Its lyrical qualities are now brought out more than they were in Albinoni's original print. At whichever point exactly in his earlier years Bach was selecting and working with fugue subjects by foreign composers (Albinoni, Corelli, Bononcini or Legrenzi, probably Raison), it is clear that he was indeed searching beyond the more prosaic fugue subjects by his compatriots Reinken, Buxtehude and Pachelbel. Copies through which his workings of such foreign fugue subjects survive come mostly from later years, in his or pupils' manuscripts, which rather indicates that they were never entirely discarded. Looking ahead, one can guess that it was stimulating for the young composer to search beyond the work of Protestant organists, and to move on as he did over the years towards the concertos of Torelli, Vivaldi, Marcello and others, up to at least Locatelli in the 1730s.

As in other instances among Bach's earlier work, the different versions of the Albinoni fugue, whether one thinks of them as workings, studies, experiments or essays, do counter a common assumption that composers create a composition and work on it again only in exceptional circumstances. Rather, different versions might be made, with different copies easily scanning decades. The several later works that exist in equally authentic 'alternative' versions do not necessarily indicate second thoughts but are upholding the craftsman's tradition of returning to an artefact, benefiting from something recently learned. One of the problems in dating certain major works for organ is that it is not always clear how to answer the questions, 'Of what surviving version are we speaking? Were there no other versions?'

How soon the young composer showed signs of one of his most enduring characteristics – a thoroughness in exploring all kinds of variety, as if he were ticking off a list – is not easy to document. Probably very soon, is the answer. A sense of harmonic tension in the surely juvenile Fantasia in C minor (BWV 921) just survives what looks like an almost childlike wish to exploit two particular 'textbook' interests: different time-signatures and different little patterns of notes (*figurae*, qv). Each of three other early works called 'Fantasia' either by Christoph or Sebastian in the Andreas Bach Book (those in B minor, BWV 563; C major, BWV 570; C minor, BWV 1121) explores a simple musical idea at length, freely, ingeniously and unpredictably, indeed fantasy-like. (The C minor even anticipates a moment in the St John Passion, at 'Crucify!') If Christoph's copy of the early organ praeludia in G minor, BWV 535a, and D minor, BWV 549a, does transmit Sebastian's first versions, as seems to be the case, one sees him developing little melodic cells again, and now and then going off at a tangent. The impression they give of being an exercise ('Take a small group of notes and explore it') is enhanced even by their specific choice of titles: an unusual term *Imitatio* for the second part of a fantasia (BWV 563), or the alternative *Praeludium ô Fantasia* for BWV 549a. *Imitatio* might have a double meaning here: a contrapuntal imitation (qv) between the voices, and a theme imitating the work of somebody else, in this case a chaconne by Böhm copied in one of his brother's albums.

Such pieces from Bach's teenage years are for keyboard and are not yet particularly extensive or adventurous harmonically, but they do lay the foundation for that tireless reworking of themes or motifs that became familiar throughout the Bach oeuvre. The *Imitatio* referred to explores a simple idea already found in a Kuhnau sonata from 1696 as well as the Böhm chaconne. Other early or quite early works, such as the Praeludium in A minor (BWV 894), give the impression of a composer fully grasping harmonic grammar, doing what he likes with it, not coy about length and in these respects also anticipating his later music. When a less than sophisticated work of uncertain origin or one without reliable sources has such qualities, the temptation is to recognize Bach as the composer. When it does not, the question is more open.

Many of these remarks apply to compositions after the Ohrdruf and Lüneburg years and when Bach had taken further professional steps for himself. It may seem strange that there is still so much uncertainty as to who composed what and when among these and other keyboard pieces often attributed to him, but the period was too early for exceptionally gifted boys to be such a wonder that their work would be systematically

preserved. As a recognized and written-about phenomenon, the child prodigy barely existed yet in music, especially the composer-prodigy, and much of what is preserved from the early period hangs on later copies made for the studies of Bach's pupils or of their pupils. When early pieces do survive, as also with Handel at much the same age, they do so by chance or in a form as revised and copied out later. Even some of the later and more assured works attributed to Bach such as Cantata No. 4 can be challenged on the dual grounds that (i) the source is inconclusive, (ii) the musical style and form belong to a common fund. Cantata No. 4 is a set of variations of a kind familiar to Thuringian organists from their work with variations on chorales (the so-called 'chorale partitas'), but to whom else a work of such quality could be attributed is rather a mystery.

Early choral works also known only from much later copies, such as Cantatas Nos. 150, 106 and 196, are less doubtful, both in being more mature and in having more recognizable hallmarks.

French and Italian tastes

> And from here too [Lüneburg] he had the chance, through frequent listening to a then famous band kept by the Duke of Celle, and consisting largely of Frenchmen, to give himself a good grounding in French taste [*Geschmacke*], which at the time was something totally new [*ganz Neues*] in those parts. (*Obituary*)

Rather than having regular teachers, Bach is again pictured as learning through listening to various kinds of music. He must have been responsible for two important details recounted here by Emanuel: that the visits were 'frequent' and that the band 'consisted largely of Frenchmen'. 'Then famous' must mean that for the two Berliners writing the Obituary in *c*. 1750, the Celle band was so no longer.

So, having as a boy sung the standard German and Latin repertory in one important Lutheran church far from home, heard a famous organist play and direct in another and quite possibly heard Italian arias and recitative sung in Hamburg theatres, he was now experiencing French music as performed by French musicians employed in a duke's own *cappella* (qv). That such music was 'something totally new in those parts' could well be something Emanuel heard his father say and is not at all likely to be true, though the way it was played by Frenchmen, especially the string-players, could well have been new to him, a young Thuringian

organist. *Geschmack*, like French *goût*, denotes 'manner' or 'style' as much as it does 'taste'. Here, then, is another example of Bach being described as learning (i) by personal experiences of (ii) diverse musical activities in (iii) different parts of his home country.

Certain types or genres of French music, especially overture-suites with all their many idiomatic characteristics, were already familiar in much of Germany, as seen in quite a few more-than-competent examples in J. K. F. Fischer's *Journal du Printemps* (1695) and Georg Muffat's *Florilegium* (1698). Handel's biography, at a similar point in his life, testifies to his grasp of both local German church music and French styles and in his case various Italian as well, claiming that he instructed Corelli himself 'in the manner of executing these spirited passages' in French *ouvertures* (Mainwaring 1760, p. 56). This could refer to both the dotted preludes and the scurrying fugues. Interestingly, in Telemann's case it was in Eisenach that he reported hearing players excelling in French music, or so he reported later in speaking of the period around 1708 (Mattheson 1740, p. 361) – so, as it happens, after Bach's departure.

Telemann's godson Emanuel Bach surely knew this report, and in speaking of his father's teenage experiences in Lüneburg may have remembered something else that Telemann had said: that he had been able to hear the Hanover court band while a schoolboy in Hildesheim, a city reasonably nearby (Mattheson 1731, pp. 171–2). So Bach's hearing the Celle band was nothing out of the ordinary. Another sign of musical developments at the time is that just then Telemann was promoting his concert series in Leipzig, with frenchified overture-suites soon imitated by other local composers such as J. F. Fasch, later a competitor of Bach's for the Leipzig job. But the Obituary's reference implies there was something superior about Bach's teenage experience of French music as he had reported it: the players themselves were French.

The Duke of Lüneburg-Celle's band played in the ducal residence in Lüneburg.[5] In noting the nationality of the players and showing thereby that early on, Bach had learnt French *Geschmack* from the horse's mouth, Emanuel may have had in mind a remark made in print by an earlier Thuringian composer: that in his case it was (only) from examining the written music that he had learnt the art of French *ouvertures*. This was P. H. Erlebach who, in his preface to *Harmonische Freude* (1697), may not

[5] The Obituary's phrase 'away from there' (*von Lüneburg aus*) implies that Emanuel assumed that his father had had to go over to Celle to hear the band.

have realized that notation gives only a pale impression of how vivid and tuneful the convention-choked music of France can be in sympathetic hands. A French string-group introduced gesture and expressive articulation that no one around Lüneburg was likely to have heard from local musicians, especially in the church cantatas most familiar to the public at large. A French windband could show what a minuet or bourrée or gavotte was better than any keyboard suites could have done. The duke's full Celle ensemble, if as good as its reputation suggests, produced harmony of a sensuousness out of place in church, and the manner of playing it – the rhythms, rubato (qv), articulation, ornaments – would, one imagines, have made a strong impression on any young musician. Bach undoubtedly benefited.

That he liked certain individual elements of French style is clear throughout Bach's creative life, from the early keyboard *ouverture* in F major (BWV 820) right through to a movement in the Art of Fugue (BWV 1080.vi). As with the 'Neumeister' chorales, one would dearly like the authenticity of this F major *ouverture* to be established, for in its different way it too demonstrates a sure if not yet mature handling of very particular conventions. A part of this grasp must also have come from studying volumes of music, however, as is suggested by similarities between some of its movements and J. K. F. Fischer's *Pièces de clavessin* of 1696. Other composers such as Telemann must also have learnt the French *manière* (qv) from comparable personal experiences. Certainly Handel had done so before his first operas in Hamburg, and he even prefaced his first opera in Italy (*Rodrigo*, 1707) with a convincingly French suite, idiomatic, polished and very extensive.

One can assume that here and there Bach had already heard *ouvertures* or ballet-suites, music of an entirely different kind from any Parisian organ-books he ever got to know. Perhaps Böhm had recommended his visits to the duke's band, having himself shown an intimate grasp of many details of French style. For a time, the Duke of Celle's theatre also had Italian opera, but it was the French court ensemble founded in 1666 that became famous, probably brought to a high standard for the sake of the duke's French Huguenot wife.

Unfortunately, the F major *ouverture*'s very fidelity to the harmony, rhythms and melody typical of a Parisian composer of *c.* 1690 leaves one wondering whether it is an arrangement of an imported work rather than a very clever musical imitation. Perhaps for a young composer the difference between the two was not as important as it might now seem. There are certainly hints of the work's genuine Frenchness in tiny details, as for example in the way the stately dotted-note introduction ends with

a big chord the first time but not on its repeat. This reproduces Parisian practice, when the first violin shoots off with a lively fugue immediately after the repeat, as if taking literally the word *fuga*, 'flight'. Exactly the same detail can be found in Bach's later overtures in *Clavierübung II* and '*Clavierübung IV*', where the careful notation of the published engravings appears to be entirely trustworthy.

To what extent visits to the Celle band first introduced Bach to the various French mannerisms of harmony, string-bowing, leaning grace-notes and lilting rhythms is hard to know, since his earliest organ and vocal music would not have been the place for such details and does not reproduce them. It is probably fair to say, however, that the much later overtures for orchestra (BWV 1066–9) and for harpsichord (in *Clavierübung I*, *II* and '*IV*') enrich the true Parisian *manière* with a harmonic sophistication, varied melody and well-wrought counterpoint that are seldom if ever found in France itself. Conversely, some of the most characteristic elements of the French suite, such as the *petite reprise* and the *rondeau* (qv) and even the various picturesque titles, rarely if ever emerge in Bach's work except through some faint allusion. In the case of later fugues with marked dotted rhythms, in both the cantatas and keyboard works, Bach was exploring one particular French element towards a much more stately effect than Handel or Zachow did in their own dotted-note fugues.

The young Bach was assimilating and imitating not only Parisian idioms but Italian as well, as is clear in his other early keyboard music employing several distinct Italian styles. That the Obituary mentions no Italian composers is a sign of its taking for granted that Italian music of one kind or another would form the background for a young composer of the period. For keyboardists, the most widely influential composer over the last hundred years had been Frescobaldi, *fons et origo* for (among others) those German organ-composers known to Bach. Quite possibly even much of the terminology itself went back to Frescobaldi (1583–1643), as with *Canzona* for the sectional fugue in D minor (BWV 588) in the early copy by Johann Christoph (for whom, see p. 42). The more recent Italian counterpoint of such composers as Corelli, Albinoni and Bononcini or Legrenzi informs the violinistic themes and treatment of certain fugues (BWV 579, 574, 946, 951), although sustained harmonies of the kind seen in the chorale BWV 714 may also ultimately derive from Bach's familiarity with Frescobaldi. Nevertheless, none of these pieces could be mistaken for original Italian music any more than Bach's *ouvertures* could be mistaken for the capricious Parisian model. The genres Bach came into contact with

in the first decade of the century were so thoroughly explored that in each case he not only stretches the definition of each but generally demotes the foreign idioms as he does so. He continued to do this for nearly half a century.

If throughout the Bach oeuvre as a whole, French characteristics tend to be more conspicuous than Italian, the reason again could be that the Italian style is altogether more widely distributed and 'normal', indeed a kind of norm. Another point to observe across the whole of Bach's output, when the following chapters consider the great composers he admired over decades, is that he might adopt certain characteristics of their style but less so the *kinds* or genres of music they wrote. Frescobaldi would bequeath him a style of counterpoint but not, say, a genre like a toccata for the Elevation; Froberger (1616–67) would give him subtle keyboard textures but not the long sectional genre he called *capriccio*. Bach's admiration for Marchand led to no known interest in the free French *prélude*, and even the concerto as understood by Torelli or Vivaldi was expanded virtually beyond recognition in Bach's three virtuoso violin concertos. In considering 'influence' or 'admiration', therefore, one needs to be aware of how selective Bach was.

2 | First appointments, 1703–1708: a young musician's activities and early works

First Weimar appointment

In [January] 1703 he went to Weimar, and became a musician of the Court there. (*Obituary*)

What the series of events was during 1702 can be only partly reconstructed, but it seems probable that Bach completed two years at senior school in Lüneburg; from there visited Hamburg, either during those years or shortly after (or both); at Lüneburg or Celle, heard the French players; returned to Thuringia at some point; claimed later to have applied there to become organist at the Jakobikirche, Sangerhausen (Dok. I, p. 93); and (instead?) went into service at the court of Weimar six months later, 20 December 1702. His contacts with both Sangerhausen and Weimar were very likely owed to the Weimar court organist Johann Effler whom Bach was to succeed in 1708 (BJ 2004, pp. 157ff.) and who was a long-established family acquaintance from Erfurt.

When exactly in 1702 Bach left Lüneburg is unrecorded but one possibility is that it was as the school year ended at Easter, when he was just seventeen. Another is that he was still there when he applied for the position at Sangerhausen. The musically active court there in the centre of Thuringia was likely to be an attraction for any young musician, if less obviously so than Dresden or Leipzig was for another teenage musician, the flautist Quantz (1755, p. 202). Nor is it recorded whether he wished to return to Thuringia because of penury (no family money), professional disappointment (no job in Lüneburg or Hamburg) or love of homeland (as the Obituary said). Perhaps at some point he stayed temporarily with his brother in Ohrdruf again, or his sister Marie Salome in Erfurt, both of whom were by now better circumstanced than before.

Like Quantz, setting his sights on metropolitan capitals at much the same age, Handel, having been introduced to many styles of music by his teacher and briefly been organist in his home town in 1702, went off to Hamburg, launched on his many-sided career. But when Handel's

biographer says that not wishing to add to his mother's expenses, 'the first thing which he did [in Hamburg] was to procure scholars, and obtain some employment in the [theatre] orchestra' (Mainwaring 1760, p. 29), he is describing a situation very likely known to the seventeen-year-old Bach too. How far any of these three young composers did procure 'scholars', as well as playing in an orchestra, is an interesting question: Handel surely had more opportunity in a big city than Bach had in Sangerhausen or Weimar, or wherever he was in the second half of 1702, although in all such places there must often have been aristocratic children to teach and a modest theatre orchestra.

In his later biography of Bach, Forkel seems to have been puzzled, as one might still be, why he left the wider promise of Lüneburg to return to Thuringia. He asked Emanuel for the reason, only to be told 'I don't know' (Dok. III, p. 288). Doubtless the boy needed income and it is possible that he had already learnt that he preferred (if he did prefer) the relatively secure world of church and court music to that of opera and city theatres, in which case the return says much about him. But one cannot know this for certain and again, 'Was a career in church really the one he wanted?' is a fair question to ask at this point in Bach's life, as it is at other points later. If he had merely heard of the Sangerhausen job en route from Lüneburg to Thuringia (though Sangerhausen was not obviously on his way home), there was an element of serendipity here. But if he had kept up family contacts with a view to hearing of such jobs, his preferences are a little clearer. A reasonable guess is that he had intended to put himself in the way of succeeding the admired and possibly ailing Johann Christoph Bach in the more important town church of Eisenach, his place of baptism.

In such a society, a seventeen-year-old is not very likely to have returned to an elder brother's house. Yet if it was to Ohrdruf that Bach first returned – or revisited from nearby Weimar or Arnstadt – one could more easily suppose how it was that the brother's extant keyboard manuscripts came to include eleven works of Georg Böhm, some others by Böhm's predecessor in Lüneburg, Christian Flor, and a group of pieces by the French composers Lebègue, Lully, Marais, Marchand, all associated one way or another with Lüneburg and, indirectly, Bach's period there. It would also be strange if any manuscripts brought back to Thuringia by J. S. Bach or anyone else did not include chorale-settings by the northern organists. But since at the time contacts between organists and musicians were so many and so effective, rarely can one say with any certainty how any of them got to know the music they copied or what they did with it.

According to Bach himself, the Sangerhausen job fell through because against the church authorities who voted unanimously for him, there was a higher authority, i.e. the reigning Duke of Weissenfels, who let it be known that he preferred another, better-experienced candidate from his own establishment (Dok. I, pp. 93-4). This Duke of Weissenfels was successor to the very duke who, according to Mainwaring (1760, p. 9), had been impressed by the child Handel. Some thirty-odd years later, history worked one of its ironies: in Sangerhausen, Sebastian's third son Johann Gottfried Bernhard Bach, not yet twenty-two, became organist on his father's recommendation, unfortunately without long-lasting success. In the intervening years Bach had maintained other connections with the house of Weissenfels, including conferment on him by one of the dukes of the title 'Saxon-Weissenfels Capellmeister', probably in 1729, a titular or 'visiting' position (see below, pp. 327f.). There is also the likelihood that he was involved somehow in the new Sangerhausen organ, dedicated on 1 June 1728 in the presence of the same duke who was to confer the court-title on him. The builder of the Sangerhausen organ was Zacharias Hildebrandt, a colleague of Bach's in Leipzig who had perhaps recommended him and whose court-title was soon followed by Hildebrandt's as 'Saxon-Weissenfels Court Organ-maker'.

Probably from Christmas 1702, and for most of the first half of 1703, Bach was employed at Weimar as 'court musician' (*HoffMusikus*: Dok. I, p. 259) to the junior duke, Johann Ernst von Sachsen-Weimar. How or when he applied is not recorded – presumably he had waited somewhere in the neighbourhood until the court appointment materialized – nor what instruments he was appointed to play, nor whether he was able to make use of certain up-to-date French and Italian music with which he had become familiar. A likely guess is that he had actively searched for an appointment in this, one of the most promising ducal courts in the whole region, and for the experience this would give of playing in both chapel music and secular entertainments. A young lively gifted musician accomplished on both violin and keyboard, he would find himself with several duties in the ducal establishments, *perhaps* enough to justify his next employers referring to him rather grandly as the 'Court Organist to a Prince of Saxony' (*Fürstlich Sächsischer HoffOrganiste*: Dok. II, p. 10), a phrase they had surely learnt from Bach himself.

In the Obituary, his appointment is described as 'court musician', but in the Weimar court accounts he is listed as *Laquey*. This word does not have quite the associations of English 'lackey', being used to mean among other things to describe an instrumentalist who is not yet a 'master' or *Meister* as

formally defined. (Mattheson refers to such hierarchic procedures for musicians: 1728, p. 58.) Many a young musician at court was first appointed as a general servant, and Bach may well have had lowly duties in addition to playing violin and keyboard: copying music, organizing the scores and parts, tuning keyboards, carrying music stands, standing in for the organist and so forth. Quite possibly he did apply for or show an interest in the organist's job at Eisenach when Johann Christoph died in the following April, but the town's Georgenkirche was surely too important for an eighteen-year-old to take over its music.

To be a court musician for a period was not a useless career move for a teenager, although as before it leaves open the question whether Bach was attracted more to this world than to any other. Much depends on how far his musical inclinations were towards the violin and towards string music, and about this there is not enough to build a picture. The versatility required of keyboardists generally meant that in a court establishment they could be called upon to play organ, while as an organist in a town church they would also expect to participate in town music. There is also the possibility that chorale-settings like, or even among, those of the 'Neumeister Collection' described above, date from this very period.

Although Bach soon left Weimar to take the organist's position in Arnstadt, he was for six months part of an interesting musical establishment, participating in the junior duke Johann Ernst's private *cappella*, presumably with experienced musicians from the main ensemble. This included the violinist Johann Paul von Westhoff, who had published a set of solo (so-called unaccompanied) violin suites a few years earlier, in 1696. This is charming fiddle music of some possible influence on Bach's later works for solo violin, lacking the dense, abstract quality of Bach's but with a sure sense of resonant string sound and what a fiddle could do (see Example 15, p. 199). Also in Weimar was the organist Johann Effler, to replace whom Bach returned as *Hoforganist* five years later and who, in his earlier positions elsewhere, had already been succeeded by other Bachs and may well have supported Johann Sebastian in his career up till then.

Even if, in light of the versatility already mentioned, the teenager Bach did substitute for Effler as organist during this brief period at the Weimar court, there was something more than a little forward in him calling himself (or allowing himself to be called) 'Court Organist' when he went to Arnstadt to test the new organ in July 1703. Presumably he did so for the sake of a church committee who would not be happy appointing a *Laquey*-fiddler as organ-examiner, much less as their new organist.

The Arnstadt appointment

At this point, whether or not he already had an eye on eventually succeeding Effler as court organist at Weimar and was looking to develop his curriculum vitae, Bach took a different job and moved on.

> The following year [in August 1703] he took on the duty of organist at the New Church in Arnstadt. Here he really showed the first fruits of his industry in the art of organ playing, and in composition which he had largely learnt only by contemplating the works of the most famous and thorough [*gründlichen*] composers of the time, and by applying his own reflections. (*Obituary*)

Irrespective of any personal preference Bach may have had for court or church, there were good professional reasons to leave the former for the latter, even when the church ranked only third in an average town: it gave him greater independence, a regular contract, twice as much pay, rights to further fees, work in the local *Schloß*, a less demanding schedule, less demeaning status, more opportunity for organ music, proximity to other family members (who may have played a part in his appointment), young people to work with and potential paying students. This was a privileged position, the result no doubt of spending energy on self-advancement while already being employed.

At least seven Bachs had been town musicians or organists in Arnstadt before 1703, including Sebastian's father for a time (a *Stadtpfeifer*), brother (briefly) and father's uncle (Heinrich, organist in the main town church for over half a century) – so the New Church or Bonifatiuskirche, not having been well served by its organist recently, may well have seized upon this latest Bach, even though he was still a teenager. Not only a talented musician but knowledgeable in organs, he was after all advantageously employed at that moment in the region's major court. His successor in Arnstadt five years later was another Bach, his cousin Johann Ernst, while the burgomaster in charge of the church's new organ project (which was no doubt an extra attraction of Arnstadt for Bach) was a brother-in-law of the admired and recently deceased Johann Christoph Bach of Eisenach. Perhaps Sebastian had been recommended by the court organist at Weimar, Johannes Effler (BJ 2005, pp. 89f.), to serve as examiner of the new organ in Arnstadt, in the course of which, presumably, he made a good enough impression on the authorities to be offered the organist's post. If so, the appointment is an important sign of recognition and endorsement for an exceptional eighteen-year-old, though whether or not with Effler's blessing is not known. The church itself, rebuilt twenty

years earlier but less significant as a building than the neglected Upper Church, occupied a central position in the town itself.

The Obituary implies that having been recently employed as a general musician Bach was now for the first time able to develop as an organist and composer, for which purposes he had qualified himself by careful study and a careful selection of worthy models. This may be the way he had spoken later of his first professional position, but it suits the picture of the ideal church musician a little too well to be entirely reliable. A further likely attraction in Arnstadt was its minor court and the chance of paid work there and in the town, even in an occasional rowdy operetta produced locally (Böhme 1931, p. 35). If for its biographical milestones the Obituary was drawing on some kind of bare chronicle such as a particular family Bible, Emanuel could have had no idea what the young Sebastian's professional desires had been at this point. He only knew that church duties had dominated his father's life for most of the years he knew him. In having already remarked four times on his learning experiences – instruction from brother, visits to Hamburg, hearing Celle's court-music and now 'contemplating' other music – the Obituary is justifying something not obvious half a century later: namely, how it was that an eighteen-year-old could have been so qualified and authoritative. Emanuel's brother Christoph Friedrich was also to enter the profession aged seventeen or eighteen, but as part of a court ensemble, not an independent organist.

In the summer of 1703 Bach was brought across from Weimar – the accounts specify the hire of horses – to test J. F. Wender's new organ in Arnstadt. This may have been as a substitute sent on behalf of Effler in Weimar or on the recommendation of the organ-builder Wender in Mühlhausen, who probably had a hand again at Bach's next appointment. (It certainly seems that Wender did play some part in the appointment of organists: see Dok. V, p. 115.) Perhaps not beyond boasting of his acquaintance with the great instruments of Lüneburg and Hamburg, Bach, a Weimar court musician, was evidently thought able to judge the work of a builder thirty years his senior. But it may not have been as extraordinary for so young a man to report on a substantial organ as it now seems: his brother Christoph had done so at Ohrdruf when he was nineteen and apparently felt no qualms in accusing the organ-builder there of little care and too much cost (BJ 1985, p. 69). At Arnstadt, Sebastian seems to have inspected the new organ, reported on it (Dok. II, p. 11) and then inaugurated it in a service with the usual hymns and improvised solos, all probably in late June or early July 1703.

It can be assumed that a *Laquey* such as Bach had no binding contract and broke no conditions of employment at court when he left to become titular organist of a parish church elsewhere. The Arnstadt contract of 9 August 1703 gave Bach for the four services per week an annual salary of 50 guilders, plus 30 thaler for board and lodging (*Kost und Wohnung*, Dok. II, p. 12). Probably the living costs were added because here there was no house or apartment tied to the job, as was otherwise common. Or Bach, as a young bachelor, did not qualify for one, lodging instead (?) in one of the two houses owned by the burgomaster, whose wife was aunt to Maria Barbara, quite soon to be his bride (Dok. II, p. 27). The salary compared very well with the 30 guilders for ten services per week that had been paid to the interim (and apparently unsatisfactory) organist whom he replaced, Andreas Börner, and again with the 40 guilders for his own successor four years later. (Börner's wife was also one of Bach's distant cousins. Did Bach knowingly oust him, a local organist with no comparable court position?) Though entitled to other fees, the superintendent himself had a salary only twice as high, implying that Bach was expected to take on duties of a cantor too, as both his predecessor and successor were also to do – hence one of the arguments that were to arise later.

From the sequence of these various events one receives the clear impression of an eighteen-year-old with bold initiative. Known through local family connections as organist in a court of major prestige, he was invited to approve a new organ, did so with authority, then probably played the inaugural recital, solicited (or was solicited) to become its organist, negotiated a very good contract and by 14 August 1703 was installed in his new position. One hopes this process had the formal approval of the Weimar court chamberlain, for Bach had been paid there for the quarter that went up to 13 September (Dok. II, p. 10). Duties in Arnstadt were to play chorales and preludes at those four weekly services each week, probably plus some such obligation at the almshouse (*Hospital*) that contributed to his salary, and the contract laid down other conditions of so standard a kind as to be re-used when the next organist was appointed.

According to this contract, which can be taken as typical for parish-church organists of the time, the organist was to be and remain reliable and competent, fulfil his duties, appear promptly for services, play appropriately (*gebührend tractiren*), take care of the organ (giving notice if repairs were needed), allow no one access to it without the superintendent's knowledge and generally devote himself

in your life and conduct to the fear of God, sobriety and a spirit of conciliation [*Verträglichkeit*], keeping yourself from evil company and hindrances to your calling, and in all things (as appropriate for an honour-loving servant and organist) to conduct yourself faithfully to God, the High Authorities and your superiors. (Dok. II, pp. 11–12)

High Authorities and *superiors* meant the local lord, the count of Schwarzburg, plus the superintendent and the consistory court (qv), and any of their officers. Taken literally, the contract gave some dozen grounds on which an organist could be dismissed, hence the several charges levelled against the young Bach two years later.

The new and colourful Arnstadt organ had twenty-one stops, pedal and two manuals, and was displayed against the back wall of a light, galleried church, high up in the special third gallery, its tone completed with a bigger bass sound than found on comparable instruments in northern Germany, and tuned so as to allow playing in more keys than was possible on many older instruments. In content it was quite distinct from instruments in Hamburg: less brilliant, richer in fundamental tone, with variety of sound useful for congregational chorales and accompaniment. Its builder was highly respected in the province, and an organ of this kind, modern and one hopes in faultless condition, was indeed something to encourage a young composer. It would be helpful to know (as one cannot) whether Bach had any hand in finalizing its design, though this seems unlikely if it had been under construction for four years, 1699 to 1703. Whether he inaugurated it with any of the chorales and praeludia discussed briefly in Chapter 1 is also not documented but certainly possible.

Whatever gifts Bach developed at Arnstadt, he surely did so beyond the requirements of his position in a relatively minor church, where he had to play the congregation's chorales, presumably with their preludes, plus a voluntary before the service. How far he participated in other music at Arnstadt is not documented in any detail, but he cannot have been reticent or idle or unwilling. In the Obituary Emanuel remarked on 'the first fruits' of organ-playing as if his father did give some priority to this at this time, taking efforts to rise above the conventional, and speaking of it in later years with some pride. A young, single-minded, energetic, self-improving organist would not necessarily please the authorities, of course, and in August 1705 and twice in 1706 (February and November) he was formally questioned by them about various aspects of his work – why, among other things, he was unwilling to perform ensemble music with the student

singers and players in what must have been some kind of motet or cantata (Dok. II, p. 20). His answer, in stating a desire for a competent music director, implied that he would not play with an incompetent, i.e. such a one as J. A. Rambach, one of the students. He also added that he would give an answer in writing to the accusation that he would not participate (Dok. II, p. 21), but how truculent these replies were, or merely discreet in avoiding publicly naming names, is impossible to know, since the clerk was reporting only the gist.

But Bach was certainly within his rights not to play in ensemble music if this was not spelt out in his contract, and this incident sets a pattern for his protection of those rights throughout his career. A most significant moment, in other words. The music director, not the organist, would be responsible for ensemble music and paid accordingly. Perhaps by these actions, even in saying he would reply in writing, Bach was in fact looking for promotion now he was nearly twenty-one and protecting his rights. That from the beginning he bargained for a good salary seems clear, whether his grand Weimar title as cited in the record was correct or merely the result of a misunderstanding, as it might have been (see BJ 2003, p. 90). At the same time, the church had justifiable expectations of its gifted young organist, having a fine new organ and a most respectable library, which contained not only older *a cappella* (qv) music for the choir (much as at Lüneburg, though on a smaller scale) but more recent cantatas with instruments. If such music was for the services, it would have been the cantatas, with their necessary rehearsals and need for a good director, that the young organist was objecting to, or wanted to be responsible for himself, either way needing to be paid accordingly.

The consistory court at Arnstadt, including Superintendent J. G. Olearius (one of a family of distinguished clergy), had other problems with Bach, as authorities often do with young people. Whether an older organist would have been formally examined in the way the consistory examined Bach is not yet clear: archival work on the life of German organists and cantors is still too incomplete to produce comparable examples. But it surely will, for in the nature of things, it seems unlikely that J. S. Bach was alone among organists young or old in being asked to explain himself in connection with matters within his contract. In April 1706, the town council also complained about the behaviour of the town's students (Spitta 1, 1873, p. 312), including their wearing of rapiers at school, so perhaps there was a 'culture of complaint' among the *superiors* in the town. The same consistory court in an earlier incarnation had had trouble with an earlier Bach: this was Sebastian's father's twin brother Christoph, who in 1673 was (to use

modern terms) sued for breach of promise and had gone on to a higher court, in Weimar, for judgement (Spitta 1, 1873, pp. 156–60).

In Sebastian's case, the problems centred on the way he fulfilled his duties and on his relations with the student players with whom, younger than many of them, he appears to have been at loggerheads, declining to play in their ensembles. On 4 August 1705 there was a brawl in the market-place, as a consequence of which, because of his contract to behave impeccably, he was interrogated by the court the very next day. Over the next few weeks he was further accused of speaking or behaving 'like a dog's *etc*', insulting the *Fagott* (*sic*) or bassoon of one J. H. Geyersbach, a student, and drawing his rapier (*Degen*) when accosted about it. He suggested sorting it out (*ausmachen*) in the morning, but would not duel with his antagonist (Dok. II, p. 16) – again, probably because of his contract.

At one of these court appearances Geyersbach accuses Bach of calling him a *Zippel Fagottist*, but quite what was reprehensible about this is not entirely certain. *Zippel* could be a dialect version of *discipulus*, a common word for schoolboy, as in known documents at Ohrdruf (Dok. II, p. 7), and by extension could mean a callow or clumsy or stupid person (*Zippel*, *Tölpel*, in *Deutsches Wörterbuch*). So Geyersbach, who was three years older, was being called a schoolboy bassoonist, an oafish learner. But *Zippel* might also mean the male member (Marshall 2000, p. 501), and if at that period – and across the centuries, from Hieronymus Bosch's painting of a woodwind instrument protruding *ex ano* (*Garden of Delights*, *c.* 1500) to today's American slang – *Fagott* was circulating *sub rosa* to mean homosexual, then there would have been a doubly offensive pun.

If there were some real coarseness of language here, as is by no means unlikely, it would not have been out of keeping with language in the less-than-elevated German literature of the time, something also illustrated in the text of the Wedding Quodlibet, BWV 524 (*c.* 1707; see p. 558 for another scurrilous pun recorded forty-odd years later). For his part, Bach had countered and first accused Geyersbach of attacking him, asking the court for protection though admitting that he was wearing a rapier. This, by the way, might imply that he was in uniform for some court music that evening (Wolff 2000, p. 87), although those earlier complaints against students wearing swords in the town suggest that it was not unusual for them to carry weapons. Why before the confrontation he is reported as having 'a tobacco pipe in his mouth' is not clear: because this proves he was not at first aggressive or because it was improper for a young organist to smoke? A more important gratuitous detail given twice in the court's *Acta* is that Bach was reported on this occasion as returning after a baptism

party of some kind, when he had performed a serenade (*ständgen*). This is a musical activity of the young Bach not otherwise documented.

There were four other chief complaints against the young Bach. First, in February 1706, the court wanted to know why he had absented himself too long on a study-trip to Lübeck (see further on this below), and secondly there was the question whether he was prepared to play in ensemble music with the students, with whom, so it seemed to the court, he had no desire to get along amicably (*sich nicht comportiren wollen*). Then in November 1706 he was asked again about performing with the students and, furthermore, what he meant by allowing a girl into the choir-gallery and letting her take part in the music. This last, the third complaint, is the well-known incident of *die frembde Jungfer*, often translated in the past as 'the strange girl' or 'the unfamiliar maiden'.

Now *Jungfer* means that she was unmarried, and it is unknown whether this was Maria Barbara (whom Bach married a year later) or her elder sister Barbara Catharina (who was his witness during the market-place brawl) or someone else. More importantly, however, *fremd* means not 'strange' but 'unauthorized': the girl, whoever she was, had not been authorized to enter the gallery or to sing with the choir, as she should have been before she entered. (Even if she was there as soloist to replace a boy-treble, such replacement was also subject to the authorities' permission.) Like other organists, Bach had signed a contract with a clause to admit no one to the organ, and presumably its gallery, without higher permission. So too, for instance, had Johann Pachelbel at Erfurt in 1678, where 'no unauthorized person' was to touch the organ (*kein Frembder*: see DTÖ 17, p. viii).

While, therefore, there is less of a frisson about this famous incident than has often been thought, all the complaints of Bach's behaviour – that he was aggressive, not cooperative, permitted unauthorized access – were none the less serious, being matters covered in an organist's contract. So were the criticisms made after the visit to Lübeck concerning the way he played chorales (see below): this was the fourth complaint. The Obituary does not mention such things, either not knowing them or, more likely, doing as Emanuel later asked his correspondent Forkel to do: pass over any stories of 'his youthful pranks' (*Fechterstreiche*, 'feints': Dok. III, p. 286). How easily Bach bore reprimands cannot be known; not very, one imagines, but he was lucky not to be dismissed. Later in the same month of November, he was away elsewhere, examining a new substantial two-manual organ in nearby Langewiesen. How this came about can only be conjectured, but one wonders if he was vetting other jobs.

It is a pity that no further 'youthful pranks' or anecdotes of the more fanciful kind are recorded, for as with stories told at various other times by or about Telemann and Handel, anecdotes contribute something to a picture. So when the young, indigent Bach, on his way to Lübeck from Ohrdruf, is supposed to have found ducats in some thrown-away fish-heads (a story apparently first published in 1786: Dok. III, p. 424), the point of the story was, in part, to show that when Bach chanced on some money, he put it to use in furthering his studies. But miraculous fish appear in other scattered legends about unexpected treasure of one kind or another, and were not unusual in Thuringia-Saxony.[1] Another incident, first told in 1775, of the elderly Bach jumping out of bed to resolve a certain chord left in the air by young Johann Christian, and boxing his ears (a six-four (qv), Dok. III, p. 291), also says something about the nature of posthumous hero-worship. But such anecdotes would have worked against the image Emanuel Bach was presenting and were therefore best ignored.

A further note on 'early works'

Bach's early activity as a keyboardist means that it is the surviving keyboard pieces, often in a simple or under-developed form, that give an inkling of his first interests as a composer. How much of the music discussed so far belongs among the earliest composition can only be guessed on a basis of other guesses. First, if a work went through various stages, as is likely, one cannot be sure which of them the source gives. Some were still being recopied many decades later. Secondly, while an impression of growing skill is given by the harmony becoming more original, the sense of key firmer, the movement-shapes more convincing, criteria of this kind cannot be relied on very far. Thirdly, Bach's increasing abilities as a performer must affect what he is composing and might well be crucial. His early works fit the keyboard so well that one suspects this is where he was composing and revising as necessary: at an actual keyboard. Since there can hardly have been a straight line in any musical developments,

[1] At Ohrdruf, St Boniface (d. 754) was led to found a convent by an eagle dropping a fish at his feet, on the site of the later Michaeliskirche (largely destroyed by Second World War bomb-raids on Ohrdruf concentration camp). A fish-legend told in Saxony was of St Benno in *c.* 1090 finding the keys to Meissen Cathedral in the belly of a fish. According to Matthew 17:27 Peter found Jesus's tribute money in a fish; hence the allusions?

Chapter 1 will already have remarked on pieces belonging to the years covered in Chapter 2, and quite possibly vice versa.

A substantial example of what he had surely achieved by 1705 is the *Aria variata*, BWV 989, a set of ten variations. In closely conforming to a type that had been common among German composers for half a century, the work will also share details with other sets of variations, such as that in A minor by the elder Christoph Bach (d. 1703). The principle of running through various keyboard figurations one by one to decorate the theme's harmonies is common to both sets, but the younger composer's are newer, more imaginative and demanding. It is possible that some other differences between them show Sebastian developing by consciously taking what was a traditional kind of music further: his theme is half as long again as Christoph's, it has more varied phrasing, and it is clearly more advanced in texture (already from b. 1) and harmony (from b. 3).
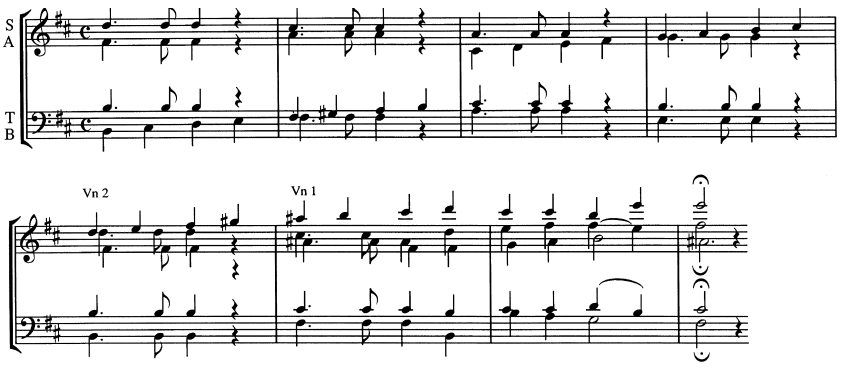
At Arnstadt, presumably, Bach was still writing organ-chorales of a modest if inventive kind familiar in type to certain 'Neumeister Chorales' (see p. 44), but also some longer pieces: sets of variations on chorales (music also suiting the harpsichord), sectional chorale-fantasias and preludes or toccatas in various sections. At least some of these required an organ of two manuals. Some early works such as the Capriccio in B flat already mentioned, BWV 992, show him to have known and assimilated the programmatic sonata as published by Kuhnau in Leipzig in 1700 and again in 1710. These are the so-called 'Biblical Stories', which must have caused a stir among the local organists, showing them new ways to use chorale-melodies and compose rondos. Bach's six movements tell a more personal story, through incidents arising as a 'brother' leaves on a journey (perhaps his brother Jacob or his Ohrdruf friend Georg Erdmann). The manuscript copy has the title *Capriccio Sopra il Lontananza de il fratro dilettissimo* ('capriccio on the distant absence of a most beloved brother') which corresponds, in a clearly less confident Italian, to such titles of Kuhnau's as *Suonata Seconda Saul malinconico e trastullato per mezzo della Musica* ('Sonata No. 2. Saul, dejected, is amused by means of music'). Bach's movement headings also correspond to Kuhnau's.

Whatever had been Kuhnau's own inspiration, probably including earlier and well-known programmatic pieces of J. J. Froberger 'picturing' certain events in music, Bach's Capriccio shows a most impressive grasp of what an influential and respected composer in his region had published. In fact, he outdoes Kuhnau with respect to harmonic tension, melodic quality and sheer charm. Conventionally pictorial, there is first, an *Adagio* not out of place in a manuscript of Georg Böhm; then a fugato not unlike

that in a French organ mass; an Italianate chromatic *lamento* ostinato (qv); a prelude changing in its mood, like some of Kuhnau's; a traditional German keyboard aria of two halves; and finally a sustained fugue. What contemporary idioms Bach was assimilating, however, cannot always be pinned down, as with the *lamento*: did he learn of such a movement from the *lamento chiaconneta* in one of Buxtehude's *Evening Musics* in Lübeck in 1705 (see p. 81)? Already more typical of Bach himself, perhaps, is the way the final fugue exploits its subject's motifs as thoroughly as does many a fugue in WTC1, despite some uncharacteristically clumsy layout implying either that he was inexperienced or that the original was in tablature. Both?

The Obituary's reference to 'composition' in speaking of Arnstadt (above, p. 58) seems to concern more than organ music, much of which Bach must in any case have improvised. What his earliest forages in composing for voices were will never be certain, but just as his assimilation of idioms is obvious in the keyboard music, so it is in the somewhat more mature Cantata No. 4, whose choral writing was traditional. Its cantata-shape – a set of variations 'through all the verses' of its chorale – was once familiar to Bach's three predecessors in the Leipzig cantorate, including Kuhnau, and hence its authenticity is (faintly) uncertain. (In his *Lexicon* of 1790, Gerber mentions Kuhnau's variation-cantatas, now lost.) Since it is clear from the complaints made about Bach in February 1706 that he was expected to participate in the ensemble music, one can suppose that he was already trying his hand at composing *church pieces* himself. There are moments in Cantata No. 150 (Arnstadt?) and Cantata No. 196 that look contemporary with some of the early organ music, as their harmony, counterpoint or melody draws on what was very familiar to organists. But a few unexpected details make for convincing choral music. Variety from movement to movement is already a ruling aim of Cantata No. 196, with its different themes, layouts, moods, tempi, pulse, textures, types of melody (melismatic (qv) or syllabic), all looking like the work of a young composer applying what he has learnt about voices and what they can do. Whether a chorale was sung at the end of these early cantatas, which their later surviving scores do not show, is unknown.

In the past, the early Cantata No. 150's short phrases, relatively unadventurous harmony and ready formulae of melody and counterpoint, plus its combination of poetry and biblical text, have raised doubts about its authenticity. But it took a gifted musician confidently applying the old choral techniques of (i) block chords and (ii) rhetorical rests in this cantata



Example 2 Cantata No. 150.iv, opening (tutti): 'Direct me, direct me'

to produce the startling line rising three and a half octaves from basses to violin 1 in alluding to the words '*Direct* me in your truth' (see Example 2).

This is no mere word-picturing: the ascending line has a 'purely musical' impact, like others in maturer music that have no such verbal allusion. (Example: the ascending line towards the end of the Capriccio of the Harpsichord Partita No. 2, published 1727.) Particularly interesting in both Examples 1 and 2 is the straightforward harmony, conventional in nature but rhetorical in application, something to which performers can respond. Any similarity between them is less striking than the differences: the composer has clearly grasped already how choral and keyboard music are not interchangeable.

Whatever opportunity there was for Bach to work on various choral music in Arnstadt, it cannot have matched the possibilities in his next appointment, at Mühlhausen. By 'the then most famous and thorough composers' from whom Sebastian learnt by observation, Emanuel probably meant again Bruhns, Reinken and Buxtehude, and perhaps also those he listed more fully in a later letter to Forkel (see p. 73). All are worthy composers the opposite of frivolous, trained to handle harmony expertly and all active in music for strings as well as organs. Whether, as Telemann later reported of himself, Bach also took as models the widely circulating and nationally admired works of two other composers, Agostino Steffani or Johann Rosenmüller – learning italianate vocal music from the one and instrumental music from the other – one cannot say, unfortunately, though some Steffani does appear in one of his brother's albums. But whether known to Emanuel or not, a prime influence was also the local Thuringian composers, including Johann Michael Bach, Emanuel's grandfather. Whatever his or Pachelbel's influence on the composer of the 'Neumeister Chorales', a detail typical of J. S. Bach would be

the sheer originality of some of the final cadences, i.e. the one point in any piece of music that was by tradition the least original.

In some organ-chorales (BWV 737) and occasionally elsewhere, the harmony and part-writing are so assured that the player may well wonder whether they have been revised, though incompletely, with grammatical faults left uncorrected. For the moment, one must assume that over several years, from Lüneburg on, Bach had observed, imitated and mastered a range of traditional Lutheran ways of writing for voices. *Something* must have happened for any composer in his early twenties to create assured and at times touching works like the early Cantatas Nos. 106 and 131, both from about the time he was into his next job, at Mühlhausen. If, as seems likely, Bach had striven from his earliest composing to do better than the local or minor talents who could have appeared competitors, the list of them would continue over his lifetime. It would include Buttstedt and Hurlebusch for fugues, Daniel Vetter for chorales, Westhoff and J. G. Graun for violin music, Kauffmann and Walther for chorale-collections, Telemann and Stölzel and Graupner for cantatas, and later, his sons for certain *galant* (qv) chamber music. He cannot have been indifferent to local talents.

Although all the early works, choral or keyboard, tend towards short phrases that were traditional in music of central Germany, the simple symmetrical arrangement of choruses and arias in the Cantatas Nos. 106 and 131 give every appearance of being carefully planned. So do the marked changes of style and mood from one movement to another. If one feels Cantatas No. 150 or 131 to be more inventive at this organizational level than they are in their actual melodies and harmonies, Cantata No. 106 could be taken as a next stage in the composer's development. This stage would involve consciously creating new melodies and adventurous harmony, not to mention such careful planning as that in No. 106 when, towards halfway a most striking moment occurs: more than a whole bar of silence. This is after a regular fugue on 'Man, you must die' has dissolved *pianissimo* on a soprano sigh, 'Lord Jesu'. Perhaps there is a touch of rhetorical naïvety here, not out of style with Buxtehude's cantatas; but it is undeniably effective in drawing attention to the words, just like the sudden break decades later in the 'Lightning and Thunder' chorus of the St Matthew Passion, followed by the words 'Open the abyss, O Hell'.

Further influences, 1700–1715

Emanuel does not say, and perhaps did not know, whether his father was exceptional among young Thuringian organists when he said of him that:

> in organ-art [*in der Orgelkunst*] he took to himself the works of Bruhns, Reinken, Buxtehude and some good French organists as models [*Muster*]. (*Obituary*)

From the organ pieces in the recently found Weimar manuscript it is already clear that Bach studied a certain amount of Reinken and Buxtehude, though how much, and why Emanuel lists the names in this order, is less clear. (Was Bruhns included because of a famous tale told about him in Mattheson 1740?) That Bach was early on acquainted with certain French masters can be guessed from the contents of his brother's manuscripts, though not exactly what or when. In any event, none of these German and French composers could be considered true 'models' beyond a certain point.

The brother's manuscript albums (p. 42) do suggest the named German composers to have featured in Sebastian's studies, and it is a fair assumption that he brought some of their music back to Thuringia himself. So little music was published and so much circulated regularly in manuscript among organists that Christoph's albums could well be typical. A further question is why Emanuel does not list more of the names that appear in those albums. Did he not know them, or had his father not spoken of them, or were the composers (especially non-German) largely forgotten by 1750? The obituary of G. H. Stölzel not only lists Italian composers that he, Stölzel, made a point of trying to hear, such as Vivaldi and Antonio Biffi in Venice, but recounts far more extensive travels than Bach's. On the other hand Stölzel does not mention native German composers as distinguished as Buxtehude.

But as was appropriate for the Obituary's hero-composer, the names of the three *Favoriten* that Emanuel gives here and later were all strong *Fugisten*, as he said himself when asked to make a longer list (see below). This probably meant good contrapuntists such as one rarely found among foreign contemporaries. And furthermore, the names Emanuel gives all appeared prominently in other German writings of the mid- and late eighteenth century, as many others in Christoph's albums did not. Certainly by the time the Obituary authors heard Bach speak of composers he admired, these names had a higher reputation than such local composers as Kuhnau, whom he had evidently imitated before Emanuel was born. Bruhns's music was the least well known of Emanuel's three composers, and there seems never to have been very much of it. Nor at this point is there any mention of Böhm. In short, the Obituary's names were selective, none was local, and together they convey only a partial impression of the young Bach's range of studies in 'organ-art'. Neither here nor elsewhere does the Obituary give more than hints about what he had been

learning from other kinds of music, whether in Lüneburg (only French instrumental music?), Lübeck (choral?) or Hamburg (vocal?).

There are good reasons for thinking that young musicians in Protestant Germany developed the technique of learning-by-observation more systematically than those anywhere else. So the young Handel had been shown by his teacher Zachow 'the different styles of different nations' from 'a large collection of Italian as well as German music' (Mainwaring 1760, p. 14); and Telemann spoke several times of trying his hand at all kinds and genres of music. In Bach's early keyboard music his ability to observe, study and develop imaginatively is becoming clear, and over a wider front than contemporary organists in other countries. The range of musical styles in the Capriccio in B flat, BWV 992, or the new ways to embellish themes in the *Aria variata*, BWV 989, the frenchified movements in the Kuhnau-like Sonata in D, BWV 963, or the early organ praeludia like those of northern organists: this is a range hard to match in anyone else's known keyboard music of the time.

The early Cantatas Nos. 150 and 106, in which already a gift for melody transforms traditional types of movement, raise a slightly different question: how strong an influence on any young composer were the better composers like Buxtehude? More than the local musicians of Thuringia? Extant works leave no easy answer to this question, and historians of the past may not have been right to assume that (by definition) the better composers were the most influential. Cantata No. 150's exploration of the chaconne and of a particular harmonic device (the chromatic fourth, qv) shows Bach to be perfectly in control of widespread current conventions, and there were other Thuringian composers also capable of exploring them. Cantata No. 106's working title *Actus tragicus* is not the only detail it shares with a Telemann cantata of *c.* 1700, the *Trauer-Actus*, TWV 1:38. Although Telemann's is simpler and his sense of melody inferior, its contents (a biblical text, a hymn) and scoring (with viols and recorders) lead one to suppose that Bach was acquainted with it. More than acquainted, perhaps – he was actually vying with it, as generally with older music he knew.

In the case of Cantata No. 71, assumed like Cantata No. 106 to be a post-Arnstadt work, its layout in block choruses of woodwind, brass, strings and choir could certainly have been prompted by the polychoral (qv) performances of Buxtehude, whether or not Bach had heard something of the kind in the Marienkirche, Lübeck. (That church still has its separate minstrel galleries high above the nave, encouraging a musical stereophony as if from the heavens.) But it is just as likely to have been inspired by more local and

modest practices going back a century or more: even the modest church in Arnstadt had tiny side-galleries in which a musician or two could have been placed when required. One could view the visit to hear Buxtehude as resulting from a desire to see and hear a grander version of the very kinds of music with stereophonic sound effects that he may already have been familiar with in Arnstadt. And Cantata No. 71 shows other signs that the young Bach was alert to musical developments. (Publishing a score, as for this cantata, was a telling way of showing this.) Not only is the fourth movement of Cantata No. 71 the composer's first-known essay in the aria form ABA, but the sixth movement is imaginatively scored (cello above bassoon), the vocal writing is very practical and throughout one hears a freshness of sound more pronounced (in my view) than it is in the keyboard music of his early periods.

From various sources, including the copies made by his brother, it seems that the French *organistes* (meaning also harpsichordists) with some of whose work J. S. Bach became familiar before his late twenties include Raison, d'Anglebert, Boyvin, Dieupart (six suites copied during the Weimar years), du Mage, de Grigny and Marchand. Exactly when and how much in most cases is less certain. The copy Bach made of de Grigny has been dated *c.* 1709–12 (NBA IX/2, p. 38) and represents some investment of time. But did he know Raison's *Premier Livre* of 1688 while still at Arnstadt, a book whose two unusual and quite different ostinato movements surely gave him the fugue subject and probably the rest of the theme of the unique organ Passacaglia? The point of the Obituary's remark above could be to emphasize that the repertory dominating Bach, the young professional organist, was north German Protestant and that the French (and Italian) styles familiar from various keyboard albums copied at the time were less suitable for church music. By saying 'French organists' rather than 'French composers' Emanuel is distinguishing their work from more recent French music he would respect less – music of the 1740s, secular or liturgical, for chamber or theatre. Hence perhaps, in a letter to Forkel (Dok. III, p. 288) Emanuel specified that the 'good Frenchmen' were 'old'.

Often in Bach scholarship, when a name is absent from the extant documentation, insufficient attention has been given to it. Two great foreign masters, Couperin and Rameau, came to wield a potentially wide influence through much of the half century between the Arnstadt years and the Obituary, but direct evidence of Bach's involvement in their music in his maturity is scant and to this day not explored sufficiently. But whether Emanuel realized it or not, elements ultimately in the French style (such as the subtle broken textures of d'Anglebert, Dieupart and Marchand) lie

behind various earlier pieces buried in the miscellaneous early or doubtful works of the young Bach, such as the Kuhnau-like Sonata in D major and the harpsichord Toccata in D major. The more or less alternating themes in this sonata's first movement are not so different in principle from those of Italian concertos of the time. Meanwhile, the toccata's sections take up Bach's earlier interest in working a simple motif as far as it will go and introducing a surprise at some point. Similarly, such works as the *Aria variata* have few details not found in the work of predecessors, but there is now a newer harmonic tension beginning to provide more interest.

In the letter of 1775 to Forkel, Emanuel names not a single one of the 'old, good Frenchmen' he said had been 'loved and studied' by his father, despite citing in one sentence nine Germans:

> Froberger, Kerll, Pachelbel, J. K. F. Fischer, N. A. Strunck, Buxtehude, Reinken, Bruhns and Böhm. (Dok. III, p. 288)

Again, the emphasis is on keyboard music and fugue-writing, and only two composers in the list (including the anonymous French) were also prominent in choral music, one or two of them in instrumental. A striking omission is Kuhnau of Leipzig who, though hardly in the same class as those listed, was certainly an influence on J. S. Bach in at least three connections: in the composing of one major early work, in the wording of the title-page to the WTC (see p. 234), and in superficial ways still in the Six Partitas for Harpsichord (see p. 316).

The focus on Germany and its keyboard-players is rather of a piece with the Obituary's patriotic agenda and with other writings of its time, such as Marpurg's anti-Italian remarks in 1749, at a time when indeed French and Italian music were not what they had been. It could well be true that Emanuel's father and uncle did admire those nine German composers. But a similar if shorter list of 'famous men' had been recently published in a book of 1752 by Emanuel's colleague Joachim Quantz, who perhaps had seen a draft of the Obituary. (Or the process was vice versa.) In Quantz's view these composers had developed the art of organ-playing beyond the Netherlanders, by which he probably meant Sweelinck, though Reinken too came from the Netherlands (Deventer); and the art culminated, of course, in the work of J. S. Bach. There is a similar message in Emanuel's own treatise, the *Versuch*, either in response to Quantz's book or in order to re-affirm it.

Most notably, Emanuel does mention one non-German organist by name, the long-dead Frescobaldi, some of whose music had probably penetrated to Thuringia well before Bach acquired a copy of *Fiori musicali*

(dating it 1714) and who had long had a profound influence on other German composers, especially Froberger and Buxtehude. If Emanuel was acquainted with his father's copy of *Fiori musicali* there would have been good reason to mention him in a letter of 1775. Or perhaps he had heard him speak of Frescobaldi over the years. But what then about other Italians important to his father's development? Perhaps Corelli and Albinoni are not mentioned because they were forgotten in Germany by *c.* 1750, or because Emanuel knew few if any of the early works of his father that had made use of their music. Besides, some of the manuscript copies of works based on earlier music did not say in the title who the original composer was.[2] Emanuel does not mention Vivaldi either, although sudden acquaintance in Weimar with some of Vivaldi's concertos, including those from *L'estro armonico*, could well have changed his father's life forever. This needs looking at further below.

It is possible that in omitting Kuhnau, Vivaldi and so many others as major influences on his father, Emanuel was speaking for his generation as one that no longer admired them – or, more importantly, no longer admired the way earlier composers used older themes or ideas on which to build their own compositions. That such habits had once been totally normal for young organists in central Germany was a further reason for the newer generation to undervalue them. (Those habits Handel had no reason to abandon when he wrote for English audiences.) It is equally possible that by *c.* 1800, Forkel, who was a careful, objective historian, wanted to 'put the record straight' in his book and accordingly made so much of Vivaldi's influence on Bach and especially on the shape of his concerto movements. By contrast, he is unlikely to have sensed how influential the literate, confident but unpretentious counterpoint of Pachelbel had been, one giving Bach among many others a thin model on which to graft his thick fugue-writing, in WTC1 and beyond.

It remains difficult , however, to understand how the young Bach came to produce such a stunningly original but unpretentious little masterpiece as the little E minor Praeludium for organ, BWV 533. Its strong, stirring, short-breathed harmony owes little to any other music dating to the first few years of the eighteenth century, German, French or Italian. Evidently, Bach was already working out his own way of producing unfailingly

[2] Whether Bach drew on Corelli for the Allabreve, BWV 589, or Frescobaldi for the Canzona, BWV 588, or Raison for the Passacaglia theme, the sources do not say. But not every extant version of the Fugue, BWV 574, names Lengrenzi, which is an unreliable attribution. So is that to Torelli in the transcribed Concerto, BWV 979 (actually Vivaldi).

melodious music on a succinct, even miniature scale, and with a sure touch of timing, modulation and sonority. Such a work may not have circulated or existed in a single version, but still avoids all trifling and idling to achieve something serious. The Obituary's phrase 'serious and profound music' applies as much to such an early miniature as to the mature Passions.

The visit to Buxtehude, and the 'Arnstadt Chorales'

Concerning autumn 1705, the Obituary continues:

> At a certain moment here in Arnstadt he had so strong an urge to hear as many good organists as he could that he set out for Lübeck, actually on foot, in order to hear the famous organist of St Mary's, Dietrich Buxtehude. He stayed there not without benefit for almost a quarter of a year, and then turned back to Arnstadt.

Bach was a little older than Handel when he ventured north to Lübeck (farther away than Handel's Hamburg), where according to the Obituary, his interest lay in 'good organists'. So Lübeck rather than cosmopolitan, opera-loving Hamburg? Whether Emanuel was right to emphasize this organ focus, however, is debatable, since he cannot have known much about it half a century later. To speak of 'good organists' is to exclude the several opera composers, whether these words were Emanuel's or his father's.

As further testimony to the initiative of a young, self-taught master and self-aware artist, the words 'so strong an urge' convey his sentiments, even perhaps his words. 'At a certain moment' also raises the image of an impatient musician who found his first appointment a little too constricting: he was twenty years old and apparently as keen to enlarge his musical experience as thirty years later he was to record his musical genealogy. Curiously, although the Obituary writes of 'many good organists' in its picture of a young man anxious to learn, only the same Buxtehude, Reinken and Bruhns are mentioned by it, and the reader is left to wonder whether there had been others. 'Good organists' would also include those church musicians experienced and successful as choral composers, though again the Obituary does not say so.

Emanuel probably knew little of the trouble Bach found himself in with the Arnstadt authorities when he returned, and yet there is already a sense here of the artist disregarding whatever stood in the way of his art. Setting out to walk far in order to increase one's learning (the Wandering Scholar)

was not something despised in mid-eighteenth-century Germany. Moreover, the very phrase 'on foot' for a journey of some 400 km contrasted sharply (and deliberately?) with Mattheson's picture of the warm reception given to himself and to Handel at Lübeck in 1703 (1740, p. 94). Surely this was another touch of pathos in the Obituary's very different picture of Bach's efforts to improve himself, a detail owed to the composer himself? Father and son also knew that by *c.* 1705 the cities of Hamburg and Lübeck had become familiar to other musicians from their homeland, including Telemann (from Leipzig), Graupner (Leipzig), J. C. Schieferdecker (Weissenfels) and, as noted already, another Christoph Bach (the one described in the genealogy as fond of travelling), as well as Handel.

Some readers, however, might have wondered why Bach had not gone earlier to study with Buxtehude or even with Pachelbel, his brother's teacher and sister's godfather. But Pachelbel, in the preface to his recent harpsichord suites *Hexachordum Apollinis* (1699), had mentioned Buxtehude as a teacher for his own son Wilhelm, aged thirteen, as Emanuel may have known. In any case, Buxtehude seems to have been persistently revered. As for Bach, although it was not unknown for the young, salaried organist of a modest town to acquaint himself with the best in his profession, nor was it entirely commonplace either, and his absence from Arnstadt, prolonged and unsanctioned, raises the question whether he was taking the initiative to look for an important job, including the ageing Buxtehude's own (see above, pp. 54f.). Had the twenty-year-old got to know of the impending vacancy in Lübeck, being informed, not for the only time in his life, by contacts who cannot now be identified?

Lübeck, though half the size of Hamburg, was strong in church music and organ-playing, and it is particularly unfortunate that virtually nothing is known of the actual contact Bach had with Buxtehude. Whether it was anything more than casual or intermittent, such as some formal instruction, perhaps even as a paying guest in the master's house, some temporary assistance in the running of a major church's music, etc., the Obituary does not say. Emanuel might not have known exactly how his father stood to Buxtehude and had no wish to give the impression either that he was still a mere pupil-assistant or that at this period he had been trying for jobs in Lübeck or elsewhere without success. It is just possible that the Obituary's phrase 'not without benefit' disguises an original aim to succeed Buxtehude that Bach had originally had. Although he did not have an offer (being too young?), he nevertheless acquired a deepening knowledge of composition and performance through an acknowledged master and his activities. Or so one can suppose.

Justifiably, the Arnstadt consistory court summoned Bach in February 1706 to explain why he had been absent for nearly four times the month the superintendent had originally allowed him, for a study-trip 'to understand one thing or another in his art' (Dok. II, p. 19). If, in October or November 1705, he really had set out on foot from Arnstadt, he could not possibly have journeyed to Lübeck, undertaken serious or formal studies and journeyed back within a month. Nor would he have been able to hear all of Buxtehude's mixed sacred concerts during Advent, the *Abendmusiken* (qv) ('Evening Musics'), which, assuming the series did take place in 1705, surely became part of the point once he got there, even if he had set out initially unaware of them. Special music performed in Lübeck during December 1705 to mark the death of Emperor Leopold I and succession of Joseph I was also worth waiting for.

Bach's reply to the consistory court, that he had made provision for a substitute and could not be criticized on these grounds, reads defensively, for he must have known that such leave of absence had been generously given and was not a right specified in his contract. In finding a substitute to play in his absence, as he had done, did he not already suppose (or soon learn) that a month was not enough? One can only speculate what then happened after Buxtehude's 'evening musics' ended before Christmas, several weeks before Bach returned to Arnstadt: were there lessons, organ-playing, chamber concerts, participation in St Mary's?

Not the least interesting word in his explanation to the authorities was the wish to improve his 'art' (*Kunst*), the new shibboleth justifying, even for a twenty-year-old, the breaking of serious rules such as absence without leave. But the court must have wished that his *Kunst* had been improved in the way they wanted it to be, for it went on to reprimand him further, complaining that

> until now [about 2 February 1706] he had been making many odd variations [*wunderliche variationes*] in the hymns, mixing up in them many strange keys [*Thone*] so that the congregation has become confused by it. In future, if he wants to bring in a wandering key [*tonum peregrinum*], he must stay with it and not turn conspicuously to something else too quickly or, as he has so far been used to doing, even playing in some opposing key [*tonum contrarium*]. (Dok. II, p. 20)

Obviously the clerk and/or the non-musicians present had some inkling of the technical terms but were not getting them quite right. *Tonus peregrinus* cannot mean the familiar and so-named modal melody to which the Magnificat was often sung, rather that the music 'wanders' through keys with gratuitous modulation, unexpected chromaticisms or

false relations (qv). *Tonum contrarium* is not a regular musical term but implied something obvious to parishioners: it was 'a wrong key'. Even *variationes* is not quite clear: what was he interfering with, the melody, the harmony, or even the form of the chorales? Despite such uncertainties, however, the main lines of the complaint are clear enough: a young organist was wilfully or in some other way annoying the clergy and people with over-adventurous harmonies not suitable for the participating congregation of an ordinary parish church, and they knew enough to be able to say they did not like it.

The double adverbs 'until now' or 'so far' (*bißher)* suggest that Bach had been offending in this way before he ever went to Lübeck. It is quite possible that certain extant chorale-settings and harmonizations attributed to him and sometimes called (conjecturally) the 'Arnstadt Chorales' do represent the kind of gratuitous chromaticism and runaway interludes between the hymn's lines that were common in some Protestant countries. These interline interludes were, and had originated, to enable a clerk or *Küster* to read out the next line of the hymn for those who could not read or memorize, but this custom has not yet been established as usual in Arnstadt. In a book of 1742 by J. C. Voigt, the interludes were said not only to delight listeners but to enable them to take a breath, for it looks as if hymns were sung much more slowly, and also with many more verses, than is usually acceptable today. As literacy levels rose (so one assumes) or as hymns were gradually being sung faster, these little interludes must have become less and less necessary.

The extant sources of the so-called 'Arnstadt Chorales' (BWV 715, etc.) give no hint of Arnstadt, are likely to be only a few examples of a once larger group, and are in any case not 'authentic' in any straightforward way. But the treatment may well have been familiar in and around Erfurt through its composers Buttstedt, Kaufmann and J. P. Kellner, and some variety introduced by a young, self-assertive organist like Bach was not unreasonable, up to a point. This would be so especially if in his extant examples he had been making written suggestions for organ-students, his own or anybody else's. Even today, many organists find interfering with basic harmonies, particularly in the final verse of today's much shorter hymns, irresistible.

No doubt hymn-playing was never free of abuse, but there is a further, more positive point. In principle, to use wandering keys and/or unexpected harmonies was at the time a standard means of responding to a text, part of the expressive harmonic vocabulary of the German organist employed to arouse the feelings of believers. It was not necessarily idle vanity.

In cantatas, such effects are often interpreted now as having theological meaning and are respected because of it. Words of penitence in a hymn, for example, might draw from the organist a descending chromatic line (something easy to introduce against almost any melody), while words of hope might be sung to an ascending chromatic line (not quite so easy but still practical). Such treatment could be found in any church music being 'coloured' to fit the text, not only organ-chorales and the earlier cantatas of Bach or other composers but much later still in the 'colouring' of the chorales in the two big Passions.

There is another point here: many of Bach's much later chorale-settings for organ were just as well open to the same kind of complaint as that brought by the Arnstadt people. Even certain *Orgelbüchlein* chorales ten years later would have startled an ordinary parish-church congregation, in the very sophistication of their unusual harmony. Congregations must often have been unclear what exactly the tune was that they were expected to sing after the prelude. Note, however, that in many *Orgelbüchlein* settings, the very first note of the hymn-tune is heard alone, a rather unusual detail. Was Bach compensating for the expressive but complex harmony to follow by giving the first note for the congregation to pick up on? For members of the court congregation in Weimar this was easier, one imagines, than for a parish-church congregation.

At Arnstadt, the young man certainly had a lot of explaining to do, even if it cannot be known from the consistory minutes how acerbic his manner actually was. No doubt some spirit within him had been strengthened by his contact with Buxtehude, for young performers are often known to return from a great teacher with heightened self-confidence. His deeply creative interest in harmony and counterpoint went beyond what was required of their organist by Thuringian parishioners, and one would like to know how and which contrapuntal techniques he had learnt on his travels, and whether this happened by chance or design. In February 1706, there was another complaint:

> so far Bach had played somewhat too long, but after notice of this was given him by the Superintendent, he had immediately fallen into the other extreme and had made it too short. (Dok. II, p. 20)

Since the complaint was made by his choir-prefect Rambach, a student some years older and whose ensemble-directing Bach had apparently criticized, clearly there were bad relations between them and they were unable to sort them out in private. Had the choir-prefect politely remonstrated about the length of the preludes and met with aggression and

territorial self-defence from the organist? Or was this a diversionary ploy by Rambach, since on the same occasion he was punished with detention for going off during a sermon to visit a bar (*Weinkeller*)?

'Too long' and 'too short' must apply to the preludes or interludes being played, but preludes to what exactly is not specified: was it to the service as a whole (opening voluntary), to the ensemble music (when instrumentalists customarily tuned up) or, most likely, to the congregation's hymns? If the prefect Rambach is referring to the interludes played between either the separate lines or the separate verses of a hymn, it is conceivable that the fault was lying there. (And this is to assume the hymns were actually accompanied by organ.) Abuses of either kind of interlude, between lines or between verses, are easy to imagine and indeed are documented in other Protestant countries during the early eighteenth century. By then, even in great churches, the old practice of organs playing alternately (*alternatim*) in hymns, metrical psalms and canticles – verses for organ in alternation with the sung verses – was dying out in this part of Germany.

A long-standing quarrel of Bach's thirty years later in Leipzig also concerned his bad relations with a choir-prefect, though in neither that case nor this is it clear whether the reason was personal (some incompatibility), professional (the prefects were not good enough) or territorial (prefects were not of his choosing, as they should be). Whichever it was, it would have been exacerbated by any natural contrariness in Bach's character, such as is all too evident in the present incident: first he played too long, then too short.

Lübeck, the cantatas, Passacaglia and other works

Two and a half years earlier than Bach is known to have done, the young Handel had visited Buxtehude and Lübeck twice, both times partly in connection with organs. There is no report that Handel received any instruction from Buxtehude or Reinken. On the contrary, it was shortly afterwards that he withdrew from his first organist's post in Halle, and by January 1705 the nineteen-year-old's first opera was being performed in Hamburg. There were some twenty performances of this before the end of February, according to Mattheson (1740, pp. 90–5), and Handel apparently remained in Hamburg until well after Bach had left Lübeck. How revealing it would be if Bach had bypassed Hamburg, Handel and the opera, and how tantalizing that we do not know whether he did or not!

Since there is also no record of what Bach heard or played or learnt in Lübeck, what exactly the visit of 1705–6 contributed to his maturing grasp of musical language and form has to be conjectured. On one hand, some of the works by north German composers copied in his brother Christoph's keyboard albums (mostly not organ music) might have been eagerly picked up in Lübeck and brought back to Thuringia; on the other, personal visits were not necessary for such copies to be made and to circulate, as the many French pieces in these same albums testify. Nor does one know whether Buxtehude, in his evening concerts in the Lübeck Marienkirche, was himself still playing, much less still composing, the long chorale-fantasias for which he is known. The 229 bars of his setting of 'Nun freut euch', BuxWV 210, might still have been suitable enough for such concerts though composed decades earlier, along with other long fantasias now lost. As far as extant sources show, and except when he played *ex tempore* in Hamburg many years later, Bach never imitated these sectional chorale-fantasias of the northerners to their full, cumulative length. The reason could be partly functional, partly musical: in Thuringia, there was less if any tradition for them, and most churches were more homely than the Marienkirche, Lübeck; and for Bach, the challenge seems to have been to create not sectional but integrated fantasias, less expansive but shaped as one whole. These reach their apogee in his maturity, in *Clavierübung III* and the 'Leipzig Chorales'.

There is also no record, likely though it is, that Bach heard any of the quasi-operas based on New Testament stories that were fashionable in Lübeck and Hamburg, composed 'in the operatic manner with many arias and ritornelli' (instrumental interludes), as one of them, *Himmlische Seelenlust* 1684, described itself. That Buxtehude's musical productions in the Marienkirche had five 'acts' spread over the five Sundays in which the evening concerts were heard is significant in two particular respects, whether or not Bach took part in them: here could lie the explanation why he extended his stay in Lübeck (which would say much about his priorities), and here was one of several precedents in Lutheran Germany for his six-act Christmas Oratorio thirty years later. There was an additional attraction to such unique concerts: no young man with musical gifts would have been indifferent to Buxtehude's pleasing harmony, charming melody and clever counterpoint, all familiar in his music for voices or instruments and in the keyboard music for church or for home. One sees why Bach would wish to make the effort to hear Buxtehude rather than other German contemporaries, including the active theatre composers.

Such qualities must have been particularly evident in Buxtehude's Lübeck church concerts, whose scope, planning and standards of performance were renowned. Of the two choral pieces by Buxtehude known to have been performed in December 1705 (cantatas BuxWV 134 and 135), the latter had a violin or string ensemble of twenty-five, probably the biggest group of instrumentalists that Bach would have ever heard so far. Had the music (now lost) conformed to Buxtehude's usual style, it was offering examples of how to construct cantatas from many sections, each in a marked style (a prelude for strings, a short solo or duet for voices, interjections for the choir, etc.); each section was sensitive to the conventions of the day (certain keys for certain effects, etc.); and each is sustained by an easy harmonic style reminiscent of Carissimi and other Italians of a generation now being forgotten by the new opera composers.

Bach's response to Buxtehude's big organ works, the multi-section praeludia, takes a curiously similar form to the way younger Italian violin composers *c.* 1700 responded to their predecessors' sonatas: by developing the usual shortish sections towards the longer, self-contained, fully fledged movements of the standard sonata as established early in the eighteenth century. An equivalent in organ music would be to explore themes of each section so as to create spacious movements that stood on their own and formed spacious wholes. Examples are the Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C major, BWV 564, and the Praeludium in D major, BWV 532. Sustained length was clearly of great interest to Bach. Fugues (and even their themes) become fully organized in their key-plans, projecting a movement at length through several keys but always gravitating towards the tonic. The final result is a spaciousness unknown to earlier composers, even those as gifted as Nicolaus Bruhns.

A similar interest in developing short, colourful sections towards more sustained movements is clear too in cantatas presumably composed while the memory of Lübeck was still fresh, such as Cantata No. 106, in which, among other details, the opening Sonatina with gambas serves almost as a salute to Buxtehude. Individual moments in the earlier cantatas keep many of the same conventions as earlier music when it comes to setting particular words, such as the word 'waiting' in BWV 131.iv set to a long note. Rhetorical pauses are strikingly effective not only in early toccatas or cantatas but are also something one might find in instrumental or vocal music of a later period, for example the pause at *nichts* ('nothing') in the later Leipzig motet 'Jesu meine Freude'. Like the keyboard music, the cantatas explore distinctive styles, such as the French subject in BWV 106.ii; also time-honoured themes, such as descending chromatic fourths

in BWV 150.ii and certain keyboard conventions of the time, such as a *bicinium* (qv) bass in BWV 150.v and a coupling of a prelude with a fugue in BWV 131.v. Word-setting might be found 'expressive' to modern tastes, but the compositional techniques themselves are riddled with allusions to older keyboard music and its conventions.

Other possible ties between the first cantatas and their composer's knowledge of Buxtehude are suggested below in connection with the Mühlhausen Cantata No. 71. Original and characteristic swerves away from convention in the harmony or melody do not yet, I think, lead to original and characteristic settings of the texts: the themes and 'melodic cells' created for setting the words still belong to a narrow repertory. It could be significant that to later listeners, the most affecting moments might well be the instrumental openings to Cantatas Nos. 106 and 196. In both cases these date from a year or two following the Lübeck visit, and neither of them recycles themes that were conventionally associated with particular word-setting.

For a young composer, the distinctive personality and light touch of Buxtehude's cantatas were inspiring, as they were in his organ-settings. No home-grown Thuringian composer often if ever went beyond conventional formulae to create out of the old hymn-tunes such winsome melodies as Buxtehude did in his choral and organ music, weaving them around with ornamental gestures typical of sophisticated techniques of paraphrased melodies. Perhaps Bach was particularly taken with Buxtehude's ostinati from hearing them in performance – including some in lost choral works? – and perhaps he brought examples of them back with him for his brother to copy and for himself to play. (It is as well that he or someone did: these copies of the Buxtehude passacaglias are unique survivals.) It looks very much as if some years after the Lübeck visit Bach responded both to these pieces by Buxtehude and to Pachelbel's Chaconne in D minor by working on his own Passacaglia in C minor for Organ, BWV 582, and doing so beyond any possible model. Nevertheless, many of the motifs he is playing with in his Passacaglia are very like Pachelbel's, whether or not he had already composed the fugue that goes with it (see below).

Alas, to be able to follow the composer's step-by-step search for sustained length, something devoutly to be wished for, cannot be done through his surviving music. This is a matter for huge regret. For even if the Passacaglia's theme is owed in part or whole to André Raison's *Livre d'orgue* (1688), and even if it is typical of a neophyte composer's work based on material gathered from elsewhere, in fact the piece turns out to be a sole masterpiece: more sustained, organized and thorough than any

possible models, German, French or Italian. It is a most significant work, offering an insight into one of the composer's main characteristics: willingness to accept a challenge, in this case not only of a large-scale ostinato but of a genre that is by tradition a dance. (Had he read Raison's preface, which mentions among other dances the *Passacaille et Chacone* as needing to be somewhat slower on the organ, *à cause de la Sainteté du Lieu*?) Not only does Bach take farther the familiar keyboard patterns, not only is this a continuous and rounded work conceived on a grand scale, but all is done by means of a theme that 'collapses' every eight bars with a perfect cadence (qv). This idea is as dangerous as the endless short phrases in the 'Goldberg Variations' (see p. 403), but in neither case is the listener disturbed or even aware of the danger. This alone is a major achievement.
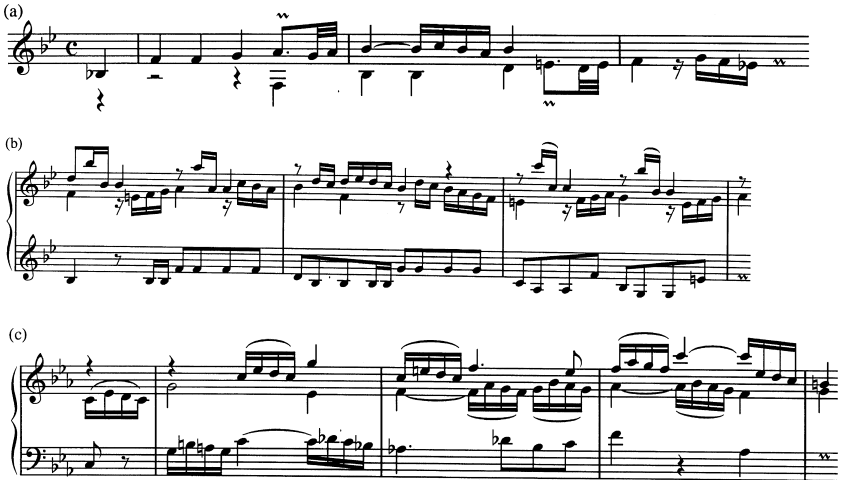
The Passacaglia deserves particular attention for many reasons but especially for what it suggests about the composer's growing control of form. The waves as tension rises and falls, and the moving towards a final climax worthy of many a Romantic symphony, are most unusual for the time, though familiar enough now from later works. Quite why the Fugue uses only Raison's four bars and never the whole Passacaglia theme of eight, which it could do, is puzzling. Was it because a long subject would break the *drive* of the piece, which the double subject actually reinforces? Or was it because the work began as a 'Fugue on a Theme of Raison' to which the Passacaglia with its longer theme was then added? Whatever the answer, the complementary pairing of a substantial passacaglia and substantial fugue, each a fully developed example of its type, shows a sure instinct for planning. Even the tension is built up differently: in the Passacaglia by becoming fuller and fuller, in the Fugue by its subject re-appearing after longer and longer gaps.

Buxtehude's ostinati are not the only pieces to which this work could be responding; another recently published was the *Giacona* in Johann Krieger's *Clavierübung* of 1699, with a theme as long as Bach's, and more than two dozen variations. But Krieger's work lacks both the crucial pedal ostinato phrases and, more importantly, the Fugue that follows, an integral part of the whole.[3] Bach's Fugue alone, at unheard-of length, explores its three themes with venerable permutation techniques (qv) and its climax one could call inexorable. All this is achieved moreover by a musical language common and unexceptional at the time beyond its mastery.

[3] The oldest extant copy (Andreas Bach Book) passes to the Fugue without a break, and no source authoritatively suggests otherwise. Furthermore, the Passacaglia proper ends on a weak beat with the third on top, implying *attaca senza pausa.*

Nowhere else could Bach have learnt much of this, only from his own musicianship. Though in the early cantatas he mastered equally the way to write for a choir, he had not yet created there a comparably unified and sustained structure. Were organ music in the centuries after 1750 to have retained the prestige it had when Bach was young, the Passacaglia's achievement as a structure conceived by a composer probably in his mid-twenties, drawing on precedents but at a stroke far exceeding them, would be more widely recognized by later music historians than it generally is.

Length and versatility appear to have been common aims. Length was a spur to creative thinking in both the young Handel and young Bach, even in suite-dances that had usually been compact, and length is something that should not be underestimated. It is typical of the thoroughness already demonstrated, more naïvely, in works of Bach earlier than the Passacaglia and already clear in the very early Fantasia, BWV 1121. (Here, in a mere fifty-four bars there are nearly twenty distinct melodic motifs.) Versatility, personified by Buxtehude, must have been something the young composer admired, studied and emulated, despite a certain stiffness of rhythm one feels in his early counterpoint. This raises other technical questions, such as did Bach learn to write tonal answers (qv) in fugues, as in Example 3(a), purely from observing what older composers did? And are the collisions and awkwardnesses at certain moments, and especially in certain earlier music (see Examples 3(b) and 3(c)), a result of writing in the old tablature,
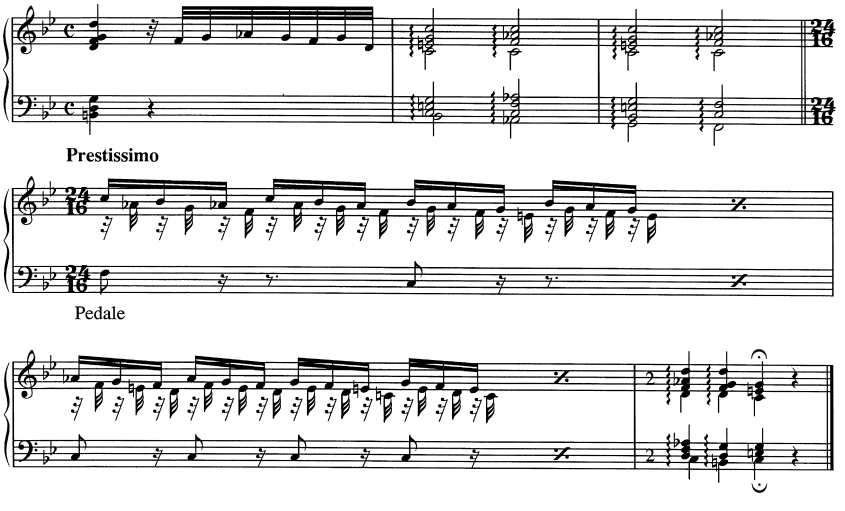


Example 3 (a) Organ-chorale, BWV 736, opening; (b) Capriccio, BWV 992.vi, b. 27; (c) Passacaglia, BWV 582, b. 104

where infelicities are less obvious than in staff notation? Both Examples 3(b) and 3(c) are trickier to play than three parts need be.

While it is reasonable to suppose the composer well acquainted with the 'North German Organ School' by the time of writing the long, recently discovered organ-chorale, BWV 1128 ('Wo Gott der Herr nicht bei uns halt'), one can sense in it a growing confidence, confirmed in his next position as organist, at Mühlhausen. But this confidence still does not quite produce an effortless *melos* (qv) such as was to be found in the *Orgelbüchlein* a few years later, and the way BWV 1128 proceeds verges on the arbitrary. Nevertheless, a rather 'northern' fantasia of this kind does leave the impression of a composer finding his own original manner without idly adopting the usual formulae. Its rediscovery prompts many such new ideas about Bach's development along with questions about unknown lost works.

Despite these early pieces still being sectional, there gradually appear the makings of an important characteristic: harmonic tension. Early works such as the Praeludium, BWV 921, and Fantasia, BWV 922, may be prosaic and dogmatic in their repetitions and formulae, but they do nevertheless have movement and do time their cadences carefully, as Example 4 suggests. The commonplace chromatic theme in BWV 922 will eventually lead to far more original conceptions, as in the opening melody of Cantata No. 3 (1725), where an inner descending chromatic fourth is subtly paraphrased as no one else had ever paraphrased it. Many another cantata movement takes up these traditional chromatics and uses them to produce



Example 4 Praeludium, BWV 921, final bars

an *Affekt* (qv) appropriate to the words being set, as for 'weeping, lamenting' in Cantata No. 12, but the opening of Cantata No. 3 is something quite different.

Finally, as for playing the hymns, any that Bach heard in Lübeck at the time of his visit were quite possibly not accompanied by the organ but only prefaced by an interesting and extensive prelude. This was another pressing duty for the organist, and a young man would want to try his hand at the same kind of thing. Bach was clearly familiar with the standard word-painting expected at those moments. But back in Arnstadt, what the good people of the New Church wanted was for their organist to play the hymn-tune in a straightforward manner, 'with the melody clear' (*thematicè*) as Pachelbel's contract at Erfurt implied, so that everyone present, congregation and choir, knew what and when to sing.

The Mühlhausen appointment

In 1707 he was called as organist to St Blasius, Mühlhausen. However, this town could not have the pleasure of keeping him long. (*Obituary*)

Since the chronology is porous and unlikely ever to be less so, works are often discussed here at more than one point in the biography. Only a few of Bach's activities are dated. Thus, on Advent Sunday, 1706, Bach was in the small town of Langewiesen, testing and (probably) inaugurating a new small two-manual organ, along with a senior colleague, Johann Kister of Gehren nearby. This was only two or three weeks after the most recent complaints against him at Arnstadt, which evidently, for whatever reason, did not injure his standing in the region as a young organ expert. A reasonable guess would be that he was now scanning the possibilities of a job elsewhere.

If Bach were not to be absent from his own church in Arnstadt on such an important Sunday as Advent I, he must have left immediately after the 8 a.m. service was over, covering the twenty-five miles to Langewiesen as best he could. The church 'inspector' present in Langewiesen was also from Gehren (Dok. II, p. 22), as originally was another Bach family, that of Maria Barbara. (Johann Kister, Bach's co-examiner, had succeeded her father Johann Michael as organist.) This marriage was less than a year after the Langewiesen organ-test, and less than three months after the move to Mühlhausen. Although nothing further is known about how Bach

came to be appointed an organ expert in Langewiesen and in what respect these various people and places were connected, connections there doubtless were. Effective networking, personal and professional, was operating.

Since the organ inauguration was only five months before Bach was arranging his audition in Mühlhausen, the Obituary's emphasis at this point on organ music and organ-playing seems quite justified. When he had gone to Lübeck in 1705 Buxtehude was nearing seventy years old, hence the possibility that Bach was visiting to look into the question of Buxtehude's successor at the Marienkirche, where there were not only outstanding organs (one of them with over fifty stops) but the organist had a major rôle in the musical life of a distinguished city. One is bound to wonder whether any such idea in Lübeck came to nothing for the same scurrilous reason Johann Mattheson gave as to why neither he nor Handel had wished to replace Buxtehude: neither of them could accept the 'marriage condition' (1740, 94) which was – to marry Buxtehude's eldest daughter, ten years older than they. In 1707, Buxtehude's eventual successor did indeed marry Anna Margarethe, as Buxtehude had married his predecessor Tunder's daughter and as Reinken in Hamburg had married his predecessor Scheidemann's.

There is no clear evidence early on whether the marriage condition in Lübeck was implicit or explicit, though by 4 May 1706 a church document is recording Buxtehude's wish for 'one of his daughters' to marry (Snyder 2007, p. 513). Apprentices or successors often did marry their master's daughter or widow, becoming in effect a 'partner taking joint control of the family business': in Lübeck, a tenured organistship ensured an income and legally entitled fees for a successor, and was not unlikely to produce a musical child who might become the next successor. Such marriage conditions could be rejected, as when, for a rector's (qv) position in 1740, Elias Bach, Sebastian's secretary at the time, declined his predecessor's widow (Odrich 2005, p. 135). But they had the further advantage of freeing church and council from providing for a deceased organist's family beyond a statutory period. This must have been a useful consideration earlier in Lübeck and no doubt elsewhere at that time of commercial depression (see Edler 1982, pp. 73, 80). Nevertheless, why Mattheson, Handel and Bach all declined the Lübeck job because of the marriage clause, if they did, one can only guess.

Meanwhile, in December 1706 in the historic town of Mühlhausen, the organist of St Blasius ('Divi Blasii') died, and by the following April, on Easter Sunday, Bach was auditioning for the position, probably having again been informed or encouraged by local contacts. He must have had

competitors, for he returned to Arnstadt before his name was put forward a month later. This was confirmed in mid-June, and his dismissal from Arnstadt was granted in July. Why at Arnstadt his first cousin Johann Ernst was not installed as successor until after another thirteen months is not recorded, nor what Sebastian's part was in his appointment. But since he was succeeded also in his next job by a relative (Johann Friedrich, see below), some kind of family involvement can be supposed: once again, a networking among the organists of Thuringia.

Mühlhausen had many connections with Hamburg, personal, commercial and probably musical, and its potential must have seemed superior to Arnstadt's. A major town, it had a proud position in local Reformation history and boasted over a dozen churches, including the two big gothic structures of the Marienkirche and the Blasiikirche. By Bach's time it was marked by strife of various kinds and by a factiousness between the churches, orthodox versus Pietists, the latter of whom were likely to prefer simpler music. Although Forkel, guessing or passing on something Emanuel had told him, said that about this time Bach received several offers (1802, p. 6) – a hidden reference to the Lübeck situation? – the only certain event is testing the modest organ at Langewiesen. Perhaps for some time Bach had been searching for broader prospects than Arnstadt gave him, but without startling success; either this or Forkel had some inkling of the Problem of Buxtehude's Daughter.

The previous organists at Mühlhausen, J. G. Ahle and before him his father, were distinguished citizens of the town as well as significant musicians in their own right.[4] Since Bach's new salary was higher by more than 30 per cent (usually, his predecessors had other employment too), what he could offer the church and town must have been recognized by the authorities. The Ahles, both of whom published as much if not more than Bach was ever to do, had helped create and draw attention to the kind of activities in a town to which their young organist-successor must have been attracted. Their half-dozen theory-books, though having little direct bearing on Bach's organ and choral music, contributed to the musical output of a region that included at least two other towns with influential musicians: Erfurt (with Buttstedt, and before him Pachelbel) and Halberstadt (with Werckmeister, who was closely acquainted with Ahle). So at this period, well before his move east into Saxony, Bach was operating

[4] In his *Geistliche Arien* (Mühlhausen, 1662), J. R. Ahle had published the well-known melody (complete with rising augmented fourth) to the chorale 'Es ist genug', reharmonized at the end of the cantata BWV 60 (see Example 24 on p. 471).

in an active province with its own musical functions and characteristics. That his project for the organ in Mühlhausen (see below, p. 97) seems to draw on Werckmeister's 1698 book for organ-examiners can be considered a sign of immersion in this 'active musical province'.

J. R. Ahle's devotional arias were still being sung and admired in nineteenth-century Mühlhausen. These are strophic chorale-like songs with instrumental ritornelli, which, though simple, do bridge the gap between hymn and secular song. In this way, they served a 'social' purpose quite as much as, in a different way, did another of J. G. Ahle's local publications, a singing method for children (*Kurze . . . Anleitung*, 1704). This was given its second edition just three years before Bach's arrival and complemented the church's music library, which included works by Praetorius, Schütz, Ahle Snr and others of the seventeenth century. Bach's Cantata No. 71, 'Gott ist mein König', to mark in church the election of the town council (February 1708), followed in the footsteps of 'municipal' works by J. G. Ahle, whose rather elementary harmonic vocabulary one could imagine Bach consciously imitating in the opening and final choruses of Cantata No. 71 while moving well beyond it in the intervening movements. The more advanced survey of styles and character he introduced in BWV 71 could be attributed in particular to the influence of Buxtehude's cantatas. Since at the age of twenty-two Bach already had wider experience of music elsewhere than the Ahles or most Mühlhauseners, it is only to be expected that he would endeavour to show this, modestly or proudly as the case may be, in his choral and keyboard compositions. (For further remarks on BWV 71, see also below, p. 93.)

The common formula 'to be called as organist', less pretentious than the modern professional's claim to be 'headhunted', was appropriate for a more important church than the Bonifatiuskirche, Arnstadt. Probably, the chief burgomaster in Mühlhausen, Conrad Meckbach, had come to be a supporter of Bach, through local connections and responding to what one can assume to be the young man's growing reputation. (Meckbach's name is incorporated in the text of Cantata No. 71 as an acrostic. He had also been dedicatee of more than one of Ahle's theory-books, including the first, in 1687.) Another applicant for the position was J. G. Walther, encouraged by the organ-builder Wender and taking the trouble to prepare a pair of cantatas. But then he withdrew, for some reason finding Mühlhausen 'hateful' (*verhasst*: see Beckmann and Schulze 1987, pp. 70, 219f.). He was still speaking of 'hatefulness' over twenty years later, despite having soon found a good position at Weimar instead. Had Bach had anything to do with this?

According to the minutes, the parish council's decision after the Easter audition was quickly taken, and Bach was asked three weeks later what he would require as salary and payment in kind (Dok. II, pp. 22–5). He asked for the same salary as at Arnstadt, the same payment in kind as his predecessor (approximately a bushel of grain per week and firewood for each day of the year) and help with removals (a cart or *Fuhrwerck*). Nothing is clearly stated about lodging. He asked for the wood to be 'beech and one other kind' and also – characteristically, one suspects, for this particular twenty-two-year-old – asked for the offer to be in writing (Dok. II, p. 23). He would need this to show at Arnstadt as justification for moving on.

The Mühlhausen agreement of 15 June 1707 specified an organist's usual obligations:

> to be loyal to the town *Magistrat* and do his best for the community
> to perform his duties 'willingly' and be available at all times
> specifically for services on Sundays, Feast Days and Holy Days
> to keep the organ in good condition and report its faults
> to take care of its repairs and its music (i.e. to control who played and what?)
> to live respectably and avoid dubious *compagnie*. (Dok. II, pp. 24–5)

All this seems to have been fairly standard for an important church and need not mean the *Magistrat* had heard of Bach's problems in Arnstadt and so needed assurances. By 'music', the council may have expected the organ and organist to work in cantatas with choir and instruments, but in such a document 'music' could also mean everything played and sung. Bach shook hands, obtained release from Arnstadt on 29 June (a week after his first cousin Johann Ernst had applied to replace him there), returned the organ keys and apparently began at Mühlhausen by the beginning of August. He made over his Arnstadt salary for the third quarter (from 15 June) to the cousin who had to wait for confirmation. Perhaps it had not been entirely an advantage for him, Johann Ernst Bach, to have his cousin's support in Arnstadt.

In addition, at Mühlhausen Bach was to have further paid duties at several other and smaller churches in the city, alternatively with the organist of the other main church, and for this there was also payment in kind, not fuel this time but corn and clothes. Altogether, there were some six regular weekly services, plus feastdays, weddings and funerals, at all of which the organist played chorales and preludes based on them (largely his own compositions, one imagines) and regularly accompanied

concerted music. A later organist in Mühlhausen (1730) agreed to similar conditions and was expected to be industrious and willing in his duties, in ensemble music as well as the chorales. Very likely all such organists were also expected to keep the organ reeds in tune, five at Mühlhausen (BJ 1987, p. 77), not the lightest of duties.

Mühlhausen and 'early cantatas'

At Mühlhausen it is not unlikely that music for the audition had included one or two cantatas. Bach's, if sung on Easter Sunday 1707, was therefore quite possibly Cantata No. 4. The cantata must date to this period and was particularly appropriate not only for the day but, being a set of particularly intelligible and tuneful variations on a well-known hymn, was most suitable for winning over a church committee. It is the only such cantata of Bach, causing some to doubt its authenticity (unnecessarily?) and leaving the question whether there were once others.

Similarities have been found, justifiably, between this cantata and variations of the same hymn-text by Pachelbel, composed up to a generation earlier, for although hymn variations were quite widespread among organists, these two works do share many details and an overall conception. Bach's own take on the melody, especially its 'sour' narrow opening semitone, is new, however: in particular, the beautiful opening prelude for strings and the duet for soprano and alto (verse 2) work this semitone with a most promising imagination. After performance of BWV 4, the hymn-tune must have been running in the people's heads, for the cantata's charming adoption of conventional ways to develop it would surely have been found as pleasing then as it is today. There is a prelude for strings, brilliant violin solos (played by Bach?), melodious solos and duets, a running bass, the whole with a secure harmonic sense drawing on a hymn melody that was pleasingly recognizable to start with.

Although the Mühlhausen contract did not in as many words require cantatas, the organist of Bach's church customarily supplied at least one great celebratory piece each year on the election of the town council: a cantata complete with trumpets and drums for a service at the Marienkirche. Bach was paid extra for the music as he was again in 1709. (His successor is not known to have composed any election cantatas. This was a son of the admired Johann Christoph of Eisenach, Johann Friedrich Bach, older than Sebastian and perhaps recommended by him as successor. More family networking?) Particular services such as those in

connection with the burgomaster, or on the days of confession, or to commemorate a bad city fire, may have led Bach to compose other occasional ensemble pieces that are now lost. Speculations about what event if any might have occasioned the composing of certain cantatas already mentioned have only circumstantial support.

For the council's ceremonial swearing-in in February 1708, Cantata No. 71 was performed twice on consecutive days in the two main churches after the sermon. At some expense to the council, it was also printed and published, both the text and, in movable type, nineteen vocal and instrumental parts. Quite why the parts were printed and quite what *publishing* meant at such a time and place are unknowns. Surely other churches were not going to use the parts? But the printer was the same as for J. G. Ahle's singing-method of 1704, the *Singekunst*, and there must have been some prestige attached to a 'municipal print' and indeed to a municipal printer. As too with Bach's second election cantata, the lost BWV Anh. 192 (1709), the city was evidently familiar with music-related publications. So was Leipzig, of course, but only the texts of Bach cantatas were ever published there, none of their music either there or anywhere else. So there remains the irony that Bach's only printed choral music, the election cantatas for 1708 and 1709, were printed at someone else's expense, an irony made sharper by being in no way representative of the mature repertory.

If in details of style Cantata No. 71 is at times like Buxtehude's, with short-breathed melody, common-chord harmonies and contrasting blocks of sound, it could be thought to have less lightness of touch than his. Some similarities have also been found between it and a festive Mühlhausen cantata by P. H. Erlebach, performed with success there three years earlier, which suggests that Bach was consciously saluting local tradition, just as he was later to do in Leipzig with his Magnificat. The scoring of the lost second election cantata is uncertain, but in any case, how easy it was to assemble the required number of able instrumentalists in or around Mühlhausen for any such performance is uncertain.

Though not a set of variations like Cantata No. 4, Cantata No. 71 runs through quite as many different styles, but on a grander and more continuous scale, with clear instrumental groups of brass, strings and wind, and with one contribution to the performance probably made by the composer: a discreet organ solo, in addition to the usual accompaniment. The effect of Cantata No. 71 is rather restless and episodic in its naïve stereophony, but with some sweet melody and unexpected tone-colours. It follows familiar traditions in its standard formulas for setting a text colourfully, as in using a crown-shaped motif C–E–G–E–C (major chord) to salute 'God is my

King' or in asking for an *affettuoso* oboe solo when mention is made of a turtledove.[5] This exploring of music's common-property vocabulary, though effortlessly competent, gives an impression more of playfulness than deep thinking.

The autograph score of Cantata No. 131 carries a note that it was composed 'at the desire of G. C. Eilmar', archdeacon at the Marienkirche, Mühlhausen, a known antagonist of the superintendent of Bach's church, and one with whom Bach could well have had a closer agreement on the importance of well-wrought church music. Eilmar had written a poem for one of Ahle's books and can be considered a friend of music. (A recognized Pietist like Superintendent Frohne of Bach's own church probably preferred simple, touching melodies.) Municipal thanksgiving was the moment to hear some music of bigger scope and for bigger forces than usual, and the early cantatas show an increasing grasp of how they can be built up of several movements. They do this with a virtually *ad hoc* sequence of introductions, choral songs, arias, chorales, interludes and so on, now contrapuntal, now homophonic (qv), the whole informed by particular images in the words and music. However many early cantatas have been lost, one can be sure they had various shapes.

Such a way of setting a text is typical of the seventeenth century, in which music changes character immediately in response to the particular sentiments and according to conventional associations between sounds and words, such as bright common chords in the major for a celebratory text, quickly changing to something else (perhaps in the minor) for a more discordant sentiment. The distinction between recitative (syllabic prose conveying a narrative) and arias (melismatic poetry reiterating stylized phrases) is not yet fully developed. Perhaps it would never have become so without impetus from a world outside that of Lutheran cantatas, that is to say from music outside Germany. Various contrapuntal techniques were explored in other music Bach knew and was at different times working on. Important techniques include combining different themes (as in works by Albinoni and Corelli that he was reworking), writing his own counter-theme (in organ fugues) and learning the usefulness of stretti (qv) (copying a cantata by Antonio Biffi).

Throughout his life Bach kept up such interests as they were fired by foreign music, hence – to move forward a few years – his work on carefully scoring up and transcribing Vivaldi's D minor Concerto (BWV 596),

[5] Some formulae were traditional: the cantata's words 'Day and night' use the same motif as 'he hath put down' in the Magnificat of William Byrd's Great Service.

one attraction of which was the example it gave of quadruple invertible counterpoint (qv) (four lines each of which could serve as the bass). Very unusual in such string music, this was less formulaic than anything found in earlier Lutheran vocal music, and was doubtless interesting to an alert organist. A comparable point could be made about his transcription of another Vivaldi concerto, BWV 593, one of whose attractions was the way it explored and broke up the theme when it periodically returned. Such examples as these, though coming considerably later in the Bach worklist, typify a persistent, lifelong interest in different species of music in which there was something for him to learn. From both examples it is easy to conclude that Bach recognized a fine piece by another composer when he saw it.

The copy of an Italian cantata by Antonio Biffi that Bach probably made around this time, 1707–8, contains recitative, as Cantatas Nos. 131 and 71 do not, or any other cantata so far. Was recitative something still felt to be inappropriate for church music? Associated with Hamburg operas? Or is it possible that recitatives were added *ad hoc* and not copied in a score? If there were none, these cantatas do more than compensate by containing antiphonal choruses and constantly changing textures: brief instrumental solos, polychoral instrumentation (brass + drums against strings, etc.), SATB solos, fugue of various kinds, solo aria and duet aria. All these produce a freshness missing from the more run-of-the-mill Italian imitations of the day. A minor but significant point concerns the Italian tempo words appearing in some scores of the period, showing Bach wishing to air his increasing knowledge. The generally short phrases recall earlier German choral music such as Schütz's, in which at any given moment tonics and dominants on the strong beats are likely to be magnets pulling in the phrases.

Nevertheless, while the early works of Bach have their touching moments, they have little of the dazzling expanse of form and melody achieved in Italy by Handel at the same age and about the same period, with the psalm settings 'Dixit Dominus' and 'Laudate pueri'. As far as one can judge from the work of the two composers from the years 1707–8 or so, there is no doubt which of them was producing music of greater or more immediate impact on listeners. One might almost say 'which of the two was the more gifted', for Bach has nothing yet to equal the moments of splendid swagger in Handel's early Latin and Italian music. Nevertheless, the care with which the themes are worked in Cantata No. 71, and the beautiful qualities of Cantata No. 106 emerging from a good performance, hint at what he was to achieve. (See below, pp. 100f., for further remarks on BWV 106.)

One could also argue that the *sounds* created by these cantatas of Bach, considered bar by bar, are more original than those in his keyboard music at the time. And they also survey more forms and genres than Handel does in his psalm-settings. This is a point one could take further if so many of 'Bach's early vocal works' were finally proved not only 100 per cent authentic but also datable, works such as the old-style Cantata No. 4, the Wedding Quodlibet, BWV 524, and the frenchified motet BWV Anh. III 159. Working the hard way without the sparkling facility of Handel, Bach seems to have sustained a greater inventiveness across a broader spectrum and over a longer period, indeed throughout his life. A fundamental difference between the two composers is that in later years, Bach fell back on what he had accomplished in his youth far less often than Handel did.

The Mühlhausen letter and other writing

Two other records of Bach's life in Mühlhausen throw some light on his activities and interests. The first is the taking on of pupils: various reports speak of J. M. Schubart studying with him from 1707 to 1717, and of J. C. Vogler already from the Arnstadt period onwards, both of whom seem to have followed him later to Weimar at some point in his years of residence there. (Vogler had previously been a student of another organist already mentioned and active in Thuringia, P. H. Erlebach. This is an instance of a pupil 'moving on' to Bach.) Schubart was described in Walther's *Lexicon* as studying keyboard-playing 'continuously' (*beständig*) with Bach over these years, as if he had moved to Weimar with him after Mühlhausen. If he had, this would say something significant about the young teacher and would not be an isolated case.

No doubt there were other pupils, and these two are known only because they succeeded their teacher and were accordingly documented. Also, perhaps, because they had been his recognized apprentice-assistants. Vogler's copy years later of a C major Prelude complete with his own fingering (a version of the prelude eventually opening WTC2), might – just – represent his work earlier in Weimar with his teacher. From working on this piece he would have been learning two particular things: how to create a coherent keyboard prelude, and how to finger it so as to play it appropriately. On doubts about such surviving fingerings, however, see below, p. 590.

The second of Bach's activities was organ-advising, something likely to have been much more frequent than records show, particularly in various

little Thuringian village churches that were having an organ built over those very years, often for the first time in their history. In February 1708, not many months after his appointment, he presented plans for a newly rebuilt organ for his new church in Mühlhausen, an instrument altogether grander than most. This was less than twenty years since the last major work had been done on the organ, and the builder J. F. Wender again undertook the job, one of several instruments he built in the neighbourhood. Successfully proposing an important organ-project so soon after taking up his position suggests no ordinary twenty-two-year-old musician content with current conditions, though his elder brother too had undertaken such work as a young man. The project may say something about all three protagonists at Mühlhausen: the composer (energetically pressing for improvements?), the council-members (supportive and imaginative?) and the builder (more willing than some of his colleagues to collaborate?). The church was bigger, and its musical potential greater, than at Arnstadt.

Like Kuhnau and others putting pen to paper to draw up an organ-scheme, Bach seems to have worked mainly on what he could have read in a most influential book of 1698, Andreas Werckmeister's *Orgelprobe*, a guide for the many people involved in the costly exercises of commissioning and approving new organs. Consequently, a big question remains as to how expert in organ-building Bach actually was at this time, whatever his later admirers said. Kuhnau, a university-educated cantor, would hardly have considered craft-technicalities to be in his purview, and would automatically consult a book as recent and full of good sense as Werckmeister's. He seems to have done exactly that for an organ-report at Halle eight years later, which Bach co-signed. The *Orgelprobe* had authority, especially within the triangle Eisenach–Wolfenbütttel–Leipzig, not least because of a dedicatory poem in it by the celebrated Hamburg masterbuilder Arp Schnitger, with whose work Bach, like Handel, had by now become acquainted. Werckmeister also had some connection with the work of a previous organist in Mühlhausen, J. G. Ahle.

More is said below on Bach's supposed intimate knowledge of organs, but in the Mühlhausen report one searches for signs of this without very much success. A good case that he 'missed hardly any minutiae' in it, including a mention of pipe-materials, is often made (e.g. Wolff 2000, pp. 143–4), but against this one could think that the details he did stipulate – '14-ounce tin' for the case-pipes, some 'good wood' for an accompanying stop (oak?), improved reed-voicing (qv) – needed no more than basic knowledge. Nor, ten years later, did his specifying a lighter touch and shallower keyfall in the report at the Leipzig University Church

(the Paulinerkirche, Dok. I, p. 164) suggest much more: these wished-for improvements may not even have been practical at that stage, though they were certainly desirable. It also seems to be the case that when in 1746 the organist at the Wenzelskirche, Naumburg reported on all the faults in the new organ recently approved by Bach with the privileged organ-builder, Gottfried Silbermann, he was implying, for whatever reason, that the two examiners had not done a thorough job (Dok. II, pp. 429–31).

Nevertheless, from presumably knowing Johann Christoph Bach's organ-rebuild in Eisenach (completed in 1707, Thuringia's then largest organ), from visiting organs in Lübeck and elsewhere and from noting Werckmeister's model stoplist (qv) and other advice, Bach's scheme at Mühlhausen is well conceived and succinctly presented, with the salient points grasped and made clear. Behind the technicalities, the priority of what he was recommending was its musical potential:

> remade bellows and chests, for a bigger capacity and a more even wind;
> a good foundation, with a good pedal sub-suboctave (qv) bass;
> improved reed stops (brought up to date? 'rounder' tone for melodies?);
> improved Tremulant;
> a twenty-six-bell Glockenspiel (for the twenty-six-note-pedal?);
> some new colourful stops;
> a Fagott 16' (this especially for continuo (qv) work);
> a thorough tuning (temperament not specified);
> finally, the organ needs a third department, a new *Brustwerk* (qv).

It could be at Bach's request that more reed stops were included than was usual for the region, a result of his experiences in north Germany perhaps, or even of reading Werckmeister's monograph on the glittering early-baroque instrument at Gröningen, near Halberstadt.

On the puzzling question of why Bach wanted a row of Glockenspiel bells, see a remark below, p. 119. Bells of various kinds were not uncommon at that time and place, and it is possible that at Gera in 1725 two revolving-stars-with-bells on the front of the organ were added after Bach's examination there and, at his request, played during hymns 'on high feastdays' (BJ 2004, p. 102). Certainly his suggestions are again geared towards music and what is useful for the part played by organists in the services, such as varying the sound for the chorales (the congregation's and the organ's), playing continuo in ensemble music, finding soft nuanced sounds for interludes or preludes and full-organ tutti effects when required (for postludes?). The taste for strong bass-tone complete with an ample wind-supply for it was particularly common in Thuringia.

Only with the reed stops did the Mühlhausen organ differ much from average provincial taste in Thuringia in 1700 or so. The third *Brustwerk* department was desired for continuo work necessary in the new cantatas, which ranged over a variety of texture (solos, duets, choruses, instrumental sections); its pipes would stand in the organ-front close to players, supporting their music and giving them the pitch. Strangely, Bach says nothing about whether there was to be a third row of keys for it or what he expected of keyboard touch. He also makes no mention of the actual tuning, although both here and at Arnstadt he presumably had the benefit of the builder Wender's well-tempered tuning, whatever that was. Crucial details of how it played and sounded are both vague, therefore; perhaps J. S. Bach was not really fastidious about such things. Nevertheless, it seems clear that in the years since the Mühlhausen organ had last been radically worked on, either its rôle had broadened or its new organist had new ambitions.

There is a possibility that the sectional chorale 'Ein feste Burg', BWV 720, was written for this organ and records Bach's choice of stops. While the details in the extant copy are typical of its scribe (J. G. Walther) and match the organs he knew himself, the approach is plausible for such sectional chorales. Usually, directions for 'scoring' chorales (what stops to draw, whether to change manuals, etc.) are rare, since organs varied so much, and to specify would be to exclude many players.

First marriage, and some cantatas of the time

Twice our Bach was married. The first time [on Monday 17 October 1707] was with Miss Maria Barbara, the youngest daughter of the above-mentioned Johann Michael Bach, a good [*brafen*] composer. By her he had [*gezeuget*, 'begot'] seven children, namely five sons and two daughters, among whom a pair of twins. (*Obituary*)

Assuming that Bach began work at Mühlhausen on or by 1 August 1707, it was less than three months later that the marriage took place, an event doubtless already anticipated in Arnstadt, the bride's home town, and possibly hurried along by his relocation. After the banns were recorded twice in Arnstadt (Dok. II, p. 28), the marriage took place in Dornheim, a village church nearby whose pastor was a family friend. Dornheim would have served as convenient 'neutral ground' after Bach had moved to Mühlhausen.

Emanuel gives no date for his father's first marriage, and only the year for the second. But since in both cases he briefly lists the children, it seems that precise dates were of less interest to him, for if he had taken details from a family Bible recording the births of children, it would also have recorded the dates of marriage. No doubt Emanuel liked to place it on record, however, that his maternal grandfather was (like his paternal) a good musician, as his mother is also likely to have been. In his father's genealogical table Johann Michael is called a 'handy' (*habiler*) composer: an interestingly circumspect word, more discriminating than Emanuel's 'good' (*brafen*). It sounds as if a distinction was intended between Johann Michael and his elder brother in Eisenach, Johann Christoph, the one who was called a 'profound' (*profond*) composer and Maria Barbara's uncle.

It is assumed that with her sisters, Maria Barbara Bach had been living in Arnstadt after the death of her mother in 1704, probably with the family of the burgomaster, whose wife was her aunt. Some five months older than Sebastian and likewise an orphan, she was his cousin once removed (*Kusine zweiten Grades*), sharing with him a great-grandfather, Johannes Bach (d. 1626). Music of her father Johann Michael and included in the 'Neumeister Collection' consists of several simple chorale-settings, harmonized and employing the melodies in such a way as to leave them clear and unconfusing for the congregations. Some settings may have been circulating soon after he died in 1694; or perhaps his daughter Maria Barbara passed a number on to Sebastian in his Arnstadt years. (If authentic, the 'Neumeister Chorales' attributed to Sebastian must be teenage compositions, and some of them could well have been responsible for confusing the Arnstadt congregation.) The truth about the situation here – dates, attributions, personal contacts – is, as usual, elusive, but there seem to have been effective musical as well as personal connections between Sebastian and Maria Barbara, and probably the pair had been well acquainted quite some time before the marriage.

The ceremony took place two months after Bach received a bequest of 50 guilders from his Erfurt uncle Tobias Lämmerhirt, in memory of whom perhaps the exquisite Cantata No. 106 was written. This, as already indicated, presents an increasingly distinctive style and is in most respects way ahead of the 'Neumeister Chorales', whether these are Bach's or not. The Cantata's style is marked by short phrases and a clear pulse whatever the metre, with few but telling syncopations, and a sweet introductory consort (qv) for two recorders, two gambas and bass. From his experience of chorale-melodies and of traditional ways to treat them on the organ, Bach produced in No. 106's final chorus a charming instrumental paraphrase of

the chorale's melody. Much has been made of the cantata's well-informed assemblage of texts dealing with time and death, but rather than assuming that these had some special intensity for the young Bach one might see him instead as striving to do a professional composer's job, which was to create sweet harmonies and fresh timbres, and thereby to draw in the listener to attend to the text, whatever it was. The title *Actus tragicus* given it in a posthumous copy has led to speculation that it is the relic of a larger work, perhaps a cantata for a Feast of the Purification, or for the funeral of someone in Mühlhausen, such as the burgomaster who died after Bach had moved on to Weimar. Whatever is the case, it serves now as a milestone along the composer's development, leaving one to regret what else might have been lost on the way.

Nothing is known about the music for the wedding with Maria Barbara, nor of any celebrations around it, although many members of the greater Bach family lived within convenient distance. Both the so-called 'Wedding or Marriage-ceremony' Cantata No. 196 and the suggestive Quodlibet, BWV 524, could have been, in their very different ways, appropriate for the day's events. The cantata suited this service as indeed it did or would have done the Dornheim pastor's own marriage with another of Maria Barbara's aunts some months later. On the other hand, the Quodlibet fitted the kind of rowdy family gathering implied by some later reports, when they wished to draw the picture of a 'human Bach'. But there is no reliable documentation about either of these occasions.

The marked difference between the opening movements of the three early cantatas Nos. 106, 4 and 196 looks deliberate, as if an already experienced speaker of music's language was seeking to apply different *dialects* for different purposes. Testing his musical muscles, so to speak. The opening string Sinfonia (qv) of Cantata 196 is a conspicuous contrast in style with the sinfonias of Cantatas Nos. 4 and 106, and it would not be unreasonable to see No. 196 as originating a little later, an early Weimar work. Its Sinfonia's 'French' rhythms have a thrusting effect quite distinct both from BWV 4's slow, opening chords in the minor and from the quietly throbbing support for the recorders in BWV 106. The latter has unexpected progeny: the two interweaving recorders, playing in a kind of heterophony (qv) above the bass, re-appear in a new guise, faster, and with violas instead, in the sixth of the *Six Concerts* for the Marquis of Brandenburg, also in B flat major.

The choral writing in Nos. 106 and 196, however, is very much of a piece in its vocal runs and its block chords. Whether each of these three cantatas was as isolated (a 'one-off') as it now appears is a tantalizing question, for if

they were, they suggest a composer already unwilling to repeat himself, and in this way he would already be standing out from the norm. It is possible that these three works survived (were preserved) precisely because they were superior to any others there might once have been in the composer's portfolio, and preserved as distinctive samples of early work. Their ways of writing for choirs are standard and more predictable than the writing for instruments, perhaps indicating the composer's early and instinctive preferences, or at least his deeper individual experience.

In the years to follow, the children of Sebastian and Maria Barbara Bach were:

*Catharina Dorothea, Weimar, 29 December 1708;
*Wilhelm Friedemann, Weimar, 22 November (St Cecilia's Day) 1710;
Maria Sophia and Johann Christoph, twins, 23 February 1713; did not long survive;
*Carl Philipp Emanuel, Weimar, 8 March 1714;
Johann Gottfried Bernhard, Weimar, 11 May 1715;
Leopold Augustus, Cöthen, 15 November 1718, died within a year.

The Obituary listed the children still living (*) and gave the two sons' current positions, but no further details. With his first-born child, Bach seems to have been keeping up the family connections, presumably taking some trouble to contact members as godparents: Catharina Dorothea's two godmothers were the sisters-in-law respectively of his own mother and of himself. If later on in July 1713, as seems possible, Bach prepared the motet Anh. III 159 for the funeral at Arnstadt of another relation by marriage, Maria Barbara's aunt (BJ 1998, p. 147), he was still keeping up in-law as well as family connections. Why he did not add the common family name Johann to the other names for three of his Weimar sons is not known; Friedemann is only the third Bach after 1640 in the table (of which he is No. 45) not to have the forename Johann, Emanuel ('Carolus Philippus Immanuel') the fourth.

Only a formal document or two casts any light at all on such personal matters as these. Thus a census reveals that Maria Barbara's elder stepsister Friedelena Margaretha Bach was to live with them, it is thought from shortly before or after the time the first child was born in Weimar (Dok. II, p. 39). Like many an unmarried woman, she probably became the family housekeeper for her sister, remaining so until she died in 1729, well after Bach's second marriage, to be replaced then as housekeeper by his and Maria Barbara's unmarried daughter Catharina Dorothea. (There was also at least one housemaid to the family, documented by 1721.)

How distressing Leopold's and the twins' deaths were, or how comforting Friedelena Margaretha's presence was, apparently no one thought to record. If, as is possible, on the very day in February 1713 when the twins were born (and one died), their father was away in Weissenfels for a performance of Cantata No. 208 or on his way home (Dok. II, p. 45), it would not be surprising if the sad event was still being spoken of during Emanuel's childhood. He was aware that twins, identical or not, were known in the family. In both the Obituary and the Genealogy there are reports on how very alike his grandfather and great-uncle were to look at – family lore, it seems.

Letters and writing

Twelve months after he was appointed at Mühlhausen and without waiting for the rebuilt organ to be finished, Bach and his family moved to Weimar, where Maria Barbara was to give birth to her first child six months later (29 December 1708). He had visited Weimar in June, perhaps by invitation, perhaps not (the Obituary is ambiguous on this point – see Chapter 3), but since the court-chapel organ in Weimar was also being worked on over this period, quite probably Bach went to review it. Exactly how these various events are linked is not known, but by 25 June 1708, Bach was writing a formal request for release from Mühlhausen, his oldest surviving letter. A week or so later his older cousin Johann Friedrich was appointed successor and took over the allowance of payment-by-cereal for duties in another Mühlhausen church (Dok. V, p. 113). At the main church, however, the parishioners apparently hoped to pay him less.

The request of Bach for release is the document of an astute man, one keen to score points on his behalf, aware perhaps that his departure was earlier than decorum required. It begins

> The way Your Magnificence and Highly Esteemed Patrons most graciously appointed my modest self [*meine Wenigkeit*] to the organist's position (vacant a year ago) in Div. Blasii, and furthermore Your Generosity in letting me enjoy a better standard of living [*subsistenz*], I have to acknowledge for ever with dutiful thanks. (Dok. I, pp. 19–20).

After the courtesy and note of gratitude, the remainder can be read as exculpatory and even rather censorious in tone. For Bach next speaks of his wish to have been able to achieve his goal (*Endzweck*), which was: to create a well-regulated church music (*wohlzufassenden kirchenmusic*)

to the honour of God. This presumably meant new types of cantatas such as he says were becoming known in every village (*Dorfschafften*), which must be an exaggeration for effect. Though he does not say so, it was also for such music that he needed, and perhaps had intended, the larger organ at Mühlhausen. Cantatas would have meant the church budgeting to pay performers, committing itself financially and perhaps doctrinally, and evidently none of this happened to Bach's satisfaction. He speaks of meeting 'hindrance' and 'vexation' (*wiedrigkeit, verdrießligkeit*) in his job, though were there to be a future change in this respect, it would delight the worshippers themselves, the 'souls of this very church' (*eigenen Seelen vergnügen*). This sounds to me not only exculpatory but mischievous, pitting congregation against clergy.

The expressed 'goal' of well-regulated church music was clearly an abiding one for Bach. He mentions it for a second time in this letter when referring to the job he had been offered in Weimar, and again in Leipzig many years later when he refers to a 'well-ordered church music', meaning cantatas (*wohlbestallte Kirchen **Music***: Dok. I, p. 60). In the Mühlhausen letter he goes on to relate other ways in which he had performed his duty. First, he built up a library of the 'choicest church pieces' (*auserleßensten kirchen Stücken*, i.e. cantatas or motets), not without cost, presumably meaning at his own cost. Secondly, he had presented the project (*das **Project***) to remedy the defects in the organ. Neither of these contributions, however, was much above the call of duty. Organists did draw up organ-projects (who else would?), and if he thought this to his credit, perhaps it had not been strictly necessary. And, at least for musicians in important posts, to build up a collection of 'new pieces of church and other music' was expected. (This was so for the capellmeister of Arnstadt as well; see Schiffner 1988, p. 89.) Unfortunately, nothing is known of these music scores, nor whether congregation or clergy wanted the scope of their music to be widened. Collecting from 'far and near', as he puts it, could indicate the kinds of music familiar in the northern cities plus those in Thuringia and the dukedoms of Greater Saxony, including imported Latin works.

Bach claims that his new job in Weimar will be without vexation (*verdrießlikeit*), which remained to be seen. Besides, he needed a position with better pay, such as he has now found elsewhere. These are points of a kind he was to make again later in Leipzig. How crucial the money was to him and his soon-to-be fatherhood, and how far tensions between the town's orthodox and Pietist factions were responsible for his quick departure, are open to conjecture. But Walther too, one recalls, had found Mühlhausen 'hateful'. By way of further comparison, it is striking that

Telemann's request for dismissal from Hamburg, when he was offered the Leipzig job in 1722, is entirely taken up with money: what he now receives, what his costs are, what he needs for a household of eleven or twelve persons, what a suitable payment in salary and kind might be, what provision he needs against any incapacity and so on (Kremer 1995, pp. 422–3).

Thirty-five years later, another organist was still speaking of the 'great chagrin' felt by the Mühlhausen Council at Bach's moving on to Weimar (Dok. II, p. 405), and even the Obituary remarks rather obliquely on the quick turnover (Mühlhausen 'could not have the pleasure of keeping him long'). The council recognized that indeed it could not keep him if he wanted to go but requested his help to see through the organ project (Dok. I, p. 21), which he presumably did at least when returning to present an election cantata in February 1709 and again perhaps in 1710. (If, on the first occasion, he did actually do so: the dreadfully bad winter of 1708–9 would have made a trip from Weimar well-nigh impossible.) There is no known record that he dedicated the organ he had instigated in Mühlhausen, but his request for release had ended by expressing willingness to 'contribute further to the service of the church'; he begs the *Patronen*, whom he has approached with dutiful respect,

> to find satisfactory my small services to the church until now, and to provide me most expeditiously with a kind release [*dimission*]. If I can contribute further anything to Your church, I will act more in the deed than in words . . .

The tone of this is difficult to measure, but through the courtesy one can read a sense of his rights as a conscientious employee. God has brought it about that he, Bach, has an offer at Weimar to be court and chamber musician (significantly, he does not say organist) where he has hopes for the kind of church music he spoke of. This sounds as if he was expecting to have the opportunity at Weimar for producing several kinds of ensemble music including cantatas, though he had to wait another six years there for this to be formalized.

'Chamber musician' at Weimar would be a grander appointment than 'court musician' and indicate membership of a select group performing both church and private music for the region's main ducal house, rather than merely the ceremonial and public church music for a municipality. A big difference. It is likely enough that he was disingenuously exaggerating the importance of the position he was going to, but less for reasons of self-aggrandizement perhaps than to appease his employers for his leaving earlier than expected for promotion elsewhere. Similarly at Arnstadt he

had exaggerated the importance of the one he was coming from, in that case to reconcile them to an unusually high salary?

Since the request for release from Mühlhausen is his oldest extant autograph letter, this is a useful moment to look briefly at Bach's writing in its various forms, not only at this point but over his lifetime. It raises what could be an important question about him or rather his education: was the macaronic style of his formal letters typical more of the time or of himself? Significant or not particularly so? The sprinkling of French or Latin words, even in personal letters to his friend Erdmann, is more than one finds in the extant letters of Handel or Telemann or Walther, for example. It may well reflect an old-fashioned and relatively limited experience in writing, as if Bach were counteracting his natural demotic style with foreign terms for the sake of a more formal touch. The terms might be unnecessary but they are not inappropriate. In the Mühlhausen request, it is noticeable that he uses German for the critical terms (hindrance, vexation) but French or quasi-French for what he is trying to achieve (*fasonierten harmonie*, *apparence*, an *entrée* at Weimar).

Both in his letters and on his musical scores, there is some sign that Bach deliberated over vocabulary and distinguished carefully, with French to signal style or *manière*, Italian for the tempi in *'sonatas'*, Latin for the rubrics of *'canons'*. The then normal convention of using Latin selectively for anything formal or remotely legal is also observed in Kuhnau's contemporary letters to the Leipzig city fathers, and a cantor's constant contact with clergy encouraged this. Particularly significant is that the Italian terms *'cantata'* and *sonata* are largely reserved for indicating italianate music. Latin or latinate headings will be found regularly attached to certain musical genres as something appropriate, not only canons but major choral works (*Missa* (qv), *Oratorium*, *Passio*). Some German terms used by Bach could be considered translations or equivalents of familiar terms in music-theory (*Übung* for *prattica*) or titles (*Büchlein* for *livre*, *Vorspiel* for *praeludium*).

In letters to people in authority at Halle (on 14 January 1714, about a job for himself) or at Sangerhausen (on 18 November 1736, about a job for one of his sons), it is difficult to see exactly why Bach uses foreign terms or complicated phrases except as indicating a wished-for status. Two examples are:

> meine **excuse** machen dass anitzo die zeit es ohnmöglich hätte leiden wollen, einige **cathegorische resolution** von mir zu geben . . . (Dok. I, p. 22)
>
> [please] make my excuses that at present, time does not allow [*lit.* the time would have wished to permit no possibility] for me to give any categorical decision . . .

Eu: HochEdlen mit Dero vielgültigen **recommendation** u. **intercession** vor das **in mente** habende **subject** . . . (Dok. I, p. 93)

your Honour, with so invaluable a recommendation and intercession on behalf of the person [I have] in mind . . .

In the second, the Sangerhausen letter, a minor cascade of French words follows on a somewhat clumsily worded allusion Bach makes to his own failure to secure a job there thirty-four years earlier. Rather than fluency, what is more obvious here and elsewhere in the extant letters and testimonials is the formality he wants to give the writing. A testimonial signed by him includes macaronic touches that in this case resulted, one assumes, from dictation (Dok. I, 127). The huge number of royal titles that he appends (or in two cases, has his copyist append) in letters to the Elector (qv) of Saxony, three times in 1725 and again in 1737, leaves one to suppose he preserved a careful note of them, to be consulted for such purposes.

Of course, the various foreign terms in letters convey some *politesse*, but sometimes there is also a cloud of foggy euphemism about them, such as one might employ around sensitive personal issues. Thus at Halle, Bach needed to explain why he had not signed the 'calling' already offered him twice, which he calls a *vocation in duplo*; at Sangerhausen later, he was writing on behalf of a less than totally reliable son when he asks for a special *Faveur*; and in 1730, he asks his friend Erdmann, who was not a musician, if he knows of a *convenable station* ('suitable job') for him in Danzig. In a letter of 1729 to a former pupil, French terms appear to give an ironic touch: he would be *réellement* grateful to be paid, and he hopes to be *capable* of being of service, which he would prove with all *dexterité*. On the other hand, the many French terms in the petition of 1733 to the Elector in Dresden are surely there to express a deferential subject's appreciation of courtly convention (Dok. I, pp. 57, 74). A desirable quasi-legal formality is expressed in three Latinate terms in a nineteen-word receipt of 1747 (Dok. I, p. 204), as it is by the letters 'p. t.' by his name on receipts he signed at Arnstadt, long before it appears on the autograph title-page of the *Orgelbüchein*, to some later puzzlement. Whether 'p. t.' means *per titulum* ('by title') or *pro tempore* ('at this moment', the Genealogy's term for Emanuel's status as a student) is not always clear and may not be significant.

Most of Handel's few extant letters are completely in French, including those to Mattheson and Telemann, to whom a letter of his from 1754 presumably had to be dictated (HHB 4, p. 483). They show familiarity with the formal language of court and aristocracy and may reflect the

likelihood that Handel was in education longer than Bach, though both of them, like others at the time, probably relied upon contemporary guide-books for letter-writing (see Marx 2009). One of several such books was produced by a librettist with whom Bach was later associated, C. F. Hunold (called 'Menantes'): *Die allerneueste Art höflich und galant zu schreiben* ('The all-new art of writing politely and galantly') was published in Hamburg in 1702/3. In the case of two other exceptional literary efforts of Bach, the French dedication of 1721 to the 'Brandenburg Concertos' and the German verse for the young prince of Cöthen in 1726, how far they are his own unaided work is unknown. They are generally presumed not to be.

Conventional or not, Bach's final reference to himself in the Concertos' dedication to the marquis as *moi qui suis avec un zele sans pareil* (Dok. I p. 217) is certainly telling the truth, and matches his other salutations. The following generation was taught a less self-conscious German, its poets were consciously creating a literary language, and so by 1747, when Bach writes the formal dedication of the Musical Offering to Frederick the Great, the only foreign term he uses is *Thema*, which has no obvious alternative in German. In the Offering's canons, any habits Bach might have been forming as a teacher of elementary Latin are stretched by its sprinkling of Latin phrases. These have a multiple purpose: they recognized the standing and education of the dedicatee, the King of Prussia; they established Bach's own standing as cantor, 'one of the educated', the third-ranking person in the St Thomas School; and they knowingly keep up the tradition for technical-musical terms used in counterpoint (as in *canon per motum contrarium*).

It is not known whether for the Musical Offering Bach himself created three unique phrases found there, the first for *Ricercar* (qv), and the second and third on the king's dedication copy of two separate canons:

***R**egis **I**ussu **C**antio et **R**eliqua **C**anonica **A**rte **R**esoluta*

By command of the king, a song and remaining items resolved with canonic art

[Or: By order, the king's theme and its derivatives developed in the manner of canons]

Notulis crescentibus crescat Fortuna Regis

May the king's fortune grow as these notes ('little marks') are growing

Ascendentque Modulatione ascendat Gloria Regis

And as the modulations rise, so may the glory of the king

A guess would be that Bach collaborated in some way with a colleague in the school or university at Leipzig, one knowing the rare word *notulis* (used by the poet Martial). The 'little growing notes' signifies a subject answered in notes of double length in an augmentation canon. Like the heading for yet another canon, *Quaerendo invenietis* ('in seeking, ye shall find'), there is a flattering challenge to the king's understanding as well as his musicianship and indeed patience.

Something apparently of interest to the composer is the well-known and beautiful monogram JSB, known first from a letter-seal of March 1722 (see Dok. IV, p. 168). The Lüneburg tablature he copied in 1700 closes with a filigree flourish that could already be read as another monogram, perhaps of GB, Georg Böhm. Likewise, Reinken was commemorated in his place of burial with a design JAR (Mattheson 1740, p. 293). In Leipzig, the engraver-publishers, like paper-makers with their watermarks, were fond of the contrived symmetry of elegant monograms, as with the initials FMF and JTB on documents illustrated in Neumann 1974 (pp. 318 and 350). The JTB monogram is strikingly close to the JSB, which indeed is a good deal more intelligible than some other monograms found in early eighteenth-century Saxony, such as one of about 1710 in a screen in Schwarzenberg Town Church or the JHS (?) printed by one of the engravers Schübler on a page of the Art of Fugue. Johann Scheibe, the organ-builder of Zschortau (organ tested by Bach in 1746), had another symmetrical but simpler monogram inlaid in the panel above the keyboard. The royal FAR monogram, for 'Fredericus Augustus Rex', was visible on contemporary objects all over Saxony, such as milestones of 1723 in Freiberg and loggias in the cathedral. It would also represent his son, the FAR to whom Bach later sent the first two movements of the 'B minor Mass'.

Some years previously another Bach had had an octagonal design incorporating the interlaced letters JCB (see Spitta 1, 1873, 38), and C. F. Rolle, co-examiner with Bach of the organ at Halle in 1716, had a monogram (see Dok. IV, 112). The crown above the seal's JSB, surely the sign of 'a not negligible self-assertion' (BJ 2009, p. 225), denotes status as capellmeister to a prince. A special and simpler autograph signature 'J S Bach' that appears on other title-pages (e.g. the Calov and Merian Bibles, and a copy of Ammerbach's *Tabulaturbuch*, qv) came about presumably because the celebrated seal-monogram JSB is virtually impossible to write freehand.

3 | Weimar, 1708–1717: the gifted player at a ducal court

Heard by a duke

Immediately after its two sentences about Mühlhausen (p. 87), the Obituary continues with:

> For in the following year, 1708, a visit he made to Weimar, and the opportunity he had there to be heard before the then Duke, led to the position of Chamber- and Court-Organist being offered him, of which he took possession straightway.

Does this mean that according to what he said later, it was on a chance visit that Bach was heard by the duke? This would excuse him, or be an attempt to excuse him, for taking another job so soon, not least for the sake of readers of Walther's *Lexicon* who noticed that the date of one of Bach's jobs (1707) was strangely close to the next (1708). The Obituary's sentence need not imply that it was on the organ, or only on the organ, that he played for the duke. By convention, the court position he was offered would necessarily include duties as 'organist', but these would not be exclusively in chapel or on the organ, rather those of a 'general keyboard-player'.

There was nothing unusual in musicians visiting ducal and other courts hoping to be heard, and a gifted young organist with a good position in an important church in the Free Imperial City of Mühlhausen had much in his favour. Yet while a duke would appoint without the need to invite applications, hold auditions in public or have candidates vetted by committees, a post would not have been offered unless it was vacant or about to become so. This suggests one of two things: either that the 'visit he made to Weimar' was undertaken in the knowledge that the court organist Johann Effler, an old acquaintance, was near to retiring; or that in visiting Weimar in the summer of 1708, he learnt of Effler's intentions, put himself forward as successor and was auditioned there and then by one of the dukes, the senior or the junior. It is possible he was visiting Weimar to look officially or unofficially at work on the organ (completed 16 June), even invited to do so by Effler as a fellow organist. If he did visit to see the organ, perhaps

this is a hint that as an enthusiastic organist he did so more often and to more organs than is now known about.

Since it is also possible that Bach's original return from Lüneburg was with an eye to a likely vacancy in Eisenach, something of a pattern might be observed here: he heard of or anticipated a desirable vacancy and made sure to be available. His original move as a teenager from being *Laquey* in Weimar to organist in Arnstadt had come about when he was inspecting a newly completed organ, somehow finding it possible to stay on as its organist. He must have made a quite exceptional impression on the authorities at each of these rather different places (Arnstadt, Mühlhausen, Weimar), combining, so one imagines, outstanding professional abilities with an obvious charismatic energy. Emanuel would not know the full story of any of his appointments or have given much thought to just how many direct and indirect family connections there were in this general neighbourhood. But not irrelevant to the Weimar appointment was that decades earlier Effler had been a colleague elsewhere of Emanuel's grandfather Ambrosius.

Recent marriage and impending fatherhood must have made better pay desirable, and it is quite possible that Maria Barbara's condition had prompted Bach to look to Weimar in the summer of 1708. Or there were disagreements with his pastor in Mülhausen, J. A. Frohne, a defender of Pietism (qv), on what constituted a 'well-regulated' ensemble music in an important church. Or there were personal tensions between the two main churches' clergy themselves, even perhaps a particular falling out that year over a cantata for 24 June, St John's day (Petzoldt 2000, p. 187). Or Bach did not get on well with the town's instrumentalists and preferred a court's music-making to that of a parish church and its ambience. 'Chamber and court organist' was one who participated with others in a wide musical repertory, even in the theatre if the occasion ever arose, but how expected it was that Bach should compose keyboard, instrumental and vocal music in Weimar has to be guessed. Almost certainly not as much as he did compose. But the musical potential in Weimar was higher than anything he had yet known, and it is a striking fact that for Bach, promotion and better pay never led to less work and never freed him from that inner drive to compose and perform. On the contrary.

However, it is certainly the case that Bach, like a clergyman, was called by God only to higher positions. The request for dismissal from Mühlhausen has touches of self-justification and disingenuousness, or at least of a barb or two thrown by the departed, one leaving with a better offer.

The Weimar appointment

Whatever the reasons for leaving the city of Mühlhausen, personal and professional contacts there did not cease. The Marienkirche's archdeacon and his daughter became respectively godparents to Bach's first two children (in Weimar), and apparently his election cantata of 1709 again had its text and music printed and available in the city (no extant copy). Also, decades later he was welcomed there when accompanying his son Johann Gottfried Bernhard on the boy's successful application at the Marienkirche in 1735. It looks very much as if he had always had better relations in Mühlhausen with people at the Marienkirche than at his own church, allowing one to speculate not so much why he left but why so soon: church doctrine or church personnel?

But Weimar, though much smaller than Mühlhausen, was a notable German 'residence city', seat of an absolute ruler, a domain that was subject less to powerful clergy and elected officials and more to the will of the reigning dukes. In Weimar's case, the 'Red Castle' of the reigning duke, with the court chapel and *Festsaal* (banqueting hall), was supplemented by the 'Yellow Castle' of his half-brother, both of whom soon supplied Bach with a harpsichord (Dok. II, p. 41). So Bach could call on at least three locations for music-making. It was a city in whose cultural life music featured high, judging by a succession of eminent musicians who had worked there: Melchior Vulpius, Johann Schein, Heinrich Schütz (for a short time) and J. G. Walther. (Much later in Weimar, Bach seems to have been largely forgotten. George Eliot, who stayed there in the 1850s and wrote a long account of the city, makes no mention of him.)

Having 'the opportunity to be heard by the duke' in Weimar, probably not in the town church but in the duke's castle, sounds as if Bach was suing for patronage. When the child Handel had been 'heard' by a duke as he played, it was probably on the spectacular organ in the duke's palace chapel of Weissenfels, and as with Bach in Weimar, this was a story presumably told by the composer himself in later years. Clearly, it was a standard way of obtaining a ruler's attention, in Handel's case not yet for a job but for patronage or sponsorship. J. P. Kellner, an important copyist of Bach manuscripts in the mid-1720s, and probably a friend rather than a pupil, reports in his autobiography of similarly being heard by several princes 'on command' while he was still at student age, presumably having sought their interest first. Interestingly, although Louis Marchand said he had 'the honour to be heard' by the king of France, and consequently dedicated his *Premier Livre* to him in 1702, he still had six years to wait for royal

appointment – interesting, because this foreshadows the several years Bach had to wait for royal appointment at Dresden in the 1730s.

At Weimar, the duke must have acted fast, as he was entitled to do, for by 20 June Bach's salary was approved and he was paid as for the second quarter of 1708, at a rate nearly double that at Mühlhausen. An annual allowance of corn (18 bushels), barley (12), firewood and beer (plus freedom from alcohol excise) was additional, as was an initial grant for 'procuring his furniture' (Dok. V, pp. 113f.). Surely Bach had bargained for all this. On 14 July, also perhaps at his request, on entering service he received a sum of 10 guilders *ex gratia*. The phrase is used in connection with payment *zum Anzugs-Gelde* ('for clothing money': Dok. II, p. 35), i.e. he had to acquire court dress. So Bach wore uniform. His rôle in the chapel music has not been established in detail, but it is likely to have been modest, surely in line generally with the Weimar Church Regulation of 1664 which required the organist not to play too long before the chorales or ensemble music, and to observe a proper musical *gravity* (BJ 2006, p. 40). As at any court, hiring and firing of employees was not an open process, and the duke's appointment specifies little more than terms of salary, including the payments in kind. But as for good behaviour and obedience: a duke had no need to specify.

The payment of 14 July 1708 implies that by then the Bachs (Maria Barbara pregnant with Catharina Dorothea) were resident in Weimar, and also that Bach's successor in Mühlhausen was already in place. The new 'chamber and court organist' of Weimar was much better paid than most parish-church organists and indeed better than his predecessors at the court, with a substantial salary rise in 1711 and another on promotion in March 1714, surely a result of his importuning. There were also additional miscellaneous fees for extra events, for keeping the harpsichords in order (at least, in the earlier years), teaching *Clavier* to the duke's page, and for engagements beyond Weimar (organ-testing in Taubach, visits to Weissenfels and probably elsewhere). Such a position could also lead to the acquiring of students, as it did. The Bachs seem to have lived in a house owned by a fellow court-musician, at least until 1713, and it will be remembered that already by March 1709, perhaps from July 1708, Maria Barbara's sister Friedelena had been living with them.

In the professional sphere, one particularly kindred spirit (so one might guess) to visit Bach early on in Weimar was the violinist J. G. Pisendel, composer of some solo violin music, the details of whose influence on Bach one would very much like to know. There may also have been good contact with Telemann, then working in Eisenach and, as we might now say,

tirelessly networking. Emanuel said that 'in his young years' his father was 'often together with Telemann' (Dok. III, p. 289), though whether this means already in Eisenach is unclear. Perhaps he meant Bach's early twenties in Weimar, even possibly hinting that they were less 'together' later. Whatever the case, from Telemann's music Bach could have continued to learn for decades what was fashionable in the musical world, both new conceptions (such as arias in 2/4 time) and newer genres (the *scherzo* movement, the *affettuoso* movement). Quite what Bach thought of the rather flabby lines of Telemann's Concerto in G for two violins when he made his copy of it in 1709 (apparently with and for Pisendel) is unrecorded, but it does bring together three gifted musicians much affected, one can safely assume, by the dazzling new Italian styles. It was some such interest that also led at Weimar to the arrangement of yet another Telemann concerto, BWV 985, now with a connection to Prince Johann Ernst, the younger duke's young half-brother and a composer of whom more needs to be said below.

Already resident in Weimar from a year previously was Bach's distant relative J. G. Walther, teacher of one of the scions of the ducal house (the same Prince Johann Ernst) and organist of the town church, the church to whose parish the young Bach family probably belonged. Why Walther rather than Bach taught the young prince is unknown but may have been the result of tensions in the ducal family: Prince Johann Ernst was a member of the junior family, not the reigning duke's, assumed to be Bach's employer. In his later twenties Bach came to stand as godfather to a son of Walther (1712), of his own brother Christoph (1713), of the court organbuilder H. N. Trebs (1713) and of a musical colleague in Weissenfels (A. I. Weldig, master of the pages, and one of Emanuel's godfathers, 1714). Meanwhile Maria Barbara was to stand for the daughters of a Weimar court trumpeter and of Sebastian's pupil J. G. Ziegler. The range of godparents for Bach's own children, three each, implies an active circle of acquaintance in the town and the province, whatever rôle godparents played in practice.

Although by 1708 Maria Barbara had her own box-pew in the nave of the duke's chapel, behind the capellmeister's wife, the family may also have had a pew in the town church where its baptisms took place, from Catharina Dorothea (1708) onwards, including those of Friedemann and Emanuel. A close connection between Weimar's two organists Bach and Walther can be guessed from the interest they shared in certain techniques of composition, in which Bach's greater adventurousness is self-evident. One interest was in using little patterns of notes to embellish the chorales,

the so-called *figurae* in use for decades by German organists and now systematically applied by both composers. Another was working on ways to set Advent and Christmas melodies in canon, the extant examples of which even suggest a rivalry between the two composers. They also shared an interest in certain French keyboard music, both of them making copies of Dieupart's *Suittes de Clavessin* and de Grigny's *Livre d'orgue*. Doubtless less self-reliant than his cousin, Walther seems to have been a much more prolific copyist of other people's organ music than Bach – though one cannot be totally sure of this – and preserved a great deal of it.

A big question is whether Bach, in his years as a regular organist before 1717, copied the work of other organists more than he is known from surviving manuscripts to have done. Even his own copious output as a composer cannot have covered every requirement, so the possibilities are that he improvised or repeated a good deal, and that he copied other composers' music, German or French, more than we know. If he did not, was it because he rejected it? If he did and used it in chapel (something he was unlikely to do with the French music he know), did it disappear along with other chapel music when eventually he left Weimar, probably in some haste?

On the chapel itself, see below, p. 118.

Early years in Weimar

His gracious lord's delight in his playing fired him to attempt everything possible in the art of how to treat the organ [*Kunst die Orgel zu handhaben*]. (*Obituary*)

Very little is documented of the first five years at Weimar, and a fair assumption is that they, Bach's mid-twenties, were very much taken up with keyboard activities: playing, teaching, composing, inaugurating (a small organ in nearby Taubach, 1710), involving harpsichord as much as organ, if not more. It would be strange if Taubach was the only organ he inaugurated at that period. But when the Obituary goes on to say that here in Weimar he also wrote most of his pieces for organ at least two questions arise. Did Emanuel overstate, affected by his father's spoken enthusiasm for what had been his last position as a regular organist? Or did he know (or think) that his major works apparently written later derived from versions already composed in Weimar? Both could be the case, the second more significant musically.

For any composer, increasing familiarity with foreign keyboard music leavens the standard fare of local consumption, and Bach can have been no exception in this respect. All the more unfortunate, therefore, is that the earliest known choral-ensemble music of his Weimar period, i.e. the second and possibly third election cantata for his old community in Mühlhausen, has not survived, since it might show how far 'beyond Buxtehude' he was beginning to move by now. Whether a visit to the Gotha Court at some point in 1711 (Dok. V, p. 273) was for more than advising on the organ is not known, but if the outstanding 'Hunt Cantata', BWV 208, was performed for the Duke of Weissenfels's birthday in 1713, not only had musical understanding grown exponentially in five years but his renown had already spread, apparently beyond Thuringia. This is suggested by one pupil, P. D. Kräuter, coming from far-away Augsburg in the same year to study with him. (For BWV 208 and Kräuter, see further below.)

There must be several reasons why the Obituary emphasizes the organ, almost to the detriment of any vocal works there were, few or none of which Emanuel knew unless they were revised later. For one thing, by the 1750s the music for organ was in wider circulation than most other music of Bach including the cantatas and Passions, and by then the harpsichord, chamber and vocal music of 1715 had been largely superseded. But the very uniqueness of the bigger organ pieces impressed itself on writers whose own period produced nothing comparable. The result is that the Obituary authors knew little of what was composed at Weimar. *When* it was composed is another big question: much organ and harpsichord music is dated today on the basis of how far it appears to have developed beyond provincial compositions of *c.* 1700. But such reasoning could be circular for a composer who accumulated and rethought.

By 'His gracious lord', it is not clear which of the two Weimar dukes Emanuel is referring to, Wilhelm Ernst the senior or Ernst August the junior (his nephew), and perhaps he was uncertain himself. The former was the controlling authority of funds and personnel, as events were to prove, but in 1775 Emanuel cited the latter as having particularly supported his father (Dok. III, p. 289). It was also Ernst August's own father who had employed Bach for a time in 1703, as part of building up a musical establishment, and it was his own younger half-brother Prince Johann Ernst whose string concertos are found among Bach's transcriptions. But whichever duke it was that Bach impressed, Emanuel is silent on one intractable problem of life in Weimar: the two dukes lived in such mutual enmity and territorial rivalry as would inevitably involve the

musicians one way or another, leaving those favoured by one to be discriminated against by the other. There are few signs that the atmosphere was easy.

The situation gives some idea of life in an absolutist ruler's court. Shortly before Bach's arrival, the senior duke had decreed that his *cappella* musicians were not to play in the junior duke's residence without his permission, on pain of a fine and incarceration (Glöckner 1988, p. 137). The decree was re-issued two years after Bach's departure, presumably because it had been defied – by Bach himself? – and by then the conditions were stricter: the musicians were not even allowed to discuss the matter. In response, the junior duke tried to compel them to choose to be his retainers as well, failing which they would forfeit any payments they (like Bach) had had from him, a forfeit which he would pursue through their children and children's children. Although by then Bach was not involved, such nasty conditions throw some light on another, much later event, namely, his own incarceration in 1717 and release a month later. They also raise questions about other contacts he had made in 1713, at Weissenfels (probably a visit) and later the same year at Halle (certainly a visit), this latter for the vacant organist's post. Five years after appointment at Weimar, he was looking to leave?

If, at about the time he became court musician to one or other Weimar duke, Bach was producing the organ Passacaglia, not only was his ability to create harmonic tension maturing but so must have been his organ-playing. So they were if, similarly, he was soon to begin to create the types of chorale now familiar from the album later called *Orgelbüchlein* (see below). On such 'ifs' hang a whole interpretation of the composer's development, not least as a player. Specifically, the technical demands of many organ works are taxing beyond norms of the day, setting him on the path to the Six Sonatas for Organ twenty years later, and justifying the Obituary's remark at the top of this section. While the *Orgelbüchlein* chorales and the later sonatas are both remarkably succinct, interesting work was also done towards creating much longer pieces, as with the Passacaglia. Spacious treatment, even when the pre-laid harmonic plan of a chorale is treated at great length, can result in more than mere length: the long Variation 10 of the chorale variations 'Sei gegrüsset', BWV 768, already achieves a new and convincing coherence. For Bach, success in creating both unusually succinct and unusually extended music remained a recurrent aim: he could do both length and brevity.

When engaged as organ-examiner, at Arnstadt in 1703, Langewiesen in 1706, Mühlhausen in 1709 (?), Taubach 1710, Halle 1716, Erfurt

Augustinerkirche 1716, Leipzig University Church 1717 (the last three major organs), Bach may customarily have played a public concert of his grander works, various praeludia or *Fantasien* and longer chorale-settings. (At Halle, it is not known which of the organists present played before or after the sermon when the special new organ was inaugurated, whether it was one of the three examiners including Bach or the newly appointed organist Kirchhoff. Perhaps all four (Dok. II, p. 60).) A probable reason why the dating and purpose of Bach's bigger organ works are such guesswork is that some were portfolio works selected and revised as such occasions required or as studied by qualified students. 'Occasions' would include inaugurations and demonstrations as well as lessons, and it can be misleading to pin down the dates of so many keyboard works of Bach: the works themselves were not fixtures even when gathered into a collection, as gradually happened now and then.

The Obituary's emphasis here on the organ is one-sided. Given that Bach had virtuoso ability as an organist and explored certain kinds of organ music farther than any predecessor, and given that he continued to do so even as cantor and no longer a regular organist, it is still puzzling that neither part of the Obituary, Emanuel's or Agricola's, acknowledges the strides he also took in chamber and harpsichord music during the Weimar years. At Leipzig, did he never speak of having taken a leading part in the duke's concert life? Learning 'how to treat the organ' sounds like the composer's own phrase when later describing his priorities at that period. It implies that he was also imitating other kinds of music on the organ, composing chorales like chamber trios and fugues like concertos. Emanuel would know the extraordinary range between a chorale of 8 bars in the *Orgelbüchlein* (BWV 631) and a big toccata of more than 400 (the F major, BWV 540), and would find in works such as these a clear demonstration of 'how to treat the organ'.

With the duke's approval and at his cost, the chapel organ was being improved and enlarged over several years, and was in and out of commission over 1707–9 and again from June 1712 to May 1714 (Schrammek 1988). The instrument could never become very grand, placed where it was, and its sound must always have been somewhat indirect in the chapel, if not actually dull or indistinct. For it was located at the back of an attic chamber above the chapel ceiling through which a balustraded opening of 4 by 3 metres admitted sight and sound, 20 metres above the chapel floor. Through this opening the organ, just visible, spoke down into the rectangular chapel below, as if from on high. For its services, the chapel, which was some 30 metres long and 12 wide, was occupied on the ground

floor and two running galleries not by a parish-congregation but by court personnel, who looked towards the liturgical east end at an altar structure that was itself not unlike a stage-set or *scena*. This consisted of (in vertical order) step, altar rail, altar table, *baldacchino*, pulpit, a decorated obelisk pointing up to 'heaven's castle', then the attic chamber balustrade. This chamber had a narrow space for performers and some way at the back of it the organ, with a 'heavenly' fresco on the plaster dome above. Although documentary reference to certain seats built in this attic conveys a picture of singers and instrumentalists stationed there during services or rehearsals, whether they always performed from on high in this way and more or less out of sight is open to doubt.

The organ, glimpsed at the top of the *scena* or 'path to heaven' (*Weg zur Himmelsburg*), had its back against the wall, with bass pipes and bellows-chamber at the very back. In 1658 it had one manual only, which probably was all that could be accommodated comfortably in a restricted space; but then a second was added, its pipe-chest placed to the side and played presumably with a complicated action that might never have worked very well. Shortly before Bach was appointed, an improvement was made by relocating this side-chest under the main pipe-chest. How room was made for this is hard to guess, but it probably made further work of improvement inevitable; this was done during Bach's term of office and resulted in an enlarged chamber being constructed behind, presumably at his urging. A row of tuned bells was also made (probably positioned just behind the music-desk and played from the manual), and the whole organ now comprised about two dozen stops: not a great inspiration, barely more than adequate for realizing new ideas in organ music, but useful none the less. Quite why Bach thought, as it seems he did, that a row of bells was necessary (acquired at some cost from Nuremberg) is not explained, and one can only assume that they sounded at certain jolly moments, during chorales at Christmas and other festive times. An organist writing in 1742 specifically mentions the young Bach having a Glockenspiel or row of bells installed earlier at Mühlhausen (Dok. II, p. 405).

The duke may have 'fired him up' (*feuerte ihn an*) but many a court organist strove to please, and in Bach's case there must also have been an extraordinary creative urge and practical ability matched by curiosity and industry. Fortunately for this new range of musical styles, it seems that his predecessor Effler preferred a more modern organ-tuning than elsewhere (BJ 2004, pp. 160–1), which might explain the appearance of the keys F minor and E flat major for chorales in the *Orgelbüchlein*. The tangible result of the duke's support was that the organ music produced by Bach

surveys a range of styles wider and on a bigger scale than had ever been achieved before by any organist in any European tradition, offering every subsequent composer a model to emulate as best he can. The Obituary authors surely realized this. After all, there is an important possibility to bear in mind here: that the first music Bach developed beyond precedents was not so much that for voices, strings or harpsichord but for the church organ.

The Obituary's gracious acknowledgement of the duke's support may have had another purpose: it was of a kind that Bach was not to receive later in Leipzig. But what purpose his organ music had at Weimar is not as clear as is often assumed, whether for voluntaries before and after the service or as items for private ducal concerts. Or as brilliant music shown off by a star employee for the duke's noble visitors? A ruler of such known piety as the Duke of Weimar might well take pleasure in special organ music being played in his chapel by a gifted and well-paid employee, although compared to other court chapels in that part of the world (Eisenberg, Saalfeld, Sangerhausen, Weissenfels) the Weimar chapel and its organ were not the most spectacular. Whether the organist played after the services as the congregation retired is uncertain, but if he did, there was a choice of toccatas, fugues, concerto- transcriptions and improvisations as well as exceptional mixed genres such as a grand ritornello Fantasia on the Whitsuntide hymn, BWV 651a. By now pieces such as these had become genuine organ works, no longer suitable for other keyboard instruments.

To what extent the works as we know them represent the composer's improvisations is not clear from the Obituary's phrase 'everything possible in the art of how to treat the organ'. Certainly Bach was expanding the repertory by absorbing other kinds of music such as sonatas and concertos, as he was also expanding styles in the cantatas, and such music would come about only after thoughtful deliberation. But how he improvised can be only hesitantly traced from surviving examples: first, in fantasias and toccatas, with their various runs, arpeggios, stopping and starting, clear cadences, distant modulations, moments of free recitative, etc; and secondly, in fugues, with moments of contrapuntal imitation interspersing freer episodes based as often as not on broken chords. A work such as the ubiquitous 'Toccata and Fugue in D minor for Organ', BWV 565, might give an idea of what some organists throughout the eighteenth century could improvise with thin harmonies, a few rhetorical gestures, dramatic pauses, simple shape, much repetition and virtually no counterpoint. But far too much is doubtful about the authenticity of this piece for it to have anything reliable to say about the young organist J. S. Bach.

Although it is clear that Bach did develop organ toccatas into big, subtle, fully worked concerto-like movements (C major, BWV 564.i; F major, BWV 540.i), the steps in this evolution are also hard to trace. As already suggested, early compositions or creative adaptations such as the Albinoni fugues are as likely to have been revised, rewritten and transmitted in various states; and this is true of some of the later big preludes and fugues. How unusual Bach's practice was in this aspect is impossible to know, since no comparable fund of sources exists for any other composer. But not all versions now known are likely to go back in all their details to Bach himself, and few are likely to be the only ones that ever existed. The 'Fantasia in G major', BWV 572, could represent the kind of music that Bach improvised in his late twenties or early thirties, indeed for the delight of his duke in Weimar, either on organ or on harpsichord, and attaching it to one or more other movements. But many works are so original that there are few clear criteria for dating them: the G major Praeludium, BWV 541, which begins like an improvisation but couples two highly organized ritornello movements, could have originated many years before the composer made a copy of it in the 1730s, with or without its known fugue. Evolution of a genre is not reliably traced when it is as isolated as Bach's 'free' organ works are, individually structured like string concertos but otherwise unlike them and unlike each other.

A down-to-earth question is how often Bach paired a prelude with a fugue to make a complementary pair, either on paper or in performance. This was almost certainly less often than supposed by anyone who relies on later editions or who has the completed WTC in mind, as all subsequent editors and players of the music have. But the earliest known versions of many WTC preludes did not accompany fugues either, and not even in WTC did the composer actually label them *Prelude & Fugue* (see p. 237). Nevertheless, once the idea of a pair became familiar from publications by J. K. F. Fischer and others, pairing must have seemed natural, particularly when the prelude was short and preceded a substantial fugue, as it did not always do. Prelude-and-fugue pairing is also there in vocal works early (Cantata No. 131) and late (Kyrie of the 'B minor Mass'), as it is in the harpsichord works of *Clavierübung I*, *II* and '*IV*'. A fugue does not have to be 'bigger' than its prelude – it rarely is later in the WTC1 and WTC2 – and it could be that some couplings of doubtful authenticity result from someone else attaching a fugue to a free-standing prelude.

That Bach was constantly, so to speak endlessly, curious is suggested by music of other kinds he became acquainted with during his earlier Weimar years, making a most important item in his biography and output.

Concertos of Albinoni (Op. 2, published 1700) and Telemann (Concerto in G, copy *c.* 1709) are certain, but often over his middle years one can only infer what he knew, such as one or other edition of Corelli's violin sonatas, Op. V. While these are a worthy model for any musician, the musical quality of some other items varies, suggesting that Bach's self-teaching was serendipitous and eclectic. He came to own copies of at least three important organ publications originating far from Weimar: the volumes of Ammerbach's *Tabulaturbuch* (Leipzig, 1571), Frescobaldi's *Fiori musicali* (Venice, 1635) and his manuscript of de Grigny's *Livre d'orgue* (Paris, *c.* 1700). He appears to have possessed at least three exemplars, possibly more, of the Ammerbach, either paying homage to a Leipzig predecessor or investing in them to sell to visitors. Their antiquarian value was high, being the first printed volume of keyboard music in Germany, an example of tablature, published by the then organist of St Thomas. A note, probably autograph, on one copy said that it cost one gold louis d'or (Dok. I, p. 269), a very large sum. By the eighteenth century, however, Ammerbach's actual musical influence had dwindled.

As for Frescobaldi, discriminating composers must always have recognized his quality. In Dresden, J. D. Zelenka also had a manuscript copy of the *Fiori musicali* dated 1718 (Beisswenger 1992, p. 285), while in Hamburg Reinken is known to have been familiar with a book of Frescobaldi toccatas. Exactly how Bach got to know the de Grigny and (two or three years later) the Frescobaldi publications is a guess, probably through J. G. Walther who habitually corresponded with other musicians. His own copies of the de Grigny and Dieupart books were perhaps a little later than Bach's but surely suggest a shared interest. While Frescobaldi continued to influence Bach's counterpoint into his maturity, de Grigny's manner of writing for the organ is less in evidence. Did copying not lead him to grasp the beauty of the French styles, especially the lyrical solos for the left hand – the *en taille* solos? These can be occasionally glimpsed, as in the Weimar organ-chorale BWV 663a, but Bach seems never to have composed fully in this way, perhaps finding its peculiar lyricism too indulgent for Lutheran chorales, Lutheran organists, Lutheran congregations. One thing seems likely: the exceptionally high musical quality of Frescobaldi's and de Grigny's books was recognized by Bach and they were even more carefully preserved than usual.

Some full-length organ-chorales from these years took in an unusual range of styles, confirming that Bach, though a Lutheran organist, did absorb much non-Lutheran music that he came across in Weimar. De Grigny, for instance, gave him practical examples of writing richer

harmony by adding a fifth part to the usual four, something found then in certain chorales and cantatas. Dance-types were also adapted for chorales, either because they were familiar to German organists already or because (in Bach's case) André Raison referred to them in his *Livre d'orgue* of 1688. The very length of one Weimar chorale, 'Schmücke dich', BWV 654a, a work fittingly enthused over by Schumann a century later, enables the composer to amalgamate two very different genres: a true-to-life sarabande and an organist's typical setting of the hymn line by line according to tradition. The result is continuous and tuneful. A gigue, on the other hand, has to be tempered when the chorale is for Communion (BWV 666a) but can be extrovert for Whit Sunday (the astonishing 'Komm, Gott Schöpfer', BWV 667a). The large scale of such organ-chorales, even before later revision in the Leipzig years, is also a feature of the recently discovered chorale BWV 1128, as if it were Bach's 'answer' to the kind of long fantasia beloved by organists in the north.

If it is less certain than usually thought quite how the organ-chorales were actually used, how much more is this so for the harpsichord toccatas! Although five or so of these are now known in disparate copies, the Obituary lists *Six Toccatas* as if speaking of a fixed set. (A lost set known to Emanuel and intended for publication?) Copies of two of them, BWV 913 and 914, had already been made by 1708 or 1709, so shortly after the move to Weimar, and possibly for or by a new student. The Toccatas' sections appear to follow the structures of earlier German organ toccatas, familiar in the Weimar chapel perhaps, and in which free virtuoso passages are interspersed between sections more in the style of sonata movements. Each section is characteristically 'thorough', exploring its themes with felicitous harmony and taking an evident pleasure in perfect cadences. If the counterpoint is still somewhat hidebound, there are flashes of melody elsewhere in which one might fancy the influence of Georg Böhm. Despite the traditional repetitions and short phrases in these toccatas, there are increasing signs of the maturing composer's grasp of sustained length, of harmonic movement and of what works well on the keyboard.

Cantatas in Weimar, 1

Tracing step by step Bach's experience with vocal works before his promotion at Weimar in March 1714 (see p. 155) is not possible, though there are some pointers. In Cantata No. 196 (see above, p. 67) the young composer had not gone much beyond imitating choral works by Weckmann and others

he could have heard in Hamburg or Lübeck. But this might reflect the fact that a display of old-fashioned permutation counterpoint is not inappropriate for the text of No. 196, a formal Old Testament benediction from Psalm 115; see Example 7 on p. 131. Not for the only time, guessing which of two accomplished but disparate Bach works was the earlier (the Passacaglia or Cantata No. 196) cannot be based on simple comparison: they are too different in genre and purpose.

An area explored during at least the later Weimar years was the copies Bach made (or had made) of choral works, including Latin works, chiefly old-style Kyries, by Roman Catholic composers not now well known, such as J. Baal, F. B. Conti, M. G. Peranda, J. C. Pez (from the *Missa San Lamberti*, Augsburg, 1706) and J. C. Schmidt. Whether these were for private study or for occasional performance in the Weimar chapel is not clear from documents, although some separate performing parts make it possible that Kyries (often sung in major Lutheran churches) were intended for it. Bach and Walther shared an interest in Palestrina and the *stile antico* (qv) of old Latin vocal music, but again, whether the known copies of Palestrina's original printed parts were made in order for singing in a service (unlikely), in informal performances (possibly) or in contrapuntal studies (probably) is not established. Judging by the accidentals consistently added at some stage to Peranda's and particularly Palestrina's modal lines, someone was interested in modernizing this music for modern performance, either in Weimar or in Weissenfels. At this period in Weissenfels, J. P. Krieger had a collection of the very works known in Weimar (BJ 2013, p. 85).

An assumption has been that Bach made use of the Weimar Palestrina copies later for performance in Leipzig. But used in this way or not, such vocal music was to be studied for much the same reason that it was studied in twentieth-century British universities: as a model for contrapuntal work, to learn the nature of intervals, to absorb the art of good part-writing and so forth. Its usefulness as a foundation to such a composer of keyboard music as Bach is also clear from many a fugue of his over the years to come. On the other hand, the cantatas from the Weimar years rarely allude patently to this old contrapuntal style, just occasionally (a countersubject in Cantata No. 54.iii). Characteristics of the style emerge much more often in the later cantatas for the Thomaskirche, Leipzig, suggesting that earlier in Weimar, for the solo singers of the duke's chapel or because the dukes had other tastes, Bach was deliberately turning away there from the *stile antico*.

How unusual such copying of imported choral music was is difficult to know, for some of it survives because it has Bach's name or writing on it.

But other acquaintances also copied out French keyboard music. The young prince himself was to compose concertos imitating Vivaldi with a musical competence rare, perhaps unique, for a teenage nobleman. In the same way, one can assume that many details in the arias and recitatives in the Weimar cantatas were due to exposure to other kinds of up-to-date music in a cultured court, even the court of a duke anxious to observe his religious obligations by standardizing the duchy's hymnbooks. This he did by means of the published Weimar *Gesangbuch* of 1713. In March 1714, the very month Bach became *concertmeister* and began a series of cantatas, the chapel accounts include the cost of five blackboards on which the hymn-numbers were to be announced (Jauernig 1950, p. 71). The two genres, chorales sung by the congregation and chorales sung by professional soloists, remained quite separate in their musical language.
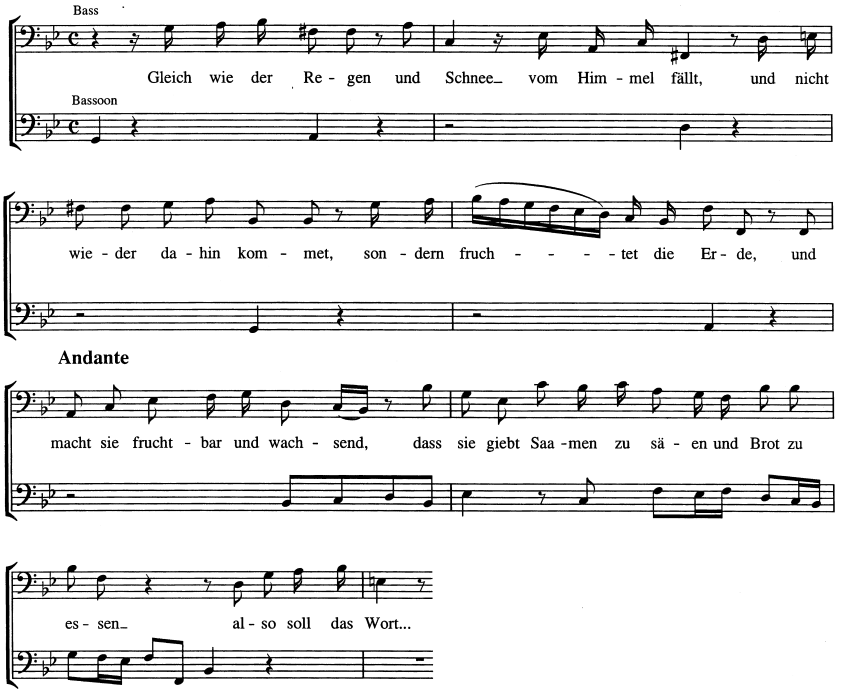
Bach's original position of 'chamber musician' indicated duties in the general music-making at court and as member of a *cappella* of fourteen musicians, to whom were added a pool of seven trumpeters and timpanist as occasion required. Whether duties included playing harpsichord solos in court concerts is not documented, nor indeed whether solo harpsichord-playing was known at all to audiences bigger than a select few. Nor is it known precisely what the ensemble works were in which he presumably did participate: solo instrumental sonatas (playing continuo with violin, gamba, recorder or oboe soloists), string trios, mixed trios and broken consort music for wind, strings and keyboard (those works the Italians called *concerti*). One can suppose that it would have taken some years for all these activities to flourish.

A particular unanswered question is whether the set of parts Bach himself seems to have copied for an anonymous setting of the St Mark Passion a few years into his Weimar job (a work attributed variously to the northerners R. Keiser and F. N. Brauns) was made for performance in the chapel, or indeed anywhere else. If this had happened or was meant to happen, it would have probably been his largest performance to date, though in a chamber setting for a few performers: SATB, two violins, two violas, oboe and harpsichord. There were some new movements added (recitative, a prelude and fugue for instruments, two *bicinia*), the work of a still-young composer using and adding to music from elsewhere, interested in ways to write for voices and instruments and making a new, whole piece for local performance. This was a procedure also familiar to Handel. Bach's copy is the only surviving manuscript of the work, which he revived twice in Leipzig, and is an example of what could well have been a common activity for him in Weimar.

In the chapel cantatas, and perhaps on other occasions, the six male singers and a handful of string- and wind-players made it possible to create various ensemble combinations, especially when other soloists joined them. This was an enthralling opportunity for a young musician and composer of cantatas. Familiar with the old tradition for mixed consorts, Bach was gradually able to create newer works in a variety of instrumental combinations, fresh springs from which the mighty stream of 'Brandenburg Concertos' was to issue later. Particularly after his promotion in 1714, a big ensemble of strings, wind and brass could rejoice in a *Sonata* for an Easter Day in Cantata No. 31 or introduce the cantata for Christmas Day in No. 63; other ensembles include a five-part 'French' string band for an Advent *Ouverture* in Cantata No. 61, an expressive string and woodwind *Sinfonia* for a post-Christmas cantata in Cantata No. 152 and a delicate violin solo in the *Sonata* for the Annunciation in Cantata No. 182. The four solo violas in Cantata No. 18 have an essentially old-fashioned sound and texture, but the work also includes an example of the new *recitativo secco* (qv), and does so with little sign that Bach was experimenting with something novel to him, except perhaps in the shortness of the phrases. Example 5 already includes both a characteristic change of pace and, because of this, draws attention to important words ('falls', 'fructify', 'Word').

Telemann's setting of this same cantata text by Erdmann Neumeister is typically bland in its harmony and gesture, emphasizing what a colourful drama Bach brought to the music for the Weimar liturgy. This becomes clearer when on later occasions in Leipzig, Bach writes a cantata as if imitating the simpler harmony and phraseology of the ever-popular Telemann, for example Cantata No. 47 (1726). There is in the Weimar cantatas a lightness of touch in melody and timbre that remained distinct from the later works for Leipzig, and of course from the work of contemporary composers. At the same time, writing recitative with continuo in a cantata was itself a way of reconciling 'church sounds' with 'chamber sounds', as it had also been for a generation or so of German composers. It is well to remember too that one cannot be sure that such colourful cantatas were performed only in chapel or only as part of its services. Never anywhere else?

Although the intimate understanding of French *manière* evident in the opening *ouverture et fugue* of the Advent Cantata No. 61 (1714) may appear to have little to do with Parisian organ music, the way it paraphrases the Gregorian chorale-melody is as French as it is German. De Grigny too, in his book copied by Bach, had paraphrased the original



Example 5 Cantata No. 18.ii: 'Just as the rain and snow fall from heaven, and do not persist but fructify the earth, making it fertile and increasing so that it gives seeds to sow and bread to eat, so should the Word . . .'

hymn melodies in this way in his settings, though doing so with a degree of arbitrariness in his harmonies (why this, why that, what is the key?) unknown to the orderly Bach. There are other touches of French style in Cantata No. 61, adopted almost certainly as a means of matching the *theatrical* aura of the text it uses, i.e. one of Pastor Neumeister's, associated also with Telemann's 'French annual cantata-cycle' of 1714/15. Thus might a cantata – here from 1714, but also others before and after – gather together all and any kinds of musical idiom, not only for the Greater Glory but for that mixing of styles to which the composer was not alone in being attracted throughout his life. Doubtless deliberately, the first movement of a later Advent cantata, No. 62 (1724) paraphrases the same hymn-tune but now in the very different style, not a French *ouverture* but an Italian ritornello *concerto*.

Whatever their musical styles, the works being produced in Weimar are responding in a lively fashion to the newer poetry as celebrated in Erdmann Neumeister's libretti, of which there were hundreds, and gathered

as yearly cycles from 1704 onwards. Neumeister's original title of 1700, *Geistliche Cantaten statt einer Kirchen-Music* ('spiritual cantatas in the place of a church anthem'), uses the word *cantata* in order to allude directly to fashionable Italian chamber cantatas and their sequence of arias (new poetry) and recitatives (new or old prose), now in 'spiritual' form. Alien to the Italian conception of cantatas, however, were the additional movements, the instrumental overture, the big choral movement and the final chorale. So of course were any chorale-melodies introduced at any point within a cantata. Such cantata-texts, often published and treated as self-contained poetry, could be realized as recitatives, arias and choruses (these with biblical sentences), and an appropriate chorale could round it off even if the poet's text did not call for one.

In general, the new texts would naturally encourage a 'theatrical' style of music at a certain moment in services, introducing conspicuously new sounds and words, and it is not surprising that court chapels such as Meiningen and Weissenfels soon made use of such texts. At Weissenfels, the composer J. P. Krieger may have set Neumeister's volume complete. But already in 1709–10 such works were being criticized as *theatralische Music* by none other than the Leipzig cantor Kuhnau (DDT 58–9, p. xlii). Deliberately or not, Kuhnau was recognizing the difference between court chapels and parish churches: as Bach was to find, a parish church was sensitive to theatrical music. Pastor Neumeister supplied ready examples of these so-called madrigalian texts for the composer of any court or, eventually, of any parish church, and the idea was given impetus by what was acceptable in royal cosmopolitan Dresden. Texts from 1710 onwards that mixed biblical words and chorales with the new poetry were especially acceptable. At Weimar in 1709, a member of the court clergy published a Passion text based on St Matthew, 'with intermixed devotional chorales and arias', and it is possible that at least in the town church some such work was performed over the following years (BJ 2006, pp. 45f.).
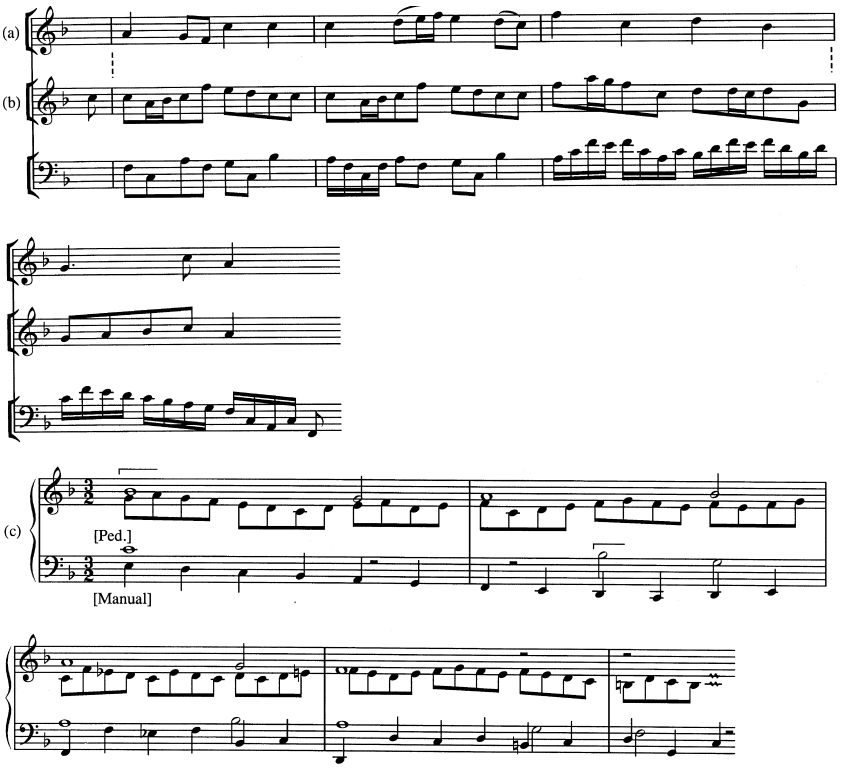
From now on Bach seems often to have chosen Neumeister texts and, since he set far fewer of them than did Telemann or Fasch, those from other poets such as the court secretary, Salomon Franck, who had a similar way of incorporating biblical words in his poetry. Franck's Cantata No. 172 for Whit Sunday 1714 draws from Bach an alert series of musical affects: first a rejoicing (big orchestra, catchy rhythms) then a quieter recitative, a tenor aria in the minor interspersed with a forthright affirmation of the Trinity (this with trumpets and bass voice), an exhortatory aria (soothing soprano) and finally a fully orchestrated verse from an Annunciation chorale. While such music lends itself to a sermon-like interpretation

encouraged, so one might guess, by the composer himself, the sheer charm of so many melodies in Weimar cantatas should not be missed, as in Nos. 132.i and 63.v. Nor should the inventive timbres colouring the effortless counterpoint, as in the viola d'amore in No. 152.i and two solo cellos in No. 163.iii. These cantatas are not from the earlier Weimar years but follow on the composer's promotion (pp. 155f.). However, that this was less of a watershed moment, a turning point in his maturity, than it has sometimes been taken to be, seems clear from the sheer scope of the fifteen movements of the 'Hunting Cantata', No. 208, from a year or more earlier.

Musical development: counterpoint, variations, concertos

Bach's musical experiences in Weimar were much wider than is implied either by the Obituary's emphasis on him as a virtuoso organist or by any other extant documentation. A still-open question is what music visiting artists and companies brought to Weimar, including excerpts from French or Italian operas. There were also his other contacts with neighbouring courts, such as at Gotha in 1711 when he was a 'guest player' (Dok. V, p. 273) and then, on returning to Weimar, a successful applicant already for a salary increase – not a coincidence, probably.
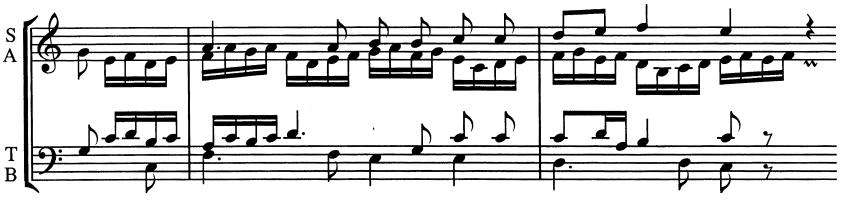
It was no doubt from private study rather than court-visiting that a fundamental technique in Bach's maturing compositions for instruments or voices emerged and bore fruit: his mastery of invertible counterpoint, well beyond the examples offered by any theory-book. For him, this generated virtually any kind of music, from the earliest organ-chorales to the later Inventions (qv), from a Mühlhausen cantata to the 'B minor Mass'. With this mastery, different themes or melodic lines are combined or exchanged with a bass-line (which is melodious in its own way) to produce music for virtually any wished-for *Affekt*, including the lightest and brightest. See Example 6(a), recomposed as Example 6(b). Even a canon can be made to work if other such lines are added so as to convince the ear that all is well, as in Example 6(c). Examples 6(a) and 6(c) belong to much the same period (1712–13) and are quite typical. An advantage of invertible counterpoint is that at a stroke the lines become available for re-using in different combinations, and the different keys have their own character. In such ways any initial effort that is required to create the invertibility turns out to be an economical way of generating movements and one that is practically infinite.



Example 6 (a) Cantata No. 208 (1713?).xiii, b. 5; (b) Cantata No. 68 (1725).ii, b. 5; (c) Organ-chorale, BWV 600, b. 9

Typical of the music for choirs had been a counterpoint based on the permutation principle. Bach's look very like the best achievements of previous composers and give the impression of being 'systematic' or 'calculated' (see Example 7). This is an old way of creating vocal counterpoint, and while in this instance the lines are still melodious despite the ingenuity, there can appear many short phrases and a certain repetitiousness that arises in the service of the text. In the organ Passacaglia's fugue, however, the short phrases such as those found in Cantata No. 196 (Example 7) have disappeared, despite this being a permutation fugue. Here, new counterpoint emerges each time and is unpredictable.

A less pervasive technique than invertible counterpoint or fugue but still important was canon. The German organist's custom of making canons at the octave (qv) from the melodies of Advent or Christmas hymns will clearly be challenged more severely by some melodies than others. Example 6(c), 'Gottes Sohn ist kommen', required ingenuity if the canon



Example 7 Cantata No. 196.i, b. 18. Text: 'He blesses the House of Israel, the House of Aaron'

was to work, i.e. to make us think that the lines occurred naturally. Walther's setting of this melody eases the problem by leaving it longer before the canonic answer, resulting in a movement nearly twice as long as Bach's but therefore 'less canonic'. The canon in another Weimar organ-chorale, 'Hilf Gott, dass mir's gelinge', BWV 624, needs to have its answers at varying intervals if it is to work, whereas in the Ten Commandments setting (BWV 635) there are several 'simultaneous' canons as the melody accompanies itself. The painstaking thought (and imagination) required for such music is obvious.

Certain practices and techniques, such as creating a set of variations on a hymn-tune by exploring a different motif in each variation, barely survived into the Weimar period, and one can understand why. Such sets, generally called 'Chorale Partitas' today (though not with any certainty by Bach himself), seem to have been a speciality of Thuringian organists for a few decades around 1700, if only seldom beyond the second decade. In 1802, Forkel's claim that Bach found writing sets of variations a 'thankless task' (1802, p. 52) arose because he (Forkel) knew that in most cases they merely reiterated the harmony by superficially decorating it. One sees this clearly in the 'Chorale Partitas', BWV 766–8 and 770, and perhaps Emanuel or Friedemann had heard the composer speak of the 'thankless task'. But Forkel could have concluded this because there are so few examples of ordinary variations in Bach's worklist compared to Handel's or indeed Mozart's, with which by then Forkel was also familiar. The remark does not quite do justice, however, to the way a chorale might be varied, reharmonized several times in a cantata or a Passion (as was the case): harmony can be imaginatively explored under a melody as much as the melody can be decorated. More to the point, perhaps, is that any such 'partitas' reliably attributed to Bach confirm that his early activity as a composer was typical of a Thuringian organist of the time.

All the same, Bach can be imagined to have reacted against the simplistic variations he came across in his youth, works that continued to influence

Handel in his variations. One notes that the four big, outstanding and indeed unique variation-works that Bach did compose in the course of over thirty years – Cantata No. 4 for voices, the *Passacaille* for organ, the *Ciaccona* for violin, the *Aria mit Veränderungen* ('Goldberg Variations') for harpsichord – do everything but reiterate the harmony in some simplistic way. A similar point could be made about those Leipzig cantatas that are based, in rather different ways, on seven-verse chorales (see p. 283). Three late works, Musical Offering, Art of Fugue and 'Vom Himmel hoch', take the variation principle a step further by using the stated theme not for reiterating or varying the harmony but as a point of reference, one way or another, for an array of complex canons.

For the picture he is drawing of a serious composer, Emanuel described the Weimar job in terms of organ music and, after the promotion in 1714, of 'mainly church pieces', as he called them. And yet of huge importance to Bach, something even changing the direction much of his music was to take, was something Emanuel never mentions: sudden acquaintance in 1713 with a group of new string concertos from Venice. Whether or not this was as simple as evidence now suggests, the vivid and seductive effect of these spectacular pieces, perhaps glimpsed already in isolated examples previously making their way north, can be imagined: a voracious, energetic composer in his late twenties suddenly gets to know Vivaldi's Op. 3, *L'Estro armonico*, and Op. 4, *La Stravaganza*. A revelation! Did Emanuel not appreciate this or did it detract too much from his picture of the self-made German master?

The closer Bach had continued to keep to tradition in his organ and harpsichord music, the more startling must have been the 'Vivaldian effect' in other kinds of music. When, probably in July 1713, the young Prince Johann Ernst returned to Weimar from a stay in Holland with copies of music by Vivaldi and other Italians (Corelli? Frescobaldi?), the prints of string concertos he brought took the form of part-books: not scores but sets of playing parts. So one is left to imagine the effect on players picking up these parts and trying them out; or on the transcriber as the concertos emerged in score and revealed their effects. Soon after the prince's return, one imagines those musicians concerned (the prince, his half-brother, Walther, Bach, some string-players) gathering to play the concertos in the junior duke's residence, the Red Palace or *Rotes Schloß* with or without the senior duke's approval.

There could be various reasons why one Weimar organist, Walther, seems to have worked more with the older generation of Italian composers such as Torelli, while another, Bach, worked increasingly with the younger

such as Vivaldi: personal preference, accident of sources, availability, even reciprocal agreement between the two organists. In any case, the sheer quality of Vivaldi's *L'estro armonico* concertos is surely the reason for Bach's transcribing at least half of them, either at that time or later: three for harpsichord alone, two for organ alone, and the unique one later for four harpsichords and strings. Two more each from Op. 4 and Op. 7 (1716, one for organ) must be a sign of someone's continuing enthusiasm for such transcriptions, Bach's or perhaps a student's. Transcribing part by part was laborious, and it must have been difficult to resist modifying in some way what was being transcribed.

Whether Bach learnt from Prince Johann Ernst that at this period in the Protestant Netherlands people could hear such Italian concertos being played in certain public organ recitals is not known, nor therefore whether he or anyone else had the idea of producing concerts of this kind in Weimar. There is no evidence either way, unless one takes the duke's support for Bach as a hint that he did play such (private?) recitals – which is possible. Transcriptions were not the only way to assimilate Italian styles, as one sees later in the same year, 1713, when Bach's aria BWV 1127 (apparently for the senior duke's birthday) combined old and new: the German organist's traditional *bicinium* bass has become a continuo part of a kind familiar to Italian cellists, and the old German strophic form (different verses to the same melody) is supplied with new Italian string interludes. The combination made a suitable offering to the duke, one of many offerings at a typical ducal court, no doubt – but why Bach and not the capellmeister? Was it a gratuitous, even presumptuous, act of homage?

If anything of Vivaldi's music such as the trio sonatas Opp. 1 and 2 (1705, 1709) had previously penetrated to Weimar, the young prince would have been alerted before his trip to Holland to search for more of their kind among the Dutch publishers and booksellers. Albinoni's three-movement concertos were being published from 1700 onwards, and signs of Vivaldi's influence are also there in movements of Handel's Concerto in B flat, HWV 312, now dated *c.* 1710 in Hanover. In Bach's case, it is hard to imagine how at least some of the 'Brandenburgs' and the solo violin or harpsichord concertos would have come about without the revelations offered by Vivaldi's Opp. 3, 4 or 7. All these have a dashing quality beyond even Corelli's concertos, with singable melodies and clear solo sections, plus certain stylistic earmarks such as beginning in bare octaves. Any composer would be excited by Vivaldi's way of organizing instrumental pieces by the means of repetition, note-spinning, sequences and simple harmony, all handled inventively with great rhythmic vitality.

It was probably at a period when the young prince was composing his own works in this style that Walther also arranged many Venetian concertos. Telemann got to hear of the prince's efforts and published some of his works. Sources also attribute to Bach two transcriptions of the prince's Concerto in C major, one for organ (BWV 595) and another, different in detail and substance, for harpsichord (BWV 984). There is a commonsense logic to the concerto shape of three movements, fast–slow–fast (or lively–slower–quicker), and it occurs as if quite naturally in very different genres. Two examples of the shape are the earlier Toccata in C major for organ, BWV 564, and the much later double-choir motet 'Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied', BWV 225.

Musical development: strategy, tactics

How to shape a piece of music, to sustain length and allow a movement to develop and come to a well-paced conclusion without repeating inappropriately or continuing boringly, was clearly a question of importance to any composer. So was another: how to create the faultless miniature.

In both the small and larger-scale works of the Weimar period, melodic flair merges with a harmonic logic in which a simple common chord can sound as striking as a complex discord. Seldom if ever does harmonic control fail Bach, though he comes close to it at one moment in the long Fugue in F major, BWV 540, in a precipitous modulation from C minor to D minor (an unreliable source or a textual crux?). When a movement of carefully organized length strikes one as not very inspired, as some movements in Cantata Nos. 12 or 31 do, it could be that too much attention has been paid to conveying a text. In the case of No. 31, for example, the idea of 'Heaven laughing' leads to something ordinary in the melody, harmony and rhythm, while the idea of the 'Prince of Life' leads to a merely formulaic rhythm. Conventions can be too automatically applied, as when without any further ado chromatic intervals convey something anxious, sad, regretful or in some other way negative. As in other works of the period, Cantata No. 12 can leave an impression of 'going through the motions', as too does many a later cantata aria.

Cantata No. 12 also has a slow, opening melody for oboe that is more touching than anything one is likely to find elsewhere except for certain moments in Handel's Italian cantatas. Even using standard effects like the Neapolitan sixths (qv) in an aria of the same cantata – picking ingredients off the shelf, so to speak – can also have a touching quality. It is a formula of

the kind that went through changes later and gradually became rare in Bach, but the conventional appearances of it were a first, necessary step. The sheer number of Neapolitan sixths in compositions from the Weimar years and earlier (especially in certain toccatas) is presumably a sign that he liked them and found them 'expressive', doing so right up to the 'B minor Mass', both in a new movement (Kyrie) and an earlier one now transformed (Agnus dei).

Chromatics were another time-honoured formula that could automatically embellish harmonies, and one much practised by Walther and Bach. When Bach writes longer or shorter phrases that include all twelve semitones, as in a recitative of Cantata No. 167 (1724) or passages in the later A minor Prelude WTC2, one can assume it was intended, a stretching of the older chromatic motif in order either to be more expressive or to do something new. The chromatic phrase was one of a whole catalogue of the motifs or patterns of notes (*figurae*) taught and used by many German composers, learning from precedent rather than books. But in Weimar the year of Bach's arrival, Walther listed and briefly described many of them in an unpublished treatise written for the same Prince Johann Ernst, the *Praecepta* of 1708, in which he gave them Italian names and in this way marked their origin. (Another somewhat similar treatise probably of some influence on German teachers was Mauritius Vogt's *Conclave thesauri*, Prague, 1719). Bach's 'Chorale Partitas' play with Walther's motifs and explore his own versions of them, and they lead gradually, by steps not now traceable, to a unique collection of short organ-chorales in which the patterns are applied with unheard-of sophistication.

These are the chorales for the church year, in an album or collection later called the *Orgelbüchlein* ('Little Organ Book'), which it is possible to view as the peak of the tradition for creating music by subtly embellishing hymn-tunes and their harmony. The melodies are harmonized in such a way as to establish a unique mood for each of the texts, 'depicting' the words of the hymns with old and newer motifs. Yet the *Orgelbüchlein*'s settings are rarely single-minded in this endeavour, especially when compared with chorale-based compositions by earlier organists such as Scheidt or Steigleder, or later by Walther and Vetter (see Example 10 on p. 160). One has the impression that in this album Bach is deliberately using the very motifs outlined by Walther in his book and adding quite a few of his own. Did the two organists discuss such techniques, vie with each other, compete in composing certain types of music?

The two men were surely aware of each other's activities, and Walther's music often uses straightforwardly the very patterns handled more inventively by Bach. Bach's earliest surviving puzzle canon, BWV 1073,

is dedicated to Walther, 1713, and it is not unlikely that he knew Walther's copy of Johann Theile's book *Kunstbuch*, Naumburg 1691, a treatise on 'special music and secrets deriving from double counterpoint'. Both of them also made use of the works of G. M. Bononcini, Walther his treatise *Musico prattico*, and Bach his Sonata Op. 6, No. 10 (Venice, 1672) – or so it seems, for a theme from the latter appears in the so-called 'Legrenzi Fugue' in C minor, BWV 574. Assuming this print was his source for his treatment, Bach condenses the original movement and omits its echo-passages, a credible sign of his technique for reworking his models.

Note-patterns are like tactics in need of a strategy. In a cantata movement or prelude based on a chorale, shape is no special problem, since the chorale-melody provides it. But what of substantial pieces of music without such props? It is not obvious how far Vivaldi's concertos helped Bach shape movements of his own, which, in the big organ preludes and fugues, are lone works anticipated by no predecessor and matched by no successor. This is uncertain despite assumptions made by Forkel in 1802, and copied ever since, that Vivaldi's ritornello movements were models for Bach. Forkel seems not to have known of Torelli and the possibility that his concertos had also been models. But he did know that Emanuel's colleague Quantz had previously acknowledged the impression Vivaldi and his 'beautiful ritornelle' had made on him, and how he had for a time taken them as a 'good model' in his own music (Quantz 1755, p. 205). For Forkel, if Quantz was bowled over by Vivaldi, so must his hero Bach have been.

But Bach had already written keyboard fugues which tend by nature towards a kind of ritornello form, with a theme returning periodically, after episodes and with a final statement or coda. Returns or 'local repetition' are not only so natural, even necessary, to the transient thing that is music, but the principle of 'returning themes' is open to a huge variety of treatment. For nearly fifty years Bach shaped fugues, concertos, arias, sonatas, chorale-preludes and choruses around this principle, whatever other habits formed around each genre. The principle of such a shape, especially where the opening and returning section is short or very short, had been familiar with Kuhnau and Buxtehude before 1700, and Bach's Cantata No. 131 (1707?) includes something of this kind. But the organ Fugue in G minor, BWV 535a, is cast as a clearly formed ritornello and, if its dating is correct, *c.* 1705–7, is already producing a shape rare for organ fugues on this scale. Whether one calls this work 'a fugue in ritornello form' or 'ritornello form as a fugue' is moot: the tight fugues of previous periods are now giving way to longer-paced movements that return as naturally to the theme after a special episode as any concerto movement does.

It is likely, though not documented, that in his early days in Weimar Bach had come across works of Torelli, and therefore seen further examples of movements planned and constructed so that a distinctive theme returned after distinctive episodes. In Albinoni's *Sinfonie* (1700) he could already have seen examples of fugues in a clear ritornello form somewhat comparable to the Fugue, BWV 535a. And from elsewhere in Albinoni he could have learnt the effect of bringing back at some point in a movement the whole of the opening statement, as well as marking the sections with strong cadences. In this way he would find how to design a substantial movement without deliberately imitating Vivaldi's breathless continuity. Nevertheless, although Bach's watchful ways of proceeding could well have gradually produced the great structures without his knowing any Italian concerto, the vividness of Vivaldi surely left a permanent mark. It can be heard in such later concertos as the A minor for Violin and the 'Brandenburg Concerto' No. 4.

The free way in which Italian composers would treat the returns of a theme (now longer now shorter, now this segment now that) also left its mark. Not only do Bach's ritornello movements have various ways of representing the returning theme but there are moments in his concertos, cantatas and even organ-chorales in which one particular segment of a theme returns when it could easily have been another. Extant sketches for the mature cantatas show the composer similarly considering and reconsidering such details with great care (Marshall 1972). Any apparent 'arbitrariness' in this process has the effect and the purpose of avoiding the too-obvious and of surprising the listener: the principle of return is not denied but is constantly rethought. A rather theoretical approach to Bach's invention in recent years has emphasized those ways in which he creates a structure by bringing back themes or snatches of melody already heard; but more fundamental still, and far less of an Italian characteristic, is the control of harmonic processes, taking listeners in whatever direction his sense of logic moves. Cantata No. 199 (1714) already displays ritornello shapes one is unlikely to find in contemporary cantatas by a Graupner or Telemann, and looks like a conscious swerving away from their simpler conceptions.

A firm harmonic control can be heard in compositions written during Bach's thirties, such as the Cello Suites, well before the biggest mature organ preludes in ritornello form. In addition, the kinds of theme, rhythm and even the reiterated chords heard in cantata or concerto movements can often be recognized as Italian in inspiration, though sustained for longer than they might be in Vivaldi's Opp. 3 and 7 or any other concerto

transcribed in Weimar. The impression Italian ritornello forms made on Bach is hinted at in such a work as Cantata No. 31 (Easter Sunday, 1715), where the opening instrumental *Sonata* uses a full orchestra to imitate a Vivaldian opening theme in octaves. A powerful stirring of the spirit on the day of Resurrection, though harmonically not adventurous! What follows, however – arias with recycled episodes, a fund of distinctive melody, moments of canonic imitation – would not be mistaken for Vivaldi or Albinoni or any contemporary German composer.

The year 1715 was also the year in which Albinoni's Op. 7 Concertos were published in Amsterdam, giving yet other examples for structuring instrumental pieces. Even if none of them had circulated earlier in manuscript, in print they could have easily sped on their way to Weimar or Berlin or Dresden. By then too Bach had also developed ritornello shapes in organ-chorales, with or without having regard to Vivaldi's concertos.

Some Weimar music: more on Italian and French tastes

Although patchy, existing evidence supports what one would expect: that the years Bach spent at Weimar in his twenties and early thirties saw developments in his chamber music, especially no doubt during his later years there. Although the sources do not confirm it, some instrumental movements known as adaptations or arrangements for church cantatas at Leipzig (Nos. 146, 156, 188, 35) or in harpsichord concertos (D minor for solo harpsichord, C major for three harpsichords) might have originated in other guises and for other forces in concerts during the later Weimar years.

Doubts sometimes expressed about the authenticity and especially the date of strikingly original works such as the 'C major Triple Concerto' may arise only because no one knows what the original form was, or even whether it had more than the one original form often supposed for it, e.g. as a concerto for three violins in D major. No other composer of either *c.* 1715 (violin version?) or *c.* 1735 (harpsichord version?) springs to mind as likely to have been capable of its original and characteristic amalgam of subtle counterpoint, extrovert rhythms, purposeful harmony and pleasing melody. That goes also for both of the triple concertos now known, the C major and D minor. Sources do not exist to clarify the history of such works, which is most unfortunate since only with them could one trace the composer's maturing style, how quickly indeed it had matured since the arrival of Vivaldi's concertos.

Slow movements with prominent solo melodies become a hallmark. Instrumental movements prefacing the Weimar Cantatas Nos. 12, 21 and 182 do not seem to me to owe very much to Italian concertos but rather result from an imaginative composer's way of building on earlier German consort music that had still been the model for the *Sonatina* prefacing Cantata No. 106. Nor, yet more importantly, can one be certain what the expressive or emotional impact of such slow movements was expected to be and how much this changed over the period. The likelier that the well-known and bewitching Largo of the F minor Harpsichord Concerto, BWV 1056, imitates a Telemannesque woodwind concerto of *c.* 1715, the likelier that in its Leipzig version (late 1730s) it had matured to become even more expressive: now with pizzicato strings and a *cantabile* harpsichord melody in A flat major. What was charming, light and fresh originally and again when re-used in Cantata 156 (in F major, *c.* 1729), becomes more seriously beautiful, more *affektvoll*, probably slower, exquisite, inspiring reflection through the concerto's key and instrumental colour.

By no means of minor interest, though utterly different, are the transcriptions for harpsichord alone of Italian and other string concertos BWV 972–87, probably made in the later Weimar years and appealing to the taste not only for imported string music but for a new world of keyboard music, one far from German traditions. Whatever music had penetrated to Thuringia beforehand, now, at a stroke, there appeared groups of imported works revealing how to shape sustained movements when there were no words to help provide shape or organization. Some composers were also surely desiring to move on from the traditional genres, such as suites, variations, fantasias, fugues, concerti grossi (qv), and would have found Italian solo string concertos to be another world. Bach's keyboard transcriptions made at Weimar create a strikingly different repertory and present yet another peak of achievement in one very particular genre: indeed, a conspicuous group of works. They offered the Thuringian organist new melodies, new movement-shapes, new effects and textures, giving the player, then and now, a welcome breath of fresh air after the older German idioms: Vivaldi after Buxtehude.

In many little details these transcriptions of Bach anticipate details in his own later works. They include the broken chords colouring episodes ('Fifth Brandenburg'), the emphatic chords in 2/4 time (Italian Concerto), the slow-movement cantilena (the three string concertos) and even simple contrary-motion scales ('Goldberg Variations'): all these appear in the concerto transcriptions. In the work of other composers such as Christoph Graupner and Handel signs of Vivaldian influence can certainly be heard, but Bach's

transcriptions stand as a distinct repertory. One can still find them more effective as music for public performance than most suites and most fugues, for unlike them, their origins lay precisely in this: music for public performance. Nevertheless, how far Bach understood the natural verve and rhetoric of Venetian string concertos is an open question. Perhaps he wished to temper it with 'German seriousness', for it is otherwise difficult to understand why he sometimes filled in Vivaldi's rests with bits of busy counterpoint.

In at least one case, the Concerto in A minor, BWV 593, the transcription cleverly derives such 'bits of busy counterpoint' from one of Vivaldi's own themes to fill the gaps, as if Bach could not help but play with little motifs ('melodic cells'). But Vivaldi's gaps are perfectly effective, characteristic of the natural rhetoric of lively, dashing string concertos, as Bach himself recognized by the time he composed the first movement of the Fourth Brandenburg. The result is that Bach's transcription BWV 593.i misses a crucial feature of the original Op. 3 No. 8 by requiring the organist to play more slowly and in a more measured way. Similarly, the two beautiful Fugues on a Theme of Albinoni, BWV 951/951a, entirely miss or choose to ignore (it is not at all clear which) the vivid string-sound of Albinoni's original trio as published. Assuming that (i) this trio version was the one Bach knew, and (ii) BWV 951 is later than the alternative version 951a, it looks as though he was increasingly attracted to expanding and extending, playing with motifs, producing in this instance a piece rather more than three times as long as Albinoni's original.
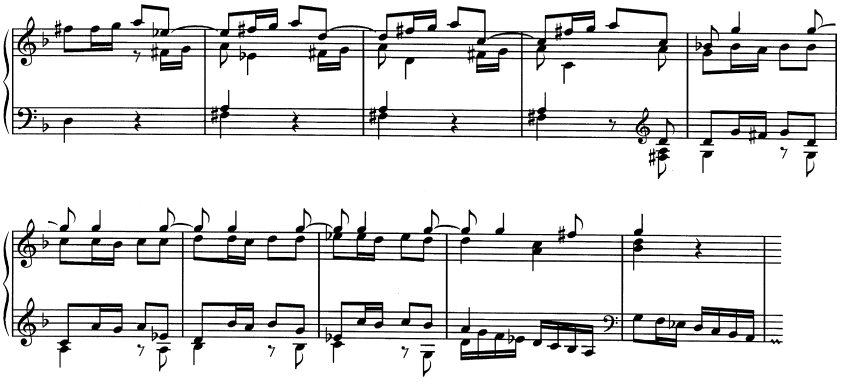
A key difference between Italian concerto or ritornello forms and Bach's are that the Italian forms are often loose and capricious, deliberately asymmetrical (half a theme here, a snatch of melody there) while Bach's are long, thorough, each section going the distance and giving an impression of being exhaustive. Bach's own (later) harpsichord and violin concertos have long movements carefully planned around various keys, breaking off a returning theme in order to shoot off in another direction, resulting again in a characteristic thoroughness, the very opposite of the loose and capricious. The handling of so-called aria form ABA in his vocal music, also accomplished by 1714 or so, is similarly inventive: the first section (A) is not always repeated straightforwardly after the second (B) but modifies it to allow different modulations. I do not think he had to learn this from other composers.

Although in a variety of works Vivaldi's influence can be heard, yet the effect is quite distinct and decidedly non-Italian: the spirit and even some melodic details of the F minor Concerto's Largo already referred to come closer to one or two of the Weimar chorale-settings (such as 'Nun komm',

BWV 659a) than they do to any Venetian concerto. Moreover, it could be that melodic resemblances people have since found between certain concertos of Telemann and Bach's E major and F minor Harpsichord Concertos (fair-copied in the 1730s) sprang from the various revelations Vivaldi had offered to both composers equally. His styles could be worked by both German composers and result in works not dissimilar in principle.

In discussing what Bach learnt in Weimar from Venetian concertos, in particular from their brilliant ritornello movements, it is easy to forget how revelatory must have been the seductive lyricism of the better of their slow movements. Those of two concerto-transcriptions, BWV 973 (Vivaldi) and BWV 974 (Alessandro Marcello), have a simple but stunning melos that is as striking as any other characteristic of Venetian concertos. This Marcello concerto also has another of the characteristics of Bach's own concertos, as found in the E major Violin Concerto: a startling change of direction at a certain point, like a conventional interrupted cadence but no longer conventional, a cadence specially 'invented'. Such changes of direction come at the end of a section with which the movement could have closed, and so allow it to continue much further. Bach needed to know Italian concertos such as these to have learnt both the idea and the placing of these effects, which, unsurprisingly, he treated more exhaustively than they did. His many original interrupted cadences were there to surprise and at the same time to produce longer movements than usual in Venice.

The Venetian conception of slow movements is surely the ancestor not only of those in several of Bach's concertos but also of a mature aria like 'Aus Liebe' in the St Matthew Passion, now setting words in such a way as to produce a sad, desolated *Affekt*. Similarly, that hard-to-define yearning quality one can sometimes sense behind the Vivaldian *allegro* of a concerto like BWV 975 (see Example 8) surfaces again in works like the double concertos in D minor and C minor, BWV 1043 and 1060. More strikingly still, the repeated tonic chords opening Vivaldi's concerto transcribed as BWV 980 – an 'extrovert' effect the opposite of intricate counterpoint – could easily have inspired the more complex, throbbing reiterations at the beginning of 'Brandenburg Concertos' Nos. 3 and especially 6. And then there are Vivaldi's 'preparatory chromaticisms': the sudden switch to the minor, or the sudden appearance of a chromatic chord or two, just before a final cadence. Bach continued to seize upon this kind of momentary harmonic colour in all kinds of music over the years, not least in fugues and even canons; it is extraordinarily effective in the first movement of the Third Brandenburg, just before the main theme finally returns. How indebted he was to Vivaldi for this effect deserves more study.



Example 8 Concerto (after Vivaldi), BWV 975.i, b. 23 (NB an early instance of Italian 2/4 metre in works of Bach)

Such transcriptions as BWV 980 and 975 imply two more mundane details: first, that the available instrument was only a single-manual harpsichord; secondly, that there is a stately tempo when concertos begin, whether in 4/4 or 2/4. Either Bach assumed from the first that an Italian *allegro* was slower, less *dashing* than the Italians themselves assumed, not having heard them play; or he wanted string music to be given a more moderate manner when it was transcribed for keyboard, especially organ. This steadier tempo was traditional in Germany, the 'standard 4/4' found in so much music of the previous generations, when only exceptionally is the crotchet fast. Today, as they constantly search for excitement, many historically informed performers approach the 'Brandenburgs' and solo concertos at a speed not at all clearly appropriate to 1715.

Differences between Italian and French styles and manner would have interested a lively young composer, especially at a ducal court employing good musicians. The differences are clear not only in the Weimar cantatas but also in the solo works for violin, which might in part go back to 1712 or so and where the two, the Italian and the French, are complementary. Whether or how well Bach played such violin solos himself is not known, though his violin-playing is unlikely to have been neglected at Weimar and could have developed very well at this time, something the Obituary authors are unlikely to have known (see remark on Cantata No. 182, p. 159). Other organist contemporaries writing concertos, such as C. F. Rolle, C. Pezold and J. G. Walther, have left no evidence that they ventured into virtuoso violin works of a comparable kind. But one has only to glance at the viola part in the opening movement of the St John Passion to recognize a composer with a sure sense of string-writing.

When in 1713 Bach's pupil Kräuter mentioned the French and Italian music he expected to hear when Prince Johann Ernst returned from Holland with a trunkload of music (Dok. III, p. 650), perhaps he was studying the French as much as the Italian. In Weimar, Bach was not the only organist to be interested in organ music from France. Walther and Vogler copied music by de Grigny, Boyvin and Nivers and were probably doing this in some connection to Bach: Walther's incomplete de Grigny copy may be based on Bach's, while Vogler's accurate copy of Boyvin (before 1715) may have been supervised by his teacher. These Thuringian organists certainly seem to have shared an interest in what was for them rather strange music. De Grigny might be useful for introducing them to the F3 bass clef, the many spilling-over ornaments, the unusual harmonies, new ways to write for the organ, exotic and rarely practical registrations; and copying it out was a clearly valuable exercise for Bach, whose copy is as cramped as de Grigny's engraving, as if intentionally so. But how much of it they could find useful in church is very uncertain. Simple curiosity, a wish to learn from the many available French publications, is probably the reason for these copies.

In Halle by 1717, Gaspard Corrette's organ-mass of 1703 was for sale from Adam Sellius, a bookseller and one of the editors of Prince Johann Ernst's concertos, which, like the 'Brandenburg Concertos', were given the French title *Six Concerts*. Copies of French organ-books, again Boyvin but also d'Anglebert, Lebègue and Guilain, were made by some much later organists directly or indirectly associated with Bach or under his influence, such as J. F. Agricola, F. W. Marpurg and J. S. Harson (Delpech 2015). The Berlin connection of some of these musicians is a reminder that the local organs of Joachim Wagner, like those in Silbermann in Saxony, did provide many suitable frenchified sounds. It is noticeable, and probably not a coincidence, that several of the original French volumes had instructive prefaces describing such details as registration as well as ornamentation – a novelty for any German organist, not only in Weimar. And French organ-books could be interesting for more than their exotic registrations, as become clear when Marpurg extracted several fugues from them for his book of 1753.

In the dance-movements of what is probably the earliest of the so-called 'English Suites' for harpsichord, in A major, BWV 806a, one sees another stretching of conventions picked up from recent books of suites, again in this case French. Which precisely these books were is conjectural, and none is likely to have monopolized the composer, but plausible ones are those of Dieupart and d'Anglebert, possibly Rameau (*Livre*, 1705/6) and even

Couperin (*Premier Livre*, 1713). Since it seems that little of Couperin's music had circulated before 1713, at most a few lighter dances, then all the bigger would be the impression made on Bach by his new book, had it penetrated as far as Weimar soon afterwards. While this is not documented, these years certainly saw Bach pay tireless attention to all kinds of contemporary music, especially those that took him beyond and away from older, native kinds. And not only those years: the rest of the six 'English Suites' followed and are discussed below.

That Bach made efforts to complete his coverage of this or that musical genre – as if 'ticking off a list' of ideas – is not always obvious but is there in many an individual work, from the earliest to the last. Thus (to take one example), although it does not say so, the three sections of the organ Toccata in C major potentially demonstrate three different ways to use the second manual which he and his organ-pupils had available at Weimar: first, for echoes and alternating themes; secondly, to bring out a solo melody, like an Italian concerto; thirdly, to provide contrast in a substantial ritornello fugue. This work then becomes both a didactic demonstration and a 'pleasing use of resources' for the player. But no copyist, and very few players today, seem aware that the work, which is known only through copies without rubrics, can be interpreted in this way. If the title or notation had specified two manuals, it would have excluded those who had only one.

Generally in Weimar by *c.* 1715, there was ample opportunity for studying, composing and playing a wide musical repertory. The reason the details are unclear could be rather banal: that the scores, sacred or secular, were the duke's property, kept in his library and forbidden to be copied or (especially when Bach became *non grata*) removed; later, after his departure, neglected and discarded; and then finally burnt in the fire of 1774 that destroyed the castle and library. The paper on which the performing parts were copied certainly belonged to the duke (see Dok. II, p. 56), and it is unknown to what extent the composer had his own stock of paper or had a right to the duke's for his personal use. A likely arrangement is that for later use he kept his own full scores, vocal and instrumental. Very few of his own copies of Weimar works have survived, including the keyboard music, while isolated copies made by others, such as a rather run-of-the-mill fugue copied by Walther (BWV 1026), serve only to tantalize further. But one can suppose that there was a rich portfolio of works 'in progress' or (better) in a form that could be adapted for various uses, revised, rescored, retexted, re-assembled or simply compiled over as many years as the composer saw fit.

The Halle audition

At Weimar, at some point in 1713,

> after Zachow, music director and organist at the Market Church in Halle, died [on 7 August 1712], Bach received a call to this same position. He did indeed journey to Halle [over Advent 1713] and performed his trial work there. Only, he found reasons to reject this position, which thereupon [Gottfried] Kirchhoff took. (*Obituary*)

This seems clear enough and presumably derives from Bach himself. But it does not quite tally with his original account written in Weimar, when he denied that he had 'applied for the post of organist' there (*Organisten Stelle angehalten*: Dok. I, p. 23). The church board approached him, he visited and he would then have left had he not been invited to perform a cantata, which he did (just possibly the Advent Cantata No. 61). More needs to be said about this below. Disagreement over pay and conditions was likely, as was the matter of status: 'organist' to such a major church would have to be understood to mean director of music, with appropriate salary.

One oddity of the Obituary's reference to the Halle job and its audition is that the former organist Zachow is mentioned by name when, in the Obituary's account of the Leipzig appointment ten years later, the former organist there (Kuhnau) is not. Zachow too was a Leipziger, son of a *Stadtpfeifer*, and another early orphan. Was he mentioned because, though not on the Obituary's list of composers whom his father admired, he had been named in Walther's *Lexicon* in another pertinent connection: as the original teacher of Handel, who is known to have visited Halle for his niece's baptism late in the previous year (HHB 4, p. 55)? Perhaps Handel had been the preferred if quite unlikely successor to Zachow. And did Emanuel exceptionally mention Kirchhoff at Halle because Kirchhoff's own successor in 1746 was Wilhelm Friedemann?

There was no hurry to replace Zachow at the Market Church (Liebfrauenkirche, Church of Our Lady) of Halle, both because work had barely begun on building the new organ and because his widow was being supported for the customary six months or so. As far as the Bach biography was concerned, turning down jobs was not a thing to keep quiet about, especially since appointments to big parish churches were such public events that names of candidates became generally known. Walther's *Lexicon* reported that Kirchhoff himself, who was only third choice at Halle, had declined invitations from two prince's courts to become their

capellmeister, something Kirchhoff must have told him. Telemann made a point of listing important offers he had not taken up (1740, p. 366), and Emanuel himself claimed more than once that while working for the King of Prussia he had had several advantageous offers (Burney 1773, p. 200).

Two big questions are whether Bach did apply in the normal way at Halle and why in any case he declined. Quite possibly he had been invited as an adviser on the building of the new, large three-manual organ of sixty-five stops at the west end of this fine gothic hall-church, contracted for only a month or so after Zachow died. This is only a guess, however, but it would indicate a growing prestige, since Halle was so far the most distant place from Arnstadt to which he was invited as organ-adviser. Moreover, this was a grand instrument of uncommon size in an unusually significant church and town. So once again, the question of taking a new position as organist was raised in some connection with the building of a new organ. Bach did become one of the organ's eventual examiners in 1716, with Kuhnau and C. F. Rolle (a Halle native), invited by the same church-council president with whom he had been in correspondence over Zachow's job and who cannot, therefore, have taken umbrage. The Halle instrument was conceived very much on the model outlined in Werckmeister's *Orgelprobe*, not unlike the Mühlhausen organ except in being bigger and more up to date, and contained in a new single but large case at the west end.

Bach's two-or-three-week stay in Halle over late November–December 1713 seems rather long except as an opportunity to consider the vacancy and its musical potential in town and church. He then explored the job fully and formally by composing and performing, on the first or second Sunday in Advent, a cantata as requested by the chief pastor J. M. Heineccius, who had backed the organ project. Had it not been for this request, Bach later claimed, he would have gone back to Weimar earlier. That the church paid for his travel expenses, his first-class accommodation and the unidentified cantata, does seem to confirm that he was treated as an honoured guest, and supports his later claim not to have actually 'applied' for the job but only to have 'presented himself' (*mich praesentiret*: Dok. I, p. 23) for it. A distinction was evidently intended between the two, again rather like those people today who speak of being 'headhunted'. (Telemann too, when asking to be released from one job to take another, claimed not to have applied for it.)

Bach's assertion, written in a letter of 19 March 1714, was part of what looks like a tetchy reply to an accusation made by the people at Halle that in presenting himself for the job he had 'given them such a runaround'

(*solche **tour** gespielet*) in order to solicit a better salary at Weimar. This is not unbelievable. However, considering what was clearly a contentious situation in Weimar between the two dukes, and one bound to involve the court's musicians, it is more than likely that Bach was having thoughts about looking for suitable positions elsewhere. Perhaps there was a genuine ambivalence in his mind, and any new responsibilities he was to take on at Weimar as *Concertmeister* from 2 March 1714 were proposed by him partly to get above the ducal fray there, should he remain. On 19 March he signed the letter sent to Halle.

What is clear is that Bach, whether or not after having made a bid for the job, was invited by the church council or *collegium*, travelled across from Weimar, performed a cantata, was offered the job and was thought to have accepted it there and then (Dok. II, p. 49); he returned to Weimar in mid-December and was sent a draft contract; he delayed a month and then declined, saying he had not yet received 'total release' from Weimar (*völlige dimission*: Dok. I, p. 21); he then asked for changes to be made at Halle to the salary (an increase) and duties (a reduction); he said he would reply further and in full, when current work at Weimar allowed (surely this was stalling?); and then, probably in February 1714, finally withdrew completely.

This was a week or two before the confirmation at Weimar that he had been promoted, with increased salary, a promotion it seems that he had requested (see Dok. II, p. 53). The Halle people must have learnt of this – how, is itself an interesting question – and accused him of playing tricks. But in reply he asked why he should relocate even at the same salary let alone a lower one, and particularly before Halle had clarified what his entitlement to other fees would have been (Dok. I, pp. 23–4). This last is an important point, and yet the story is surely not quite to his credit. There is tetchiness in saying that he had no need to travel to Halle for the duke to raise his salary in Weimar, pride in claiming not actually to have applied for the Halle job, astuteness in making no mention of the Weimar promotion and speciosity in saying that his Halle correspondent ('a learned lawyer', *ein Rechts-Verständiger*) could judge whether he was right not to change jobs for the same salary.

Such points are not so very different from those in the letter he had written to Mühlhausen after leaving, so it seems, sooner than it was quite proper to do so. All the same, it is easy to believe that Bach was highly valued in Weimar, and it could also be that the frequency with which money and pay crop up in connection with him is a misleading consequence of his being represented today chiefly by formal documents and business letters. These are bound to be partial, more about business than

music: for instance, there is written documentation for the cash-shares he took in one of Freiberg's silver mines (see below, p. 612) but not about whether he ever played Freiberg's Silbermann organs. At Halle, only certain things are recorded, and the facts that apparently he was well received for the organ-test in 1716 and had set a text by the Halle minister (possibly Cantata No. 63 for Christmas Day 1714 at Weimar) suggest that by no means did he become *non grata* there, any more than at Mühlhausen. The men of church and town councils he was dealing with were familiar with professional ambition, and it could be that the committee at Halle, though genuinely disappointed, knew their offer was not good enough and wanted to avoid blame. Besides, even creative musicians need to be practical.[1]

Only on 30 July 1714 was Kirchhoff appointed organist, after Halle's second offer (to Melchior Hoffmann of the Neukirche, Leipzig) had also failed, no doubt for reasons comparable to those that had led to Bach's refusal. Such reasons must have been common enough: Sebastian's elder brother Christoph declined to go to Gotha to replace Pachelbel when his current pay in Ohrdruf was raised, and nor, for similar reasons, did Sebastian's son Christoph Friedrich leave Bückeburg in 1759 for a job in Hamburg. It is clear enough that Bach was not backward in wishing to establish himself as well financially as possible, especially when in March 1714 (less than a week after the promotion was confirmed) Maria Barbara had just produced another child, her fifth: Carl Philipp Emanuel. One wonders whether, when in June 1711 the duke had already raised his salary because his predecessor no longer required a pension, Bach had actually solicited on these grounds, and if so, why no mention was made of any obligation to Effler's widow (Dok. V, p. 116). Later, his own widow in Leipzig, Anna Magdalena, was to live on modest pensions from church, city and university (BJ 2002, pp. 245ff.), and another organist in the family, his son Johann Christoph Friedrich, was careful to negotiate a half-salary pension for his wife were he to leave her a widow (BJ 1998, p. 159).

The events in connection with Halle raise a question about Bach's priorities. Its new organ, then in the making, was apparently not enough to draw him away from his position at a duke's court, any more than the organ in Hamburg Jakobikirche was when he was capellmeister a few years later at another court. It is also possible, however, that the Duke of Weimar

[1] In the same year of 1713, Handel, not a family man, was freer to risk his 1,000 thalers-a-year position in Hanover when overstaying leave in London. Perhaps his work in late 1716 on setting the Brockes Passion was with a view to job-searching in Germany?

would not release him and even forbade him to say so to anybody. And there was the question of how subservient a church organist in Halle, though composer of the cantatas, would be to the cantor as well as to the church's *Ober-Pastor*, who had to approve the texts chosen for the Sunday cantatas. On high and other feastdays and on every third Sunday he was to prepare a 'moving and well-set devotional music' (*bewegliche und wohl klingend-gesetzte andächtige Musique*: Dok. II, p. 50), the French word presumably meaning a cantata. As the document makes clear, this would involve the cantor, choir students (*Schülern*), town musicians (*Stadtpfeifer*) and other instrumentalists. In addition, shorter ensemble pieces were to be heard on the second and third feastdays (*Feyertage*), with these same performers plus the town musicians.

Although for Bach playing the organ for services and composing cantatas and motets was hardly a problem, there may have been potential difficulties with the cantor or clergy, or with the quality of singers and players, or even with the Pietist implications of that word 'moving'. As organist, he was to play the big organ in all main services, the smaller organ and the regals as required. Regular services included the weekly Catechism and the frequent public weddings, and for the *Composition* of the *Musique* for each of these the organist was to be paid a further thaler (Dok. II, p. 51). Usually, the Catechism service (*Examen*) was weekly, but exactly what was involved is unclear: a motet rather than cantata, perhaps, on various days and times when instruction was given, with prayers and chorales sung with the choir. In Leipzig, the Sunday Catechism followed the final hymn of vespers (Stiller 1970, p. 242), probably without the cantor.

In contrast to all this, the new duties of March 1714 in the court at Weimar, complete with salary increase (see next section but one), were more promising and to be an organist even in a prominent town church like Halle's was no longer attractive. (Handel's putative job-search in Dresden two or three years later seems to have been for a dual appointment: capellmeister, or cantor plus opera-composer.) Bach's Weimar colleagues would also have been a positive factor, raising his musical horizons beyond those of any town-church musicians. Later on after Weimar, to have remained a court musician at Cöthen instead of becoming organist in Hamburg (if he really did have an offer there – see below) suggests the same kind of preference for working in a court with distinguished fellow musicians. Although opportunities for church music at Cöthen were more limited than they were in Weimar, its well-run court gave a wide scope for other kinds of music – concertos, orchestral suites (*ouvertures*), chamber cantatas, serenatas (qv), songs, sonatas *à 2* (qv), sonatas *à 3* and all kinds of

keyboard music. Was this what Bach most wanted at this stage of his career, and if so, was it what he continued to want?

The *Orgelbüchlein*: for Halle?

The Halle 'application' of 1713 may also imply that Bach studied beforehand the kinds of music a particular job would require. For if in the album of organ-chorales later called *Orgelbüchlein* the earliest pieces were copied around Advent 1713, as usually thought, it could have begun as a chorale-book for the job in Halle and not for Weimar, though added to over several months. These chorale-settings suited the church in Halle, a city then becoming a well-known centre of Pietism, which rather suggests that they originated, all or mostly, for that purpose. Music for this form of Protestantism would not be vaingloriously complicated or flashy or impersonal but aid the individual believer's faith by directly appealing to personal feelings in reaction to the words of the hymns. Many a listener will feel this is also what certain larger-scaled works do that may have been connected directly or indirectly with Halle, as in the dramatic changes from minor to major over the long course of Cantata No. 21 which are responding to the sentiments of the text.

In the ways the *Orgelbüchlein* sets them, most of the hymn melodies are more immediately recognizable than in some other kinds of organ music: almost all consist of a short harmonization realized by means of subtly integrated motifs, going straight through the melody without breaks between the hymn-lines. It is as if the listener is singing a verse in an appropriate manner, slowly and thoughtfully at Advent or for Confession, joining in boisterously at suitable moments at Christmas or Easter, or simply praying for the dying. The aim is to affect the believing listener through original harmonies, resulting in new sounds conceived with a new purpose. How and when this concept originated is quite uncertain, though it is somewhat similar to the last verse in sets of hymn-variations, including those attributed to Bach. But only 'somewhat', for here is another example of 'Bach the Thuringian organist' pushing beyond local tradition in new directions.

Guesses that the first examples collected for the book (whichever these are) go back to about 1710 remain guesses, nor is it obvious what their function in Weimar would have been. By the time the title-page of the never-completed album was written nine or ten years after it was begun, quite different aims can be specified: now the young organist (potentially

including Friedemann, then about twelve) is to be taught how to set chorales and learn pedal technique. So a guide to both composition and performance. Inevitably, it is from this title-page headed *Orgelbüchlein* that the album is now always referred to, but this is misleading on several counts. It is a pity there is no easy alternative.

What in general Halle wanted of its organist can be guessed by its various moves towards less formality in its church ceremony, such as abandoning Latin in the Lutheran Mass and requiring generally a warmer expression of emotion than had been usual. Specific requirements for the organist, had Bach signed up to them in the contract, were the following (Dok. II, p. 50, here paraphrased):

- to accompany the chorales chosen by the minister 'slowly' and 'without special decoration' (*langsam ohne sonderbahres coloriren*);
- to play them in four or five parts (i.e. the harmony neither too thin nor too thick);
- to draw the organ's basic or foundation stops (Principal, Quintaden, Gedackt, reeds – i.e. avoid glitter) and to vary them constantly (i.e. avoid tedium);
- to realize the harmony with syncopations and suspensions in such a way that the congregation feels supported by the harmony.

'Accompany' is a more difficult word than appears. It could mean playing along with the congregation while it sang the hymn; or it might instead refer to playing over the hymn-tune, interspersing its verses with interludes, giving the people a music matching the text. If it did mean playing along with the congregation while it sang, this could be part of a Pietist approach to the hymns, a 'communitarian' practice not yet universal in Protestant churches. Being perhaps apprehensive of the large new organ then taking shape in the church, the authorities were being careful to insure against wilful organists playing too fast, too loud and too complicated, as very probably they otherwise would. Somebody in Halle knew the dangers.

Although the church's clerk was rather uncertain of the technical language, his meaning is clear, and it could certainly help explain something very striking about the *Orgelbüchlein*: how it is that its settings are so different from the usual collections of chorales – richer, shorter, distinctive, 'warmer', full of *Affekt*, a most sophisticated harmony in three to five parts discreetly realized with syncopations and suspensions. Four-part settings, as in the two hymns for Passiontide, can have astonishingly different

end-results: a 'beautiful suffering' in BWV 622 but a dance (polonaise?) for a doggerel-like text in BWV 623. Five-part settings also vary, from the rich pensive hymn for Advent Sunday, BWV 599, to the less weighty hymn before the sermon, BWV 633. One setting in three parts leaves the hymn-tune even clearer: the F minor of BWV 639 is surely meant to convey the anxiety of 'I call to you, Lord Jesu Christ'. All forty-six settings encourage the listener to feel that emotions are being expressed, so much so that as with Bach's other major compilations, the *Orgelbüchlein* requires a book to itself if one is to do it justice.

That the composer was enthusiastic for his new project, at least at first, can be easily sensed. Many settings could serve as accompaniments to the hymn while it was being sung: is this why most begin with the first note of the hymn-tune by itself, isolated? Because of the detail in the harmonizations, the result would generally be a slow tempo if used as accompaniment, but that may well have been the Halle style at the time, as it was elsewhere in Germany. Hence the reason, perhaps, why the composer added to the book briefly from time to time afterwards: because other organists would find it useful? When in 1746 Bach's former pupil J. G. Ziegler applied at the same Halle church for the job that went to Friedemann Bach, he specifically said that his teacher had instructed him to play the hymns not indifferently but according to the *Affekt* of the words (Dok. II, p. 423).

To play according to the *Affekt* of the words was something the Halle church's ministers would have desired, as Ziegler must have known from having held positions in the town for many years. His was a remark aimed specifically at pleasing the Halle authorities. Indeed, appropriate hymn-playing 'with beautiful harmony' had been specified elsewhere in the town on a yet earlier occasion: in 1702 when the seventeen-year-old Handel was appointed organist in its modest castle-cathedral (see HHB 4, p.18).[2] To take such care seems typical of the town's clergy, and whatever trial piece Bach had performed there he must have convinced the authorities that he was able to match what they had required of the late Zachow decades earlier: that he provide some kind of 'pious songs of penance and thankfulness' (Serauky 1939, pp. 377ff.).
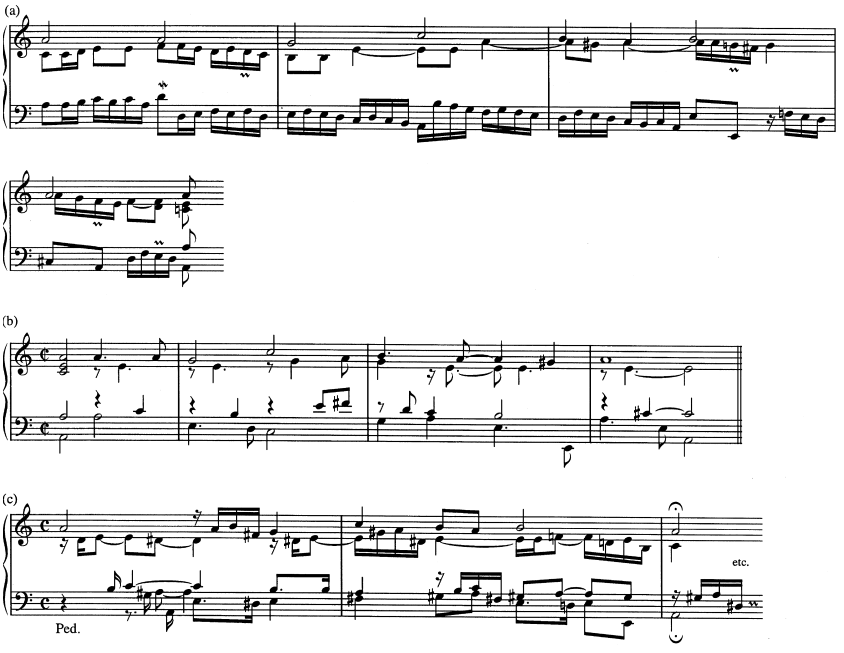
The original collection of settings is doubly revealing. In aiming to provide chorales 'for the whole church year' it is responding to the desires of a potential employer and showing an awareness of what other

[2] Since 1686, this cathedral had also been used as the Huguenot refugees' church. Is this how Handel became so adept at French?

composers were doing. If the first dating from Advent 1713 is correct (Dadelsen 1958, pp. 79f.) and Bach began assembling the album of 164 chorale-titles in late 1713, he did so soon after Daniel Vetter, long-established organist in the Leipzig Nikolaikirche, had published the second part of his collection of nearly two hundred chorale-settings for the church year (*Musicalische Kirch- und Hauss-Ergötzlichkeit*, Leipzig, 1709, 1713). No document proves that Bach was encouraged by these publications to make his own compilation, but other collections were also being made, such as the so-called *Weimarer Tabulaturbuch*, a book of harmonized chorales with short preludes 'for the whole church year', a manuscript dated 1704 and attributed to Pachelbel, though not in his hand. Although the manuscript was not present in Weimar, it seems, while Bach was there (Eggebrecht 1965, p. 116), it is nevertheless a sign of the needs of organists at a time when the hymnbooks themselves were normally without melodies and yet when the number of organs being built across the region was gradually increasing.

In addition to the *Weimarer Tabulaturbuch*, there were the ninety-seven chorale-variations in the *Musicalischer Vorrath* (1716–19) by J. S. Beyer, cantor in Freiberg. Some years later a complete yearly cycle of chorales by J. G. Walther was announced by Mattheson (1725, p. 175), though it did not appear in print. In Vetter's books a simple four-part harmonization is followed by a simple decorative variation; in the *Weimar Tabulaturbuch*, 82 of the 160 chorales are preceded on the page by a short fugue; unlike Bach's, Vetter's were suitable for the spinet or clavichord, as the title-pages say, and the book must have been successful, for a second edition appeared in Dresden in 1716. Bach's collection shows no sign of any chorale having a second movement, or to have been spinet music, or to have followed any regular hymnbook. Like those other collections it begins the church year with the main chorale for Advent Sunday and after other seasonal texts moves more selectively towards a miscellany of hymns. In the way they are actually harmonized the chorales are clearly striving for a sound beyond any found in any other local collection.

It is a truism that with these settings Bach created an exceptionally touching world of sound, with a quality obvious from any comparison one might make with other composers' work. Thus, in Example 9(a), Walther's little semiquaver patterns though literate are commonplace, while Vetter's setting in Example 9(b), for spinet or clavichord, is actually less like a French *prélude* than is Bach's in Example 9(c). (Bach's *prélude* as emblem of Advent and the start of the Church Year is matched by the *ouverture* written a year later for the Advent Cantata, No. 61). The



Example 9 Advent hymn for organ, 'Nun komm der Heiden Heiland':
(a) J. G. Walther, verse 1 of a three-verse setting, b. 3; (b) N. Vetter, Chorale No. 1, 'Variatio'; (c) BWV 599 (*Orgelbüchlein*, No. 1)

manuscript shows that the opening chorale's expressive tmesis or semi-quaver break in the melody of bar 1, imitated in the following alto and tenor, was the result of second thoughts – a tiny but clear example of creative thinking, and typical of the album. No known documentation links Bach to Vetter's publication in Leipzig, but the latter's final chorale does appear at the close of Cantata No. 8 (1724), and in the original date, scope and aim of the *Orgelbüchlein* there is a good case for supposing that J. S. Bach wished to surpass Vetter in his own work. A case of Halle's potential organist *versus* Leipzig's current organist?

In the event, alas, Bach completed little more than a quarter of the album. New duties at Weimar in March 1714 might mean that he had no need for small-scale chorales there, even that he no longer played for the hymns in chapel. Or he was now turning more to longer, more demanding organ-settings appropriate to a ducal chapel, longer chorales evidently known to some of his students and in part assembled later in Leipzig for a new, revised collection. Had he gone to Halle, one can speculate further on how Bach's cantatas too could have become more 'approachable', more

immediately 'affecting', less 'doctrinal' than many of those for Leipzig. On the other hand, it could be that Halle's form of Protestantism was not a great attraction and was even part of the reason that he remained at Weimar. Having begun the album, however, there was no reason why he would not add pieces to it from time to time, to make a more complete collection, and to do this well into the Leipzig years, by which time he might have been considering how or whether to publish it. None of this, however, affects what is likeliest: that the compilation of the album began in connection with the Halle application and stopped chiefly because he did not take the job.

In Weimar itself, practice was distinctive, not least in the court chapel. According to a report made some twenty years later, *Choralsingen* was led by a group of eight choirboys located in a gallery behind the altar, much nearer to the court personnel on the chapel floor than the main organ was (Jauernig 1950, p. 71). *Choralsingen* could mean either Gregorian intonations or the singing of Lutheran hymns, or both: the duke's recent decree, applying throughout the dukedom, that his revised Weimar hymnbook be used testifies to the importance he gave to congregational chorales. (The level of literacy this implies was no problem for the congregation in a court chapel.) All the more striking, then, is that neither Bach's selection of hymns nor his order follows exactly any Weimar hymnbook. This alone might suggest the book was not for the Weimar chapel.

A practical question remains, concerning any organ-chorale, short or long, whether played at Halle by a big organ up at the west end or at Weimar by a little instrument far away in a ceiling-gallery: was there first a prelude wafting down from on high, then the choristers singing, then a congregation joining in, with organ accompanying and/or separating the verses by an interlude?

Cantatas in Weimar, 2: the promotion to concertmaster

> In 1714 [2 March] he was named Concertmaster at the same Court. However, the functions connected with this position consisted at that time chiefly in this, that he had to compose church pieces and perform them. (*Obituary*)

Concertmeister was a new title and may not have had all the connotations it gradually acquired, i.e. the violinist leading the band from the first desk. The force of the Obituary's 'however' is that the term, which had become

more familiar by the time Emanuel was writing, would not normally imply a director of cantatas, the overall responsibility for which, and the court's music as a whole, remained the capellmeister's. The term *Concert-Meister* appears also in the ducal records and could well have been suggested by the composer himself, so that the 'however' implies that he had not replaced the reigning first violinist.

The official minute in the records says that the promotion to *Concert-Meister* was made at Bach's 'most humble request' (*uf sein unterth [änig]-stes Ansuchen*: Dok. II, p. 53) – a conventional phrase but making one suspect that Bach had been pressing for promotion for some months, chafing at the bit to be responsible for the cantata and thus to raise his standing, still before his twenty-ninth birthday. In Weimar, the *cappella* was a considerable ensemble fourteen strong: capellmeister and deputy, concertmaster, six singers, a bassoonist and a quartet of string players. (This last is important for one practical detail: the bass-line was not doubled an octave below.) The minute also specified that the court musicians were to appear for rehearsals at Bach's request, and rehearsals were to be in the chapel and not 'in the house or [his] own apartment' (*im Hause oder eigenem Logiament*). Whether 'own' refers to Capellmeister Drese's or, on the contrary, to Bach's, is uncertain: if the latter, then someone (Drese?) was hindering the new concertmaster from taking over the musicians in his own lodging, the month Carl Philipp Emanuel was born.

It is fair to assume that Bach preferred to move rehearsals to the 'neutral' chapel and, fearing that his authority would be questioned by the older instrumentalists, requested this in writing. A year later, by 20 March 1715, Drese father and son were officially informed that Bach was to receive a capellmeister's salary (in fact, it was a little higher), as if the duke were directing them, willingly or unwillingly, to accept his status. Was this again at Bach's request? Clearly, both the Weimar promotion and the Halle offer are saying much about the composer's ambition and astuteness, as well as the genuinely high regard in which he was held by current and potential employers.

Though concertmaster, Bach continued to be court organist at least by title (Dok. II, 63) and probably harpsichordist in the chamber music. How much he played himself in chapel is vague, but his position in the world of organs was high, even unrivalled locally, both before and after the promotion. Although the court document's phrase *monatlich neüe Stücke* ('once-a-month new cantatas': Dok. II, p. 53) is not without ambiguity, something of the kind was previously the duty of the vice-capellmeister, as it had been

of his predecessor. What the vice-capellmeister's response to this new arrangement was is unrecorded. Music in the other weeks remained under the capellmeister, including arrangements for extra instrumentalists on festive occasions, but Bach was paid extra for the occasional special court event such as wedding or memorial services.

The Obituary's phrase 'and perform them' seems to be there to make it clear (as it might not otherwise have been) that Bach was to direct as well as compose these cantatas, not the capellmeister. This was something recalled with pride in later years, perhaps. Not only does the Obituary make clear that Bach was in charge but so does the court secretary's minute, making one suspect that for the Obituary Emanuel had some original document to hand, such as a contract or copy of the court minute. That his father would preserve any such document is likely, although in that case not to include its further details – i.e. that he was ranked next below the vice-capellmeister, and that the title was at his own 'most humble request' – means that Emanuel omitted them.

The 'church pieces to be performed monthly', ensemble works of several movements, were sung after the creed and before the seasonal hymn and the sermon. Composing once a month was surely less arduous, more a pleasure even, than composing every week. Whether Bach intended or planned a complete monthly cycle of such cantatas for the church year is not clear, and there are still doubts about when exactly some of the surviving pieces were composed. Half or so of the three years' output 1714–17 is probably lost. Fortunately, in many cases cantatas were revised later, with their instrumentation updated for the different conditions in Leipzig, and in both places they were performed to congregation-members who had the text in front of them. But in principle, the new church-cantata forms of that period must always have been more at home in court chapels than parish churches.

How far the promotion to concertmaster was a reason to decline the Halle position is another open question, since there Bach would have had similar opportunities for church cantatas, even perhaps on a bigger scale. Perhaps the standards of performance in Weimar and its aristocratic context were an attraction. One cannot be far wrong to hear in the Weimar works a wish to delight through pleasing and novel sound, and Bach must have spent time and effort in seeking to set the words expressively in the way that could be understood by his listeners. Cantatas dating from after the 1714 promotion, composed for the period from Palm Sunday to Christmas 1714 (Nos. 182, 12, 172, 21, 199, 61, 63), open mostly with an instrumental introduction before the chorus, and in this introduction

especially the new concertmaster gives every appearance of aiming to please with sounds not so very different from the court's other music, outside chapel. The length of, for example, Cantata No. 21 might itself suggest that it is a compilation made partly from earlier work, and assembled to show the composer's range of abilities.

Typical of cantata texts over the next, most fertile twenty years, 1714–34, is the mixture of new poetry and prose extracting clauses or sentences from biblical or devotional passages and reacting to them, the whole often (normally?) rounded off both verbally and musically with a stanza of a familiar chorale from the hymnbook. This final chorale would alone distinguish the church cantata from any other kind, and where an extant score does not include a final chorale, it does not mean that there never was one, the hymn for the day perhaps, either cued in or not. (If this were so, it rather implies that the final chorales in other cantatas were more consciously selected.) Just as 'Neumeister' texts, unlike Italian recitatives or arias, mix biblical words and chorale (Cantatas Nos. 18, 24, 28, 59, 61), so a final verse from an existing chorale-book rounds off Salomon Franck's texts (Cantatas Nos. 31, 72, 80, 155, 161, 163, 164, 165, 168, 185). This 'rounding off' rather recalls the old, familiar sets of chorale variations for keyboard whose last movement would 'summarize' the work with a full sound, the *plenum*, a final statement of the original hymn. Cantatas ever since Cantata No. 4 seem to have followed suit. But this is something that had to evolve, and it is not always clear at what stage a cantata before the Leipzig period acquired its final chorale.
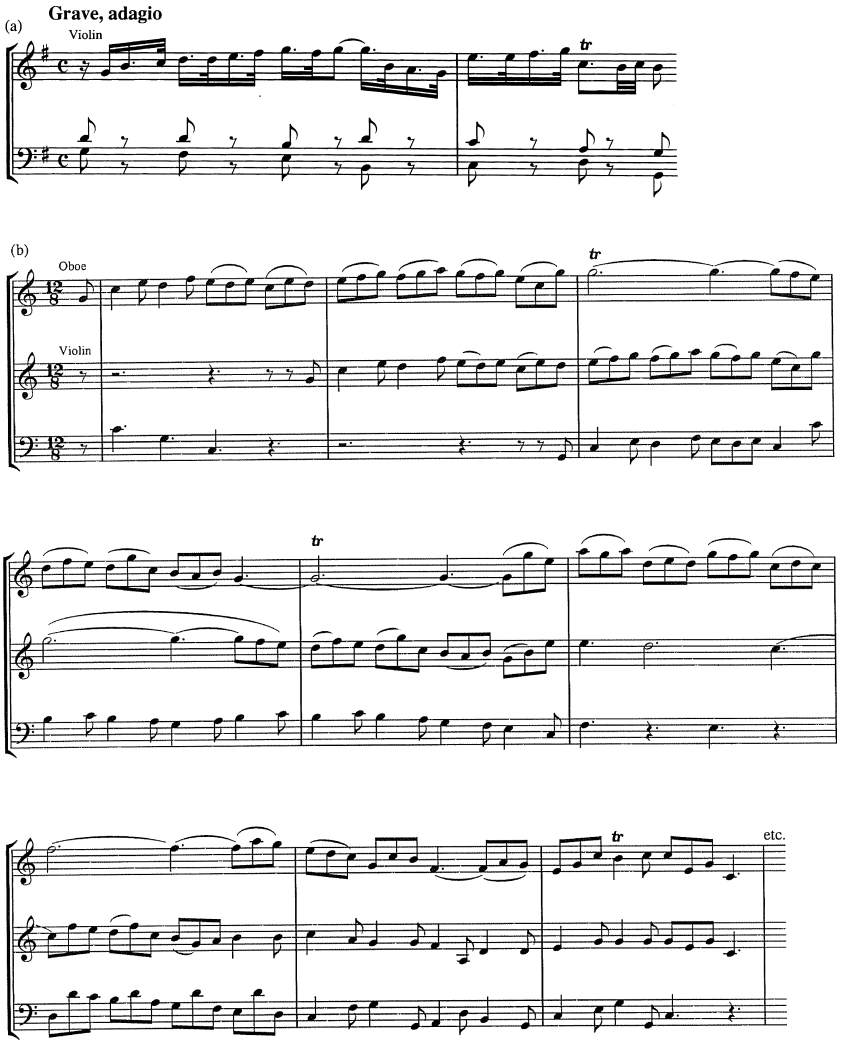
Cantata recitatives and arias do develop in idiom over the years but remain remarkably uniform, or enough to make dating on such grounds most unreliable. The recitative in Cantata No. 132 (1715) is distant from any simple Italian model: the text begins with a couplet, the phrases are variously punctuated (full stop, exclamation, comma, semicolon), an arioso (qv) section includes melismas and repeated words, telling modulations mark the following sections, and so on. Despite little melodic phrases characteristic of Italian recitative, then, there is a correspondence between particular words and their musical gesture that takes the listener into a distinctive Lutheran world. The result can seldom be mistaken for the pattering, secular recitative of Italy.

The body of the colourful Weimar cantatas is the result of a constantly inventive creativity that draws on no standard formulae in setting each libretto, large scale or small scale. In the cantatas up to Easter 1715, scorings and types of setting are more varied than afterwards, and the five-part orchestra widespread in the previous period (with two violas in

the Parisian manner of Lully) is reduced to four, as in chorales. In 1714 Telemann had also begun his 'French' cycle of cantatas, and it is possible that musical interests passed from the one composer to the other, though in which direction cannot be assumed. Peculiarly Bachian are not only the thorough French/Italian contrast between the two Advent Cantatas Nos. 61 and 62 but also the original way he deals with both sections in a French overture. In No. 61, the chorus participates in both parts of the overture, the 'prelude' and the 'fugue'; in No. 194 (1723) only the fugue. Handel's anthems and cantatas too may well have a French overture, but none is earlier than BWV 61 and in none does the choir join. Weimar choruses where they exist can be much like arias cast for a solo group of singers, whose participation spills over from the instrumental overture to the vocal cantata, from one genre to another.

That Bach-the-organist was sometimes providing cantatas already before becoming Bach-the-concertmaster is implied by a salary increase in June 1713 and by certain details in extant manuscripts. Such cantatas are Nos. 18, 199 and probably 54, chamber-like works not exclusively attached to particular Sundays but useful in other respects. In addition, there was Cantata No. 208 at Weissenfels in 1713, an expansive unicum of a cantata whose position in the composer's development can hardly be overrated (see below). Probably the first cantata to be composed for performance under the new dispensation, No. 182 (25 March 1714, Annunciation and Palm Sunday) is knowingly and elegantly setting a new tone, as the King of Heaven is welcomed in a bright cantata that unites chamber music, chamber choruses, recitative, a sequence of arias, a chorale and finally a choral dance in the manner of a passepied. (It is possible that the first word *Himmelskönig* or King of Heaven was an allusion to the *Himmelsburg* or Castle of Heaven at the chapel's liturgical east end; see above, p. 119.) Moreover, it has an opening *sonata* that leads off with a very charming melody between recorder and violin (see Example 10(a)). Is it possible that the violin solo was played by the composer, his *début* as violinist-composer-concertmaster?

The last movement of Cantata No. 199, which might just pre-date the new contract, also has all the bright melody for setting words like 'How joyful is my heart' (Example 10(b)), where Bach is unable to resist imitative counterpoint and a masterful bass-line. Perhaps Bach also played the descant-like violin line that he added above the conventional chorale that closes another cantata, No. 185 (July 1715). Such final chorales have a chamber scoring whose effect is rather different from those at the end of the later Leipzig cantatas, where the bigger ensemble gives a more congregational feel to a hymn, whether or not the congregation actually joined in.



Example 10 (a) Cantata No. 182, opening Sonata for flute (recorder) and strings; text of following movement: 'Himmelskönig, sei willkommen' ('Welcome, King of Heaven!'); (b) Cantata No. 199.viii, introduction: text: 'Wie freudig ist mein Herz' ('How joyful is my heart'), C major version in *Kammerton* (qv), viola part omitted

In principle, at Weimar chorales are not unlike finales in an Italian opera in which, after the vicissitudes of plot, the soloists gather around to participate rather in the manner of a classical *choros*.

Two months into the new contract, Cantata No. 172 welcomes Whit Sunday with a dancing chorus and instrumental antiphony suitable for any birthday or celebratory cantata. This is a work so different from the

intervening cantata, No. 21, that no one, from duke to pageboy, could have missed the musical range of which the new concertmaster was capable, and which he showed again on Christmas Day that year, with Cantata No. 63. No. 172 welcomes the Holy Ghost much as it might welcome the Elector of Saxony and does so surely to have an impact. Though in these works the parts could at times have been doubled, they are essentially chamber music, colourful, written with specific instruments in mind. In their way, and perhaps for the same reasons, the Weimar cantatas appear to be as self-dependent and distinctive as Haydn's early symphonies at Esterhaza.

The texts by Salomon Franck are often described as too didactic and admonitory for a composer, compared with the Leipzig texts of Picander with their straightforward sentiments, and yet No. 182 is sustained by a freshness of melody and apparently effortless invention that are by no means always the case in Leipzig. As with the serenades composed at Cöthen a little later, the dance-types in which arias or choruses can be cast are not totally unlike those in keyboard suites, if not the formal allemandes or sarabandes, then minuets and, especially, dotted jigs. Which movement-types can pass from genre to genre, and which in practice do not, is a topic to be considered more broadly elsewhere.
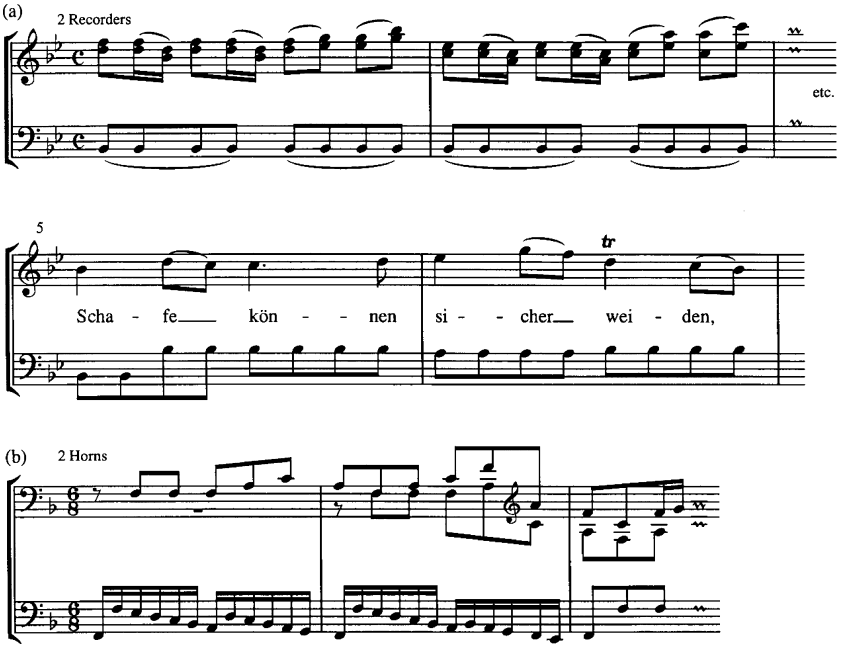
Some eighteen cantatas for the period 1713–17 exist and another five are documented, leaving open some questions, chiefly not only where are the other twenty-plus from those years but what other musical or career avenues was he exploring? Also how do the eighteen come to survive at all? The three months' period of mourning after the death of the young Prince Johann Ernst in August 1715 accounts for some of the 'unproductive' time in Bach's tenure, though strangely, no memorial cantata for the prince survives (or has been identified) from any of the composers associated with him, Bach, Walther or Telemann. There is also a question, when a cantata has an unusual shape, whether it is known only from somebody else's copy (such as the short No. 54) and whether it is complete. The unusually sumptuous Christmas and Easter Cantatas Nos. 63 and 31, when the duke's *cappella* seems to have been strengthened, are good examples of works for which Bach must have preserved his own copies for various reasons including their usefulness in other church employment, as became the case in Leipzig.

The big festive 'Hunt Cantata', BWV 208, in two versions for two dukes (Weissenfels 1713?, Weimar 1716) is exceptionally well transmitted, probably not having been secreted away in the chapel library. (Bach's score calls it *Cantata* rather than *Serenade* or *Dramma*, as for comparable later works.) It too raises a question about logistics: when two horn-players

were brought in from Weissenfels for a later performance, someone must have arranged this, sent messages, negotiated payment, got their parts copied, arranged rehearsals, etc. How Bach had come to write a piece for the birthday celebrations of the Duke of Saxe-Weissenfels, whether in February 1712 or 1713, is not recorded, but the Weimar court must have led to such contacts, via the court secretary Salomon Franck, author of the cantata's text. There was also a former colleague by then at the Weissenfels court, with whom Bach shared godfatherly duties in 1714 (A. I. Weldig, Emanuel's godfather along with Telemann). Here again is probably an instance of the composer making useful contacts.

In Bach's Weimar works, Franck naturally appears as text-author more often than Pastor Neumeister who, moving to Hamburg in 1715, plays such a big part in Telemann's output. Cantata 208 is a path-breaking work, the first of its kind for Bach, with elements both old (types of melody) and new (recitatives, horn solos), and developing without any obvious effort the topics of hunting and the *pastorella* as these were familiar at the time. Here is his first known pairing of an aria with its lead-in *recitativo secco*, which is immediately dramatic in its isolated note *Wie ?* ('how?'). The cantata is on a bigger scale than the church pieces, thoughtful but characteristically full of tunes. Each of the seven arias explores its own particular topic, and the obligatory hunting-horns in F major provide a strong central key, to which a dramatic opening is given by the soprano's curtain-raising recitative. There is a famously memorable pastoral movement which, though still totally conventional in its gentle *cantabile* throbbing bass and recorders playing in thirds, is developed towards something quite new (see Example 11(a)). The pastoral topic is particularly striking after the horns have, in their own way, introduced a very different element, the bucolic (Example 11(b)). The cantata's plan resembles the act of an opera, with a series of arias in *da capo* (qv) or concerto form, all freshly tuneful, with a grand total of fifteen movements, at least three of which were re-used in Leipzig church cantatas. Again, in 1740, BWV 208 was revived in honour of the Elector of Saxony's name-day, with a minimally revised text. Evidently, it was an exceptional work regarded by Bach as suitable for two dukes and a king.

The recitative is particularly significant as part of a work not intended for a church service, showing the composer mastering the technique, possibly in response to Prince Johann Ernst's return from Holland with Italian scores, but now of course in German. By coincidence, Handel's first vernacular (English) recitative, in 'As pants the hart', HWV 251a, also belongs to 1712. Bach's skill in writing melodious recitative is something that persists into his last decade, and like Handel's in his (earlier) Italian



Example 11 (a) Cantata No. 208.ix, introduction; text: 'Sheep can safely graze'; (b) Cantata No. 208.ii, introduction; text: 'Hunting is the pleasure of the gods'

cantatas, the melody and harmony go beyond those of the Italians, who might even hand recitatives over to pupil-assistants to compose. It is difficult to imagine Bach doing this.
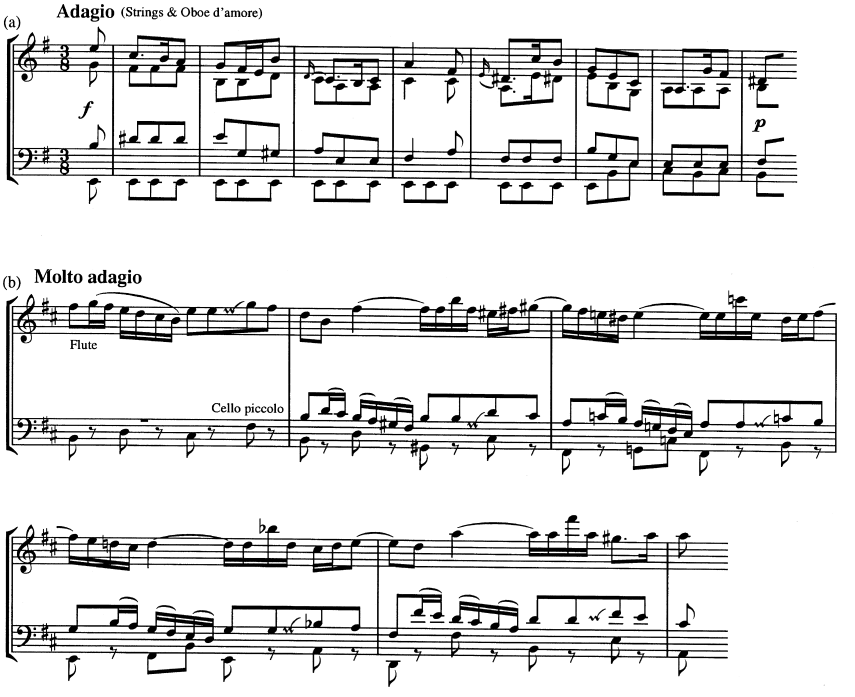
In its very range of styles, especially the hunting motifs in the first aria, BWV 208 is a work that seems to lead naturally towards 'Brandenburg Concerto' No. 1. This last may be either a compilation, its first movement originally prefacing Cantata No. 208, or a full concerto from the Weimar period later revised in order to open the Margrave of Brandenburg's set of six, fair-copied in score in 1721 (see below, p. 219). No doubt the margrave was as much a hunter as the Duke of Weissenfels was, so the hunting topic was appropriate and indeed commonplace. In going on to explore special instrumental combinations, the 'Brandenburgs' build on the kind of sounds already approached in the Weimar cantatas, although the leisurely paced and repetitious harmonies of the third, fourth and sixth concertos are more mature, perhaps resulting from Bach's moving away from cantatas and their restricting preoccupation with words.

If in 1717 Bach did write no cantatas, as seems to be the case, was it pique at not automatically succeeding the deceased capellmeister Drese Snr in the previous December? Or that on Drese's death, all current

arrangements simply ceased and needed to be renegotiated? The cantatas for the later part of 1716 are maturing in melody and harmony, hardly a moment for a composer to choose to stop. (Why the Advent cantatas for 1716 have no known recitatives is unclear and may be a result of unreliable sources – or unreliable singers.) The three cantatas BWV 70a, 186a and 147a were surely meant to impress the duke with their composer's fitness to succeed Drese. Perhaps in 1717 Bach sometimes performed pieces by other composers, even by Drese Jnr, who had been in Venice and must have learnt something about recitative and aria-form, and for all we know was a thorn in concertmaster Bach's flesh. (Nothing is known, however, of compositions by Drese Jnr.)

But Bach did not automatically become capellmeister on Drese Snr's death in December 1716, despite writing cantatas for that period (Advent) and hoping, one supposes, to be preferred above Drese Jnr, whose father had in turn succeeded his own father and for whom, quite possibly, Bach was not a favourite colleague. When no appointment was made, Bach's interest in Weimar could well have waned. Other possibilities are that in the interregnum the chapel music was deteriorating, and that Bach was more or less silenced for a year by the senior duke for his loyalty to the junior. The two dukes' quarrelling certainly exposed the distasteful side of a court run on absolutist lines, although in a major church squabbling clergy were by no means unknown. But whatever the situation, Bach would have had no trouble in turning more to chamber music were he to seek a different position elsewhere. Besides, perhaps too much is assumed today when the 'church cantatas' for Weimar are thought of only as church music, exclusive to services in the court chapel as if their devotional texts suited no other occasion or location, but which they surely did.
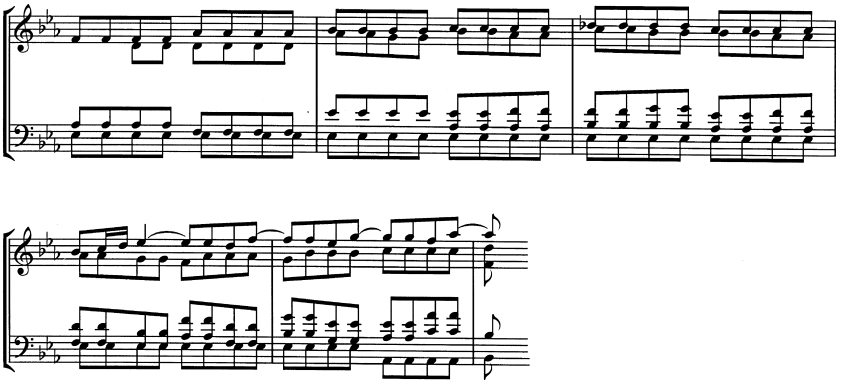
A contradiction one might sense in Bach's twenty-plus years of writing cantatas is less easy to pin down: the sensuality of his music at moments of marked piety. This is something that one comes across in cantata arias or in organ-chorales throughout his life. It is there already in some Weimar cantatas, such as No. 54 but reaches even greater heights some time after Weimar, in the mid-1720s. The harmony is often so new and rich that one can only assume that Bach's piety somehow embraced the God-given delight in musical sound, and went on to develop that delight. To take a Leipzig work from the mid-1720s as example: the *Affekt* of penitence in two arias of Cantata No. 115 is calculated and explicit, and yet the rich harmonies of the first aria and the dissonant ninths of the second are positively sensuous, beyond anything necessary for the text (see Example 12). Even if one described the latter's contrapuntal lines and very slow, hesitant tempo as



Example 12 (a) Cantata No. 115.ii, 'Ah, sluggish soul, how can you rest?'; (b) Cantata No. 115.iv, 'Pray, pray, even there in the middle of the watch'

'evoking shame' or 'picturing an ingratiating penitence' or 'praying hesitantly', what I find most striking is the sheer sensuality of the ninths.

The Weimar Cantata No. 54, in beginning unexpectedly on a throbbing discord, might be alluding to the text's command to 'resist sins', but it is the beauty of the chord itself that invites one to speculate and wonder what exactly it is alluding to. The slowly unfolding harmonies are not quite as conventional as may appear at first, nor is their implied *crescendo* (see Example 13). But what is the repeated discord conveying – the power of sin (it is a seductive discord), the desired resistance to sin (the discord evokes and stands for effort), the sinful resistance itself (it persists without resolution)? Why is the 'resisting' chord made so pleasurable? Because we are embracing the pleasure of sin, reluctant to turn from it? Or is it that a musical work having no true referent can picture resistance-to-sin with any chord, if required to do so, and a good composer finds a beautiful one in order to draw in the listener, consoling and persuading, rather than berating or ranting? Repeated chords were quite familiar to German organ-composers, but not quite like this.



Example 13 Cantata No. 54, opening (harmonies only); text: 'Resist sin above all, otherwise its poison grips you'.

Such a rich chord and its treatment suggest a sensual side to Bach's personality not restricted to cantatas; one hears a different side from it in those vigorous, pulsating major triads (qv) opening two of the 'Brandenburg Concertos'. Such sensuality cannot have been exclusive to music, and one wonders how he dealt with it in its various forms, whether in his personal life he achieved equilibrium between the cerebral and the sensuous.

Pupils in Weimar

In Weimar, no less has he trained [*gezogen*] various fine organists. (*Obituary*)

Adding to the picture of Bach's activities at Weimar in chapel and chamber is the glimpse, given by various sources, of a dozen or so pupils. Adding also to his income: throughout his career, teaching fees could have amounted to at least his church salary at any one time and even as much as double it. Emanuel would know of pupils in Weimar probably both from his father and from later acquaintance with one or two of them, including his own relations. If 'training' organists implied a formal relationship, such as a regular apprenticeship between master and (live-in) pupil, the Obituary was inviting further respect for Bach's early achievements: pupils mean that he had become an accepted and even well-known *Meister*, which a court position did not hinder.

Only miscellaneous chance references reveal an organist's teaching-income. Thus for *Clavier* lessons that Bach gave Duke Ernst August's page in 1711–12, payment in kind was recorded in the court books (Dok. II, p. 44); over the same period, lessons given elsewhere by Vincent Lübeck appear to have doubled or tripled his church salary (Syré 2000, pp. 109f.); in 1729 J. G. Walther made it clear in a letter that without such fees, organists were in trouble. One can assume therefore that there were at least two further supplements to a court-employee's income: from payments for live-in pupils' board and lodging (as for P. D. Kräuter in Weimar); and from higher fees for teaching well-to-do amateurs.

Various manuscripts, typical of what once existed, show Bach's keyboard works being copied by J. T. Krebs and J. C. Vogler, pupils working, in at least some instances, directly from his autographs. Probably such copying increased during the composer's twenties and early thirties, to serve as models for the student both as composer and as organist needing repertory. There was, after all, so little in print. Walther would make several copies of the same piece, perhaps to pass on or (like a contemporary of his, the London organist John Reading) to keep at different locations. How far the *Orgelbüchlein* chorales were known to pupils in the later Weimar years cannot be judged from the extant copies, nor can it be judged why these were made, i.e. whether as examples of how to compose fluent harmonies or as practice music (including pedals), whether as duplicates for the teacher himself to use in services or even because the copyist simply admired them. Two of the *Orgelbüchlein*'s chorales were themselves recopied and greatly expanded by the composer about then or much later, showing pupils how it could be done. Perhaps there were more of these, lost along with other Weimar work.

Although Bach's pupils are often now listed in such numbers as to imply that he had a brilliant reputation as a teacher, it is unclear how exceptional such numbers were or how unusual were the abilities of some of them. Walther mentions having fifteen to eighteen students in good times (Beckmann 1987, p. 133). Boys would normally learn organ and the arts of registration only by attaching themselves to an employed practising organist, because of formalities of the time – responsibility for the local organ was the organist's, there were no other accessible organs, a bellows-blower had to be present, etc. There being fewer formalities for students of other instruments could explain in part why it was so common for organists to claim Bach as teacher: they needed to establish their bona fide for church appointments more than violinists did for court bands.

Several useful pieces of information about the situation in Weimar emerge from a request by one P. D. Kräuter in late 1711 to his school

board at home, who were sponsoring his study with Bach, lasting for eighteen months, from April 1712 to September 1713 (Dok. V, pp. 116–22). It seems that aged twenty-six, he travelled all the way from Augsburg to Weimar for lessons – so there was nothing so very exceptional in the young Bach having gone all the way to Lübeck – and reported back regularly on progress with 'the famous musician Bach' (*dem berühmbten Musico Bach*). Whether by 1711 any of Bach's compositions had penetrated to Augsburg is not documented, nor whether Kräuter came to Weimar because of some other connection with the court there. Either way, his testimony gives some insight into life in the earlier Weimar years, though one may have doubts about the claim that Bach was already 'famous': it was conventional for admirers to say so, as is clear from Handel also being called so, in the same year 1711 and thus at the same age (HHB 4, p. 47).

In speaking of 'the famous musician', Kräuter, like many a later student, could simply have been trying to satisfy his sponsors, as his word *Musico* also suggests something more than simply *Organist*. Kräuter's remarks are more restrained than the fulsome praise sometimes given composers elsewhere at the time, as when the librettist's dedication in the opera *Rinaldo* (1710) refers to 'Mr Handel, whom the World so justly celebrates' though he was barely twenty-five. It would also be odd if Kräuter did not carry some music of Bach back with him when he returned to Augsburg to take up a position in 1713. In Hamburg by 1717, Mattheson was reporting having seen both choral and keyboard works by 'the famous organist in Weimar' (Dok. II, p. 65), so manuscripts were circulating, if only fitfully. Still in the earlier eighteenth century, however, transmission of a composer's music via his students or colleagues clearly played a major part.

For a year's lessons plus board and lodging, presumably in his own house, Bach asked for 100 thaler, which Kräuter got reduced to 80 or, for the sake of his sponsors, said he did. For the teacher to charge for lodging was normal; so did Buxtehude's predecessor Tunder in Lübeck (Edler 1982, p. 74). As to the musical instruction itself: the pupil received six hours a day of 'instruction' (*zur Information*), in composition, keyboard (*Clavier*) and other instruments. After some months, as a token of his achievement, Kräuter sent his sponsors a *Kirchen-Stuck* in the 'newest church style' (Dok. V, p. 119), presumably a cantata, though quite what form this took in 1713 is unclear. Perhaps 'six hours a day' was also to impress his Augsburg sponsors and included such things as copying parts for his teacher, though in this instance no copies seem to have survived. He said he was free to look through his master's work, a detail confirming the

right of a fee-paying pupil to do so, and shedding some light on the moonlight anecdote (see p. 22). Students in Weimar are known to have contributed to preparing full scores of choral works with their teacher, in Kräuter's case the motet Anh. III 159, probably by Johann Christoph of Eisenach and later listed in the Old-Bach Archive.

The picture given by Kräuter is one of serious sustained study, comparable to that of a professional college today if its curriculum were to be pared down to core studies. Lessons as we now know them but lasting six hours are unlikely. Rather, Kräuter's day-long contact was as an apprentice to a master, observing and being useful, accompanying him in his duties, hearing or participating in music that included newly imported works, learning the details of Italian and French instrumental music, getting to know an organ's structure (and costs) from the work underway in the Weimar chapel, and altogether 'seeing, hearing and copying a great deal' (*vil sehen, hören und decopirt*). In formally requesting a longer leave of absence from his church, as Bach himself had failed to do at Arnstadt, Kräuter mentions in particular Weimar's musical prince, Johann Ernst, his ability on the violin, and the chance for him, Kräuter, to learn the arts of Italian *concerti* and French *ouvertures* made possible by the prince's anticipated return from Holland. As the prince was still away, somebody must have told Kräuter what to expect. Very likely this was Bach, supporting a good student's studies and having encouraged the prince to bring back such music. The incident gives an idea of what was discussed and planned between musicians, and what their hopes were in the musically active court of an interested duke.

At much the same period as Kräuter's but in London, Maurice Greene was articled to the organist of St Paul's and eventually became his successor, as Bach was succeeded in Weimar by his pupil J. M. Schubart, who was succeeded by yet another pupil (J. C. Vogler). As the Obituary makes clear, Bach had not been regularly articled himself as an apprentice to a master, though as far as their musical education was concerned, his own children might have been treated in much the same way as any live-in pupils. These could also have included a family cousin or two from time to time. Some of the seventy-odd pupils documented from the Leipzig years were regular copyists for the performing parts of their master's cantatas and instrumental works, extracting them from his fair-copy score. One 'family member student' was Johann Lorenz Bach, a cousin who had studied in Weimar for some years from 1713 and felt himself qualified to be a cantor, which he subsequently became at Lahm in Itzgrund in 1718. (The organ of 1732 at Lahm remains in reliable condition.) His younger brother, Johann Elias,

became tutor for younger Bach children in Leipzig 1737–42 and secretary to their father, as other pupils probably did for a period.

Johann Elias is notable today for some surviving letters in which he gives a few details of life in the Bach household twenty years or more after Weimar but still useful for a general picture, up to a point. There are pitifully few details, alas, though from them we do learn that Anna Magdalena, Sebastian's second wife, was a keen gardener (several letters about this in BJ 2001, pp. 173–7) and that Sebastian himself had a sweet tooth, and is reported as liking cider as well as (so other references say) beer, Moselle wine, brandy, tea, coffee and tobacco. The substantial bill for such things when Bach examined an organ at Gera in 1725 represents, one must hope, consumption over several days and by several people (Dok. V, pp. 137f.).

For a salaried musician, any live-in pupils and young relations who served as some kinds of personal assistant were unlikely to adopt the elevated title 'treasurer' or 'secretary', as J. C. Schmidt Snr came to do with Handel in London. Nevertheless, some assistance was necessary, if less in Weimar than in Leipzig. Emanuel is speaking of the Leipzig years with which he was most familiar when he called the busy family house a dovecot (*Taubenhaus*: Dok. III, p. 290), with people coming and going all the time, his father too busy to deal with necessary correspondence though happy to talk with visitors. But the Weimar situation cannot have been so very different, except that presumably there were fewer distinguished visitors. The visit of one of them, J. G. Pisendel, later to be concertmaster at the Dresden court, was recalled by him some years after he had been in Weimar (Dok. III, p. 189), and his name occurs elsewhere in this book.

Johann Elias seems to be speaking of the Bach family house in Leipzig when he mentioned concerts taking place there (*bey uns*: Dok. II, p. 366), played by family and visiting musicians. Again, one can suppose life in Weimar to have been similar in this respect, with musical gatherings involving pupils, court colleagues and a precocious young Friedemann Bach. When Emanuel mentions organist-pupils specifically at Weimar, while there must have been many times more in Leipzig, he is establishing the authority Bach already had in his twenties. Only an occasional chance document from later years, such as a job application by one ex-pupil in 1726 (Dok. II, p. 157), suggests that Bach had more students in Weimar than is now known. On his being too busy for correspondence, see a suggestion on p. 329.

Equally uncertain is where and what exactly students were taught in Weimar, especially but not only when the chapel organ was out of

commission. Perhaps in the Leipzig years instruction for occasional pupils, university students and, as time passed, visiting admirers was less on the organ and more in music and musical grammar generally. (It was for one university law student, L. F. Hudemann, that the nine-note canon BWV 1074 was composed, published without solution a year later in 1728 by Telemann, who thereby became in effect the 'first Bach editor'.) One guesses that well into the Leipzig years, 'organ lessons' were mostly on practice instruments and covered all keyboard skills, including continuo-playing. J. P. Kirnberger, adopting the mantle of fugue-expert after Bach's death, wrote about studying fugues in such lessons, and found himself criticized by another mantle-wearer, F. W. Marpurg. Another pupil, H. N. Gerber, spoke of learning to play fugues, along with figured-bass realization. 'What was taught' is discussed further below, but in Weimar it cannot have been very different from how it was in Leipzig.

Existing variants of particular works, when not an accident of surviving sources, give the impression of a composer inventively extending his first thoughts as if he were actively instructing himself – and conceivably, pupils. As well as for the early Albinoni and Bononcini/Legrenzi fugues, the versions of the mature and spectacular 'Chromatic Fantasia', BWV 903, demonstrate how to keep improvising, and it would be immensely useful to know whether the variants of this piece represented the composer's actual improvisations. All three works survive in various forms, and the history of the 'Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue', if only one were certain about it, could reveal at a stroke the composer's development, or at least the way copyists interpreted its ambiguities.[3] The achievement in its two such totally different but extensive movements is far beyond the *free fantasia* and the *strict fugue* of any predecessor, though in being a pair of substantial movements, BWV 903 does rather remind one of the Passacaglia. Consequently, it is hard to place any version of either movement in time and place: late in Weimar, early in Cöthen?

If the fantasia originated in response to the description of 'free fantasy' given in a well-circulating book of 1719 (Mattheson 1719, p. 225), it would be a perfect model of how to marshal the various scales, arpeggios, hand-alternation, broken chords, harmonic tensions, modulations, changes of direction, rhetorical gaps, striking gestures, recitative and pedalpoints characteristic of free fantasias. But it probably came earlier, and in any

[3] The title 'Chromatic Fantasia' may or may not be the composer's. The fugue paired with the Fantasia in C minor, BWV 906, is also chromatic, but its autograph manuscript does not say so, nor is its first movement here called 'Fantasia'.

case Bach is unlikely to have needed suggestions by Mattheson. The Fugue offers another demonstration: how to create a keyboard fugue with an idiosyncratic range of textures, corresponding in weight to the big organ fugues. As in the WTC, Musical Offering and Art of Fugue, a three-part fugue can draw from Bach the most extended and sustained structure. Whether the absence of substantial variants means that the Fugue originated after the Fantasia or, as a fugue, would by nature be less open to second thoughts, is an open question. It is not surprising that the work as a whole seems to have been more widely appreciated by keyboard students and admirers in the following decades than any concerto or cantata, with more than fifty copies of it extant or now known about.

Mattheson's reference to fantasias raises the question how far Bach reacted to writings that appeared during his lifetime. If it was already in Weimar that he conceived the idea of compiling a complete collection of fugues (the WTC1) it could have been in response to two particular recent publications: J. K. F. Fischer's set of twenty petite preludes and fugues (*Ariadne musica*, 1715), from which he appears to borrow a theme or two, and J. H. Buttstedt's treatise comprehensively discussing fugal tehnique (Erfurt, 1716), and encouraging the idea of a grand compendium. Bach must also have been aware of current interest in tuning and in learning to compose and play in all the keys. As to specific techniques for composing: in the *XX Kleine Fugen* of 1731, Telemann is still advising that one can create or improvise preludes to fugues by playing with such patterns as broken chords. But this was already the case for most of the preludes in WTC1, a technique applied there with unheard-of invention.

One vestige of the way in which so many young German organists learnt to write preludes from building up broken chords and fresh harmonies can be seen in a very different piece: the opening section of Handel's 'Zadok the Priest' (1727). Its atavistic allusion to German tradition was barely if at all recognized in England, although (considered objectively) it is a 'standard' prelude in 4/4 time, in standard tempo. An interesting question for the performer of Bach's 4/4 preludes quoted in Example 17 (p. 239), even today, is whether there is anything in the way they are notated to imply that they have a different tempo.

The competition with Marchand

After reporting Bach's call, not accepted, to be 'music director and organist' in Halle, the Obituary picks up the biography with a lengthy anecdote:

The year 1717 gave a new opportunity to our Bach, already so famous, to achieve still more honour: Marchand, a harpsichordist and organist famous in France, had come to Dresden and had himself heard with special approval before the king, and was so fortunate as to be offered a position in the king's service with considerable salary. The then concertmaster in Dresden, Volumier, wrote to Weimar to Bach, whose merits were not unknown to him, and invited him to come to Dresden without delay, to challenge the arrogant Marchand to a musical competition [to see] who was the better. Bach accepted the invitation happily and journeyed to Dresden. Volumier received him with pleasure and obtained for him an opportunity to hear his opponent first, in secret. Bach then invited Marchand by a courteous hand-written note to a contest, in which he offered to play at sight anything musical that Marchand would give him, and promised himself ready and willing to do the same in turn. Certainly a great audacity! Marchand showed himself very willing. Time and place were arranged, not without the foreknowledge of the king. At the appointed time Bach found himself at the battle-scene in the house of a distinguished minister, where a large company of persons of high rank, and of both sexes, was gathered. Marchand kept them waiting a long time. Eventually . . . to the greatest astonishment, it was learnt that on the same day, and very early, Monsieur Marchand had departed Dresden by special coach. Consequently, Bach, now sole victor on the battleground, had enough opportunity to show how strongly he was armed against his opponent . . . By the way, our Bach willingly gave Marchand due credit for beautiful and very refined playing . . . (*Obituary*)

There are many implications in this anecdote, giving it an importance not immediately obvious. There may have been a religious-confessional aspect to the story: the royal family was Roman Catholic, the court increasingly so, especially later when the crown prince (Friedrich August, future dedicatee of Bach's Kyrie and Gloria of the later 'B minor Mass') and his Hapsburg wife succeeded in 1733. Tension between Lutherans and Roman Catholics is clear from recorded quarrels in Dresden over burial rites and the machinations of Jesuit functionaries. It could be that the *Generalfeldmarschall* Flemming (in whose house the competition was to take place, according to Forkel) was looking for a Lutheran musician of repute to counter the Parisian Louis Marchand, doing so via an invitation from *Concertmeister* Volumier that matched the royal invitation to Marchand.

Apparently, there was 'more honour' in being called to a competition in Dresden than to becoming music director in Halle. The story had been briefly told in print during Bach's lifetime (Dok. II, p. 348), hence, perhaps, the Obituary now giving so much space to it, the biggest single biographical item, even twice as long as the moonlight anecdote. Of the gaps in the extract above, one concerns Marchand as a person (he did not 'show himself a man'), one concerns him as a composer (most of his fame rested

on his Christmas Eve noëls played to Parisian crowds) and one concerns Bach's reward being deflected. How Emanuel knew that Marchand entertained with noëls is unclear – probably through one of the younger German keyboardists (such as F. W. Marpurg) who were more familiar with French tastes than the prejudices of other German composers allowed them to be. It sounds sarcastic.

Unfortunately, Emanuel does not take the opportunity to say more about his father at this point, neither whether he was a fine interpreter of Marchand's suites, as was said later (Dok. III, p. 125), nor even whether he really was reluctant to talk about the competition, as was said later still (Dok. III, p. 443). The last is doubtful, for the differing details in the story as variously reported look like the result of a middle-aged man's retelling of an old anecdote about past triumphs – his very words, perhaps, in such superfluous details as 'by special coach' (*mit Extrapost*) or the 'courteous hand-written note'. Apparently, he also spoke about it to the Erfurt organist Adlung in 1728 or thereabouts, and gave him further details (Dok. III, 122, 125). Like any good anecdote this one implies a range of things about contests of the kind that were not uncommon at the time, and especially what published biographies and their sources felt to be worth recording.

Emanuel, probably knowing that the first reference in print to his father also belonged to the year 1717, merely surmised that he was indeed 'already so famous' by then, though it took 'great audacity' to write to Marchand. Or he could assume it from an account of the Dresden competition that had been published in 1739 by J. A. Birnbaum, university teacher of rhetoric, who mentions Marchand's significant status, Bach's courteous letter to him and the Frenchman's flight. Birnbaum, who was also defending Bach against some recently published criticisms (see below, pp. 533–42), had presumably learnt about it from the composer himself, goaded into publicizing his earlier success in the kingdom's capital. For Dresden was the home of the newer musical styles preferred, apparently, by the critic against whom Birnbaum was defending him in 1739. Birnbaum's account of the competition appears not the first time he defended Bach but the second (Dok. II, p. 348), as if the composer had meanwhile brought it to his attention: to have vanquished a French virtuoso in Dresden was a double feather in anybody's cap, especially for a composer being criticized by 1737 for too much artifice. Again, therefore, it looks as though Emanuel was covering a story already in the public domain, particularly as there was another tale then in print about an earlier contest in Dresden, also between a 'local' man, Matthias Weckmann, and a distinguished, admired Catholic visitor J. J. Froberger. (This story is in Mattheson 1740, p. 396.)

Well-read musicians anywhere would know from another and very different publication (Titon du Tillet's *Parnasse*, 1732), that Louis Marchand was considered by some to have been the best French keyboardist of his day, more naturally gifted than either Couperin or Rameau. Pierre Du Mage, his student, already says in the preface to his *Premier Livre d'orgue* (1708) that his own music is modelled on *la savante école et dans le goût de l'Illustre Monsieur Marchand mon Maître*, and it is possible Bach knew Du Mage's book (it too was mentioned by Birnbaum) and had long ago read its praise of Marchand. Altogether, then, for the Obituary a story of Bach conquering Marchand was by no means pointless, in fact comparable to the stories of Handel personally instructing Corelli or surpassing Domenico Scarlatti, stories recounted just a few years later in his biography.

The salient points of a story not unique in the days of competitive meetings in public between professionals seem to be these:

Marchand had been offered a well-paid position at the Court of Saxony.
The Dresden violinist Volumier, concerned about this, invited Bach over.
Bach heard Marchand play, according to the Obituary (not Birnbaum), and praised his playing.
He wrote to him (in French?), suggesting an extemporization contest.
Marchand agreed (in writing?).
The contest was to be in a minister's house, with the elector's knowledge.
Many people (of both sexes) waited expectantly at the agreed place.
But Marchand had left early that morning.
The king (elector) rewarded Bach, but the 500 thalers were taken by a servant.

Why the Obituary said the listeners were 'of both sexes' is unclear: because Bach had reported this himself, aware that the queen (electress) was there and that she had a vested interest in Marchand's success or failure? What is pictured is a court appearance before people of fashion, not a church committee of the usual kind. No French sources give the story, but a Dresden document, unfortunately undated, shows that Marchand did receive a payment in the year concerned (BJ 1998, 14). Among the many embroideries given later versions of the story are that Bach's modesty allowed him to speak of it only when pressed (unlikely), that the composers did meet (also unlikely) and that Bach improvised on a theme given him by Marchand (possible – see note 4, p. 176). Other conjectures are more plausible, some of them illuminating:

If the story of the reward is true, the occasion cannot have been before October, i.e. shortly after the crown prince returned from Italy. Since J. D. Heinichen was already court capellmeister, perhaps Marchand was invited

by the crown prince to direct music for the Roman Catholic chapel or for the future queen. Or certain Dresden musicians were attempting to introduce J. S. Bach as a 'Lutheran counterweight', although Volumier, an old acquaintance, was himself Roman Catholic, as were Buffardin the flautist, Weiss the lutenist and two-thirds of the court musicians.

The contest centred on the harpsichord. Although there is no evidence to support the idea, it is possible that (parts of) the Fifth 'Brandenburg Concerto' were first drafted for this occasion, with Dresden's instrumental specialities in mind: harpsichord, virtuoso violin and (for the first time in Bach's instrumental music) transverse flute. The slow movement seems to use a theme by Marchand,[4] while the theme of the first resembles others by Vivaldi and Telemann (also in D major).

Some later writers have speculated that there were to have been two recitals, one on harpsichord that did take place, one next day on organ that did not, but again, there is no clear evidence for this. On the contrary, since there was probably no fine organ in Dresden suitable for a competition until Gottfried Silbermann built his first instrument there, in the Sophienkirche in 1718–20, some public virtuoso music for harpsichord 'in a court minister's house' was more appropriate. Fine harpsichords were becoming of great interest in Dresden, thanks to court patronage, and one possibility is that Bach was responding to this, even that Marchand demanded it, not being used to German organs. By saying that Bach heard Marchand 'in secret', Emanuel or his source is implying that Bach did not make himself known, which seems rather out of character. Perhaps he tried, unsuccessfully, and this had somehow led to Marchand being called 'arrogant' (*hochmüthig*). A former and evidently charismatic organist to the French king might well have seemed so to a Thuringian *Concertmeister* and his Saxon colleagues.

Four other conjectures concern possible job-searches:

Although Bach, anxious to leave Weimar, was by then committed to Cöthen, the possibility of an incomparably better job in Dresden, where he too could 'let himself be heard by the king', crossed his mind.

The largesse expended on music and theatre at Dresden was well enough known, if not in budgetary detail, for any musician to cast eyes in its direction.

[4] See Pirro 1907, p. 429, also Louis Marchand, *Pièces d'orgue manuscrites*, Editions Fuzeau, facs. edn 90.400 (Fuzeau, 1990), f.31'. A surviving 'first version' of the Fifth 'Brandenburg Concerto' is now dated to 1719, but there could have been a yet earlier version of the slow movement.

Two years later, according to the same Count Jakob Heinrich von Flemming, Handel too was in Dresden, as possible successor to the royal opera-composer Lotti (HHB 4, p. 83). Perhaps Flemming was contriving to get Handel and Bach together in the city. (The main opportunity would have been at the six-week-long celebrations in 1719 for the marriage of the crown prince. The new opera-house in the Zwinger Palace was also opened, an occasion on which Quantz and Telemann were present, the former for his first opera, the latter doubtless soliciting.) It was later said that Bach had gone that year to Halle to visit Handel, but he had left that day (Dok. III, p. 443).

If Marchand had already decided not to take the Dresden position and return to Paris, which is possible, perhaps he 'missed' the competition rather than shirked it.

The anecdote says nothing about any of this, but it seems entirely characteristic of a story told by J. S. Bach that it should include something about money. When the Obituary adds the following:

> A Frenchman willingly turns down an offer made to him of a permanent salary of over a thousand thaler, and the German whose precedence he seems to concede by his flight was not even able take up the one *ex gratia* gift made to him by the king. (*Obituary*)

who is speaking, Emanuel or his father? It could be either or both, but sounds like the latter.

Writing in the early nineteenth century, Goethe's friend Zelter had a different interpretation of the anecdote, while frankly admitting he had no evidence for it: Marchand did come to the meeting, won the competition by playing in a more *galant* way than Bach had and took the king's present while Bach went back to Weimar (Dok. VII, p. 150). Zelter, typically for his period, was questioning the nature of historical evidence and pointing out that there was no better documentary evidence for the Obituary's story than for his. After all, it is quite possible that a spirited, vivacious, up-to-date Parisian harpsichordist had known better than J. S. Bach how to appeal to a mixed audience of non-connoisseurs. Birnbaum's report, though apparently corroborating the later Obituary's, was written after Marchand, Volumier, Count Flemming, the elector and the electress had all died.

How Bach and the Dresden violinist Volumier were previously acquainted in Weimar is not totally clear from documentation, and by the time of the Obituary, only the flute-virtuoso Buffardin, who had been in Dresden at the time, was still living. It is not possible to know such things as whether the flute part of the 'Fifth Brandenburg' had anything to do with him or whether the violin part was written for Volumier. Both are

possible. But tempting though it has often proved in the past to connect some part of the Bach oeuvre with particular performers, it is, with few exceptions, too conjectural for comfort. It is also uncertain whether Bach's works for solo violin and the later sonatas for violin and harpsichord had anything to do with Volumier or with some other violinist.

Late in the same year of 1717, a reference to Bach made in print by Mattheson includes a request for further biographical information from him, a request repeated in 1719 but to no avail on either occasion (Dok. II, pp. 65, 75). Was the first request too close to Bach's contretemps with the Duke of Weimar that surfaced in November 1717 (see the beginning of Chapter 4) for him to want to respond? Was the second too close to Telemann's own autobiography of 1718, which repelled him by its show of learning? Both could be the case, as again when the generous publicity Mattheson gave to J. G. Walther's library and his plan to publish some chorales (1725, pp. 175–6) evidently did nothing to persuade Bach to seek the same kind of publicity himself. A natural reserve, as well as its opposite, could be responsible for the silence, though it seems from the preface to Mattheson's personnel encyclopedia of 1740, the *Grundlage*, that Handel too failed to send a full biography.

Whatever was behind Bach's not responding to Mattheson, there was good reason for compiling over the years, if he did, three biographical 'archives': a file of cuttings about himself, intended as a kind of summary curriculum vitae; eventually, a genealogical table; and a collection of his family's compositions.

4 | Cöthen, 1717–1723: other opportunities for the maturing composer

The call to Cöthen

When [after the Dresden competition] our Bach had returned to Weimar, and in the same year, the then Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen, a great connoisseur and lover of music, called him to be his Capellmeister. He took up the position without delay and held it for almost six years, to the greatest satisfaction of his gracious prince. (*Obituary*)

One reason why Bach took up the position 'without delay' was that since 5 August he was probably being paid some kind of retainer by Cöthen as capellmeister and director of chamber music there (Dok. II, p. 93), some months before the fruitless visit to Dresden in the autumn of 1717. This can have been no later than early November for one startling reason – because in Weimar from 6 November to 2 December 1717 Johann Sebastian Bach was in prison.

He was held in the 'district judge's chamber' or court-house remand cell (*LandRichter-Stube*) on account of his 'show of obstinacy and for over-pressing his dismissal' from the duke (*halßstarrigen Bezeugung und erzwingenden dimission*: Dok. II, p. 65). According to the same court record, he was eventually released but only 'in proclaimed disgrace' (*mit angezeigter Ungnade*), a kind of dishonourable discharge. Naturally the Obituary says nothing about any of this, unless 'without delay' is an elliptical or tactful allusion to it: Bach so wanted to be free of Weimar that he did not hesitate to remove himself (and then his family?) when he could, and spoke about it in these terms over the following years.

The record shows that Bach was accused and convicted by the Weimar duke on two charges, obstinacy and importunity, the first apparently the more serious charge. But neither is quite clear now. He could have been 'obstinate' for some time in resisting the decree against musicians playing for the junior duke; or he was more recently obstinate in pressing for permission to leave the duke's employ and remove to Cöthen. 'Importunity' would arise if he had remonstrated

against J. W. Drese Jnr about to succeed as capellmeister (i.e. above him) after Telemann had declined;[1] or again, if he had agitated importunely to be allowed to go to Cöthen. Permission to leave was by no means automatically granted, especially as he had also missed two important events at court in late October 1717, the duke's fifty-fifth birthday and the 200th anniversary of Luther's nailing of the Ninety-five Theses to the door in Wittenberg. In particular, the Reformation anniversary had been important to the senior duke, who had decreed specially composed music for it and was known to tolerate no resistance. (In 1716 he had forbidden the court preacher to speak against the French Huguenot refugees allowed by him to settle in Weimar, giving the said preacher fatal apoplexy. A year later he also quarrelled with another preacher – BJ 2006, pp. 47, 52, 55.) In addition to all this, however, it is more than faintly possible that Bach was generally insubordinate in his demeanour.

Other possibilities are that the senior duke was genuinely concerned about maintaining chapel standards, mortified to learn (if he did) that Bach was already accruing back pay at Cöthen, irritated by the junior duke's support for him and even jealous of Concertmaster Bach's triumph in Dresden (if the Marchand incident had already taken place and become known, as it surely did). Whether Drese Jnr became capellmeister because Bach was agitating to leave, or vice versa, is not clear from the known chronology, although it is clear that Drese was first paid only in December, after Bach had gone (Dok. II, p. 66). What is certain is that the junior duke had a personal association with the very court that was about to receive Bach as concertmaster: Cöthen, whose prince was the duke's brother-in-law. One way or another, the enmity between the two Weimar dukes surely played a part in Bach's confinement and dismissal.

The senior duke's quasi-feudal treatment of Bach was nothing out of the ordinary, nor, as far as is known, did he ever lift Bach's conviction before he died in 1728, something that would have made it awkward, perhaps dangerous, for Bach to return to Weimar. Both dukes were dictatorial, and during the junior duke's own reign later, a horn-player asking for dismissal was actually condemned to a hundred lashes and prison, and on escaping,

[1] As general capellmeister to the main ducal line, so Telemann said later (Mattheson 1740, p. 364). The Obituary authors probably knew this claim, since it was in print and Emanuel was in touch with Telemann. Bach did not compete with Telemann either at Weimar or on other occasions at Gotha and Leipzig.

was hanged in effigy.[2] If Bach's visit to Dresden took place before his incarceration, which it presumably did, it could have been in part to get royal support for his request to leave Weimar, although the difficulties that Quantz had in Dresden when trying to leave in 1728 suggest that the Elector of Saxony would not have been sympathetic. Autocrats are autocratic. Besides, any approach to royalty meant offending the Weimar duke by going above his head: it is possible that Bach's offence lay in part because he somehow exposed the matter (implied by the word *Bezeugung*, 'testimony'). At least the request for Bach's release was not denied on the common grounds that he owed money, as his admired relation Johann Christoph's request had been at Eisenach some decades earlier.

One would like to think that being detained in the 'district judge's chamber' meant, for a quite senior court-employee, something more like a room in a debtors' prison than a prison cell of popular imagination. Bach is not likely to have been out of communication while there. Seventy and more years later, E. L. Gerber, whose father was a Bach pupil during 1724–7, wrote what has sometimes been taken as referring to this imprisonment when he repeated a tradition (*sic*) that the WTC had been 'written' (*geschrieben*: composed? begun? compiled? fair-copied?) during a period in which the composer was depressed, bored and without an instrument (Dok. III, p. 468). Had Gerber Snr heard the composer himself say something of the kind, and in reference to his incarceration? More to the point for the Gerbers, however, was to show that their hero did not need a keyboard at hand for composing even complicated counterpoint. Emanuel made a similar point (Dok. III, p. 289) as if a point of pride, which in turn suggests that students normally did work with a keyboard but ought to aspire not to. Whatever the truth, there are other periods in Bach's life in which boredom or enforced idleness were not unknown: for example, his second visit to Carlsbad with Prince Leopold in 1720. He could well have had nothing much to do then either, for there is no record of the party taking a harpsichord along, as there had been for the previous visit (BJ 2006, p. 101).

Dishonourable discharge and quick departure could alone account for Bach's own manuscripts from the Weimar period now being so few, including many keyboard works. Evidently he managed to keep hold of the Little Organ Album (*Orgelbüchlein*), which alone might (just) support

[2] Glöckner 1988, p. 141. The University of Leipzig had a convicted but escaped student hanged in effigy on 8 March 1723 (Schneider 1995, p. 184), a few weeks before the Bach family arrived in Leipzig.

the idea that it was begun for Halle, was kept at home and had nothing to do with the Weimar chapel. (The court records of his imprisonment and release still call him organist or *Hof-Organist*, 'court organist': Dok. II, pp. 65f.) He also had his own copies of certain cantatas that were reworked later, but perhaps a great deal of choral and other music was still on court premises, wherever rehearsals had been held and from which presumably he was banned. If so, his eventual successor and former pupil J. C. Vogler could have 'inherited' this stock (Maul and Wollny 2007, p. xxv), were any of it still surviving when he took over as court organist in 1721.

Gerber's point about composing without a keyboard may be relevant to Bach's formal portrait made later at Leipzig, which shows him not near any instrument but holding a piece of paper containing some difficult counterpoint (a canon), in cryptic or unrealized form. Portraits of Handel and Scarlatti, on the other hand, show them seated near a harpsichord,[3] either as their indispensable worktool or as an emblem of their renowned virtuosity.

The move to Cöthen

The Weimar junior duke's marriage to the prince of Cöthen's sister in January 1716 is likely to have been the occasion on which the prince became aware of the Weimar court's concertmaster, either at the musical events for the wedding or subsequently. Nothing is known of any contact between them on that occasion, but it does seem that the prince's musicianship impressed Bach sufficiently for the Obituary to refer to it thirty years later. There Emanuel is implicitly contrasting the prince's support with his father's later situation in Leipzig.

So the opportunity to become the prince's capellmeister, whether or not solicited by Bach and/or supported by the junior duke, was too good to miss: the title signalled promotion, Weimar was becoming problematic and Prince Leopold of Cöthen was musical. Coincidentally or not, the prince had sent a representative over to Weimar for a week or more in July 1717 (BJ 2006, p. 96). The accounts do not make it as clear as usually supposed whether Bach was paid an actual retainer from 5 August 1717 and, if so, whether this was tantamount to deceiving Weimar, where he had not been released from his obligations to the duke and was still being paid to the end

[3] Conclusions are hard to draw. Another portrait of Handel in the University Library, Hamburg (1749), shows him holding a score, with a copy of *Messiah* on a table, but no instrument. A well-known engraved portrait of Couperin (1735) is comparable.

of September. Another possibility is that when he signed for payments on 29 December, they could have been backdated by request and by some pre-arrangement (Dok. I, p. 190; Dok. II, p. 67). But it is difficult to quell the suspicion that Bach had been double-paid for a time and had deceived the Duke of Weimar. Not a sensible move, considering the duke's known authoritarianism.

Whatever the case, it looks from this and other circumstances as though the young Prince Leopold had become anxious to have 'the most honourble and learned' Bach as 'capellmeister and director of our chamber music' at Cöthen (Dok. II, p. 93), and his enthusiasm became part of the picture Emanuel drew later when he remarked that along with the dukes of Weissenfels and Weimar, the Cöthen prince 'particularly valued and rewarded' his father (Dok. III, p. 289). To these admiring dukes one may add, as Emanuel did for the later years, the admiring kings of Saxony and Prussia, as well as various members of Slav nobility, giving one some idea of what the composer may have missed through his long service to the churches and burghers of Leipzig. If Bach was 'particularly valued and rewarded' by Leopold, does this mean that his predecessor at Cöthen, Augustin Reinhard Stricker, had not been and had even vacated the post for him, despite serving the prince since 1708 and dedicating some Italian cantatas to him?

Precisely when the composer's family moved to Cöthen is not certain: 'already in August' is one guess, but it is more probable that it was only later, in time for the prince's twenty-third birthday celebrations on 10 December 1717. Special music was prepared for one who was, according to the composer in a formula he used elsewhere, 'as much a lover as a connoisseur' of music (Dok. I, p. 67). Prince Leopold also stood a year later as godfather to the Bachs' only child to be born in Cöthen, Leopold Augustus, as did the wife of the Weimar Duke Ernst August. For his brief life the child was a member of a family of seven plus a maid, living in part of a house that appears to have been something of a centre for the Lutheran citizens of the non-Lutheran Residence of Cöthen.

Only two weeks after release from detention in Weimar Bach is documented in Leipzig as testing the newly rebuilt organ of the university church, the Paulinerkirche, something which must have been previously arranged, somehow. So much travel within a short period (Weimar–Dresden–Weimar–Cöthen–Leipzig–Cöthen) seems excessive. Since Marchand's stay in Dresden is not precisely dated, the order of events before the Cöthen relocation in December 1717 will never be clear. Emanuel places the visit to Dresden for the 'Marchand competition' before Cöthen, and therefore before the Leipzig organ-test, so there is little reason

to think the competition was merely an excursion Bach made during his stay in Leipzig. In any case, the effect on Bach of a hectic schedule in five different places – the competition, then back to internment, then relocation, organ-examination elsewhere, then a return to a new home and new duties – can only be guessed.

On 17 December, already officially Capellmeister to his Highness the Prince of Anhalt-Cöthen (*Hochfürstlich Anhalt-Cöthenscher Capellmeister etc.*), Bach signed a report on the Leipzig organ that shows no sign of being skimped, and indeed was prepared 'with diligence' according to one chronicler (Dok. I, p. 166). It was surely on the recommendation of Kuhnau, university graduate and cantor in Leipzig, that at some point he had been invited to review such a significant instrument. Kuhnau had previously signed the Halle organ-report as a colleague along with Bach, who directed the new examination in Leipzig in the presence of six authorities: the current university rector, a former rector, two senate members, another organ-builder and another Leipzig organist. His unusually high fee of 20 thaler from the university was for taking formal delivery of the organ, testing it and listing its defects; no inaugural recital is mentioned, but this might have been assumed. Certainly, appointment as organ-examiner to such a university in such a city was a sign of the esteem in which Bach (or his reputed expertise) was now held by those who knew.

The report, dictated or drafted and only signed by him (Dok. I, p. 189), comments in good detail on the organ's overall structure, its inner working, stoplist, voicing, tuning and key-action, recommends that a window behind the organ be covered up and a one-year guarantee signed with the organ-builder, and goes on to ask that consideration be given the builder for his work extra to contract (Dok. I, p. 165). Much of this again resembles very closely points made in Werckmeister's *Orgelprobe* and is, one might think, a little too trusting of the builder. Three important church musicians, Kauffmann of Merseburg Cathedral, Lindner of Freiberg Cathedral, and Kuhnau of St Thomas's and Leipzig University, had already been considered as examiners (Dok. II, p. 69): did they decline, and if so, was it in protest that a bid by the young master-builder Gottfried Silbermann to rebuild the university organ from top to bottom had come to nothing?

The Cöthen appointment and musical opportunities

At 2,000, Cöthen's population was tiny, less than half Weimar's. The whole principality amounted only to some 10,000 inhabitants, and was

dominated by its court and palace.[4] In most respects it was like so many of the smaller German residence towns and not infinitely stimulating, but its prince's musical interests have left it with a significant place in history. In other respects too the town and court were very different from Weimar's. Not orthodox Lutheran but Reformed (Calvinist), the court chapel is thought to have required no church cantatas and no organ music, despite half of its musicians being professing Lutherans. The attraction of the job, other than a rise in pay, must therefore have been its opportunities for non-church music and general music-making with especially fine colleagues. Another and important factor is that its young prince seems to have become something of a personal friend to the composer, which alone must have given the job rather a different tone from Weimar's. It cannot be known whether Bach was pleased to have no regular church duties.

As a teenager, Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen had travelled, heard opera in The Hague, brought back French and Italian music, studied in Italy with a competent musician (probably J. D. Heinichen, later capellmeister in Dresden), played string and other instruments, returned to his inheritance with enthusiasm and by 1717 had some fifteen musicians on his payroll. Unfortunately, it is not possible to compare the music he brought back from his travels with that imported by Prince Johann Ernst at Weimar, but without doubt Bach reaped the benefit of both. Because Leopold was a good player himself, reliably said later to have played the violin 'not badly' and sung 'a good bass' (Dok. III, p. 188), one supposes that he and the composer participated together in vocal music and string concertos like (or possibly including) the 'Third Brandenburg'. There being no need to employ a chapel choir, resources could be directed to instrumentalists (strings, woodwind, brass), and while the number participating in the ensemble at any one point is not precise, the establishment generally matched that of many a much larger court's *cappella*. Leopold's company was bigger and better paid than the one at neighbouring Zerbst, for example. In addition, the town of Cöthen had a band of twelve *Stadtpfeifer* which it could call upon, no doubt sharing at least some of those players with the court.

As the court was Reformed, it was the town's Lutheran church of which the Bach family remained regular members, renting pews in the Agnuskirche (one in 1720, two the following years: Dok. II, p. 79). Sebastian stood as godfather to the church cantor's daughter. To be 'capellmeister

[4] It is seldom clear from recorded population counts, however, whether the numbers are adults only, communicants only, householders only, etc.

and director of chamber music' (as the title-page to the WTC puts it) meant directing some fifteen or sixteen first-rate musicians in chamber music and special-event cantatas, often with extra players. The level of musical achievement at Cöthen must have been higher than at Weimar, with such musicians as the viol-player C. F. Abel, whose son worked later in London with Bach's son Johann Christian; C. B. Lienicke, cellist, member of a scattered musical family;[5] and several other virtuosi on violin and woodwind. Not long before Bach was appointed, Leopold had attracted several court musicians from Berlin on their dismissal when the philistine King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm, succeeded. Life was precarious when new rulers came in and so often got rid of musicians, particularly foreigners. In Dresden in 1681 under the new Elector of Saxony, the Italian court musicians had been requested to leave. At Cöthen, however, the new incomers were able to give Bach a wider musical horizon than before, as well as probable contacts with Berlin.

Other than his sons Friedemann and Emanuel and his live-in nephew Bernhard, who did some work at court as a copyist, what pupils Bach had in Cöthen is not known for sure, although one organist who recorded staying with him in 1718 (Dok. V, p. 126) may have been only one of several. Bernhard, sent by his father Christoph to his uncle Sebastian to develop his 'innate musical desire and art', describes this training as 'one of the main reasons' he was able to succeed his father (Dok. II, p. 202). Since at Cöthen Bach's salary was twice and soon more than twice his predecessor's, plus payment for maintaining the harpsichord and lending his house for rehearsals, clearly he was highly valued and, at the same time, alert to his opportunities. Chamber music must have been energetically developed under his direction, hence perhaps the copying work done by Bernhard, and Bach was enabled to hire performers from elsewhere for special occasions. Whether he regularly played any organ in the town or visited organs in the neighbourhood for pleasure or advice is not documented but probable.

Interestingly, in view of the former directive in Weimar about where rehearsals were to be held, at Cöthen Bach was able to use his own house for rehearsing and got paid extra for it. Was this for the sake of privacy, status, convenience, greater geniality, a better-maintained harpsichord at home, increased income or a stronger control over the preparation of

[5] Probably related to the viola-player D. Linike (Leneker, Lunecan), one of Handel's first copyists in London (a score of *Rinaldo*, 1711) and J. G. Linike, concertmaster at Weissenfels, who contributed to Handel's opera *Giulio Cesare* in Hamburg in 1725 (HHB 4, pp. 52, 137).

performances? All of these, perhaps. A weekly *exercitium musicum* is documented, indicating regular rehearsal and preparation for a weekly concert played in the throne-room of the castle, but there could have been many other contexts or occasions for which incidental music was required, planned ahead and scheduled.

Various expenses for the music library are recorded. Unfortunately, since Cöthen's terms of employment are not known and may never have been written down, and since copies of music again belonged to the court and disappeared over time unless re-used by the composer and his successors, one can only guess that Bach produced many chamber works there. Losses from Cöthen are probably at least equal in proportion to those elsewhere. Considering how much Bach produced in the first two years at Leipzig, both for the church and elsewhere, and how out of character it would have been for him to neglect his composing, a great deal of music in its Cöthen form must be missing – perhaps the bulk of several hundred compositions (see Wolff 2000, p. 200). That he was producing a great deal of music cannot be doubted. The counterpoint of WTC1 and the Inventions would cost even J. S. Bach a great deal of time and trouble, and from the point of view of effort each suite for keyboard or violin or cello would be the equivalent of many a cantata or concerto, if taking less time to score than these.

Cöthen music re-used in various guises later has often had its tracks covered over, resulting in the strange fact that largely because Bach always explored so fully the type of music he was engaged in, some of his best-known chamber and ensemble music is of quite uncertain origin and date. Each genre largely has its own path of development, as self-contained as one can imagine possible. What can be plausibly suggested as music suitable for Cöthen's chamber concerts can often be as plausibly suggested for concerts later in Leipzig, and extant sources need not be the last word on what existed, or why and when it originated or on what form(s) it ever took. It is difficult to specify what in a violin concerto shows it to be 'maturer' or 'later' than a solo violin sonata or any other kind of music, when each and every one has its own idiom and style, relating only superficially to any other kind. Dating so much of this music at any of its various stages is not only still problematic but also, in being of such interest to later historians, even misleading.

Another important activity took place far away from Cöthen: evidently the capellmeister and five or six musicians complete with a harpsichord travelled with their sickly prince to Carlsbad, Bohemia, on 9 May 1718. There the prince took the spa waters and apparently had his musicians

perform in what would have been semi-private concerts of a kind that were becoming popular in towns across Europe. The prince had made an earlier visit to Carlsbad before Bach moved to Cöthen, also with some provision for music, and in 1718 it seems he took a full group along: capellmeister plus two violins, viola, gamba, oboe, cello and bassoon. The likelihood is that they performed in the so-called Saxon Room at Carlsbad (BJ 2006, pp. 94ff.), something like the Pump Room in Bath and holding up to 300 persons. Fewer details are known about the musicians accompanying Bach on a further visit in 1720, but undoubtedly significant to him was the presence in Carlsbad of the Elector of Saxony, to whom he was to appeal in Leipzig five years later for support against the university (see p. 549).

There is no record of Bach playing any local organs in Bohemia, as might be expected of a virtuoso organist visiting unfamiliar Catholic territory. Something of the kind had been the case some years earlier when the young Handel played in Rome at St John Lateran, 'to the amazement of everybody' (HHB 4, p. 26). Perhaps a search of Czech news-sheets would yield something relevant to the only visits Bach ever made outside the German-speaking empire.

It seems that the keyboard instrument taken to Carlsbad had either become unfashionably modest or no longer good enough for concert work. For in March 1719, presumably after some preparatory correspondence, Bach was in Berlin to pick up a new two-manual harpsichord by Michael Mietke, the Berlin court instrument-maker whose few extant instruments have served in recent decades for reconstructions of 'the Bach harpsichord'. Although there is always the possibility that Bach also saw any visit to any major centre as an opportunity for soliciting a job, it was not unusual for a musician to journey on commission to pick up fine instruments. (Bach's friend in Dresden, the violinist Volumier, had been to Cremona in 1715 to pick up a dozen instruments from Stradivari.) Either in Cöthen or Carlsbad, such an exceptional new harpsichord,[6] made not locally but by a Berlin builder probably recommended by the ex-Berlin musicians in Cöthen, would feature prominently, along with Leopold's virtuoso capellmeister himself. Cöthen was not alone is acquiring a special instrument: the Gotha court had, over a similar period, a large collection of harpsichords.

[6] The margrave's estate listed in 1734 includes a Mietke two-manual harpsichord with blue and silver lacquer (Oleskiewicz 2011, p. 109). A Cöthen inventory of 1784 still lists the maker of its own instrument as *Michael Mietke in Berlin 1719* (Dok. II, p. 74), probably copied from the instrument's nameboard or soundboard.

Whether or not in connection with the new Mietke harpsichord, an important factor in the music played and composed at this period was the low pitch prevailing at the Cöthen court. At a' = 392 Hz, this was a low French pitch below the *Kammerton* customary outside church and could be the reason why, at much the same period, the trumpet in 'Brandenburg Concerto' No. 2 is given such an apparently high tessitura (qv).

Cantatas in Cöthen

It is conjectured that some dozen cantatas were composed for such occasions as birthdays, New Year and the prince's wedding in December 1721, musical works now known only in part. That *occasional* cantatas have left such a scrappy fund of copies, unless rewritten for other purposes, was normal: none of the many wedding cantatas performed, composed, compiled or re-arranged by Bach's predecessors in Leipzig have survived in that form. There are a few hints that some of the church music written in Weimar was now found appropriate in Cöthen, such as a version of Cantata No. 199, whose jig-finale suited a celebratory performance of some kind, or Cantata No. 21, a not unsuitable work for the Reformed church if needed. Presumably it was the low pitch of the Cöthen instruments that required BWV 199 to be transposed up a tone, more probably for chamber than church use. Its performance in the first year at Leipzig (August 1723) may have been the fourth time it was revived, and its adaption by Friedemann Bach at Halle in 1747 perhaps its last (BJ 2013, p. 302).

Cöthen cantatas or serenatas, at least as these are known from surviving excerpts, are marked with something like a common musical style: chamber-like, dance-like, melodious in a kind of generalized italianate idiom quite distinct from the church-choral style of an older composer like Johann Pachelbel or Christoph Bach of Eisenach. Texts used by Bach in birthday cantatas for the prince are full of the customary words of fame, praise, happiness, deference, blessings, etc. Three such texts were by the poet Christian Friedrich Hunold (called 'Menantes', d. 1721) and are set with music to match: bright extrovert 'dance-arias' for one or two solo voices and instruments, usually contrasted at some point with what one assumes to be a more meditative aria, and the whole interspersed with wordy recitatives. Though not so called, one can recognize a pair of bourrées in two arias of the Birthday Serenata for Leopold, BWV 173a, typical of the *alternativement* pair of dances in an orchestral suite (the first

repeated after the second). Such dances are unlikely to be found in Italian violin sonatas or regular church cantatas, nor are they in the later Leipzig cantata version, BWV 173. The division of secular versus sacred is seldom rigid, especially in the case of dances: the gavotte closing the Cöthen Cantata No. 184a seems hardly out of place when re-used in a Leipzig cantata for Whitsuntide, BWV 184, nor does one of its arias, a passepied: summery music for an early summer festival.

Like other librettists publishing such texts, Menantes introduced dialoguing into both recitatives and arias, neither of which Bach would have had much difficulty in converting from 'secular' to 'sacred'. The dramatic or rhetorical principle remains versatile, so that congratulatory cantatas served a prince on his birthday (BWV 66a, 173a) or New Year (134a) just as well as they would serve the Prince of Peace at Easter (BWV 66, 134) or Whitsuntide (BWV 173). Recitatives in particular are of so standard a kind that a text such as 'Heaven thinks of Anhalt's fame and happiness' in a birthday cantata for 1718 can be changed for 'the grave is demolished and with it our misery' for an Easter Cantata in 1724. In later Leipzig rewritings the recitatives are often composed anew, though it is not always clear in what ways they are. In the case of the birthday serenata BWV 173a, the opening recitative saluting the prince is for soprano (in December 1722, was this Anna Magdalena?); in BWV 173 the same is for tenor, almost as if he was an Evangelist.

Presumably there were no final (Lutheran) chorales for the Cöthen cantatas. Final choruses in the prince's serenatas are very unlike final chorales in church cantatas and are always (as far as known) more like choric dances, more often than not in triple time. This quite specifically matches the texts whose pronounced metre with dactyls (long–short–short) transfers easily to music. The sunny dance that closed the birthday cantata BWV 66a became the opening movement of the Easter Cantata BWV 66 in Leipzig. A rather different match is found in cantatas Nos. 194/194a. The French *ouverture* and fugue at the beginning of both cantatas, followed by dance-arias, was equally appropriate for two different celebratory 'openings': in Cöthen, for the first day of the New Year (BWV 194a); and then in Störmthal, for the new church and its new organ (BWV 194). Such *ouvertures* complete with a fugue on a frenchified theme result in a distinctive musical style of the kind appropriate for both occasions.

Re-using later in Leipzig dance- or concerto-movements originating in Cöthen seems to have been highly selective, though there may have been more examples in works either now lost or unrecognized. Whether the melodic inspiration of the Birthday and New Year's Day cantatas for the

prince is quite equal to that of the 'Brandenburg Concertos' is arguable. But the many dance-characteristics found in both, considered along with those in the keyboard suites of the same period, illustrate how easily Bach could create quite distinct genres when occasion required. Three repertories – serenatas, concertos, suites – give the picture of a composer working a great deal with concert music, playing solos or directing professional ensembles. Other repertories, the educative volumes of keyboard music, do something similar for his activity as a teacher, a more private, less public activity with young musicians.

Violin concertos, the *Clavierbüchlein*, Inventions

According to court accounts in Cöthen, the period July 1719 to May 1720 saw considerable expenditure on copying and binding music, commissioning and printing texts and hiring musicians. All this must have been for the sake of performances not described or documented some other way, so one has to conjecture what works, beyond the ten or so non-liturgical cantatas or serenatas partly surviving, Bach contributed to a lively but to some degree private musical scene. Were some of these arias, songs, trios, overtures and concertos versions of music taken into the 'Brandenburg Concertos'?

From then until he leaves for Leipzig in three years' time, little is certain or detailed about Bach's output either as a whole or in detail, and despite what was suggested above, it is always possible that scant documentation means that nothing new was produced, beyond keyboard and chamber music. But scant documentation can result from circumstances, such as how well court property was preserved and how many copies Bach kept for himself. Quite apart from the prince's marriage to a philistine wife in 1721, some trouble with his income-producing domains and uncertain finances in 1720 causing the *cappella* to be reduced by a third, his life was also marred by bouts of sickness. Hence the visits to the Carlsbad spa waters (1718, 1720). Some have seen some reason here why cantata-texts set by Bach refer to mortality, faith and similar topics (BWV 134a, 173a, 66a). But in general, such references are natural to words of pious exhortation, inevitable even. These works remained useful and were used later in Leipzig for Easter or Whitsuntide services, perhaps reset to recently published church texts, with some new recitatives, arias and a final chorale.
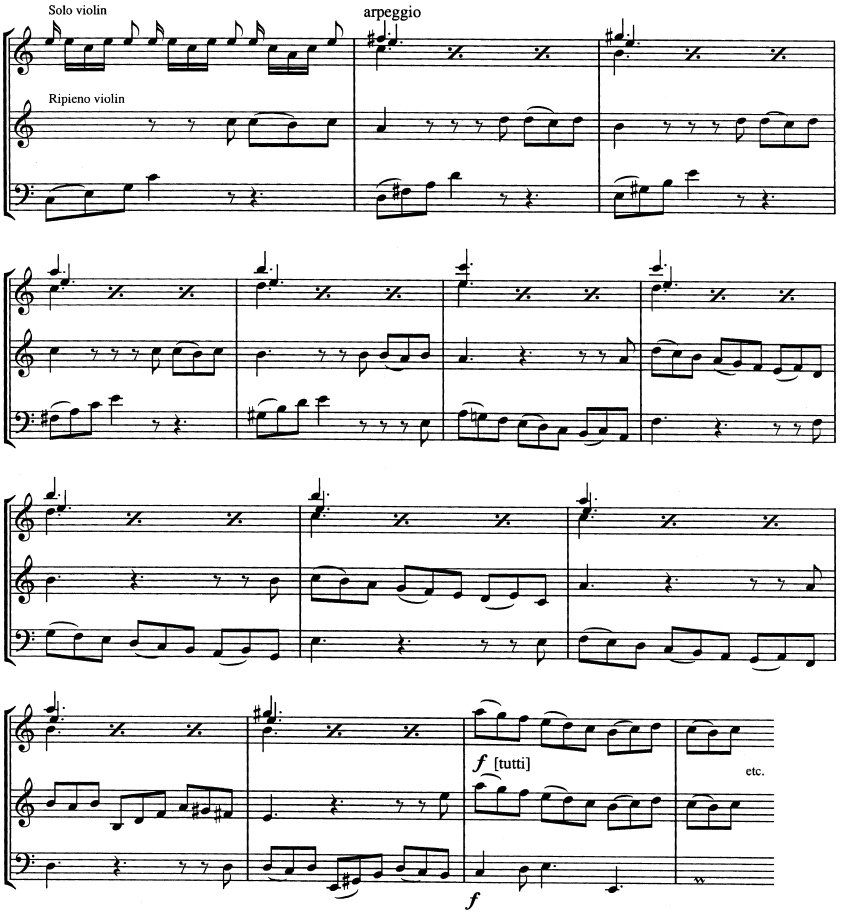
There seems to have been a particularly active hiring of outside musicians over the turn of 1718/19 and beyond, presumably at the

capellmeister's request, and many of the known cantata arias have demanding parts for good wind-players among the musicians. It is also possible that the three violin concertos best known today (two solo, one duo) also originated during the Cöthen years, inspired partly by the playing of the fine ex-Berlin violinists working there and partly by the challenge of composing thoughtful concertos that relied less on virtuoso fireworks than Vivaldi's did. (Not that Bach's are easier to play: the D minor Concerto known in the harpsichord version BWV 1052 but probably a violin concerto originally, taxes both harpsichordist and violinist.) All movements in these works follow Venetian models up to a point, with immediately striking themes reflecting the natural rhetoric of string instruments, plus details of melody and harmony entirely characteristic of Bach. The parts for the string instruments accompanying the Double Violin Concerto, for example, are detailed and demanding, unlike most of Vivaldi's: the counterpoint consists of true counter-melodies in addition to the exchanges between the soloists that had become typical of Italian trios and concertos. A most powerful amalgam.

Despite the string concertos' new melodies, regular organization, attention to detail, contrapuntal thinking and purposeful bass-line – all of these a kind of 'default' position for works of Bach – there are moments when the violinist enjoys traditional string effects. These are by no means negligible, as when the finale of the A minor Concerto suddenly introduces a grinding open e''-string effect, persistent and penetrating, the so-called *bariolage* (qv) known to earlier string composers (Example 14).

One hardly notices the hectic and ingenious imitation in the accompaniment, though one certainly does the splendid recapitulation when the soloist suddenly joins in at the end. Curiously, in the later transcription for harpsichord, BWV 1058, the 'grinding' effect is less conspicuous, disappointingly so: by *c.* 1740, perhaps such *bariolage* was looking a little old-fashioned, or was thought rather too specific to the violin.

Frustrating any attempt to describe the evolution of Bach's ensemble music is uncertainty about the original date and purpose of the violin concertos in E major and A minor, and the overtures in C and D major. Extant copies cannot prove that they belong either to the Cöthen or the Leipzig years, or indeed what states of revision, if any, they went through. That some movements in so many chamber and ensemble works certainly go back to Weimar at least says something about the composer's constant return to music he evidently considered worthy of reviving, often for different purposes. The unknown origin of major pieces, the uncertainty about the versions they underwent, is typical of a manuscript culture.



Example 14 Violin Concerto in A minor, finale

The gradual and exponential growth in music publication had some similar results at first, and many a movement of Handel's was also published in more than one version; but Bach never published the same piece in different versions, a detail the Art of Fugue's original editors forgot when they came to make their compilation.

Many characteristics of these Cöthen concertos can be traced to Vivaldi, as when a slow movement's bass-line slowly throbs and returns periodically, or its melody soars in a new *cantabile*, or when in the *allegro* movements the theme is driven in octaves. Yet in addition there are a density of detail, a harmonic drive, typical turns of direction and even sheer length seldom found in Vivaldi. That Vivaldi's influence on composers could easily have resulted in a much thinner and perfunctory kind of music, with commonplace sequences, unadventurous harmonic rhythm

(qv) and perfunctory counterpoint, is suggested by other German concertos of the time, such as Telemann's G minor Concerto, transcribed for harpsichord, BWV 985. The density of texture developed in the ritornello and *da capo* movements of the 'English Suites' for harpsichord might well be Bach's reaction to such thinness, but at this period there is little keyboard music that matches yet the masterly amalgam that is the three string concertos.

According to its title-page, on 22 January 1720, Bach began a 'little album of keyboard music' for Friedemann, then aged nine: the *Clavierbüchlein*, corresponding in size and format to the album of organ-chorales to be called *Orgelbüchlein*, which by then Bach was probably also using for instruction. These very titles allude to the *vade mecum* or commonplace books familiar to Lutheran children and to any owner of a *Gebetbüchlein* ('little book of prayers'). The *Clavierbüchlein* is very special in one particular way: despite the dearth of personal documents concerning J. S. Bach, there are few clearer glimpses in the whole history of music of any composer's fatherly affections and solicitude than here.

One senses this throughout the album but especially in a pair of compositions (allemandes) started by the father and continued by the son. In one of them Friedemann could not quite get the hang of returning to the tonic without further help, which father supplied. How far Couperin's *L'Art de toucher* inspired the album's contents and method is conjectural, but importantly, the 'Little Keyboard Album' is the first of four books of keyboard pieces compiled and/or given thoughtful titles during the Cöthen period, between 1720 and 1723:

1 *Clavier-Büchlein* 1720, 'Little Keyboard Album for W. F. Bach';
2 *Das Wohltemperirte Clavier* 1722 (or 1723?), 'The Well-tempered Clavier', not at first so called? (Later known as 'Part 1'. A version of eleven preludes assumed to be earlier, appears in the *Clavier-Büchlein*);
3 *Auffrichtige Anleitung* 1723, 'Sincere Guidance', fifteen two-part inventions and fifteen three-part sinfonias (a version of twenty-nine of the pieces, assumed to be earlier, appears in the *Clavier-Büchlein*);
4 *Orgel-Büchlein c.* 1722/23, 'Little Organ Album'. Little more than the title-page belongs to this date.

For further remarks on the *Clavierbüchlein*, see p. 593 under 'A pupil'; on WTC1, see pp. 234f.; and on the *Orgelbüchlein*, see above pp. 150f.

In effect, all four title-pages refer to *learners*, the first directly to Friedemann, the others in more general terms. Although, on one

reckoning, the title-pages of (2)–(4) above date from a period after the death of Kuhnau in June 1722, i.e. when Bach may have set his eyes on the Leipzig cantorate and its world of gifted young students, all four collections are in line with Friedemann's own development. Hence, perhaps, specifying the number of parts in a fugue (*à 2, à 3*, *à 4*, etc. in the WTC1) and so alerting the learner to the kind of counterpoint to be found there. The books also have titles that conform to the style of contemporary publications, and it is possible that the composer intended to publish Nos. 2–4 at some point, in the publishing centre of Leipzig.

Album (*Büchlein*) was a common word as was *well-tempered* in circles familiar with the books of Andreas Werckmeister. If the title *sincere guidance* (or *upright instruction*) for the pieces now usually called Two- and Three-part Inventions seems fanciful and eye-catching, it is less so than, say, *Monthly Keyboard Fruits*, a title used for Graupner's suites at the same period (1722). 'Sincere' seems to be the meaning of *aufrichtig*, used in a letter of 1726 by Bach to his friend Erdmann (Dok. V, p. 85), and as a title implies something more didactic than Daniel Vetter's *Musical Church- and House-Enjoyment* for his album of chorales. The fair-copy's titles *Inventio* for the two-part and *Sinfonia* for the three-part replace the more neutral titles they have in Friedemann's album (*Präambula* and *Fantasia*). *Inventio* is unusual (unique?) as a title for a piece of music, rather a technical term in rhetoric for the finding or selection of material that is then developed through manner or style (*elocutio*). Perhaps Bach had become aware of Mattheson's recent assertion that invention was not a product of art but of nature (1722, p. 343).

The Inventions' title-page makes their intention quite clear, i.e. through them the young, inquisitive musician will learn to play neatly in two parts (*reine spielen*), then to manage three parts accurately and well (*richtig und wohl*); not only to find or make good discoveries (*gute inventions zu bekommen*) but to develop them (*durchführen*); and above all, to achieve a singing style in playing on the keyboard (*cantabile*) and hence for the student to acquire a taste for composition. In this way, playing and composing are hardly separable. Bach was not the person to write a practical tutor, but his title-pages, as far as they go, do lay out a programme of sorts: to learn to play without mistakes and sustain the counterpoint; to develop a good touch; and to learn to think as a composer, finding ideas and what to do with them.

Especially the fifteen Three-part Inventions suppose not only a player already very able but a student-musician grasping the different models of

counterpoint they offer – not yet in all twenty-four keys, but in the most common fifteen:

C d e F G a b B flat A g f E E flat D c

This is the order of keys also in the *Clavierbüchlein* and, incompletely, in a surviving group of pieces now called 'Five Preludes & Fugues', BWV 770a, 899–902 (C, d, e, F, G). These orders indicate a recognition of traditional theory insofar as they follow the hexachord and add a seventh note (qv):

C D E F G A + B natural or B flat

(What the seventh note was exercised early medieval theorists.) All original six have a triad on the 'white-notes' of the keyboard, three major and three minor, a fact recognized in the order of the *Clavierbüchlein*'s inventions. They then descend through the more modern keys or triads, as if to mirror them and thereby produce a fuller complement. (But still only fifteen of twenty-four possible keys.) For the published *Auffrichtige Anleitung*, the hexachord's order is modified or modernized, while still leaving it to the *Wohltemperirte Clavier* to include all keys from C major to B minor. Whether or not Bach had recently been reading Mattheson, he can be expected to have been schooled in the hexachord as a child and to have seen the logic of the twenty-four keys of his own period – and the inevitability of dealing with them in order.

As more keys were introduced and treated as equals, the fingering needed to become more versatile, since the keyboard was not designed (or over time had never grown) for them. Fingering is uncannily stretched in each Invention, and though the notation offers little evidence, one can suppose that the texture is meant to be shared between the hands, unlike a good deal of other contemporary music. Judging by some adjacent Inventions, some of them look very much as if they were conceived in pairs and are meant to teach a varied touch: the D major Invention (fully slurred) supposes a quite different playing-style from the D minor Invention (no slurs) that follows it; so does the slurred F minor after the slur-less F major. Note the reversed slurred/non-slurred order in these two major/minor pairs: one can never be sure in this music that such details were not planned.

There is a further useful pair of Inventions giving a different message or instruction to the young player: how he might embellish. The first Two-part Invention and the fifth three-part (*Sinfonia*) have versions by the composer that look like 'second thoughts.' In the first, decorated lines change its character with new note-patterns (many triplets). Was this

something Bach taught his students, or encouraged, or at least did not forbid? In the second, the lines are decorated *à la française*: not lively triplets this time but graceful embellishments. Both offer model applications, one of them 'German' (with the triplets), the other 'French' (with added grace-notes). Quite possibly, both techniques were more familiar to players than it is now possible to prove, the first among German organists, the second among harpsichordists in general. The kind of ornaments and little flourishes in the E flat Sinfonia are rather like those added options for embellishment that Couperin gave to a few movements in his first book, the *Pièces de clavecin* of 1713. Perhaps this is another piece in the jigsaw entitled 'What music of Couperin did Bach know, and when?'

Not only are performance skills being developed: each Invention, two-part or three-part, illustrates grammatically correct thematic imitation, with motifs as varied as possible. Though fugal, the counterpoint of the Sinfonias is different from the WTC1's, mostly but not entirely in having a bass-line. Once again, it looks as if the composer was finding as many ways as possible to apply and demonstrate basic techniques, in this case how to imitate all kinds of themes, now in thirty very different pieces. In such ways, the Inventions offer a close view of the composer's thinking and surveying.

The solo works for violin and cello

At Cöthen, teaching students, directing court concerts and composing serenatas were supplemented by other forays into the musical arts, most of them unusual and some without precedent.
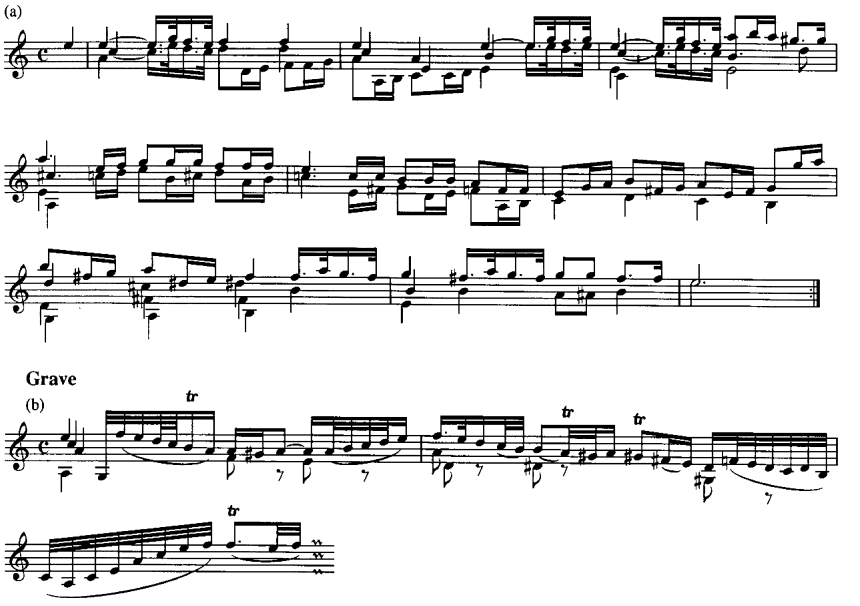
One unique fair-copy compilation was the set of pieces for solo violin, the *Sei solo* marked 'Libro Primo' in the title-page: three sonatas and three suites, stretching the virtuoso violinist (not yet, one assumes, the ten-year-old Friedemann), offering compositional models and providing music for concerts. Although the signature is dated 1720, some of the movements contained go back more than half a decade, judging by certain notational details. There are no surviving earlier versions, however, before the extant fair copy, a compilation which uses paper made in Bohemia not far from Carlsbad, where Bach had accompanied the prince in May 1720. This raises the not-so-faint possibility that the set of pieces was somehow connected (expanded, completed, assembled) with a violinist there, whether visiting or resident. Other plausible connections are with one or other of Dresden's successive concertmasters Volumier and

Pisendel, both already acquainted with Bach, Pisendel having joined him some years before in copying parts for a Telemann concerto, and Volumier having invited him in 1717 for the contest with Marchand. (In connection with that contest, the Obituary says that Bach's 'merits were not unknown' to Volumier (Dok. III, p. 83), an unusual remark suggesting a close acquaintance.) That neither of these two well-known violinists is known to have been particularly enthusiastic about *scordatura* or retuning of one or more strings – too old-fashioned a fiddler's technique, perhaps – might explain why there is none in Bach's six solo violin works, though there is an example in the Six Cello Suites.

It could be that the ungrammatical title *Sei Solo* arose because the fair copy began as a single sonata, and *Sei* was added on its title-page (asymmetrically written) as the compilation grew, along with the words *Libro Primo*. Or alternatively, the original title-page of the first suite might have read simply *Solo/Violino/Libro Primo*, with subsequent solos to be called *Libro secondo*, etc. For a *libro* to contain only one suite was not unknown, as in Marchand's *Livre premier* of 1699/1702, probably familiar to Bach for some years before 1720. But the idea of a set of six violin pieces was also known in at least two previous Dresden publications, one of them for solo violin, J. P. Westhoff, 1696 (see below).

The usual name today, 'The Unaccompanied Violin Partitas', is doubly misleading. 'Unaccompanied' would be better replaced by 'without a separate *basso continuo* part', since the violin makes its own accompaniment, and the title-page's own phrase is not *non accompagnato* but *senza Basso accompagnato*. This is not the same thing, and the Obituary usefully says *ohne Bass*, 'without Bass'. Nor is 'partita' an appropriate word for all six works, at most only for the three suites the composer called *Partia*. The term *partia* matches the collection's other Italian words, *Sei solo* and *Sonata*, as the French word *suite* would not, though appropriate.

Quite apart from the overwhelming subjective impression left by these unique violin pieces, their systematic organization (alternating Italian sonata and French suite), their meticulous survey (three contrasting examples of suite and sonata, three contrasting fugues, etc.) and the very length of certain movements (the fugues, the chaconne) all suggest a maturing in the composer's idea of a coherent group. Such Italian/French 'pairing', which would have spoken for Prince Leopold's own interests, was widespread. Handel's first set of harpsichord suites, published in the same year 1720, significantly begins with a French *ordre* (qv) followed by an Italian *sonata*, neither so called but each with four characteristic movements. Evidently in the desire to expand beyond the common



Example 15 (a) J. P. Westhoff, Suite No. 1, opening Allemande; (b) Sonata No. 2 for Solo Violin, BWV 1003, opening

French/Italian pairing, and over much the same period, Telemann was alluding in his way to other musical-national styles.

Publication of J. P. Westhoff's suites for solo violin (see Example 15) did not ensure wide transmission, nor need it have done for the solo *partias* (*sic*) published by J. J. Vilsmaÿr, *Artificiosus concentus* (Salzburg, 1715), a pupil of the widely admired violinist Heinrich Biber. Certain elements of virtuoso solo playing had been developed by several violinists in German-speaking lands in the late seventeenth century, such as bowing techniques by J. J. Walther (1676, etc.), *scordatura* by Biber (1674, 1681) and consistent part-writing by Westhoff (1696). But no direct connection between their work and Bach's is obvious. Perhaps he was familiar with published work of far-flung violinists such as Nicola Matteis or, on a less elevated level but just as important, the kind of music played by local, popular fiddlers. The likeliest impetus for *Sei Solo* probably came through the two Dresden violinists but is hard to pin down beyond the certainty that they all knew the art of implying harmony without the need for a bass-line. So of course did the various composers of music for tenor or bass viol and, more recently, cello. Whether the Cello Suites were inspired by something as specific as the playing of the Cöthen cellist C. B. Lienicke or the Eisenach viol-player J. C. Hertel (an acquaintance of Bach), or by such earlier

publications as J. Schenck's *Scherzi musicali* (Amsterdam, 1698), is another question that cannot be answered.

The Cello Suites' origin and provenance are even less certain than for the violin's *Sei Solo*. To a complete copy of both sets of solo string works, 'made by Anna Magdalena Bach, his wife' (*écrite par Madame Bachin Son Épouse*), Bach's pupil G. H. L. Schwanberg added an overall title calling them *Pars I Violino Solo Senza Basso* and *Pars 2 Violoncello Solo Senza Basso*. Probably he was merely following Anna Magdalena's order and may or may not have been implying any chronology, a *Libro primo* followed by a *secondo*. As seems to be the case with Anna Magdalena's version of the *Sei Solo*, the musical handwriting is very close to the composer's and may be imitating his own lost copy, whether this was an advanced draft or a final version. Since a copyist must often have imitated the master's handwriting – Bach's too had once been very like Georg Böhm's – there is no reason here to propose Anna Magdalena as the composer.

The numbering *Pars 1/2* is inevitably dubious while there is no autograph copy (working or fair) of the Cello Suites and while the title-page's date 1720 for the *Sei Solo* says nothing certain about origin. On one hand, since the oldest copy of the Cello Suites has been dated 1726–7, and No. 6 in D major shares its five strings with the *violoncello piccolo* used in some cantatas of 1724–5, the set of six could have been assembled only well after the Violin Solos, now as a 'second book' in Leipzig incorporating frenchified dances comparable to the 'French Suites' for harpsichord (p. 231). On the other hand, the other early copies of the Cello Suites could have derived from an earlier manuscript. One might suppose them to have come first, not so much because of the music's stylistic details – these, as so often, can be argued either way when the genres are different – but because there had been a longer, courtly tradition of solo music for bass or tenor string instruments (cello, tenor viol) than for violin, not least in German-speaking lands.

Whichever set came first, and despite their generic differences, they could both reflect the common challenge to court musicians to 'upgrade' the treble-fiddle or bass-fiddle music of tavern and market-place into something fit for a prince's chamber. Both sets look like solo string-music elevated to aristocratic levels of expressiveness, with intricate harmonic movement and an intimate handling of conventions. These include various French mannerisms in the nine suites, Italian movement-types in the three sonatas and especially German gigues and German broken-chord preludes in the Cello Suites. Not in the slightest is the composer's characteristic harmonic tension reduced by the fact that chords are often being implied

rather than stated, amounting to the rhetorical device of ellipsis. So from time to time there is a certain ambiguity in the harmony, an unexpected change of direction, a sequence (qv) that does not go quite where one expects or a cadence seemingly avoided. To whatever extent Bach 'invented' such ellipses, they clearly depend on a most secure grasp of diatonic harmony.

Both sets of solo string works are notated less literally than most keyboard music of the time: notes are often given a length not possible in performance; or alternatively, they are let go when they still persist harmonically. The score represents an ideal more systematically than does that of most other music of the time.[7] There is no evidence of who played either set of solo string works originally, nor how regularly if at all such music was heard at court by the string-players around Bach, such as the violinist Spiess (leader of the *Premier Cammer Musicus*, for whose son Bach stood as godfather in 1728) and the viol-player Abel (for whose daughter Bach stood in 1720). Were it as certain as it seems that both of these musicians, as well as Bach, accompanied the prince to his Carlsbad cure in May 1720 (see BJ 2006, p. 105), one might hazard a guess that one or both sets of solo string pieces went with them, even compiled for the occasion and dated.

Craftsmen working for the nobility were expected to 'upgrade' anything and everything within the craft they practised: architecture, buildings, dress, furniture, fabrics, porcelain, *objets d'art*, toys, the decorative arts, fiddle-music. The systematic way Bach went about such 'upgrading' is explicit and can be seen clearly in both sets of string pieces. So the three violin fugues of the *Sei Solo* (sonatas 1, 3 and 5) demonstrate and work out at an uncommon and taxing length, three distinct types of theme: the canzona (G minor), the 2/4 dance (A minor) and the *stile antico* (C major). Each ackowledges tradition such as, in the C major, turning a theme upside-down (*al riverso*) and then 'opposing' it with a chromatic theme. There are also three distinct ways to create fugal counterpoint, all established and familiar, so that e.g. the same C major Sonata's fugue subject and its working-out anticipate audition-pieces for Hamburg's organists, so it seems from Mattheson (1731, p. 33). Mattheson also recognized the exceptionally generative nature of the violin's A minor fugue subject (see below, p. 540), though he does not comment on the short, unfugal echoes

[7] But there are examples in keyboard music. The big pedalpoints at the end of the A minor Fugue in WTC1 and the French fugue in The Art of Fugue, BWV 1080.vi, are 'ideal' and cannot be played as notated.

(an idea picked up from de Grigny's *Livre?*). If the Cello Suites did come after the Violin Solos, they might show Bach now rejecting such textbook exhaustiveness, replacing it with more immediately charming movements, seven of each suite, all dances, no fugues. Unsurprisingly, there is system in the variety: two minuets in Nos. 1 and 2, two bourrées in Nos. 3 and 4, two gavottes in Nos. 5 and 6.

The violin's slow movements likewise represent several distinct types of violin music: there are intimations here of a trio, of a sonata with continuo and of a concerto. Each *partia* has a movement-type the others do not: one has a prelude, one a set of variants, one a chaconne, one a *rondeau*. All of them are recognizable genres, conventional except in the detail and extent of their working-out. In providing these differences so systematically, the *Sei Solo* join such recent publications as Telemann's *Six Sonatas* for violin and continuo of 1715, with their two types of sonata *da chiesa* and *da camera* ('church, chamber') and very different specimens of dance-types. But it is difficult to see how the principle of diversity could be more rigorously applied than it is in Bach's violin solos, especially when compared to the Cello Suites. Although all his sets of works show such diversity, the *systematic* variety of these solos, in what is after all a very narrow medium, is startling. Diversity alone could suggest that Bach's interest lay more in pursuing a demonstration-programme than in producing natural violin music for natural players.

In ringing the changes, the Cello Suites explore six different preludes much as the later Six Partitas for Harpsichord do. No. 1 matches the opening Prelude in C of WTC1, Nos. 4 and 6 other WTC1 preludes, No. 5 the later Sinfonia of the Second Harpsichord Partita and so on. Bach's observance of terminology is shown by his label of *Prélude* for the first six movements of the suites (and one for violin) but Adagio or Grave for the first movements of the three italianate sonatas. Also quite explicitly, the Cello Suites vary in their technical requirements and give another impression of a theoretical 'survey': No. 6 is for five strings (probably the violoncello piccolo), No. 5 for *scordatura* (top string tuned down a tone). The latter recalls a viola-tuning in No. 5 of Heinrich Biber's *Harmonia artificiosa-ariosa* (Nuremberg, 1712) and in earlier Biber pieces probably circulating in Saxony via J. J. Walther, violinist in the most influential court at the time, Dresden. It would be odd if Biber's publication had not reached Cöthen by *c.* 1720, or if Bach knew nothing of the various violin-tunings required in a work much closer to home, Pachelbel's *Musicalische Ergötzung* of 1691/5. Did his elder brother, a Pachelbel student, never play these interesting pieces? Two copyists of the Cello Suites were especially close to

Bach: not only Anna Magdalena (who is not always accurate and whose bowing is not always practical) but also J. P. Kellner (who may be earlier and/or working from a different original).

The generally sparser texture of the Cello Suites is characteristically deft, as if any notes unnecessary for clarifying the harmony have been thinned out: listeners are expected to have a good harmonic memory to sense the logic of the progressions, which is not always immediate. In both sets of string solos, the harmonic progressions and the music's sense of direction are not always easy to follow when phrases overlap and the new one takes a surprising turn, there being no bass-line to indicate what is happening. If all other works of Bach had disappeared, one would recognize in the Cello Suites alone a mastery of harmonic movement created with the minimum number of notes, with syncopations, dissonances and common chords succeeding each other with a touch as light as the refined, simpler, but more superficially ornamented, Parisian gamba solos of a previous generation.

There is a different aura to the violin solos, as if they did originate independently of the cello's. The resonant sound of fiddle-strings in Westhoff's dances speaks for an approach to solo violin music inevitably influencing anyone who had heard it, while other surviving solo pieces, such as Biber's Passacaglia of *c.* 1676, give only a hint of a form of music-making that could have been widely circulating. The more familiar that Bach was with Biber's sonatas and Westhoff's suites, the more striking the tendency of his solo violin music to veer towards melody rather than the multiple stopping which, though often emphasized by violinists today, is not the main *raison d'être* of this music. (Here too one would like to know much more about what Bach's own father had played *en famille*.) Two movements by Westhoff and Bach illustrate their respective melodies, as in Example 15(a) and (b).

Harmonically, the second is also richer despite its thinner texture, having three modulations in the first three bars.

Violinists do not find it easy to minimize the sense of strain in the dances and fugues: sounding effortless is something at which few seem to aim. Probably based on something Emanuel told him, Forkel reported that for many years the best violinists took them as the best means of mastering their instrument (1802, p. 61), but not many manuscript copies exist to support this claim. It is easier to believe that Bach himself went on playing them in other copies, either for violin or transcribed for keyboard. Playing them on clavichord was reported by Agricola, a student in 1738–41 (Dok. III, p. 293), who spoke of his 'adding harmonies he found necessary'.

This is a surprising remark, because the unfolding harmonic logic of a typical Bach prelude, whether for cello, violin, lute, harpsichord, organ or ensemble, is one of his best-known achievements and needs no further 'additions'. An unfolding harmonic logic is something that can be heard already in an early harpsichord toccata (D minor, BWV 913) but is now clearer still in the Preludio of the E major Partia for Violin. On one level formulaic and seemingly predictable, in practice the logic of these harmonies produces sounds which – especially in the more discreet preludes of the Cello Suites – many people feel 'touch the soul'.

Another kind of demonstration is offered in the B minor Violin Suite, by providing every one of the four standard movements with its *double* (a lighter variation). Even the admired Froberger (d. 1667), who had popularized the idea, had not done this for all four movements in any of his keyboard suites, so far as is known; and here Bach might well be vying with him. That the quality of Froberger's suites was widely recognized is suggested by the various circulating copies and editions, including certain pieces in the confiscated notebook of the young Bach (see p. 22), and it could be that the B minor Partia of the *Sei Solo* salutes Froberger's *doubles* as much as the D minor and E major *Partien* salute in other ways their frenchified models. In neither the violin's *Sei Solo* nor the Cello Suites is the difference clear between 'being influenced by' and 'actually alluding to', as when they have some details in common with Marchand's harpsichord *Livre* (known to Bach?), such as including a Gavotte *en rondeaux* followed by the Menuet in the E major Violin Solo, or a prelude before each one of the Cello Suites. The preludes themselves owe nothing to Marchand, but their presence might.

It was probably to preserve the italianisms in *Sei Solo* that the D minor Chaconne is called *Ciaccona*, raising two questions. If it begins, as it does, with a springing rhythm starting on the off-beat, exactly like a French chaconne, it is implying a light starting tempo, *legère*, *allegro*. On the other hand, if there is any deference here to the *Ciacona* in Corelli's Op. II, No. 12, perhaps it was meant to begin as Corelli's did, *largo*. There are certainly old elements in the work, including the earliest variations being repeated. (The organ Passacaglia's second variation begins to repeat the first but soon goes its own way, with a startling chord.) A more 'modern' element is the pair of dramatic changes, into the major and then back again, both preceded by big violin arpeggiation (a technique honoured by fugues in Corelli's Op. V) and thus producing a new aesthetic of built-up and released tension. Continuous like Corelli's but now on a vast scale, the Chaconne combines this new strategy with traditional tactics, i.e. what can

be done bar by bar with changing patterns of notes to create variations or *divisions* of a short theme. Although these four-bar phrases, heard over and over again, stand out after the fluidity of the previous movements, they manage to include other dance-types, clearest in the D major section in which one could fancy hearing a *sarabande brève avec doubles*.

As to why Bach composed these two very unusual sets of solo string works: whatever his familiarity with earlier music, there is a strong possibility that with each set he was responding in some way to distinguished colleagues or acquaintances, though who, when and exactly why are open questions. Westhoff held a position in Weimar until he died in 1705, so was present when the young Bach briefly worked there as 'Lackey'. But if his printed solos were known (as evidently they were not to another Weimarer, J. G. Walther, in his *Lexicon*), why Bach would wait ten years or more before taking up the idea is hard to say. Perhaps he had experimented earlier. Furthermore, personal contacts do not go one way only, and it could be that a surviving solo sonata by one of the Dresdners (Pisendel) is a response to Bach's, rather than vice versa. Personal contacts of a similar kind have been proposed for the Cello Suites, but other questions remain about this set, such as whether it was composed as a set or only gradually compiled. There surely was at one time an autograph fair copy of the Six Cello Suites.

As to who played the solo string pieces: of course, a big question is how well Bach could play them himself. If well or adequately, it seems a little strange that apparently he composed no further sets. Yet it was just before speaking of them that Emanuel said that his father 'understood completely the possibilities of all string instruments' (*Geigeninstrumente*: Dok. III, p. 285), rather implying that his 'understanding' came from playing them. Whether the music that resulted from a composer challenging himself intellectually becomes as natural to string instruments as Corelli's or Marais's does, however, is another question, and the 'struggle' can be distancing. A guess is that in the three violin sonatas a conspicuous sense of his 'struggle' in the sensitive part of the aural spectrum around treble e'' is a reason why the Cello Suites are, on the whole, more popular today.

Death of Maria Barbara

After he had had a blissful marriage with his first wife for thirteen years, he experienced in Cöthen in 1720 the severest pain, on his return from a journey to

> Carlsbad with his Prince, in finding her dead and buried, despite having left her fit and well on his departure. The first news he received that she had been ill and had died was when he entered his house. (*Obituary*)

Emanuel was six years old when his mother died and, one imagines, was not unwilling to speak in the Obituary of a 'blissful marriage' to which he owed his own existence. Whether or not true in all respects, what Emanuel describes is a sudden widowerhood that cannot have been unfamiliar – Telemann had lost his wife after the birth of his first daughter – and one that allows a little lifting of the curtain on personal feelings, one way or the other.

The story of his father's shock on finding his wife dead and buried depends for its pathos on whether he received a Cöthen court payment on 4 July in person or on account, for the payment was made three days before the funeral (Dok. II, pp. 68, 76). One recent view of the order of events, however, is that the party from Carlsbad did return only on 7 July, a few hours after Maria Barbara's burial (BJ 2006, p. 107), registered by the Lutheran church of St Agnus without naming her other than as the capellmeister's wife. If Emanuel is speaking as a young eye-witness he is unlikely to have been confusing this event, as might have been suspected, with an earlier: this was the death of his twin siblings in 1713 when Sebastian might also have been absent, in Weissenfels (Dok. V, p. 290).

Maria Barbara, aged thirty-five, died for unknown reasons less than a year after the death of her young son Leopold Augustus. She was buried with the unusual honour of the full choir of the Cöthen Latin School (Dok. II, p. 76) which, had it been on the prince's personal order, would indicate that he and his capellmeister had returned from Carlsbad by then. But it need not, and was perhaps more a sign of her standing in the town as capellmeister's wife, even if the actual day of her death was not recorded. (And how would the prince have heard of her death if he was away?) Whether because of this sad death, or because of quarrels between clergy that dogged him in several of his appointments, or for some other reason, a few months later in the same year Bach was looking at another church job. This was one with some prestige, in a city with which (and with some of whose clergy) he was already somewhat familiar: Hamburg, in the Jakobi-kirche. Presumably during his four-week absence in November–December 1720, his motherless children were looked after by Friedelena Bach. There could have been many reasons for seeking another appointment: sadness in Cöthen; a desire for more (or more secure) pay whether in Hamburg or,

after some negotiation, back in Cöthen; a wish to run a major church's music and to develop its renowned organ recitals on a renowned instrument; to join in the wider musical life of a major merchant-city; to avoid any disappointments that may have been developing in Cöthen; to give a growing family other opportunities; or to have a simple change of scene.

No move to Hamburg came about, however. From the presentation of the *Six Concerts* to the Margrave of Brandenburg four months later one can reasonably assume that the composer, who shows every sign of making great efforts with these exceptional works, was setting his sights on soliciting another possible employer. On the other hand, it is unlikely that any pieces he wrote later for the court at Schleiz in August 1721 and for the Prince of Anhalt-Zerbst's birthday at nearby Zerbst a year later (where by then he had connections through his second wife) were made with a view to appointment, since jobs there would have more clearly represented a step down. Works written for nobility as at Berlin-Brandenburg, or for court celebrations as at Zerbst, did not necessarily require the presence of the composer and were by no means necessarily well rewarded or carefully preserved.

But life at Cöthen seems to have deteriorated for him when the prince married on 11 December 1721, taking as princess a nineteen-year-old who, though with previous musical interests, was still being called a philistine by Bach nine years later (*eine amusa*, 'a muse-less one': Dok. I, p. 67), and who brought a new category of expenditure for Prince Leopold's limited resources. Whether the situation would have improved for Bach or the other musicians when the prince became a widower less than eighteen months later, in April 1723, one cannot say, for Leopold was not in the best of health himself and his finances were not flourishing. All these circumstances, like the quarrels between the dukes at Weimar, would only underline the fragility of a capellmeister's position even at an enlightened court.

For someone like Bach with a family, to work for a church of repute offered more security and relied less on the will or well-being of a prince, even if becoming an organist in a big city church with responsibility for a choir was not obviously the step for a court capellmeister to take. A major church, though still with dangers – clergy generally and justifiably suspicious of the ineradicable contumacy of organists – provided a home and a clear contract of employment. For a composer like Bach active in music outside church, Hamburg itself, one of the two biggest cities in the empire, would also have offered other opportunities, musical and personal. And if in Cöthen there had been pressure on Bach to have his children not in a

Lutheran school but in a Reformed one, as may have been the case (see BJ 1979, p. 103), then here too was a reason to move elsewhere. Seventeen months after Maria Barbara died, he married Anna Magdalena, and the year after that let himself be named as an applicant for the cantorate of Leipzig.

There is a further point. In Bach's biography a pattern emerges in which, despite his initial enthusiasm, ardent creativity, and the active support of his employer, the music's chronology implies a gradual dampening of spirits in each of the jobs he held. The pattern implies that he felt less and less appreciated or encouraged for the work he originally took on with such zeal, turning then to other kinds of music about which he was personally passionate and hugely productive. In this way he would privately satisfy his Lutheran duty to develop his God-given talent as well as, one assumes, to follow his natural inclinations. But there is some kind of decline here or at least a progression clearest over the years in Leipzig, and one that may be glimpsed in the earlier appointments.

The Hamburg recital (an audition?)

It was immediately after the sentences at the head of this chapter that Emanuel refers to another important event of 1720, making no connection between it and his mother's death, probably because he misdates it:

> During this time, about 1722 [November 1720], he made a journey to Hamburg and had himself heard there for more than two hours on the beautiful organ of the Catharinenkirche [St Catharine's] before the Magistrate and other prominent people, to general wonderment. The aged organist of this church, Johann Adam Reinken, then nearly a hundred years old, heard him with special delight and made him the following compliment, particularly for the chorale 'An Wasserflüssen Babylon' which our Bach, at the desire of those present, played extempore at great length, for almost half an hour and in a varied manner [*auf verschiedene Art*], such as the finest of the Hamburg organists had once been accustomed to do at Saturday Vespers: 'I thought this art had died, but I see it still lives in you'. This judgement of Reinken's was all the more unexpected in that many years previously he [himself] had set this chorale in the above-mentioned manner, which was not unknown to our Bach, as too that Reinken had otherwise always been rather jealous. Reinken urged him thereupon to pay him a visit, and showed him much courtesy. (*Obituary*)

This was clearly an episode of exceptional importance to the Obituary authors. Among the many points being made in its unusually detailed account was that Bach was fêted in Hamburg – a significant point for

Obituary readers, since this was Telemann's city – and that he was praised by the then oldest living representative of the German Protestant tradition, Adam Reinken (Buxtehude had died in 1707). To connect Bach with the authority of Reinken, as earlier with Buxtehude, was important. Something similar had been claimed for another composer, G. D. Leyding, in a widely known lexicon familiar to the Obituary authors (Walther 1732, p. 360).

Though again emphasizing the traditional organ-world of the Lutheran musician, Emanuel does not say or did not know whether his father was in Hamburg in order to offer himself along with seven others for the vacant position not at the Catharinenkirche but the Jakobikirche. Nor, as with the earlier Hamburg visits, is anything said about whether he saw any operas while he was there, though the season was well underway. How he got to hear of the vacancy at the Jakobikirche is another unknown, although as before, active contacts between musicians can be supposed. By now Bach would not travel for nothing, and one can guess there had been some approach to him, like Volumier's invitation in 1717 to visit Dresden. Erdmann Neumeister, then pastor of the Jakobikirche, Hamburg and author of texts Bach had already set, is quite likely to have been an instigator (Schulze 2006, p. 142), with or without involving Telemann, who had recently been appointed director of music to the five churches of Hamburg. It is possible that Cantata No. 21, a substantial work making demands on both players and singers, was presented at some point as the offering required of a candidate.

Perhaps when he got there Bach learnt that the instrumental players he could call on in the great city were inferior to Cöthen's, or that Hamburg's church music was in the doldrums, or that he would be all too subject to the city's music director, whether an old friend or not. Whatever the reason, he left before the full audition, saying he had to return to his prince in Cöthen. This rather resembles what he called the *excuse* he gave at Halle seven years earlier, that the duke in Weimar had not given him his release. It certainly seems that in December 1720, Hamburg had made him an offer and expected a reply (Dok. I, p. 27).

The passage in the Obituary, then, follows immediately on the remark that over this same period, Prince Leopold of Cöthen had the greatest satisfaction in his capellmeister's work. If Bach's interest in leaving Cöthen had arisen partly in the aftermath of Maria Barbara's sudden death, one might think Emanuel would know, especially as Mattheson had by then drawn attention to this particular Hamburg job-search by gossiping in print about the auditions for it (Dok. II, pp. 186–7). But how serious his father's interest had been is not certain. Although the previous organist of

the Hamburg Jakobikirche had had a salary only about half of Bach's at Cöthen, various fees and payments in kind were considerable and dependable, for a Council-appointed organist's *ex officio* status in such a city would be respectable and attract students and apprentices. Also, the church's four-manual Schnitger organ was something to inspire any organist, as was Hamburg itself, with many attractions especially for the father of a growing family. Yet to exchange life in a musically active court for a church post in a Hanseatic city cannot have been overwhelmingly tempting, especially considering how poorly equipped with singers its churches were (Kremer 1995, p. 182) when compared to those in the Lutheran heartlands, Lüneburg, Halle, Leipzig, Dresden.

The Obituary said that Bach's recital was in Reinken's church, the Catharinenkirche, but there could be some confusion here. If he did play in this church, had he already withdrawn before the customary audition recital in the Jakobikirche? Or Reinken heard him in the Jakobi (he was one of three judges), then invited him 'to pay a visit', as the report said, to his own church? Or it could be that Reinken's church was the official trial church for organists applying to Hamburg's five main churches. It was here in the Catharinenkirche that Telemann, as a new director of music in the city, was to give his inaugural presentation less than a year later (Mattheson 1740, p. 202). Whichever is the case, Bach played a public recital to everybody's admiration. The remark about Reinken's jealousy rings true as something told by Bach himself at some point afterwards, as do some other phrases found in the Obituary's report, such as 'other prominent people', 'general wonderment', 'with special delight', 'urged him', etc. But Reinken was seventy-nine years old, not nearly a hundred, having been born in 1643. Mattheson and Walther say he was born in 1623: is this the source of the Obituary's 'nearly a hundred years old'?

One wonders whether it was from his father that Emanuel knew Reinken's organ to be unusually 'beautiful' or, once again, from a printed reference of the same kind made by Mattheson in one of his many books (1722, p. 256)? And does the whole reference, the second one to Reinken in the Obituary, have something to do with Emanuel's personal knowledge of Reinken's spectacularly long setting of 'An Wasserflüssen Babylon', which was still being copied by organists in the Bach circle in 1750 or so?[8] His father's much earlier copy of the piece, apparently made in Lüneburg in 1700, was less likely to have been known to Emanuel, though one cannot

[8] The chief extant source of Reinken's chorale was made either by Bach's son-in-law Altnickol about the time the Obituary was being written, or by his associate, J. C. Farlau (BJ 2002, p. 42).

be sure. The Obituary might have mentioned extemporization because Mattheson had implied that Reinken himself was considered less of an improviser, an observation he made shortly after Reinken's death in 1722. It could be that Mattheson's account was behind the whole story appearing in the Obituary, even for the wrong date being given there ('about 1722'). One thing seems likely: that Mattheson and Bach had some kind of personal contact, though there is nothing to suggest it was warm or productive.

The Obituary's story of playing to Reinken amounts to a claim of apostolic succession, so that the German Protestant's traditional mantle had passed to Bach. His words to Bach as they are quoted (in direct speech, unusually) even have something of John the Baptist about them, suggesting a precursor's blessing, as readers must have realized. The idea of arts dying with a master was not rare and occurs also when, for example, Bach's pupil J. L. Krebs complimented the organ-builder Gottfried Silbermann in similar terms (Müller 1999, p. 55). What Reinken said can hardly have been welcome to his successor at the Catharinenkirche, who had worked as official substitute since 1717. Mattheson's warm praise in his book of 1740 for the older Hamburg composers such as Scheidemann and Weckmann, in effect slighting more recent organists, could have prompted Emanuel to relate the story and imply where the new gravitational centre was to be found. The Obituary is presenting J. S. Bach as at heart a composer in the north German tradition rather than a knowledgeable Thuringian cantor of cosmopolitan tastes, which is closer to the truth.

A question is what Bach did in fact play, since it seems that by 1720, long chorale-fantasias of a traditional type were no longer familiar even to Hamburg organists. Reinken's long extant setting of the chorale has more or less separate sections. Usually, the musician's phrase 'in varied ways' (*auf verschiedene Art*) referred to a set of variations, and hymn-variations played a big part in the public organ recitals in Protestant cities from Haarlem to Lübeck. For a further ninety minutes Bach could have followed the kind of plan laid out later in *Clavierübung III* (see below, p. 379). But it is always possible that 'more than two hours' was a standard phrase: a newspaper said the same about Bach's recital on the new organ of the Dresden Frauenkirche in 1736 (Dok. II, p. 279). Even the reference to improvising on a familiar theme for half an hour was nothing new: Mattheson reports it of the organist Weckmann improvising in public on a theme of Froberger (1740, p. 396).

There does not seem much doubt that the Hamburg performance was a traditional demonstration, 'one of the last old-style organist auditions'

(Kremer 1995, p. 219), whether a long fantasia or (more likely) a set of hymn-variations. As is clear from Werckmeister's book *Orgelprobe*, organist-applicants needed to be tested in improvising a fugue on a given theme, in playing a chorale 'in various ways', in realizing figured harmony and in transposing. Playing 'before the magistrate' in Hamburg, as the Obituary puts it, could mean either a celebrity recital at Saturday vespers or, more likely, a separate public trial of the short-listed candidates for an important municipal position. Equally uncertain is what 'playing at the desire of those present' means: that he played a recital rather than a regular adjudicated audition, to which a ranking capellmeister such as he would not happily submit? Or, as a visiting virtuoso, he improvised on chorales requested by the jury and even, as might have been customary, by other listeners?

The phrase also exonerates Bach from any presumption in borrowing Reinken's theme, for it seems that in Hamburg to play this particular hymn-tune 'in various ways' had long been expected of candidates. Seventy years earlier Matthias Weckmann, another famous organist, had improvised on it at his Jakobikirche audition in 1655. Perhaps when the young Bach made his tablature copy of Reinken's setting, whether under Georg Böhm's tutelage or not, he had learnt that the hymn was a trial piece at auditions and would be well to keep in mind for the future. A probable reason why the hymn was so favoured for organ-trials is that 'An Wasserflüssen Babylon' has the only regularly sung chorale-text that actually mentions the organ, which it does in its first verse.[9]

The Jakobikirche organist had died two months before Bach's visit, in September 1720, and the church, its organ and its status, all offered good prospects, especially as the directorship of the five churches might become vacant soon. His life here could have been what he had seen of Böhm's in Lüneburg years earlier, and it is a pity one does not know whether Telemann had a hand either in Bach's presenting himself or, conversely, in his declining the job if he had been offered it. One notes that just as Telemann soon called himself *Chori Musici Hamb. Director* on the published title-page of his book of cantatas (*Harmonisches Gottesdienst*, 1725–6), so Bach was to call himself *Directore Chori Musici Lipsiensis* on a title-page in the same year, his first publication (Partita No. 1). Titles were important.

[9] For much the same reason, and despite *Orgeln* being a mistranslation of Vulgate *organa*, it is the only hymn mentioned in a publication celebrating the new Silbermann organ at Ponitz in 1737 (see Ahrens and Langrock 2003, p. 133).

The decisive trial took place only after, and perhaps because, Bach had returned to Cöthen, although he does seem to have been interested in the position (see Dok. I, p. 27). Mattheson, who was either involved in the adjudication or made it his business to comment on it later, criticized the opening of Cantata No. 21 for its repetitive word-setting, which rather suggests that he had heard it in a service in Hamburg, even as part of Bach's formal audition in 1720. Furthermore, ten years or more later he was still quoting the well-known subject and countersubject of the Fugue in G minor for Organ, BWV 542, as if he had heard it on the same occasion (Dok. II, p. 219). Its subject happens to resemble an old Dutch song, and there has long been floated the idea that Bach used it as a salute to Reinken's Netherlandish connections. If Louis Marchand had been cited (rather obscurely) in the Fifth 'Brandenburg Concerto' on a semi-public occasion in Dresden, it is entirely possible that a recognizable Dutch song was cited on a bigger public occasion in Hamburg.

The Jakobikirche committee certainly considered Bach to be one of the official applicants, invited him to declare his interest in accepting it, and then, on 19 December, learnt by letter that he had declined. Mattheson said later that it was because the organist who was eventually appointed, J. J. Heitmann, paid 4,000 marks for the appointment, being adept at 'preluding better with dollars [*Thalern*] than with fingers' (Dok. II, p. 187) – and prompting the main preacher, probably Erdmann Neumeister, to say that an angel coming down from heaven and playing divinely (*göttlich*) might as well fly off again if he had no money. Yet the church committee had minuted that such payment was not obligatory, even if acceptable from a successful candidate as a token of his gratitude. There was some ambivalence here: Heitmann's own eventual successor in 1727 was appointed on condition of a payment being made, this at a moment when Bach might just possibly have returned again briefly to Hamburg (see Dok. I, p. 227).

If Bach had been 'headhunted' in 1720, was offered the job but declined to hand over a sum and consequently left the scene, the motive need not have been entirely to his credit. In a large Hanseatic city, it was not unreasonable for an official to pay for a stake in the church rather as other professionals expected to buy into any partnership that needed capital but produced income. However much Mattheson objected to it, the custom had been for a successful organist to contribute in this way, as befitted his status in a city where only certain classes or higher levels of appointment did in fact attract pre-payment (see Edler 1982, p. 107). It was actually a sign of an employee's high standing that he should be in effect 'a stakeholder' in an institution for whose 'partners' such as himself 'shares' or

extra fees would accrue automatically, for all the weddings, baptisms and funerals in a populous parish.

A note on adapting works

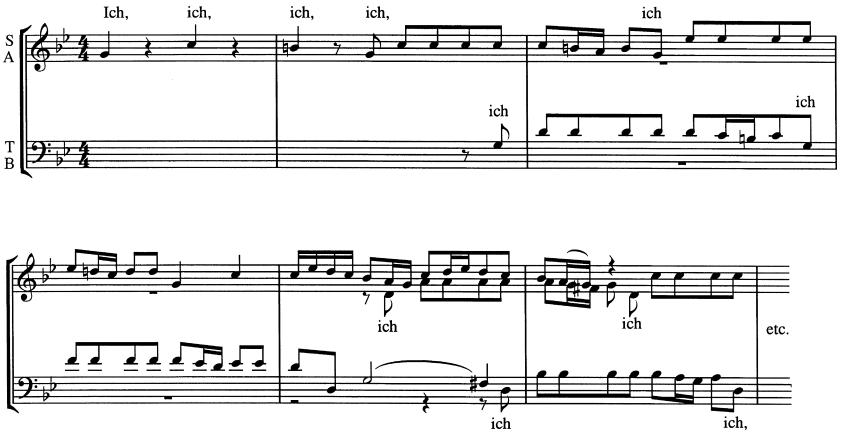
Whether the composer himself, in Hamburg or elsewhere, ever coupled the shattering Fantasia in G minor for Organ with its well-known but earlier fugue, either on paper or in performance, is not known. But it is an important work in many ways, being very like a grandiose equivalent to the Prelude of the Solo Violin Sonata in G minor, which could be more or less contemporary. They both offer insight into one of the composer's interests during the Cöthen years: in creating harmonic archetypes that are adaptable to any instrument. The Fantasia's opening harmonies are a writ-large version of so many other preludes, allowing for that weight and majesty of a full organ that a solo violin can only imitate and allude to when playing with rather similar harmonies in the same key, but in its own way. Musically, the extraordinarily different ends to which similar means are worked in these two preludes, for solo organ and for solo violin, are difficult to match in music elsewhere, and say much about the composer's self-given task to apply his musical language to different genres without losing their hallmarks. Pieces such as these, though similar on paper, are very different in effect and *Affekt*.

Somewhat comparable in its prelude harmonies, but apparently an actual transcription this time, is a later version of the *Preludio* of the E major Solo Violin *Partia* adapted to produce the sinfonia prefacing two later cantatas: Part II of a wedding cantata of 1729 (BWV 120a) and a Leipzig election cantata of 1731 (BWV 29). The first adaptation was probably for strings and oboes, but the second is rescored on a big scale for trumpets, drums, oboes, strings and solo organ, all of which, with a new heading *presto*, contribute to a noisy and boisterous re-interpretation of a work that was already as noisy and boisterous as a single violin could make it. An astonishing metamorphosis! – assuming the violin version was the original. A still later version of this movement and its following suite, either for solo lute or a lute-harpsichord (1736–7), offers yet another interpretation of the piece by reverting to a chamber-like delicacy. So there are three or four (known) versions of these particular 'prelude harmonies' adapted to ends very different from each other. Moreover, in principle they are not distant from the preludes to the Cello Suites and even, though rather disguised, from certain preludes in WTC1 such as the E minor and A minor.

As these examples suggest, adaptability was not exclusive to the Cöthen years. Some existing concerto slow movements were liable to be arranged for voice and instruments in a Leipzig cantata, with words introduced and the music extended so as to produce a conventional aria. And then later still another concerto version could be made without reference to other versions appearing meanwhile. This is the case with the Harpsichord Concerto in E major and its 'partner' the Leipzig Cantata No. 169, although unfortunately for a true estimation of Bach's art of transcribing and arranging, too often it is uncertain what form the (or an) original took. Even so, an inkling of how Bach responded creatively is given by the accompaniments being subtly varied according to whether it is a concerto or a cantata and of course by words added when a vocal movement is made out of an instrumental. The word-setting in Cantata No. 169.v suits the new melody introduced against the concerto's original rhythms, again assuming that this was the original. One would hardly guess that the cantata movement was an arrangement of an earlier work.

A versatile approach to genres is one hallmark of J. S. Bach, so that an organ-chorale can be very like a sarabande, a cantata-chorus like a prelude-and-fugue, a slow movement equally suitable as aria or concerto. A newly composed cantata such as No. 21, performed several times over a decade, begins to look as if it were a sequence of different but characteristic musical genres, which in practice means that an instrumental type is adapted to a vocal, or vice versa, and could be re-adapted. The final fugue of Cantata No. 21, for instance, would not be out of place as a piece for organ, without the notes having to be repeated as they were for the syllables of the text. Similar practices in the Weimar and Cöthen periods continued in later cantatas when re-used concerto movements vary in the way they are adapted from a straightforward rescoring to a fuller rewrite, as when a complete chorus and text are added to the 'original' string version. Two movements from the well-known Harpsichord Concerto in D minor offer an example of both in Cantata No. 146: in the first movement, the concerto Allegro is simply rescored; but in the second, a new chorus with its own melodies is grafted on to the concerto's Adagio. The first movement of 'Brandenburg Concerto' No. 1 opens Cantata No. 52 and usefully establishes the key as forcefully as possible (F major, complete with horns); but the very first note of the next movement (C sharp) dramatically contradicts the key with the cantata's opening words, '*False* world, I trust you not!'

Such processes as these are quite distinct from the parodies converting secular cantatas to sacred, referred to elsewhere in this book. Perhaps Mattheson's criticism in 1725 of repetitious word-setting in Cantata



Example 16 Cantata No. 21.ii: 'I, I, I had much grief in my heart'

No. 21 (Dok. II, p. 153) arose because there is a crossover here between genres: the offending word *ich* would be fine in an opera – especially in Italian, *io* – but not in a church cantata. Even when as here the musical idiom was italianate, there was a limit to adaptation, since the text was not (see Example 16).

Also, the stretto (qv) in Cantata No. 21 produces a tiresome sibilant 'Ich, Ich, Ich' across the voices. J. G. Ahle in Mühlhausen had already criticized certain repetitions, in his *Sommer-Gespräche* of 1697. Perhaps repeating is unsuitable if like BWV 21.i it offends the rhetoricians' rules, two of which were (i) to repeat only complete phrases, and (ii) to do this only for proper emphasis. So repetition of words is at its worst when there are gaps (rests) in between, as here in Cantata No. 21.

Although Mattheson shows no sign of relishing the compensatory delights of this movement, his remark is not without interest, since contemporary critiques are rare. Because it could be argued that 'Ich, Ich, Ich' reinforces the message of the words and is therefore not inappropriate, one wonders whether Mattheson also objected to those various other words that were repeated much more regularly in sacred texts, like 'Amen' and 'Hallelujah'. These were acceptable because they are not German? Perhaps the text of this cantata had some significance for him personally (see BJ 1993, p. 44). Also, it would not be unknown for singers to have handled it badly. A faint possibility is that Mattheson is actually defending Bach, and with him the Halle composer Zachow, against the earlier Ahle book that objected to in-between rests (see Dok. II, p. 154). This is an objection any composer might well find unreasonable.

A note on the 'English Suites'

A two-manual harpsichord of the kind Bach acquired in Berlin in 1719 need not have been any louder than a single-manual, either in solo or ensemble playing. What it does is encourage variety or special effects in long movements of any kind, including transcriptions, accompaniments (to arias and sonatas), and even concertos ('Fifth Brandenburg'). That is to say, in recital-music. Cöthen acquired another striking instrument in 1722, a harpsichord with pedals, useful (so one may guess) for private practice, for concerts, composing, and teaching the organ. Both instruments, of 1719 and 1722, were surely asked for by Capellmeister Bach, and like other exceptional instruments, such as the lute-harpsichord made for the junior duke in Weimar, would have been a novelty to show to the dukes' guests, 'exhibited' like other artifices collected and displayed by their owners. All such apparatus would serve to satisfy the curiosity of acquisitive princes and to arouse envy in others, especially with a virtuoso player in-house to demonstrate it.

How far the new Berlin harpsichord encouraged Bach to compose music as idiomatic to the instrument as the music of his French and Italian contemporaries was to theirs is difficult to say. So often in his case, an instrument is rather a tool for putting musical ideas into practice and less a source for sound-colour or effects, even in the case of organ music. Hence the near-indifference as to which instrument plays a lot of his music, but also, by way of total contrast, the very careful choosing of wind instruments in the Leipzig Passions for one or other *Affekt*. Particularly interesting are the keyboard transcriptions of Italian concertos probably made about 1714 at Weimar, for in the way they are laid out they neither require two manuals nor make it easy to use them, in either fast movements or slow. At that point Bach surely had no two-manual instrument at his disposal, and it seems that an ideal layout of a Venetian concerto, with its solos contrasting with its tuttis, was fully realized only much later, in the Italian Concerto of *Clavierübung II* (1735).

The set of 'English Suites', much of which may have been begun before Cöthen though compiled later, deliberately leant towards the newer kind of true harpsichord-writing one finds here and there in Handel: music with sustained harmonies and requiring a sensitive legato, with textures much closer to Rameau's than in the Capriccio excerpt in Example 3(b) above (p. 85). The Suites absorb possible Parisian models but also expand well beyond them. Though impeccable and fastidious in style, their scale,

systematic survey of conventional dances, and especially fugal counterpoint, were unknown to French composers. In addition, a familiarity with Italian concerto forms shows itself in the long first movements of several of them, their ritornello shape quite un-French and resulting in something 'international'. These extensive preludes are so written that it is possible to make use of two contrasting manuals, really for the first time on this scale in any repertory, even if there is no autograph manuscript to say Bach required it.

In conveying so many details of the usual dances, the 'English Suites' are the most French of Bach's sets, especially as copied and ornamented (on uncertain authority) by his pupils. Why and when they became called 'English' is no better known than why the 'French Suites' are called 'French'. Forkel said, presumably from something a Bach son told him, that they were composed for an English nobleman (1802, p. 56) to whom, if this is true, a fair-copy autograph would have been sent, just as the 'Brandenburg Concertos' were to the margrave. If it was, it is now lost. But conceivably, what was English was not a nobleman but a publisher. Notable suites by other German composers had already been published in London (by Mattheson in 1714, by Handel in 1720), where also François Dieupart, composer of other suites copied by Bach and Walther, worked and lived. The marking *fait pour les Anglois* on a copy owned by the 'London Bach', Johann Christian (NBA V/7, KB, p. 26), and conceivably known to Friedemann, could have indicated not so much a patron as a publisher, even with a contact of the kind Prince Leopold of Cöthen could have made on his earlier visit to London (1711). No English publisher, however, would have been other than puzzled by the formidable detail, the complexities, chromatics, counterpoint and sheer length of some of the suites' movements.

Nevertheless, between Bach's and Handel's sets of suites there are certain similarities in detail as well as conception and which deserve recognition. The first suite in both has a fairly free prelude in A major; both E minor suites open with a fugue (an unusual detail); Bach's A major Allemande has distinct Handelian moments; and both sets require a longer keyboard compass than had been customary in Germany. (Bach, as here, often gives the impression of wanting to use the top and bottom notes of the instrument to hand.) Something in common with Mattheson's suites is that Bach's begin with different types of prelude, though he takes this idea a great deal farther than Mattheson was able to. Bach's Suite No. 1 also has more than a passing reference to Dieupart's No. 1 (*Suittes*, 1701/2) and, in its opening movement, to a gigue in the same key in Gaspard Le Roux's

Pièces (1705). With the full-length preludes, especially the concerto-like Nos. 2–6, he moves well beyond any and all these composers. More than once the preludes of Suites Nos. 4 and 5 recall (or anticipate?) other keyboard works of Bach, including some for organ; a theme in No. 4 is like one in the 'Fifth Brandenburg'. Despite a common ancestry in Froberger, Handel's gigue theme in E minor (published in 1720 but older) might accidentally lie behind the finale of the same Brandenburg. Inverting the theme of a gigue in its second half, as Bach does, was not exclusively German: Marchand too does it in a suite.

Particularly influenced by French harpsichord music, directly or indirectly, were the six sumptuous sarabandes, though one could claim that seldom does *Frenchness* take over a Bach movement entirely. The sarabande-like organ-chorales written in Weimar (BWV 653a, 654a) are more restrained and in shape typical chorales not dances; and certain embellished lines in the A minor Sarabande *double* are like those in some of the *Sei Solo* for violin. Such details are rather cosmetic, however. The formal control in the 'French Suites' – the way themes and passages reappear differently in the course of a movement and move towards integrated, coherent shapes – is of a kind unknown in France.

A note on the 'Brandenburg Concertos'

The French title of the set of concertos dedicated in March 1721 to the Margrave of Brandenburg (*Six Concerts*) was as appropriate for chamber works as a German title (*Orgelbüchlein*) was for a book of organ-chorales. But for Bach, these concertos were a new venture in an 'international' genre, in principle more original and initiatory than a set of chorales. While it can be fairly said that the 'Brandenburg Concertos' have a part-writing and motif-development that 'definitely predate the standards set by The Well-tempered Clavier' (Wolff 2000, p. 232), it is also the case that such concertos for chamber ensembles have a quite different purpose from preludes and fugues for keyboard instruments, and are therefore not strictly comparable.

In producing music of a more audience-pleasing kind than chorales or fugues, Bach is now testing the limits of a genre one of whose advantages was to be open to many kinds of instrumentation. So Nos. 3 and 6 are for strings only, Nos. 1, 2, 4 and 5 for mixed strings and winds, no two the same. An older terminology would be *unbroken* and *broken consort*, though there is more variety in the instrumentation here than was usual

in traditional consorts. There are also many types of movement familiar generally in chamber music, though looking now as if rethought: three particular movement-types are (i) binary (qv) dances from suites, (ii) intricate ABA form from sonatas and (iii) ritornello shapes from concertos. One has the impression that Bach felt free to make use of what ideas he liked, even as to whether the conventional three movements for concertos could be reduced to two-and-a-bit (No. 3) or at first ignored (No. 1). And when he does create a relatively conventional consort (No. 6), he gives it a totally up-to-date Vivaldian sense of excitement in its repeated major chords.

Whatever their scoring, the concertos achieve a rhetorical and very stirring effect from 'little cells' of melody built up to create sounds, with an endless, rhythmic drive, rarely obscure contrapuntally. The result is something very different from the way lines are composed in other kinds of music relying on such 'little cells', such as the B flat minor Prelude in WTC1. To such music as the concertos rigorous keyboard counterpoint is more or less irrelevant, although a characteristic mastery of invertible counterpoint is evident throughout the *Six Concerts*. Applying such mastery to totally different genres is a clear example of *adaptability*, as the composer develops a versatile approach during these and later years, compartmentalizing the type of music he is currently working on. Here, in this case, the music is for court entertainment.

It seems from the dedication accompanying the *Six Concerts Avec plusieurs Instruments. Dediées [sic] A Son Altesse Royalle Monseigneur Cretien Louis, Marggraf de Brandenbourg*, dated 24 March 1721, that when Bach had been in Berlin collecting the new harpsichord for his Cöthen prince 'a couple of years ago', he had 'the good fortune to have himself heard' by the margrave (*il y a une couple d'années, le bonheur de me faire entendre*: Dok. I, p. 216). The *Marggraf de Brandenbourg* was half-brother to Frederick the Great's grandfather, and was an acquaintance of the Prince of Cöthen from long before (Schulze 2003), hence perhaps Bach's contact with the margrave. But Marquis *Christian Ludwig* had also been, twenty-three years earlier, the dedicatee of no less than Werckmeister's *Orgelprobe*, a book presumably known to Bach (see p. 97). This and other details suggest an active patronage of the musical arts, even as far as supporting work on all the new organ-building in the kingdom's churches.

In a similar way, the margrave's sister-in-law, Sophia Charlotte, Electress of Brandenburg, had been the dedicatee of a book that for professional musicians was (and is) yet more significant than Werckmeister's *Orgelprobe*, namely Corelli's twelve Sonatas for Violin, Op. V (1700), one of the

most influential of all scores of the time.[10] Through the dedicatory notes, one attached to each of the two works and in Corelli's case more conventional than Bach's, one may fancy some direct connection between them. Bach's concertos and Corelli's sonatas were, after all, the two most conspicuous volumes of 'Brandenburg court music'. Opus V must have been known to Bach as he drafted his dedication, the first of its type known.

This time written (or drafted) by Bach himself, the familiar phrase 'good fortune to be heard' appears again, tinged with flattery, acknowledging that musicians did need 'to be heard' by princes of state or church. Not only was Bach heard by royalty in this instance, but evidently this had happened by virtue of the margrave's commands (*en vertu de ses ordres*). Whether these commands were a response to the composer's solicitation or a freely given invitation is not to be discerned from the words. It can be assumed that he came somehow by this 'good fortune' when in Berlin to pick up the Mietke harpsichord (see p. 220), but on what occasion is not recorded: a chamber concert of some kind in one or other palace, a matinée royal audience, a planned 'chance' meeting? One does wonder whether at some point, somewhere in his mind, Bach was sounding out chances for an appointment. No documents have shown that there was a vacant position at the margrave's court or about to be, nor that Bach was thinking of leaving Cöthen for any reason, personal or political. Nevertheless, nothing was ever lost by impressing royalty.

To prepare quickly a fair-copy autograph score, the sole source for the *Six Concerts* as a complete set, does suggest a wish to be favourably looked on. If 'a couple of years' since the Berlin visit means literally two, any delay could be explained by the concertos being another of the *sets of six* compiled over time from older and newer material. The dedication also says that the margrave had commanded Bach to send him some compositions (*commander de Lui envoyer quelques pieces*), from which the composer would probably expect some future patronage. What he sent from Cöthen was a set of pieces for a court's chamber players, rather as he was later to offer the king in Dresden music for his theatre events and the king in Potsdam music for his chamber concerts.

Whether he sent the margrave a copy of the parts as well as the fair-copy full score is not recorded, nor whether he kept a duplicate score himself of the complete compilation. It would be strange if he did not. But though

[10] Sophia Charlotte, granddaughter of Elizabeth Stuart (daughter of James I) and sister to George I of the United Kingdom, became the first queen of Prussia shortly after the Corelli dedication, when in 1701 Brandenburg-Prussia was elevated to become a kingdom.

copies of at least individual movements were certainly retained, the set of six may well have existed only in the form now known as 'The Brandenburg Concertos'; it is not named or separately listed in the Obituary, in which half a dozen other *sets of six* are listed. The chances that the concertos were performed hangs on whether the margrave ever got the parts copied. This was a practical need of the kind recognized a dozen years later when, for a different but comparable gift, a set of parts was sent to the new Elector of Saxony for the *Missa* (Kyrie and Gloria) but apparently not a score. Little remains of the repertory of music performed at the Prussian family's court-concerts, and little is known about the margrave's personal involvement in them, but copyists were active in such establishments.

By accident or intention, the French-language dedication in the fair-copy manuscript of the *Six Concerts* is more than faintly reminiscent of other French prefaces, notably the one by Louis Marchand in his *Livre premier, Pièces de clavecin* of 1702 for his own king, Louis XIV. Any direct connection between these two dedications would imply that Bach had known Marchand's harpsichord works before or after the 'Dresden contest', just as the Affettuoso movement of the 'Fifth Brandenburg' suggests he knew some of Marchand's organ music. In any case, the final verbal flourishes recall those in yet another French publication, Jean-Henri d'Anglebert's *Pièces de clavecin* of 1689, whose ornament-table Bach is said to have drawn upon a decade or so after its publication. Any further direct help with his French is unknown, but in the musical score itself, the names of instruments and the tempo words are all in conventional Italian, as befits such concertos.

Nevertheless, the word *concerts* in the title-page indicates not *concertos* but *concerts* in the French sense, i.e. pieces for mixed consort. It is not obvious where Bach learnt the word, which was not in fully regular use before the 1720s. Perhaps he had heard it from the handful of French musicians he knew, or from a now unidentified volume of music. Couperin's formative *Concerts royaux* could have been circulating in manuscript for several years before being published in 1722, and had quite possibly reached Berlin-Brandenburg. But their scoring and contents are much more limited than Bach's which, rather, are extending the scope for groups of solo instruments already found in some Weimar cantatas, works which in some cases were not so very much older. When compiling six such *concerts* for a royal margrave, a composer might well feel he was entering a wider, European world, grander than anywhere he had come from, and if so, it would have been naturally very disappointing that the dedicated volume led nowhere, so far as is known.

For any Berlin court-members present when Bach was 'heard' during the visit to Berlin in 1719, he had presumably improvised some harpsichord solos, either in the Stadtschloss (city royal palace) or at the margrave's estate at Berlin-Malchow. Two conjectures are that he took along with him a version of the Fifth Concerto, and that its harpsichord solos were those that had triumphed over the absent Marchand in Dresden eighteen months earlier, public music thus going from one court to another. The margrave's musical library as recorded on his death in 1734 lists many Italian concertos of a kind very different from French *concerts*, though some of these might also have been held in the library and included among what the 1734 catalogue terms *Concerte und Sinfonien*. (Lully's name does appear in the list: see Besseler 1956, pp. 33ff.). How the autograph *Six Concerts* came to survive when the margrave's library as such did not is also uncertain but may have something to do with Bach's pupil J. P. Kirnberger, who worked in the Berlin court from 1751.

On his return to Cöthen, and gradually compiling his pieces as a conventional set of six, Bach's procedure seems to have been much like that for his other compilations. Certain movements composed earlier for various occasions were collected, arranged, rewritten, transposed, etc. and were then joined by new movements or whole works, making a set of six distinctive pieces. Five of No. 1's movements appear to go back eight or nine years to a *Sinfonia* of pastoral character written for Weissenfels. The seven movements alone of this concerto give an impression very different from the three of other concertos (all of them lively–slow–fast). There are also many French touches in No. 1 – not an *ouverture*, but an opening with French *cors de chasse* calls (superimposed on the first movement, see below, p. 515) and closing with a typical *rondeau* of dances. Had the composer's original intention been to alternate French and Italian pieces in the set? And if so, to hazard a further conjecture, he recognized that Italian concertos in three movements were likelier to leave a more stirring and fashionable impression behind, and this became the pattern subsequently. Especially the finales of No. 3, No. 4 and above all No. 6 leave behind a more 'modern' note than anything in No. 1. At that period, but much more so in this case, any *set of six* explored what could be done with a single type of music, whether concerto, suite, fugue, prelude, sonata, trio, or even (in the Christmas Oratorio) cantata.

Absence from the Obituary's worklist could mean that Emanuel (assuming he prepared it) never knew the 'Brandenburg Concertos' as such during the whole Leipzig period and never saw a complete fair-copy manuscript. A much later copy of the separate instrumental parts of No. 5 by a

supposed pupil of son-in-law Altnickol (J. C. Farlau) seems to draw on a version earlier than the margrave's, and made for use in concerts in the 1760s (BJ 2003, p. 47). In turn, this suggests that copies of (some of) the twenty-two movements were made and kept safe, including those played in concerts or drawn on and rescored for some Leipzig cantatas. No. 4 in another version became one of the set of harpsichord concertos in the important fair-copy compilation of 1738 (see p. 364), rescored there for flutes instead of recorders, whose original terminology (*fiauti d'echo*, 'echo flutes') had been both unique and unclear – sopranino recorders, perhaps. A further Italian allusion?

As with the other compilations, what the 'original' form of certain works was is not always clear, other versions having been lost or superseded or left in sketch form. For No. 6's middle movement, which is a trio with dual bass-line in the old Italian manner, it would be easy to suppose an origin well before 1721. No. 5 too might have had different versions depending on the size of the available harpsichord. Sources themselves may have deliberately left open various options for instrumentation and, consequently, keys. Thus, based on the patchy extant documentation, it has been argued that No. 2 existed in two other authentic versions, one allowing horn as an alternative to trumpet, the other a work for four soloists and continuo only, without the string band. Perhaps these were usable alternatives, not necessarily authorized but certainly conforming to French practice at the time, when *concerts* offered options. Such alternatives are not implausible and lead to other possibilities, such as that the movements for fewer players in Nos. 1, 5 and 6 could have been furnished with fuller accompaniment for strings without too much difficulty.

The colourful scorings, though more varied than usual in any set of six at the time, could be reflecting current practices more than is often realized. No. 6 conforms exactly to the composer's term *concert* (it is a *consort à 5*), and its pairs of violas and gambas without violins were not unfamiliar in older German cantatas. They are therefore not a sign that this concerto was composed earlier than the others or that it was meant to represent the 'archaic' or that it once had a quite different scoring. (One might justifiably wonder whether Bach would himself play viola I or viola II or one of the gambas in any performance of No. 6 in Cöthen.) Whether the bass-line was expected by the composer to be doubled an octave below is something that cannot be concluded from the terms employed in the autograph. Later in Leipzig both major churches possessed a double bass, of which one, possibly both, was imported (from Prague), and this suggests what by then had become usual for a church cantata. But it would say

nothing about chamber groups playing string concertos, one to a part, where *violone* might indicate an instrument sounding either at written pitch or an octave lower. (Also, it is not always obvious to the ear at which octave-level a bass instrument of the Bach period is sounding.)

The usual string consort was stretched to nine parts in No. 3, a most unusual 3 + 3 + 3 (plus continuo), and there are faint signs in the make-up that at first the scoring was not for three cellos but only one. So this concerto too may originate in part earlier, in the Weimar years, and so have been in some sense expanded for the margrave. As finally realized, the two concertos Nos. 3 and 6 explicitly contrast the old consort (rich, subtle viols in No. 6) with the new (brilliant, brash violins in No. 3), doing so of course with a tremendous sense of melody and rhythm, showing an uncanny grasp of truly effective string music, a match for Vivaldi's Opp. 3 and 8. Not least from his Vivaldi transcriptions such as the D minor Concerto, BWV 596, Bach learnt, if he needed to, how gripping simple repeated chords could be, applying them in his own way to open No. 3 and especially No. 6.

Concertos Nos. 2, 4 and 5 are concerti grossi (qv) in a special and new sense: No. 2 has or a group of four solo instruments, the *concertino* (qv); Nos. 4 and 5 have two quite different *concertini* of three solo instruments, and in combinations unfamiliar to Italian composers. Each novel scoring is unique, freshly conceived, and instantly recognizable, some kind of reaction perhaps to the more uniform scoring and sounds of the *locus classicus* of the concerto grosso, Corelli's Op. VI (Amsterdam, 1714). Although there is no direct evidence that Bach knew these works, it is hardly conceivable that Prince Johann Ernst would have brought back from Amsterdam to Weimar the parts for Vivaldi's Op. 3 but not those for Corelli's Op. VI – twelve concertos admired for decades, worthy models for any composer 'swerving away from' the achievements of his precursors. (Handel's uniform Op. 6 concertos are more closely imitative of Corelli's, though by no means supinely so.) The possible model offered by Corelli is important: Bach-admirers seeking only Vivaldi in the 'Brandenburgs' might be looking for the wrong composer.

A further point concerns Concerto No. 5, for though now often regarded as (i) the original trailblazer for (ii) the true keyboard concerto, it is neither. Except in being a complete work it is no more and no less of a solo harpsichord concerto than some earlier pieces by Handel, such as the sonata in *Il trionfo*, 1707 or the *cembalo* obbligato (qv) part in the aria 'Vò far guerra' in *Rinaldo*, 1710. For a keyboard soloist to have so subservient a role in a concerto's slow movement as he does in 'Brandenburg' No. 5,

where he is only partner in a trio, would have seemed as odd to Handel in his concertos for organ as to Mozart in his concertos for piano. Keyboard soloists do not usually take a minor rôle in slow movements. Among the striking parallels between No. 5's fast movements and those several isolated pieces by Handel are that each is shaped as a ritornello, with the full sections (*ripieni*) interspersed with solo episodes of somewhat naïve, flashy broken chords.

These solo episodes of Bach reflect Italian habits, even rival them and, as is the case also with some Vivaldi concertos, they can exist in more than one version: one episode in the 'Fifth Brandenburg', the so-called cadenza, survives in two versions, the longer of which was probably made specially for the margrave's set.[11] A precedent for these long solos, and their probable inspiration, is the comparable solo episode in violin concertos of Vivaldi, in particular the Concerto in D major, RV 208, which Bach had almost certainly transcribed by then, the Concerto for Organ, BWV 594. In such ways as these one could imagine Bach, like Handel, as wishing to compete with famed virtuosi abroad – Handel with Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti, Bach with Louis Marchand and Vivaldi. The so-called cadenza of the 'Fifth Brandenburg' is owed to what Bach had learnt from transcribing Vivaldi.

If by 1700 the continuo-player in Italian operas, cantatas and concertos was beginning to be more conspicuous than written scores suggest, it is easy to see how works with a part for solo organ, like Vivaldi's Concerto RV 779 (same period as Handel's *Il trionfo*), came about. Mattheson, who had observed Handel's playing on more than one occasion, reported later (1739, p. 88) how in his stage productions Handel often turned the harpsichord accompaniments he was playing into inimitable improvised solos. (One hopes this was during aria-episodes when the singer was silent.) It would be nothing strange for the cosmopolitan musicians of Cöthen or Berlin-Brandenburg to be familiar with such Italian practices, and there was even a personal link between London and Cöthen through members of the Lienicke family of musicians. Of Bach too it was later reported that he made a habit of accompanying in such a way that 'one thought it was a concerto', according to his much later and complaisant pupil Mizler (Dok. II, p. 321). Earlier, in playing the 'Fifth Brandenburg', he also 'must have captivated by the lightness and elasticity of his fingers'

[11] Note that the 'cadenza' of the 'Fifth Brandenburg' is not a true *cadenza* in the later sense (despite the long preparation for a perfect cadence) but the final solo episode of a ritornello movement.

anyone who heard him play it, as Burney said of Handel's earlier playing in *Rinaldo* (1789, p. 224). But the solo sections in Bach's concertos could never be criticized by Burney, as Handel's were, for containing 'not one learned or solid passage'.

There is no evidence that the Margrave of Brandenburg or his musicians made use of Bach's concertos, rewarded their composer or even acknowledged them, much less put him in the way of a royal appointment in Prussia. This is so despite a broad hint in the dedication when Bach describes his desire to serve on occasions that were 'more worthy of His Highness' (*plus dignes d'Elle*: Dok. I, p. 217). A Berlin student taken on by him in Leipzig in 1725 (Dok. II, p. 218) is not known to have had any connection with the margrave but it is possible. For Bach's later concerts in the Leipzig Collegium, the *Six Concerts* would have been of limited use because of their idiosyncratic and by then old-fashioned scoring, although there were enough good players (including those who played solos in the church cantatas) available. The third movement from No. 1 used in a cantata of 1726 (the *Dramma*, BWV 207) was fundamentally rescored in a new key and expanded with phrases for the chorus, resulting in a most ingenious and convincing metamorphosis, though one cannot be sure it derives from the same version as the margrave's concerto. (See a remark elsewhere on the concerto's first movement re-used in Cantata No. 52.) Emanuel was still at home when on Whit Monday 1729, Cantata No. 174 opened with a version of the first movement of No. 3, enriched with added winds which immediately transported it to another sound-world, and which, in a sense, took the place of the usual chorus absent from this cantata.

Second marriage

He married for a second time, in Cöthen in 1721, Miss Anna Magdalena, youngest daughter of Mr Johann Caspar Wülken, Court Trumpeter to the Duke of Weissenfels. (*Obituary*)

Anna Magdalena was born on 22 September 1701 in Zeitz, where her father had been a court trumpeter before moving to Weissenfels in 1718: once again, then, directly or indirectly the court of Weissenfels, whose several trumpeters were held in high esteem, played a rôle in the life of J. S. Bach. Evidently a precociously accomplished singer within a court society

of fine musicians, Anna Magdalena could well have come into contact with Bach before he was a widower, on some such occasion as a professional visit to one of the ducal courts in the neighbourhood, visits that each of them, as a fee-paid musician, is known to have made over the period 1720–1. Or perhaps Bach had been commissioned to search for a singer for Cöthen and found her (heard of her?) in the nearby court at Zerbst, where she had performed as a teenager with her father, and where one of her brothers was trumpeter. Curiously, any such search for a singer would have been at much the same period that Handel too was looking for singers, though farther afield than Bach.

By 15 June 1721, less than a year since Maria Barbara died, Anna Magdalena was living in Cöthen, a member of the Lutheran congregation (Dok. II, p. 71) and probably with an appointment as court or chamber singer. By the end of September, and surely the result of making a personable impression, she had already become godmother to two children in different families of Cöthen court-employees, at the first of which Sebastian Bach also stood as godfather (Dok. II, p. 82). Appearing together in this way could (just) suggest that they were already 'betrothed', in some way conventional at the time. The local baptism records describe her as court/chamber singer, but in extant court documents she is listed only as 'Capellmeister Bach's wife', and this only eight months later, when two apparently rival singers at Cöthen may have been leaving for Berlin and the Hamburg opera (BJ 2013, pp. 293f.).

Anna Magdalena's three sisters had married trumpeters at various courts, so perhaps she had deliberately chosen a different plan. As godmother she had just turned twenty, and her court appointment, if she had one so soon, was presumably made on the recommendation of Capellmeister Bach, whose predecessor's wife at Cöthen had held a similar appointment. It is a plausible guess (though no more) that the new copies of soprano cantatas Bach had worked on earlier in Weimar, Cantata No. 199 and Francesco Conti's 'Languet anima mea', were made for Anna Magdalena to sing in her early days at Cöthen. He was surely in some sense her instructor. (The obituary of G. H. Bümler that accompanies Bach's in Mizler 1754 points out that both of Bümler's two wives were former pupils or *Schülerinnen*.)

Evidently capellmeister and soprano became close enough for them to be soon married, on 3 December 1721, she aged twenty, he thirty-six. (This is some two months after Bach's brother Johann Jacob, an oboist, also married for the second time. So of course had their father nearly thirty years earlier.) The record describes the marriage as 'by command' of the

prince (*Befehl*: Dok. II, p. 83), indicating his permission, something necessary either for an important court appointee's marriage or for this to be elsewhere than in church, Reformed or Lutheran. (The prince himself was married only eight days later, and it is likely that Anna Magdalena was involved in the celebrations before or after, though there is no record of this.) However conventional it was for a Lutheran widower in a Reformed town to remarry at home and buy discounted wine for his wedding, Bach seems to have done both and reduced his expenses accordingly. His eldest child, Catharina Dorothea, was only some seven years younger than her new stepmother but is likely to have been better prepared for this fundamental change in her life than Anna Magdaena was in hers, moving in on an established family. Even with mortality as it was in the early eighteenth century, Anna Magdalena's fate – to have thirteen children before she was forty-one, one of them handicapped in some way, and by her early thirties to have seen seven of them die over as many years – was hardly to be considered average.

It is difficult to resist the many tempting speculations about this very interesting period in Bach's life, questions to which there will never be an answer. The immediate record concerns only formalities about money, as when a few weeks after the wedding, Bach's Erfurt connections, apparently including his elder sister Marie Salome, asked for a change in the legacy of their uncle Tobias Lämmerhirt's widow, originally intended for Marie's brothers as well as herself. (Perhaps she did not know they were still alive. Legal claims *in ignorantia* cannot have been rare.) How Sebastian got to hear of this is not known, but he objected in writing on behalf of himself and his brother Johann Jacob and apparently won his case. He seems to have tried to contact his brother, in vain (Dok. II, p. 83), and Johann Jacob died in Stockholm not very long after, in April 1722. In August of the same year, Sebastian was also paid for an unidentified birthday cantata for the prince of Zerbst nearby, in which perhaps his wife the soprano and his new brother-in-law the trumpeter participated. The position of capellmeister at Zerbst was filled that year by J. F. Fasch, another able musician associated with Telemann, Kuhnau and Bach himself. Fasch's starting pay at Zerbst, a modest establishment, was barely half of Bach's (and of Anna Magdalena's) at Cöthen, and he was soon to apply for promotion to the Leipzig cantorate, as of course was Bach.

After his marriage Bach also continued to receive a court payment each year for holding rehearsals in his house in Cöthen and for maintenance of the harpsichord: another business-like detail that got recorded (as did the cost of new harpsichord strings: Dok. II, 70). At least financially, all this

would have been a consolation for there never having been a lucrative offer from Dresden, if this was something he had been seeking. Since the gifted Anna Magdalena, who was something of a local diva, was soon receiving a salary three-quarters that of her new husband, and since both were more highly paid than anyone else except the first violin (whose pay came between theirs), the court's musical expenditure was much dominated by husband and wife, with what ill feeling among their colleagues no one now knows. What and where Anna Magdalena sang during her nearly two years in Cöthen is also unknown, though very probably she earned her position with many frequent performances of chamber music at court, including such festive and formal works as the birthday cantata for the prince, BWV 173a, various discreet songs of the kind contained in the later Anna Magdalena Bach books, and a range of more formal solo cantatas in the mould of 'Amore traditore', BWV 203. Her first child was born well over a year after her marriage, but died aged three.

Although 'Amore traditore' (at least, in its surviving form) is for bass, and is neither certainly authentic nor even certainly from this same period, it nevertheless conforms to the italianate chamber styles known far and wide in courtly circles, including Cöthen itself already from the time of the previous capellmeister. Perhaps the version for bass comes from early years in Leipzig, following a soprano version for Cöthen? Its Neapolitan text is known elsewhere, and BWV 203 in shape and character is the nearest thing in the BWV to a pure Italian chamber cantata. Although some details are unusual – its ABA arias are irregular, cello seems not to be required, and the extravagant harpsichord part is exceptional – none was unique for a genre far less moribund than has often been assumed. The keyboard part, along with that of the 'Fifth Brandenburg', is surely typical of the way accompanists were by now understanding the rôle of continuo-player, i.e. to produce busy accompaniments of the kind now being illustrated in a well-circulating theory-book of 1721, F. E. Niedt's *Musicalische Handleitung*. BWV 203, however, is a good deal more musical and imaginative than anything in Niedt. In another and later chamber cantata, 'Non sa che sia dolore', BWV 209, comparable Italian conventions are so ably handled that if J. S. Bach is not the composer of either of the two Italian cantatas, the musical community needs to know who is.

As it is likely that Anna Magdalena had sung at the prince's wedding, so it is that she did at later weddings in Leipzig, from where she came over to sing again in Cöthen at least three times. The increasing financial problems in Cöthen about this time must have arisen in part from the cost of the prince's musical establishment, though how far the Bachs were aware of

this is not known. It would have been reason enough to look elsewhere for an appointment. In the early 1720s, finalizing the first book of the WTC would be something to monopolize the thoughts of any composer, although in 1722 the first of two albums was also begun for Anna Magdalena, comparable to Friedemann's and similarly called by her *Clavier-Büchlein*, one hopes with Friedemann's approval.

The Anna Magdalena books and the 'French Suites'

Enough of Anna Magdalena's album of 1722 survives, probably about a third of it, to show that it was to have had a mix of keyboard pieces, including five of the small-scaled 'French Suites', not so called. Presumably from 1722 on (Anna Magdalena's date on the title-page), the album could have been gradually compiled from a store of pieces over the period Cöthen-to-early-Leipzig. One can hardly help seeing this and the second A. M. B. book begun in 1725 as tokens not only of Bach's devotion to his young wife but as support for her musical advancement. A project originating perhaps over her first pregnancy in late summer 1722, these books show continued support of her for the best part of twenty years.

The 1722 book contains Anna Magdalena's earliest known music handwriting (the Minuet, BWV 813), on one of the only three sides not written by Bach himself. The second book is rather different, more of a family album. Dated (initially) 1725, and so after the family's move to Leipzig, it is a sumptuous parchment-bound volume, today about 90 per cent complete (127 pages), more than half of it written out by Anna Magdalena. As a blank album ready-made before the pieces were entered (see NBA V/4, KB), it too was compiled gradually, with contributions from Emanuel and others. About the 1725 album there are again many unanswered questions, such as why Friedemann is not represented in it as it is now constituted, i.e. with a number of missing pages. The book's two partitas (not so called) in A minor and E minor are not copied from their versions published in 1727 and 1730/1, and give every appearance of being earlier versions. On the other hand, the album's version of the aria from the 'Goldberg Variations' is very close in detail to the print of 1741, giving no clue that it was made earlier. Was its old-fashioned notation (soprano clef in the manuscript, treble in the print) educative, for Anna Magdalena's benefit?

As for the title 'French Suites': this appears only in posthumous references and is not certainly authentic. The Obituary refers to them as 'six suites somewhat shorter' than the other set of six (the 'English Suites', also

not so called – Dok. III, p. 66), so a sixth had joined Anna Magdalena's five, perhaps in a now lost fair-copy compilation similar in principle to that made of the Inventions. Already in 1762, F. W. Marpurg referred to both the number and the name (Dok. III, p. 173), yet there is amazingly little in the suites that is French or anything like Parisian harpsichord music of *c.* 1710–20. Players can soon recognize their distinct character, taut, elusive but unmistakable, at least after the rather conventional start to No. 1. (This might have been brought in at some point to make up the six.) There seems every reason to think them written specially for Anna Magdalena, captivating suites aiming for and achieving great charm: thinner in texture than the bigger suites, fitting the hands easily, light and discreet in their counterpoint. Most are no more than mildly demanding for the player, but the Suite in E flat is challenging and Nos. 5 and 6 do suggest both a chronology and increasing demands made on the player. The set really does give a new and recognizable face to the conventional suite for harpsichord or clavichord.

Although the absence of substantial preludes gives a petite feel to the 'French Suites', where few movements are more than forty bars long, they do offer a series of lessons in the form of dances to match the more theoretical *tours de force* of the Inventions and the WTC1. Every movement seems to be consciously aiming for great charm. At least three Allemandes (C minor, G major, E major) are unusually melodious, perhaps the reason why Marpurg noted that the suites offered 'real models' (*aechte Muster*) for Allemandes. Several model Courantes take their name literally. There are Invention-like Airs (Nos. 2 and 4), conspicuously expressive Sarabandes (especially No. 6), firmly rhythmic Gavottes, graceful Minuets, etc., all indeed models. The stuttering rhythms of two dotted Gigues (Nos. 1, 2) require particular attention. And there are many opportunities for *cantabile* melodies in the right hand, including the G major Sarabande, a dance which in some respects anticipates the aria of the 'Goldberg Variations'.

The apparent programme of instruction in Anna Magdalena's two albums is looked at below (see pp. 596f.), but for the moment, the 1725 book can be considered further as an example of a musical family's activities in the home. It includes an arrangement of a bass recitative and aria from Cantata No. 82 now rewritten for soprano, also rather demanding and likely to be reflecting Anna Magdalena's talent as a singer. Did she choose such pieces herself for the album, including 'Bist du bei mir', already a favourite in Leipzig? G. H. Stölzel, court capellmeister of Gotha to whom this is now attributed, was probably a family friend and is also represented

by keyboard music in Friedemann's album. For Friedemann's stepmother, the songs of the day would be of more interest, complete with any bass-lines improved by Sebastian.

It is puzzling that Bach seems never to have composed a fuller set of simple strophic songs of the 'Bist du bei mir' kind, though one cannot be 100 per cent sure he did not, either for his new wife or during the 1730s when other songbooks were being prepared for publication in Leipzig. One would think it a natural thing for him to do. Similar points could be made about the arrangements of more formal arias, represented by those movements from Cantata No. 82 in the 1725 album: were there no others, was there no project to publish a collection of aria arrangements? In 1726–7 Telemann had done something of the kind in Hamburg, publishing no fewer than 144 of his regular cantata-arias, extracted and arranged 'for public and private uses'. The publishing conditions in Hamburg were better? Telemann was cleverer at self-promotion? His arias were simpler to start with?

The 1725 album's versions of harpsichord partitas Nos. 3 and 6, copied by Bach himself, introduce a very different tone from the sweet galanterie of the songs which, in some way one can only guess, suited the young woman. If the 'French Suites' of Book 1 were well-planned lessons, surely the partitas in Book 2 were deliberately stretching her (or the children's) abilities further and already at a more advanced stage? It is possible that the book of 1725 was begun for Anna Magdalena's birthday or wedding anniversary (22 September, 3 December), with some new pieces brought from Dresden,[12] where Sebastian had been playing in September that year. In any case, Partitas No. 3 and 6 are so clearly made for proficient players in or out of the family that it was rather to be expected that the composer should gradually add four others, each just as instructive as these if not more so, and making up a *set of six* once again, now for wider publication. Less expected, perhaps, was how original and unique each of them was when the collection of Six Partitas was serially published later (see below, pp. 316f.).

A 'bridal poem' written out in Anna Magdalena's hand is testimony to her happy marriage, according to Spitta (1, 1873, p. 759), but less speculative is that for some time, she came to make good professional copies of other important works. These included the three complete sets of works for solo instrument (six suites for cello, six sonatas and partitas for violin, six

[12] Including the well-known Minuets in G major and G minor, by Christian Petzold, organist and Friedemann's predecessor in Dresden (BJ 1978, p. 54).

sonatas for organ), perhaps as gifts for Sebastian's pupils, perhaps for sale. The disappearance of her portrait, reliably recorded still in 1790 (Dok. III, p. 501), is regrettable for many reasons.

A note on The Well-tempered Clavier, 'Book 1' (WTC1)

Over the Cöthen period work must have begun (or continued) on the movements eventually compiled to make up the WTC, movements which in some cases had reached a stage or version by 1720, in others even earlier. On the (faintly) possible relevance of the month in 1717 spent by Bach in custody, see p. 179.

A variety of technical-musical points arises with this exceptional volume, giving an unusually clear indication of the composer's aims and self-given tasks. The extant autograph manuscript is a fair-copy compilation of forty-eight pieces now known as 'Book 1', with the following title-page:

> The Well-tempered Clavier, or, Preludes and Fugues through all the tones and semitones, both with respect to the major third or C D E [***tertia major*** *oder* ***Ut Re Mi***] and to the minor third or D E F [***tertia minor*** *oder* ***Re Mi Fa***]. For the use and profit of musical youth wishing to learn, as well as for special passing of the time [*besonderem ZeitVertreib*] by those already skilled in this study [***studio*** *schon* ***habil***] drawn up and prepared by Johann Sebastian Bach. *p.t.* Capellmeister to the Illustrious Prince of Anhalt-Cöthen and Director of his Chamber Music, Anno 1722.

There are several striking points about this title. The four words *Das Woltemperirte Clavier oder* look like additions made after an already full title-page was written,[13] for the 'P' for 'PRAELUDIA, und fugen' is written with a flourish, as if it was originally the first word of the title. So just as the *Orgelbüchlein*'s title-page need say nothing about what the composer originally intended to call it, if anything, nor need WTC1's. There is no mention of a 'Book 1', and the date looks altered, perhaps from 1723. The carefully compiled manuscript volume carries further markings made by the composer, in 1732, the mid-1730s and again after 1740, suggesting

[13] At least, down to the words *Johann Sebastian Bach*. The remaining lines, including the changed date of 1722, look later, so that *p.t.* represents the composer's Cöthen title 'at the time' the manuscript was compiled. The date '1732' added at the end of the manuscript might record some revisions.

that he had it readily at hand, perhaps with publication in mind or for playing or for privileged students to copy.

The title-page has no reference to tuning or temperament, only to 'the tones' (white-note keys) and 'the semitones' (black-note keys), and their major and minor thirds – something made clear in two ways, letters and words. (See further on this, below, p. 571.) Without doubt, Bach's wording comes in part from the two volumes of suites by Johann Kuhnau published in Leipzig (1689, 1692):

. . . *Partien aus dem Ut, Re, Mi, oder Tertia majore eines jedweden Toni* . . . ('suites in C, D, E, F, G, A and B flat major, one in each key')

. . . *Partien aus dem Re, Mi, Fa, oder Tertia minore eines jedweden Toni* . . . ('suites in C, D. E, F, G, A and B minor, one in each key')

Presumably in 1722 Bach did not know that he was to succeed Kuhnau as cantor in Leipzig, but he would have done in 1723. Either way, deference to an influential composer and a publication specifying not modes but major and minor keys was apt, even if Kuhnau's actual music cannot have been valued very highly (compare Example 29 below, p. 630). Obviously the WTC project is far more complete: now twenty-four keys not fifteen, alternating major/minor, rising in chromatic order. A player would not assume that the WTC was a cycle to be played in order any more than Kuhnau's suites were. The book is a repertory, not a programme.

The three words *Well-tempered Clavier* have caused some misunderstanding. First, *Well-tempered* need not of itself mean 'equal tempered' and certainly does not do so as a matter of definition, as one might expect if the composer had been making a point of it here. Especially if the title was added as an afterthought,[14] the book need no longer be seen as some kind of vindication of any particular temperament. The one French word in Bach's title, *habil*, may allude specifically to those students trained in the old tones (corresponding to *habitude* as defined in Brossard's dictionary, 1705, p. 266), and who now have their studies advanced by working in all the major and minor keys. Secondly, *Clavier* is a word already found on the title-page of Friedemann's album and means any keyboard except, by convention, the full-sized church organ. It does not of itself mean clavichord or even, specifically, harpsichord, although this is the one keyboard instrument that alone suits all forty-eight pieces. Twenty years later, by the

[14] As for all manuscript works in its worklist, including the Passions and *Orgelbüchlein*, the Obituary does not use the composer's own title, and refers only to 'Twice four-and-twenty preludes and fugues'.

time of Book 2, *Clavier* (assuming the title of Book 2 was Bach's) could be taken to include the fortepiano either as an option for younger players or as an instrument intended for certain movements.

Bach seems to have allowed a host of pupils – two at least by *c.* 1720 – to make copies of at least parts of this compilation which, characteristically, supersedes all earlier collections by other composers he or they might have come across. It does this not only through the unique achievement of WTC1's forty-eight pieces, each of them a complete individual movement far beyond possible models, but in the use they make of all twenty-four keys. Since J. K. F. Fischer's *Ariadne musica*, a book of little preludes and fugues by a composer admired by Bach (Dok. III, p. 288), uses twenty keys and had been re-issued a few years earlier (1715), its part, however slight, in prompting the idea of a bigger project and even some of its themes cannot be doubted. But obvious though it may now seem to order a set of pieces (i) in all the keys, (ii) first major then minor, and (iii) rising by semitones, in fact each of these features was beyond anything else at the time, even odd. It is a measure of the volume's achievement ever since that they seem odd no longer.

The idea of a complete compilation surely emerged only gradually. Evidence from the *Clavierbüchlein W. F. Bach* is inconclusive, however: its copies of so-called early versions of eleven preludes (only) from WTC1 have the order C, c, d, D, e, E, F, C sharp, c sharp, e flat and f, but these could have been extracted from a bigger collection, or one planned to be so, whatever their order. Nor is it known when the preludes were joined by fugues or whether this too had always been planned. The very neatness of the eventual pairs in their complete chromatic order starting from C is an instance of the composer's growing 'thoroughness' and does not of itself imply either a playing or a chronological order. One striking detail is that WTC1 (like WTC2) begins with a fugue-theme that alludes to the historical hexachord (see below, pp. 624f.). The theme of C major Book 1 is a version of the 'rising scale' fugue-theme often met with in both the practice and theory of this period, and not only in Germany. The hexachord *topic*, if this is what it is, alludes wittingly or not to a firm tradition that ultimately goes back as far as the ninth-century treatise *Musica enchiriadis*.

In a single continuous piece of music passing through many keys, such as the twelve in Marin Marais's *La gamme* (published in Paris in 1723), it would be implausible for keys to rise by a semitone each time, because they have no relation to each other. WTC1's sequence of keys (i.e. on paper) is a display for the eye rather than the ear, but it has led later

musicians to such anachronistic assumptions as that WTC1 is an entity and that it is a concert item to be played in order. Both concert and order are quite unlikely for 1720, as they are with the sets of inventions. Even the pairing of prelude and fugue is not straightforward: the title *Prelude and Fugue in C major*, etc. may appear in all modern editions but does not do so in the manuscript, where instead, *Prelude 1* is followed by *Fugue 1 à 4*. When the key's fugue is over the page and preceded by the words *segue Fuga,* etc., this is information for the student as much as a directive to the keyboardist. To specify a fugue's number of parts in a title was more important because composers know that *à 2*, *à 3*, *à 4* or *à 5* implies different fugal styles, just as keyboardists know that they use the hands in different ways.

While it was D minor that had long been established as 'the first key', particularly in published organ music (Frescobaldi *Fiori musicali*, de Grigny's *Livre*, Fischer's own *Blumenstrauss*), collections were by then often beginning in C major (Kuhnau's *Clavierübung*, Fischer's *Ariadne*).[15] There might seem an advantage in beginning in a key that needs no key-signature, but then, nor originally did D minor (*tonus primus*). The two sets of inventions in the order given by the *Clavierbüchlein W. F. Bach* go by step from simple to more complex key-signatures, as in Fischer's *Ariadne*, an order that has a certain sense to it. How many preludes or fugues of WTC1 were transposed to complete the key-sequence will never be certain, but the autograph's notation of the Fugue in D sharp minor suggests that some transpositions required only a change of key-signature and subsequent accidentals. This is a feasible way of transposing by a semitone and had been discussed sixty years earlier, in a book published in Lüneburg (J. Rist's *Musicalisches Seelen-Paradis* II, 1662, with music by Christian Flor). That some pieces were transposed is also one of the factors that do rather affect the various theories of later temperament-specialists on what was 'Bach's wished-for temperament'.
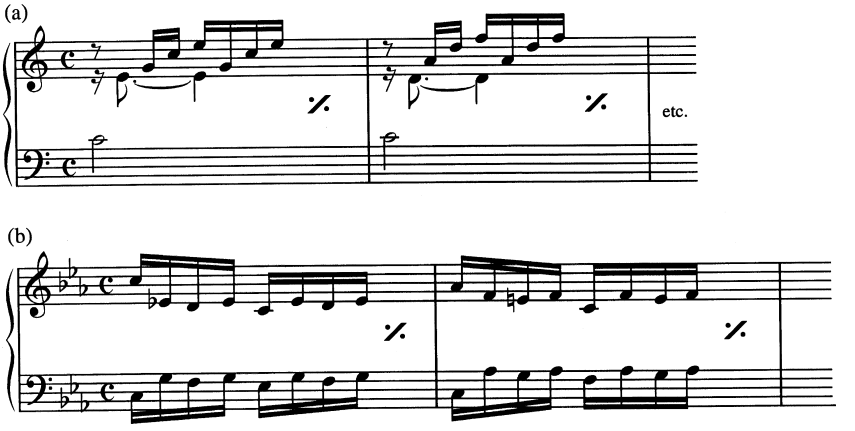
As to the complete twenty-four keys: J. P. Treiber's *Der accurate Organist im Generalbaß*, a book printed in Arnstadt while Bach was organist there (1704), gave figured-bass chorales in twenty keys, often with a more complicated (and still unsure) notation of accidentals than one finds in WTC1. Mattheson's instructional book of 1719 for organists included figured-bass exercises in all twenty-four keys. Judging by a turgid curiosity like F. Suppig's unpublished *Labyrinthus*, Dresden, June 1722, in which a

[15] Modern editions of organ music by Bach, Buxtehude and others beginning with pieces in C major and rising by step to B minor (as in the NBA) are in this respect anachronistic.

single fantasia passes through all twenty-four keys, Bach was responding in his own practical way to growing interests at the time. Suppig's family was active in the Cöthen-Dresden region, and 1722 was also the year in which Bach's colleague Fasch, who had some connection with Suppig, was appointed in nearby Zerbst. If Suppig sent a manuscript copy of his work to Mattheson, who referred to it a few months later (1722, p. 152), it is certainly possible he also sent one to Fasch or Bach. Or his work was known to Heinichen, capellmeister in Dresden, whose book of 1728 includes a piece going through every key, starting and ending in A minor. Clearly, such interests were growing in this very area of Germany in this decade, although it is strange that J. S. Bach is not among the many composers mentioned by Heinichen. WTC1 was not for general consumption.

If Bach did know, or know of, Suppig's *Labyrinthus*, several important points would follow. First, WTC1 is therefore establishing a new sequence of keys, for Suppig no more proceeds by rising semitones than does Marais in his piece *La gamme* ('The scale'). And then, since the title-pages of *Labyrinthus* and WTC1 have much in common, including their very orthography (facsimile in Rasch 1990), there is a distinct possibility that WTC1's title and date were some kind of direct response to Suppig's manuscript. (The date was even altered to correspond to it?) And thirdly, in WTC1 Bach is bypassing temperament theory by temperament practice, providing pieces in every key and requiring the player to be able to play all possible keys, something rather advanced for 1722. The tuning might be done so that the keys are all the same and equally out of tune except for the octaves (unlikely); or they might be so tuned as to make all acceptable, some more than others (possible); or they might be separately tuned on each occasion (feasible when the book is not played all through). It is important to note that since no piece wanders far from its key, one could claim that precisely how each is tuned is irrelevant to the rest. Besides, players were far more used to different key characteristics produced by differing degrees of 'sourness' in the tuning than pianists of the last two centuries or so are.

The volume as compiled appears to be consciously going beyond other books of instruction in demonstrating two particular musical creations: the fully fledged prelude, taking several forms; and the fully fledged fugue, succinct and tightly argued. These are theoretical aims as well as practical, and they offer models in writing in less familiar keys as well as playing in them. Many preludes, perhaps almost all, had earlier versions, and some fugues were transposed, all gathered for a bigger exhibition of those arts



Example 17 Preludes Nos. 1 and 2, WTC, Book 1

than anything known previously. For example, the first two preludes illustrate a single idea, a ruling concept for creating a praeludium (qv): that is, a 4/4 bar is built up from a pattern of eight semiquavers heard twice but otherwise totally different (see Example 17):

one in the major (light), the other minor (dark);
one entirely of arpeggios, the other with no arpeggios;
eight semiquavers in one prelude shaped 5 + 3, in the other 4 + 4;
in one the figure is divided between the hands, in the other shared;
one is predominantly higher in tessitura than the other;
the first keeps its *figura* unchanged throughout, the second allows it to metamorphose (disintegrate) in the second half of the piece.

Here in effect are twelve compositional ideas, each clearly demonstrated before the student's very eyes. They are joined in the volume by other object lessons in note-patterns and, in an exceptional case, a 'string trio' in two halves (B minor). Another pair of preludes might demonstrate the contrast between one built up carefully like a three-part invention (A major) and another, even more inventively, built up from original, repetitive, and rather playful motifs (A minor). A comparison between, say, the G major and the G minor preludes suggests that Bach was intent on showing what can be done with little motifs, totally different, two in each prelude. In principle these could be improvised, but in fact they defy easy imitation.

So do the fugues. Compared to many of his previous fugues for voices (Cantatas Nos. 131, 106) or organ (the Passacaglia's), over half the fugues

of WTC1 have tight, succinct fugal structures of well under fifty bars in which the subject predominates and the episodes are relatively discreet. To integrate the episodes in this way is exactly what many an earlier fugue does not do, and although the 'looser' type of fugue-structure is not dropped in WTC1, examples of it give the impression of being there purely for a change. The recent inventions too are succinct in a way that the fugues for solo violin (*Sei Solo*) or for organ had not been, leading one to guess that by 1720 or so Bach was working out his own kinds of fugue and planning a new, original and really rather strange volume to contain them.

The WTC1's fugues vary consciously in style, from the antique to the whimsical, but usually the subjects have a quality quite distinct from that of other melodies. That quality itself is as elusive as it is recognizable. Some themes recall those of J. K. F. Fischer (G minor, F major) or earlier traditions (C major, C sharp minor), while the ancestry of yet others (E minor, A major, C minor) is distant, even puzzling. There are startlingly original fugues, such as the E minor (in two voices) and A major, that are particularly single-minded though faintly reminiscent of unconventional work by J. H. Buttstedt of Erfurt. Several longer fugues such as those in B flat minor and D sharp minor, though well developed at length, keep to the simpler idea that a fugue consists of a series of harmonizations of a melody, presented in different types of counterpoint.

Nevertheless, for a young composer then as now, the WTC1 is more a counsel of perfection than a practical book of instruction. Some of the prelude-types are imitable only up to a point. Perhaps it would not be beyond an imaginative student to create some kind of prelude of his own from the note-patterns illustrated in Example 17 or those in preludes in some other keys (C sharp major, D minor, F sharp major, G major, B flat major). But the advanced harmonies were surely beyond any pupil, including Friedemann, even when the style is not new but imitates other people's music, such as the preludes in E flat major (Pachelbel?) and B minor (Corelli?). Some preludes appearing in Friedemann's *Clavierbüchlein* end inconclusively, as if the player is being expected to improvise or explore further; but there is no such suggestion in WTC1 itself. As for the fugues: the very first is hardly a model to follow, with its exceptional array of stretti, barely repeatable and quite misleading for a young student. Very few of the twenty-three other fugues would be of much help to more advanced student-composers either, except as exercises in analysis.

In general, some kind of inspiration for compiling WTC1 can be supposed in Bach's alertness to music by Treiber, Fischer, Kuhnau and Suppig, to published writings on keys and temperament by Mattheson and

Werckmeister and to his needs when working with students, particularly Friedemann. But perhaps it was that familiar passion for collecting and completing, conquering and controlling, that was the real ruling motive. As for performances of the WTC today: the musical jolt when movements are played in written order (e.g. F sharp minor fugue followed by G major prelude) might be pleasant for later sensibilities but it is severe enough for one to doubt that it was intended. In the first few bars of certain fugues there are other challenges for the listener: what is the key of No. 12, what is the metre of No. 14? Surely such ambiguities are intended. Why do some fugues develop inversion (G major, A minor) but not others? Is there any significance in the fact that most subjects begin off the beat? Do those commentators of today, who find symmetries or complex plans buried in the number of bars, voices, notes or thematic returns, achieve anything that corresponds to what is verifiable and audible in the music or to one's vivid experience of playing it?

A note on French interests

As a means of formally organizing a movement of some weight, an *ouverture* like a chaconne is useful in all kinds of music. And if the finer points and *manière* of French style are so specific to genre that they impinge less on cantatas and vocal music than such forms, the field of instrumental music remains open. Whatever French string music had reached Bach during the Weimar years, it looks as if there was an interest in French keyboard music in the Bach household around the time of the move to Leipzig. And perhaps not only keyboard music. The gamba solos in both Leipzig Passions are not difficult to see as influenced to some degree, directly or indirectly, by French repertories such as Marin Marais's books of *Pièces de viole*, some of them having been published recently.

E. L. Gerber, whose father had been a student in the mid-1720s, said that Bach liked Couperin's works, recommended them and took note of Couperin's 'styles of playing' (*Spielmanieren*: Dok. III, p. 471). Whether by this Gerber was referring to anything more than the standard French ornaments and notation is nowhere explained, but other things were surely studied in lessons, such as touch, fingering, phraseology and lilting rhythms. The falling-off of musical quality and originality in Couperin's later books makes it likely that if any of them influenced what Bach passed on to students, it was the first two of 1713 and 1717, plus the playing tutor *L'Art de toucher* of 1716. For someone who had meticulously (though not

slavishly) copied de Grigny's *Livre d'orgue*, the heavily detailed notation and many rubrics in Couperin's books were not a problem, nor, if Bach had written the 'Brandenburg Concertos' dedication himself, was their language.

How big an influence Couperin became is not obvious, however, and even Gerber Jnr may have been merely recycling a report made years earlier by J. A. Hiller, by then *Thomascantor*, that Bach held Couperin in 'great respect' (*viel Hochachtung*: Dok. III, p. 199). And Hiller too may have depended on a similar remark by F. W. Marpurg, published in the year of Bach's death (Dok. III, p. 4) and likely to be reliable. There is some tantalizing evidence of Bach's continuing interest in Couperin during the 1730s: at some point Couperin's *Second Livre* apparently become known in the Bach household, for Emanuel uses one of its whimsical titles for a piece of his own, and in about 1730 made a copy of its unique Allemande for two harpsichords (see p. 337).

Any such interest Bach had in French styles had certainly been selective and was perhaps only commented on by these later writers because it had become rare. Although for most of his life Bach had regularly produced *ouvertures* and suites, he did not pursue the types of organ music he knew from more than one Parisian *livre d'orgue* any more than he followed the old way of writing allemandes and courantes by using similar harmonies for both, as if they were variations. Nor in his experiments with sustained form does he seem to have cared as much for French composers' rondos (*rondeaux*, qv), or for the newer kind of light and even picturesque movement one finds increasingly in Couperin's books – movements not so different from the Romantic composers' *Charakterstück*. Perhaps French *rondeaux* were all too simple and insufficiently adventurous harmonically, like the one attributed to Bach in the Ouverture in F major, BWV 820. His *rondeaux* that do exist are either spacious gavottes (B minor Flute Overture, E major Violin Partia) or succinct, breathless dances (C minor Harpsichord Partita) and none has the tender melody of so many of Couperin's *rondeaux*.

Also elusive is any sign that Bach knew or cared for other French characteristics: the density of ornaments, the low tessitura, the personal and programmatic titles and even the crossing of hands on two manuals (Couperin's *Second* and *Troisième Livres*, 1717, 1722), at least before the 'Goldberg Variations'. Nevertheless, in the 'English Suites' there are many moments close to Couperin, as in some other music copied, as these were, by Bach's pupil Gerber Snr in the 1720s, who seems to have become familiar also with Rameau's ornaments soon after their publication in the

Pièces de clavecin of 1724. When pupils added ornaments to the inventions, they might have done so from what they had independently learnt from various French sources. The result of all this is that as a topic, 'Bach and Couperin' or 'Bach and Rameau' remains much more open and vague than, say, 'Bach and Vivaldi'. Couperin's *Second Livre* offers a case study of the uncertainties. On one hand, a version of its piece 'Les Bergeries' found in the second Anna Magdalena Bach book looks like a simpler version of Couperin's; but since the piece was probably composed by Louis-Claude Daquin, and copied in Anna Magdalena's book from an unknown manuscript version, one can conclude nothing from its appearance there.

The family

Of thirteen children, namely six sons and seven daughters, which [Anna Magdalena] bore him, six are living. (*Obituary*)

In spring 1723, just as Sebastian was involved in the Leipzig job-search, Anna Magdalena (still being paid by Cöthen until April) had the first of her thirteen children. Of the first ten seven died young but, remarkably, none of the last three. The survivors were:

Gottfried Heinrich, 27 February 1724: disabled in some way. Emanuel says 'a great genius [*Genie*] but did not develop' (Dok. I, p. 267). For his 'imbecile understanding' (*blöder Verstand*), see below, p. 547;
Elisabeth Juliana Friderica, 5 April 1726: married her father's pupil J. C. Altnickol, 20 January 1749;
Johann Christoph Friedrich, 21 June 1732: the 'Bückeburger Bach';
Johann Christian, 7 September 1735: the 'London Bach';
Johanna Carolina, 30 October 1737;
Regina Susanna, 22 February 1742.

In recording details of the children, the Obituary was likely to be drawing not on Emanuel's memory but on a family document, with entries made formally by the paterfamilias. By mid-1726 Bach had six living children, and by 1733, when Friedemann left Leipzig, there was a seventh. Of his twenty children, there were never more than nine living, with early deaths familiar in the larger Bach clan: four of his sister Marie Salome's seven children died early, while of the eleven children of Johann Günther, from a branch of the family in Erfurt, ten died under five. When Anna Magdalena

gave birth in October 1728 to Regina Johanna, who died aged four, it was barely three weeks since her son Christian Gottlieb had died.

The new musical entries made from time to time in the two Anna Magdalena Bach books would have benefited her own children as these were taught by various adults: their father, their siblings, their father's pupils, his copyists such as nephew Johann Heinrich and Anna Magdalena herself. Several of the youngest Bachs contributed to the second of the albums, and they offer more than a glimpse of family activity. The polonaise Emanuel entered in about 1732 was one of several keyboard pieces he composed while a student in the university, presumably living at home. Another piece was added at that period by another student who taught the younger children in the mid-1730s, B. D. Ludewig, again suggesting the albums were used for instruction. Why Friedemann has no entries in the 1725 book might be explained by the now missing pages, although in that case one wonders why they were torn out. Altogether, these are tantalizing documents, and conjecture about the various personal relationships in the family is hard to resist.

Some indication that Sebastian was a solicitous father comes from a few documents concerning the children's education, career or abilities, i.e. areas likely to be the purview of a father and, more importantly, those leaving behind written testimony. Thus he lists the handicapped Gottfried in the genealogical table and describes him as 'likewise inclined to music, especially keyboard' (Dok. I, p. 261). In a testimonial he praises a student for having taught his younger children (Dok. I, p. 141). He is clearly anxious about his son Bernhard's personal difficulties (Dok. I, p. 107). When two feastday cantatas by Ludwig Bach were performed in June–July 1726 either side of the day Anna Magdalena's first child died, can one suppose Sebastian had withdrawn for a few days? Perhaps it was for Friedemann in his first job from 1733 that he copied out the Grand Prelude and Fugue in G major for organ, BWV 541, and if so, as an actual audition piece. (It could be that Bach's own recital in September 1725 in the same church prepared the way for Friedemann to succeed the current organist later.) He bequeaths keyboard instruments to his youngest son (Dok. II, p. 504), and visits Berlin/Potsdam at least in part for the sake of Emanuel, whose son (the first grandson, whom Sebastian never meets) was named after him in 1748. So was his next grandson, by his daughter Elisabeth, in 1749, and the family's reasons for keeping the name-pair 'Johann Sebastian' are easy to imagine.

Bach also continued to work professionally with Anna Magdalena, whose singing, however occasional, probably continued far longer than is

suggested by the scant documentation, at Cöthen in 1724, 1725 and 1729, and in Leipzig in January 1729 (Cantata No. 210a, for the Duke of Weissenfels). A later remark by Gerber Jnr, that she was never able to make use of her outstanding talent in public (Dok. III, p. 470), is credible, though only up to a point. Gerber would know she had no part in the church music, so perhaps he was implying that she did not in the public concerts of the Collegium either. But surely she did from time to time? In any case, her part in teaching music to the children, likewise not in public and not reported, must have been crucial, whether known to Gerber or not; and the third of her married years she was pregnant would not have made teaching in the family impossible. Emanuel refers to his own mother as daughter of the 'solid composer', Johann Michael Bach (*gründlichen Komponisten*: Dok. III, p. 255), but goes on to say that he, Emanuel, had no other teacher in composition and keyboard than his father. His later reference to students of his father 'other than his sons' (*außer seinen Söhnen*: Dok. III, p. 289) implies they were all taught by him in Leipzig, but some were pupils in Weimar or Cöthen.

5 | Leipzig, the first years: a cantor's life, his duties, cantatas, Passions, publications

The call to Leipzig

Immediately after reporting Reinken's praise of Bach's playing in Hamburg, the Obituary continues:

> The city of Leipzig elected our Bach in 1723 as its Music Director and Cantor at the St Thomas School. He followed this call, though leaving his gracious prince [in Cöthen] unwillingly. Providence seemed to want him away from Cöthen before the prince's death, which occurred soon after and against all expectation, so that Bach was at least no longer present at this sorrowful event. Nevertheless, he had the sad pleasure of preparing in Leipzig the Commital music [*Leichen-music*] for his deeply beloved prince, and to direct its performance in Cöthen in person. (*Obituary*)

Astonishingly, these are the Obituary's only sentences to refer by name to the city and cantorate of Leipzig, the city in which Bach produced so much of his best-known music and the job he held longest. Or perhaps it is less astonishing given the difficulties to come, some of them witnessed by Emanuel as a teenager. The contrast with the Obituary's earlier remarks on the Cöthen appointment, where his employer was said to be 'a connoisseur and lover of music' and where Bach performed 'to his greatest satisfaction', could hardly be missed by the reader: the Obituary claims neither for the Leipzig situation but does make a point of describing his success elsewhere.

The wording *Music Director and Cantor* makes clear that this was not a mere organist's position, another point evidently important to Emanuel. He had specified that the Weimar job was as 'Chamber- and Court-Organist', spoken of the Halle offer as 'Music Director and Organist', specified 'Capellmeister' at Cöthen, but said nothing about the organist's job or job-title in Hamburg. For the careful reader, the Obituary's reference later to 'Court composer' for the King of Saxony confirms a clear line of promotion.

Though saying that his father directed the musical obsequies in Cöthen 'in person' – a further proof of his closeness to the prince – Emanuel omits

to mention several significant things about the Leipzig appointment. Why the former cantor Kuhnau is not mentioned is a good question, especially since he was already named in the earlier and shorter biography of Bach in Walther's *Lexicon*. He nowhere appears in the Obituary, quite possibly because he was being said at that time to have performed his teaching duties better than Bach (see Dok. III, p. 104). For some years, *Thomascantor* Kuhnau had been sole director of music in the university for its four main seasonal services per year (the *Old Divine Service*), but when these services increased to become weekly from 1710 (the *New Divine Service*), a second director had to be appointed. Just a few weeks before Bach's election, J. G. Görner, a Leipzig organist and former university student, had been appointed and not merely in an interim capacity, raising the suspicion that there had been some kind of pre-empting by the university. It would do as it liked irrespective of any new *Thomascantor*.

Nevertheless, the new cantor was to become director of the university's *Old Divine Service*, a paid duty Bach kept up throughout his Leipzig years. It is assumed that on the four annual occasions required, he did this by repeating that day's cantata for St Thomas's in the university church, with what change of personnel, especially of choristers, is unclear. Difficulties over responsibility and pay between the new cantor and the university were inevitable and arose a few months into the job, leading by 1725 to appeals from both sides to the Elector of Saxony (see p. 549). One might wonder what part in this contention was played by Bach's not being a university graduate, and how persistent he had to be to maintain any professional connection with the University of Leipzig.

Perhaps it was in memory of this less than happy situation that the Obituary mentions neither Kuhnau nor the university. But nor does it name any of the Leipzig churches: it is the 'city' who elected him, and since *cantor* and *music director* imply respectively school and municipal duties, evidently nothing further need be said about either of the main churches known so well later for the cantata performances, the Thomaskirche and the Nikolaikirche. Nor does the Obituary here or anywhere take the opportunity to suggest a happy, fruitful relationship between cantor, school, churches and people. Perhaps such details were unnecessary when readers were familiar with a cantor's duties and knew the positives and negatives in such relationships. But there does seem a pregnant silence about Leipzig not entirely explained by the fact that the Obituary was published there. 'Our town' is expressly mentioned in the Obituary's valedictory poem, a work not by Emanuel or Agricola but by a third author who was not a local man.

Nevertheless, for the two main Obituary authors (born in 1714 and 1720) the Leipzig years were so dominant that so much of what they say is really speaking only for this period – for example, what they say about Bach as performer might say little about his years in Weimar. It can easily be forgotten that much of what Emanuel recounts about the earlier years can only be hearsay. The only Weimar works the Obituary mentions by name are the *Orgelbüchlein* and what it calls 'Six Toccatas for Harpsichord', both probably familiar to Emanuel himself as he grew up learning keyboard and perhaps by then still in his possession. Reticence about life and work in Leipzig means virtual silence about what now seems such a huge part of the composer's life: the colossal output of cantatas and other vocal works. Certain organ recitals and musical celebrations might reach the newspapers from time to time or inspire praise from listeners, but the weekly cantatas go by without comment. How were they taken by the people? Were they for Bach more than a job of work, to be done with the best of his abilities? Was it for pious reasons that the composer put more effort into composing them than required? Was their standard of performance adequate?

Naturally Emanuel says nothing about his father being third choice for the Leipzig cantorate. But if he did know about this, conceivably the reluctance claimed in the Obituary's second sentence is an indirect reference to it: the Cöthen prince's appreciation of him would (we are to suppose) have left him reluctant to take up a municipal cantorate and become subservient to town, church and school authorities. In general, judging by the other obituaries published with Bach's in 1754, there seems to have been something inappropriate or redundant in discussing a musician's church activities, being perhaps too commonplace to be worth recording, but also perhaps because it was the 'paid job' and not so important to him personally. Rarely too is there much evidence about the practical details of the church services themselves, and then only obliquely. It remains unclear just how much organ-playing in the church Bach himself did, whether there was organ music before or after the services (or neither), what kind of cantata-rehearsal was usual, how often the second part of a cantata was sung during communion, etc.

In a letter written to Georg Erdmann in 1730, Bach did claim that he had originally meant to stay at Cöthen the rest of his life (Dok. I, p. 67), and the Obituary's warm references to his position there doubtless relay what Emanuel had heard said in the family. But since Cöthen was not the greatest centre for such a versatile musician, and since he could have dropped his Leipzig application at any point, just as he had at Halle and

apparently at Hamburg, these claims are hard to accept without further question, in particular when it was that disillusionment with Leipzig set in. Also hard to accept is another claim in the Erdmann letter of 1730: that for Bach to go from being a capellmeister to being a cantor was 'not at all proper' (*gar nicht anständig*). Considering the city's importance, that is unlikely to be wholly true, although it could have been something he came to feel over time. How many English cathedral directors of music have found their initial enthusiasm waning and begin to cast their eyes at a different musical career? What might it imply if they did not?

And yet, however fine Cöthen's musical potential had once been, with its exceptional players and an enthusiastic prince, the position of a court-dependant without contract and in a modest establishment would not compare favourably with a public appointment to one of the best-known cantorates in Protestant Germany. The city itself was more than ten times bigger than Cöthen, with at least three claims to wide fame: unrivalled mercantile fairs attracting many visitors, a choir-school and university both renowned, and an exceptional number of book-publishers. Its church life was as active as anywhere in Protestant Europe, with some twenty-two sermons a week across the city's substantial churches, for a city population of only thirty thousand or so. Nevertheless, attractive though all this seemed from a distance, it is not surprising that after six or seven years of hard work in church and school Bach would look wistfully at a different kind of musical career elsewhere, as he does in the Erdmann letter of 1730. There were many suitable towns and courts, most of them needed other kinds of music than sacred choral and some might even have been relatively free of clergy.

The Obituary's second sentence implies that being 'called' to a position was not merely a conventional reference to a successful application, as it was, but indicated acceptance of divine will, something one can believe of Bach in view of other pious expressions. The third sentence is more clearly misleading, since the prince did not die until 19 November 1728, and nor was his death 'against all expectation'. Emanuel must have forgotten the music performed in Cöthen in memory of him, on 23 and 24 March 1729, in which his brother and mother took part. Or alternatively, his father's subsequent references to the prince's death had been vague or misleading. Although it is not entirely clear what was performed and when, such funerary music at Cöthen four months after death was no ordinary funeral music and does speak for Bach's feelings of regret and gratitude. Some of the music, it seems, was heard at the committal service when the body was re-interred in a mausoleum prepared for it.

At a memorial service next morning in Cöthen, in the same Reformed Jakobikirche, three or four pieces of music were performed by musicians drawn from the region, under Bach's direction, with three arias probably sung by Anna Magdalena. Since this music seems to have included eight arias and two choruses adapted from the St Matthew Passion, plus two choruses drawn from the mourning music for the queen of Saxony, Christiane Eberhardine (BWV 198), it is clear that the late prince was indeed 'deeply beloved', and mourned with unusual and outstanding music organized 'in person' by his former capellmeister. How far Bach's fondness for Cöthen grew from the retrospection of advancing years will never be known, but very likely Emanuel had heard many grumbles about the Leipzig job. The three fulsome sentences about Cöthen are rather out of proportion and suggest several things: that Bach spoke often of the prince and of their relationship; that he had found nothing comparable in Leipzig; and that someone so highly regarded as himself at a prince's court cannot have been to blame for any vexations in Leipzig. The result is that for those readers far from Leipzig, the city's and its churches' part in his life would appear secondary. A further reference in the Obituary to the 'beloved prince' hints, again in a way hardly to be missed by readers, that the late cantor had been better valued and happier in Cöthen.

In documents, Bach kept the title of Cöthen capellmeistership when he took up the Leipzig cantorate, and it is still there on the title-pages of the first publications he ventured for himself, the harpsichord Partitas Nos. 1–4, 1726–8. One form of No. 1 was also prefaced by a poem on the occasion of the prince's newborn son (Dok. I, p. 223). Though perhaps not Bach's own work, any more than some other poems attributed to composers (such as Handel at a younger age: HHB 4, p. 15), it convincingly conveys a charming mixture of respect and affection that one supposes to have been quite real, not least in referring to the baby's mother, Leopold's second wife, who perhaps was less of a philistine than her predecessor.

Bach's not calling himself 'cantor' on official documents suggests that when he could he kept some distance from the church and school in Leipzig, liable therefore to be at loggerheads with those whose outlook was limited to them. In testimonials written for students in the period after his royal Saxon title was conferred in November 1736, he signs himself 'Court composer' and 'Capellmeister'. It is also likely that some factions in city, church and university were closer than others to the royal court in Dresden, and wished their music director to be more of a town's capellmeister (a leader of its music) than a cantor (an official of church and school). Later, away from Leipzig, in a provincial town like Weissensee

in 1738, he would be known by such terms as 'the famous Chapel Director' or 'the famous composer Mr Bach' (Dok. V, pp. 158f.).

Titles convey Bach's sense of self. In his first entry in the Leipzig church-books, for his son Gottfried Heinrich's baptism on 27 February 1724, he wrote his own title carefully, *Director musices u. Cantor*, and for Elisabeth Juliana Friderica's two years later added his old Cöthen title, *Anh. Cöth. Capellmeister* (Dok. V, pp. 89, 313). *Director* implies something similar to Telemann's prestigious position in Hamburg, a municipal version of capellmeister. Similarly, another applicant for the Leipzig job, Christoph Graupner, described himself as 'director' in his keyboard music of 1722. Bach's title *Cantor* appeared only in documents dealing with church and school, but like his predecessor Kuhnau (who had argued for the title *Director musices*) he did direct the music of all the principal churches. The increasing tendency for organists to use the title *Director* led Mattheson to make an impertinent remark about it (1740, p. xxxiv), though for Telemann in Hamburg it was the correct title.

The Obituary authors, whatever they understood of Bach's life in Leipzig, would not actually criticize the authorities in print. This was especially so in the early 1750s when the widow needed their help and when Emanuel was about to apply again for the cantorate, having failed once before on his father's death.

The appointment procedure

As was appropriate for an important town church with a school, a professional choir and municipal obligations, the many-stranded order of events around J. S. Bach's appointment is fully documented and gives some idea of the procedure for appointing the 'director of music' in a major city.

5 June 1722	Cantor Johann Kuhnau dies, aged sixty-two.
14 July 1722	To succeed him, the twelve-member Council (the *Enge Rat*) discusses J. F. Fasch (soon to be capellmeister in Zerbst), G. B. Schott (organist of the New Church, Leipzig), C. F. Rolle (cantor in Magdeburg), G. Lembke (cantor in Laucha), J. M. Steindorff (cantor in Zwickau) and Telemann (since July 1721, music director in Hamburg).
9 August 1722	Telemann auditions for the job, and is offered it two days later. He may also have presented the annual Leipzig Election cantata that month.
3 September 1722	Telemann seeks dismissal from the Hamburg Council.

September 1722–February 1723	Payments for renovating the cantor's lodging (following points raised by Telemann?).
6 November 1722	Telemann declines, despite Leipzig's offer to compromise on teaching duties (i.e. to reduce them); obtains a salary increase in Hamburg, where the honour his fame brings to the city is recognized (Kremer 1995, p. 143). He also withdraws from the position, apparently offered, of 'Academic music director' in Leipzig, i.e. at the university, which then appointed J. G. Görner, another of its alumni.
21 November 1722	Council considers two new candidates: A. C. Duve (cantor in Brunswick) and G. F. Kauffmann (music director in Merseburg).
29 November 1722	Schott, Duve and Kauffmann audition on Advent Sunday; Fasch, a former pupil in the school, declines, in part because of not wishing to teach there.
21 December 1722	Christoph Graupner (a Leipziger, at that time court capellmeister in Darmstadt) and J. S. Bach apply.
15 January 1723	Graupner unanimously chosen, on condition he make a successful audition of two cantatas the following Sunday (as later was the case for Bach). Perhaps as a precaution, Rolle and Bach were also invited to audition. At this point, the teaching component is not discussed (or not minuted).
17 January 1723	Graupner auditions with two cantatas.
2 February 1723	Schott auditions (in the Nikolaikirche), Rolle and Kauffmann having withdrawn.
7 February 1723	Bach, like Graupner, auditions with two cantatas: Nos. 22 and 23, which are 'much praised', according to a Hamburg newspaper a week later (Dok. II, p. 91).
8 February 1723	Bach (still in Cöthen) receives 20 thaler for travel and subsistence.
? March 1723	Graupner fails to obtain release from Darmstadt. His salary there is increased.
9 April 1723	Council discusses Bach, Schott and (still) Kauffmann; also an unnamed musician 'from Pirna', near Dresden.
13 April 1723	Prince Leopold writes graciously, releasing Bach from Cöthen.
19 April 1723	Bach (only now?) writes a letter of intent to take the job.
22 April 1723	Bach formally elected.
5 May 1723	Bach displays his Cöthen release and signs his written undertaking.
8 May 1723	Bach is presented to the consistory court by Superintendent Deyling, who adds a testimonial by J. Schmid, Doctor of Divinity in the university, approving the candidate after the statutory theological-confessional test.
13 May 1723	The consistory court signals acceptance.

16 May 1723	Whitsuntide: Bach 'entered on his [adjunct] functions' in the university (Dok. I, p. 39) and officially at St Thomas – the former with a cantata?
	From now until his death, receives his share of the twelve quarts of wine distributed to the six church officers, at four main festivals each year (Dok. II, p. 113).
22 May 1723	Newspaper report of the family's move from Cöthen to Leipzig.
30 May 1723	Bach performs first documented cantata, in the Nikolaikirche: No. 75, for the first Sunday after Trinity, two weeks after the beginning of the new school year.
1 June 1723	New cantor formally introduced at the school. (The absence of the superintendent, Salomon Deyling, is publicly noted.)

The document for December 1722 distinguished between those candidates recently named for the audition (see 29 November) and those 'presenting themselves', Graupner and Bach (*sich gemeldet*, Dok. II, p. 88). How Bach got to hear of the vacancy, whether he had recently been in Leipzig and/or was encouraged to apply, what contact if any he had had with Kuhnau since they collaborated on the organ-examination at Halle in 1716, are all unknowns. There is a possibility that he had contributed the Weimar cantata No. 172 for Whit Sunday 1721 in Leipzig, when Kuhnau was unwell, but if he had it is all the more puzzling that he was not among the first group of candidates. The geographical spread of these applicants indicates clearly how important the position was. But whether the rather convoluted series of events is a sign of reluctance to appoint Bach or simply the officiousness of a municipal committee is less clear.

A newspaper report of the audition was carried in two different publications. Publicity was not unusual: Telemann's successful audition in August 1722 was still being reported on in print two years later (see Dok. V, p. 154), apparently with some pride, for he was known throughout the whole of 'Germany', was highly literate, knew Greek and had founded Leipzig's still functioning concert-series, the Collegium musicum. Of course, such reports had the unwelcome effect of reminding readers that Bach was not first choice. In the case of Graupner's candidacy, Darmstadt had more prestige than Bach's Cöthen and gave him a higher ranking. Relations between Bach and at least some other candidates seem to have been good enough for Graupner to support Bach to the Leipzig Council and describe his virtues in three areas: he was 'strong on the organ', 'experienced in church things and *Capell* pieces' (non-liturgical works? instrument ensembles?), and able to 'perform his allotted functions

honestly and appropriately' (Dok. II, p. 98). Whether Graupner knew this from personal contact or only by repute is not explained.

Also unknown is whether Bach had known of this testimonial or had even solicited it, but either would imply that he was not as reluctant to take the job as the Obituary implies. In the 1730s in Darmstadt, Graupner's son was copying various harpsichord works of Bach, presumably at his father's recommendation and by means of some contact kept up between the two men. If Bach, once in position at Leipzig, then made no use of Graupner's hundreds of cantatas, and not much more of Telemann's, the reasons were probably expectation (St Thomas's was too important for borrowed music) and inclination (an urge to create his own repertory) rather than a low opinion of them. But one cannot be sure. The Six Partitas for Harpsichord a few years later certainly had some relationship with Graupner's own published suites (see p. 316).

The Council discussions have a depressingly modern ring to them. Several Council members focused on the teaching attached to the cantorate (five hours per week in the church school, plus musical instruction), some on the musical ability required; one of them wished the cantor's compositions to be 'not theatrical', others wished him to pay for his own teaching substitutes; one thought Bach a clever man, another that the post had been vacant long enough and they should get on and vote. Burgomaster Lange thought that if Bach accepted, they could forget Telemann, 'on account of his conduct' (Dok. II, p. 94): *wegen seiner Conduite* could mean that they knew of Telemann's recent salary increase in Hamburg.

When by April a member speaks of having to take a 'middling' candidate (*mittlere*: Dok. II, p. 92) because Council 'cannot now get the best' candidates, it is not as clear as usually supposed that he thought Bach of mediocre ability. It is more probable that he meant someone not yet in a top-rank professional position, as Telemann and Graupner were. Status was an important factor, for as the third person in the school hierarchy, after rector and conrector, the cantor held a position of more than merely musical importance. The question of a candidate's current standing was not a trifle. After the councillors voted for Bach, Burgomaster Lange remarked on the need for 'a famous man through whom the university students will be inspired' (*studiosi animiret*: Dok. II, p. 95), noted that Bach had to seek release from Cöthen and wanted it to turn out well.

On 19 April 1723 Bach signed to be available to take up the post within four weeks, i.e. in time to prepare for the new school year beginning at Whitsuntide, quite possibly with special cantatas to be presented as a matter of tradition. He also signed to undertake duties in the school, both

regular classes and individual singing lessons (Dok. I, p. 175), and if he needed assistance for Latin classes, to engage someone at his own expense, though with Council's approval. This approval was sought ten months later and given, on condition that any assistant to the cantor conducted himself according to the rules. Bach's own instruction as a child in Latin schools qualified him to teach or supervise this teaching of Latin, though surely, in a school as distinguished as St Thomas's, only up to a certain point.

On accepting the position

The final undertaking of 5 May 1723 was very specific, and the following stipulations (here paraphrased) are a good example of the kind of contract the holder of an important church position in Protestant Germany signed:

- to set the boys of the school a good example, in an honest discreet life and in general conduct (*in einem erbarn eingezogenen Leben und Wandel*);
- to the best of his abilities, bring the music of the two main churches to a good standard (? *in gutes Aufnehmen*);
- to show respect to the Town Council and do its bidding if it requests the presence of the choristers; but not to take them out of town without permission;
- to obey the school authorities;
- to restrict admission to boys who already have a foundation in music or show aptitude for it;
- to teach the boys both in vocal and instrumental music;
- to order the churches' music so that it be not too long and not operatic (*opernhafftig*) but conducive to devotion;
- to provide the New Church (the third church in the Leipzig hierarchy) with good scholars (*Schüler*, i.e. singers for the hymns);
- to treat the boys carefully and in a friendly manner; punish in moderation, or report delinquents;
- to perform faithfully the teaching duties in the school;
- to himself pay for any substitute teacher (i.e. for lessons other than in music), who had to be competent;
- not to leave town without the burgomaster's permission;
- as far as possible, always to accompany the boys in funeral processions;
- to accept no job (*officium*) in the university without the Council's permission.

Since the same document (Dok. I, pp. 177–8) would have been given to Telemann to sign had he accepted the appointment, Bach was not going out of his way to be complaisant or submissive.

Nor in such a city was the undertaking exceptional for a choir-school which, though in principle not unlike those in Dresden or Meissen or Freiberg, seems exceptionally to have required all applicants to have musical ability. The job's prestige was such that what Bach was agreeing to was, in important respects, not unlike the kind of requirements made of musicians at Esterhaza when Haydn joined the orchestra in 1761 (see Harich 1971, p. 134). But unlike Haydn, Bach was now an official schoolmaster teaching or responsible for seven music lessons and four Latin classes per week (Schering 1941, p. 53). Conversely, at his induction on 1 June 1724, the school's obligations to him were also spelt out: the students, both resident and day-boys, were to be obedient and show him respect (Dok. II, p. 108).

The church and school clergy of Leipzig, faced with a *fait accompli* by the burgomasters' Council, were no doubt keen to specify in this document what in less important institutions was left implicit. Indeed, the new appointment was a good opportunity to banish any slackness that had resulted from recent contention among teachers in the school (see Schering 1941, p. 40). The *Thomasschule* was a boarding-school and church-music institution of high prestige, quite different in function and schedule from a regular boys' school such as that of the Nikolaikirche in the same city. The school was, as the rector pointed out, of benefit to the whole town (Schering 1941, p. 51), just as being housed within it was of benefit to the cantor, at least in theory.

Basically, the signed undertaking is only expanding on the two main obligations of church musicians as widely understood (see Edler 1982, p. 82): first, to perform duties obediently and willingly; and secondly, to lead a blameless life. In view of later dissension between cantor and clergy, it is significant that nothing is said in the document about the practical authority for appointing choir-prefects, choosing hymns, or paying for the major musical event of the year, the Passion on Good Friday (nor where it was to be heard). And nor is anything said about what became common items in a contract such as the pension for the appointee's widow, something that Telemann insisted on at Hamburg when making a deal to remain there (Kremer 1995, p. 335). Two other questions are raised by the document: did Bach really ask for and obtain permission for all the trips from Leipzig he was to make during his tenure? And, did funeral processions at which he accompanied at least some of the boys include

those to the scaffold for public executions? Neither is further documented, but 'Yes' is likelier to both than 'No'.

Bach later told his friend Erdmann that he had originally delayed accepting the offer for a quarter of a year (Dok. I, p. 67), but this can be true only if he had taken the success of his trial performance in February as an official sign of intent, which is possible. The normal annual income of 700 thalers he mentioned to Erdmann would not have been a huge incentive in view of the 770 he and Anna Magdalena had jointly received at Cöthen, and it seems that Telemann and Graupner had each had 1,000 thalers or more mentioned in their respective negotiations at Leipzig (Wolff 2000, p. 244). But Bach's entitlement to funeral and wedding fees, a range of perquisites, a capacious family apartment and ready access to fee-paying students were attractions. And though he ranked only about twelfth in the municipality's pay-rates, even the city burgomaster's salary was only twice as large (Szeskus 1991, pp. 17, 10). From the city Bach also received 'money for wood and light', corn, firewood as well as the wine already mentioned, plus some minor legacies *ex officio*. (University professors of the time were also entitled to an amount of tax-free wine.) It seems that like his predecessor, Bach took a third of his statutory fee for parishioners' weddings in the form of wine (Dok. III, p. 342).

Nevertheless, as a non-graduate schoolmaster and musician Bach's social rank in Leipzig was not very high and was unlikely to rise much. Even a graduate cantor would not be guaranteed due respect: Kuhnau had had problems, complaining about challenges to his authority in the town and about musical resources at the Thomaskirche, and doing so as recently as 1720 (see Spitta 2, 1880, pp. 866–8). At Hamburg, if successful candidates expected less and less to 'contribute' towards their appointment, it would only be because organists' professional and personal status was gradually sinking. More highly ranked municipal appointees continued to hand money over.

At Bach's audition, Cantatas Nos. 22 and 23 must have puzzled many of those present, although the texts were similar to those set by Graupner for his audition a month earlier and had probably been dispatched to Bach in Cöthen. In general terms, the cantata structure was not new to the main churches of Leipzig. Constructing them from arias with devotional text, homophonic chorales in four (or five) parts and recitative (with or without biblical texts) had been known since the 1680s under Thomas Schelle as cantor, though not without resistance from a burgomaster at the time, who implied he was not alone (Schering 1941, pp. 187f.). Especially in such a city, such disagreements were part of the

traditional doubts about having 'operatic' music in church, though this was a shifting concept: it might be the vernacular that was objected to by some, or the italianate *secco* (qv) recitative (especially if it had a Gospel text), or lengthy arias (more tolerable in a noisy theatre than in church?) or the nature of orchestral colouring.

Partly because of these traditional doubts, it was not unreasonable to examine a prospective cantor publicly by means of a cantata. Neither of the new works (except for the finale of No. 22?) has the immediate melody or easy approachability of the cantatas being published by Telemann, or the anthems Handel wrote for the Duke of Chandos. Both Nos. 22 and 23 sound as if their composer were trying to impress with complex and refined musical detail, flattering a committee but leaving the congregation, and perhaps the choir itself, rather at a loss. Is the absence of *secco* recitative and true *da capo* aria an anti-operatic gesture appeasing his potential employers? It could be that in general, Cantata No. 22 is keeping somewhat more antique details of style than Cantata No. 23 (and no longer calling for hautbois d'amour), cantatas for which its composer seems to have assumed he could draw on instrumental soloists of the calibre he knew at Cöthen. It could also be that the different *auras* of these cantatas reflected different positions in the audition service: Cantata No. 23 became the 'main music', Cantata No. 22 was sung during Communion (Schulze 2006, p. 153). Some such arrangement had also probably been the case for Graupner's pair of audition cantatas.

Cantata No. 23, prepared in Cöthen, shows signs of being enlarged by a final chorale movement, probably at the last minute and perhaps after Bach witnessed Schott's audition. Making use of the hautbois d'amour could suggest a willingness to follow new trends already practised by other 'local' composers, Kuhnau and Stölzel; it was a speciality of Thuringia and Saxony including Leipzig, where there were at least two woodwind makers (BJ 2014, pp. 47f.). But both cantatas raise other questions some Leipzigers must have had – was their prospective cantor's music too complex, demanding, remote? – questions leaving him in turn resentful and antagonistic. Was a parish-church congregation up to recognizing in Bach's cantatas and Passions the affecting meditation on Scripture they offer? Cantata No. 23 reminds one of the Cöthen cantatas for special occasions, thoughtful rather than immediate, aristocratic rather than popular. A second question follows on from this: if a cantata with recitative, chorus, arias, duets and chorale was too rhetorical or affecting, and too 'operatic' and inappropriate for a parish church, what was considered more appropriate? Only music with simple tunes, predictable harmony, elementary

counterpoint, familiar word-painting and naïve rhetoric? If so, virtually any composer in central Germany would have supplied it with far less trouble to the performers and their listeners.

It was only at the end of May, two weeks after Whitsuntide, that Bach performed his inaugural cantata in office, No. 75, not in the Thomaskirche but in Leipzig's largest town church, the Nikolaikirche. This was 'to good *applausu*', and the published report made a point of calling the piece 'his first *Music*' or cantata since the appointment (Dok. II, p. 104). No. 76 followed the next week, now in the Thomaskirche. In a later petition to the elector, Bach said he took up his function at the University of Leipzig on Whit Sunday 1723, which was early that year (16 May), and for this another cantata may have been used (No. 59). As is clear from other references, in his new position and from time to time over the years to come, for good practical reasons Bach made use of earlier works, for example two Cöthen cantatas for Whitsuntide the following year (Nos. 173, 184) and a further one from the Weimar years (No. 172).

Being in two parts, the inaugural Cantata No. 75 was heard either side of the sermon, as a Hamburg newspaper pointed out. It is likely that the chorale heard three times in the course of it, 'What God does is well done', had special significance for the occasion, a musical allusion to Bach's being 'called' to the position, perhaps, or to the wisdom of the Council's decision. Whether or not the congregation appreciated the fact, its thirteen different movements demonstrated their new cantor's total mastery of the by now standard musical forms: chorus, aria, recitative (both *secco* and accompanied), instrumental sinfonia, chorale and obbligato (qv) solos for wind-instruments (two fine movements for the town trumpeter). How adequately singers and instrumentalists had mastered such demanding music cannot be ascertained from the newspaper report of good *applausu*, however: this was a conventional formula. But surely there had been an intense rehearsal or two in the closing days of May 1723.

New life in Leipzig: personal

On 22 May 1723 the family, presumably including its new infant daughter, moved from Cöthen to Leipzig. In reporting the move, a newspaper noted the time of arrival at noon of four wagons bringing household goods, the arrival of the family at 2 o'clock and their mode of transport (two carriages for the capellmeister), adding that the apartment in the St Thomas School had been renovated (Dok. II, p. 104). Such syndicated newspaper accounts

about a prime musical appointment were not rare, but since the newspaper reporting Bach's first Leipzig performance was the one which described again in unusual detail his much later visit to Frederick the Great, perhaps there was some special newspaper correspondent – Bach himself? – in some sense competing with Hamburg's recently appointed director of music, Telemann.

The newspaper too spoke of Bach's being 'called' to the Leipzig job. If the correspondent was Bach, it is noteworthy that he would send reports to the Hamburg newspaper (and again in 1731 concerning his recital in Dresden), but not a regular autobiography to the Hamburg biographer, Johann Mattheson, despite being asked to do so. His biography in the *Lexicon* compiled by Walther and published in Leipzig in 1732 is also brief, a fraction of the article on Kuhnau. It looks very much as if he kept away from such things, but whether from modesty, immodesty, indifference, shortness of time or (towards Mattheson?) disdain is impossible to know. One can read various things into Bach's apparent silence towards Mattheson: had he already met and taken against him on one or other earlier visit to Hamburg? (Mattheson is known to have had disputes with, among others, the organist J. H. Buttstedt, the theorist L. Mizler, and the poet Gottsched.) When Walther wrote so briefly, was it because he was drafting the *Lexicon* by the time that his relative Bach, who may have contributed some details, was looking to leave Leipzig?

While quoting the number of wagons seems rather otiose unless they were exceptional in some way, a touch of pride is suggested in the remark, supported by other documentation, that the apartment had been renovated (*renovirte*). If its completion had been a condition for accepting the job, that might imply that there been no such offer at the Jakobikirche Hamburg three years earlier. A renovation that cost 100 thaler reflected the cantor's status, presumably, and it also implied that his rent-free housing was a benefit of great value, as indeed it was. (Other building work is recorded in 1726–7 and in 1744–5, as well as major reconstruction in 1731–2, all possibly at the cantor's prompting.) Thanks to traditional hierarchies and the presence of school prefects elsewhere under the same roof, it is unlikely the family was particularly inconvenienced by the choristers' dormitory and classrooms in the same building. The arrangement, as in English cathedral closes at the time, was not unusual.

The church house and its appointments can hardly have been a minor matter for Anna Magdalena, who was to have so many children there between 1723 and 1742, the first, Gottfried, almost exactly nine months after the move. The house had three floors plus cellars and was a successor

to various buildings made at and along the old city wall. At the back, it faced into a section of the garden partly encircling the city in place of the moats and ramparts. In the cantor's apartments there was a music-study or 'composing room' (*Componir Stube*) in which a large cupboard held the choir's scores. The compositions and copies remained the cantor's personal property to pass to his heirs (Glöckner 2011, pp. 15ff.), something that may have been rather unusual and even specially bargained for, if it is so that at Weimar the scores belonged to the duke. Music scores by Bach's predecessor Kuhnau could also have been his personal property, hence (one of several reasons) not being used after 1722.

Whether or not the Bachs had agitated later for the substantial rebuilding of 1731–2, the eventual result was an imposing five-storey block with an attic of three further storeys in typical Saxon manner, the whole comprising cantor's apartment, study, classrooms, choristers' dormitory etc., and the rector's apartments between school and church.[1] The family lived elsewhere in the town from June 1731 to April 1732, returning just two months before Christoph Friedrich was born.

Over the early period in Leipzig, as well as plunging straight into preparing the cantatas, Bach visited nearby Stöntzsch twice to test a small organ, wrote a cantata for the dedication of the new school-building in June, and reworked it for the elector's name-day the following year. Somewhere in the Bach house both before and after renovation, the full scores of the newly composed cantatas were used by copyists (not professional copyists but miscellaneous relatives and students) to extract vocal and instrumental parts in time for the Sunday service or, though this is a guess, for a Saturday rehearsal. All this presumably followed a regular weekly schedule. Help was needed also for the later non-church pieces, works like the 'Phoebus and Pan' Cantata, BWV 201 (1729). A stock of valuable paper and other supplies had to be maintained and stave-lines had to be drawn, sometimes with less than happy results. (Only in the 1740s does paper with printed staves appear, for the Wedding Cantata No. 195.) But precisely what the schedule was, from start of work to its public performance, can now only be conjectured. The Whitsuntide Monday Cantata No. 174 had its parts finished only the day before

[1] The pulling down of this building in 1903 is matched by demolitions dating from the years of East German socialism: the remains, including the complete baroque tower, of the Leipzig Johanniskirche (for a traffic island, 1963), the Dresden Sophienkirche of Wilhelm Friedemann Bach (for a cafeteria, 1962) and the Leipzig University Church, the Paulinerkirche (for student buildings, 1968).

(see NBA I/14, KB, p. 92), and, assuming these were the parts used, one can only guess when or even whether it was rehearsed.

Several of the regular copyists have been identified, some of whom probably lived in the building, even with the family: J. A. Kuhnau (nephew of Bach's predecessor), C. G. Meissner (who also copied various organ works), J. H. Bach (son of brother Christoph in Ohrdruf), J. L. Krebs (pupil, son of Weimar pupil J. T. Krebs) and others from the school, as well as the two oldest Bach sons. Whether they were paid directly or indirectly is not documented. Pupils and sons maintained copying duties throughout the Leipzig period, new ones taking over as others moved on, up to the second-youngest son Johann Christoph Friedrich (aged sixteen when working on Cantata No. 195 in the late 1740s) and even beyond. At least one copyist, C. F. Barth, was used by both Bach and his two successors. Friedemann sometimes scribbled on copies being made by the others and Emanuel was modestly active from the age of fifteen. There are also signs that Emanuel composed more than one cantata before leaving home in 1734 (BJ 2010, pp. 111ff.), leaving open the question of whether they were exercises or were meant for performance in the Thomaskirche. Or even somewhere else? If Friedemann and other students did not also compose cantatas under instruction and prepare performances, one might wonder exactly why.

Anna Magdalena was active as occasional copyist longer than most, sometimes copying just a vocal or instrumental cantata-part, or a section of it, and she seems to have done more in some years than others, as might be expected. Sometimes she worked with Sebastian (WTC2) or family members (the two Anna Magdalena Bach books). It is not difficult to imagine circumstances in which she assisted, why some copies remain incomplete and why she was particularly concerned with chamber music, some of it probably for sale. If, as is the case, her copies often included only the notes of the music while Sebastian wrote in the headings and dynamics, was he at least 'supervising' her? This looks like normal practice whoever was copyist, for Bach himself often wrote in the title, clef, signatures and sometimes opening bars.

There is no record of whether the family, or some of it, accompanied the cantor each time to the long early Sunday service in St Thomas's or stayed for all of it, nor whether for Anna Magdalena a pew had to be reserved and paid for, as had been the case at the Lutherans' church in Cöthen (Dok. II, p. 79). For the regular services, it is possible that Bach rented out seats in or near the west gallery, just as he somehow distributed and sold textbooks for the cantatas (on this, see below). As would be expected, the twelve children

born in Leipzig were baptized in St Thomas's, in a sacramental service of a kind held on most mid-afternoons, later on Sundays after the catechism examination (Stiller 1970, p. 60).

New life in Leipzig: background to cantatas, motets, etc.

In 1729, in connection with the St Thomas School's obligation to provide singers, the school's 'director' (*Thomasschulvorsteher*: Dok. II, p. 193) confirmed that Bach was responsible for arranging, from among forty-four boys, the singers required for five churches: Thomaskirche, Nikolaikirche, Neue Kirche, Petrikirche and an unnamed church, probably the Johanniskirche outside the city walls and next to the main cemetery. Music for the third and fourth was comparatively modest, such as choral motets and hymns; the fifth called on the choristers only at the three main festivals of Easter, Whitsuntide and Christmas, for a service starting at 6.00 a.m. The sixth church, the university's Paulskirche, had its four services a year that required the cantor's attention. Even if the music for churches three, four and five was led by a prefect, it and he had to be chosen and made ready, whatever priority the cantor was giving the two main churches and their musical preparations. On the main festivals, music of various kinds had to be prepared, for six, even seven, services (BJ 2013, pp. 164, 176).

For the cantatas in the two main churches, the copying of parts belonged only to the late stage of production, presumably for scheduled performances. But even before the actual composing began, the seasonal texts had to be chosen and approved. These, as becomes especially clear in the six cantatas of the Christmas Oratorio, are often based on the Gospel for the day. What the formalities for approval were are unclear, and there are hints that Bach exercised choice over the cantata-texts, hence perhaps a reason why he never set a whole year's cycle of texts by a single author, as did other relevant composers such as Telemann, Krieger, Fasch, Graupner and Stölzel. Either Bach or his clergy seems to have wanted texts to be individually or carefully selected, not drawn from an easy source, and it is striking that he had direct, personal contact with at least four authors: Franck in Weimar, Menantes in Cöthen, Picander and von Ziegel in Leipzig. Why there are so many texts of unknown authorship is one of the big questions about the cantatas, but it could well be that Leipzig, its theologians and its two main churches gave closer attention to texts than other churches and chapels in Lutheran Germany did, and expected a more individual approach.

Only occasionally might one suppose that Bach knowingly used cantata-texts already set by other composers, but a composer might well seize upon some convenient publication of them, as happened in 1726 when the initial impetus in cantata-writing appears to have subsided somewhat. In any case, less than half of the texts set in the course of the cantata production have been identified, leaving open a big question of how many Bach wrote or arranged himself. And to what extent the differences between cantata-texts as printed in known books and as set in known cantatas are the result of changes made or requested by him, and if they were (and in each case), why? That question has led to a range of speculation.

Truly significant doctrinal differences between Bach and his selected authors are unlikely, however: they shared an approach to biblical interpretation, were all brought up on such books as J. Olearius's *Biblische Erklärung* (five volumes, Leipzig, 1679–81) and were all aware of what poetry owed to the Scriptures. Presumably they also shared (composers even more than poets, perhaps) an encyclopedic knowledge of chorales and their texts, and were able at a moment's notice to find an appropriate allusion. But since for their knowledge of the Bible they also shared a lifelong indebtedness to Luther's translation of it, one must assume that when a text set by Bach differs (if only in a word or two) from the poet's printed version and seems closer to Luther's original, he is deliberately returning to his chief authority. So in an aria in Cantata No. 77, his phrase *dein Gebot* ('your commandment') instead of *dieses Glück* ('this happiness') in the text of 1720 from J. O. Knauer's *Gott-geheiligtes Singen*, corresponds to Luther's emphasis on the Law and the need to observe its commandments joyfully. Such little details are not rare.

And then, since it is more straightforward for a composer than for a poet to emphasize something in a text by repeating and re-repeating a word or phrase, virtually every aria of Bach will give some idea of how he is interpreting or responding to the words, in either German or Latin texts. How a phrase is repeated, how often and which of its words might be made to stand out in the interests of musical continuity: these are opportunities for a composer to give his own personal emphases to what he is setting. So is another and very important way a composer has for contributing to the text's message: by introducing at the same time a chorale-melody whose absent words refer to those actually being heard. Such allusion to the guiding angel in Cantata No. 19 (aria 'Bleibt, ihr Engel', 1726) is one of many examples, most of which raise the tantalizing question of how many congregation-members did understand the connection. Perhaps it remained a private, even esoteric act of the composer's. One would like

to know also whether any emphasis Bach was making in a text coincided with emphases in the sermon of the day, and thus whether composer and preacher ever actually collaborated beforehand. There is room for more research here.

Adding to the need for efficient planning ahead was that a set of texts for several Sundays had to be approved by the clergy and given to a printer in time for the congregation to have the text, or set of texts, in front of them at the relevant service. Printing the text for a series of cantatas to be performed, perhaps six cantatas at a time, was a custom from before Bach's time – with Kuhnau and before him Johann Schelle – and must have added to the cantor's general workload. The booklets were by no means 100 per cent reliable, sometimes omitting *da capo* indications or short phrases set to music or references to the chorale, possibly because they were prepared before the musical composition was complete. Booklets had several functions, not least contributing to the cantor's income, as they did too for Telemann in Hamburg: having presumably arranged them or had them arranged, the cantor published them, paid for them and had them sold, allocating time to approving (and proofreading?) them each week. In Bach's case, the cantor might also have prepared printed texts for Collegium concerts and extra services such as weddings. For the 1738 Passion performance, 300 copies were printed by Breitkopf (Dok. II, p. 312); for various serenades saluting royalty and others, performed indoors or outdoors during the 1730s, numbers varied from 150 to 700 copies (Wolff 2000, p. 360). But for regular Sunday services, presumably the numbers were on the lower side and they were regarded as ephemera, hence the survival of surprisingly few copies of any of them.

Whatever the occasion, these printed texts were important in helping devout and attentive listeners to recognize any emphases the music was giving to the words. A particular musical effect in the setting of a word would mark it, underline it, make it clearer, pointing up its scriptural significance. Bach's reliance on certain established musical effects when setting standard words, and his almost automatic manner of creating counterpoint, are factors in the regular routine he must have followed for composing the Leipzig cantata-cycles, a routine hinted at in the few extant sketches and drafts. Both the effects and the counterpoint were part of the craft of composition and remained largely in line with convention, though the characteristic and original handling of them is without question. Yet one may think these qualities are even more marked in the roughly contemporary Six Partitas for Harpsichord, his earliest publications, for these were seeking a world wider than a local Lutheran congregation.

Anyone familiar with the running of a major church's liturgical-musical programme can imagine how often difficulties must have arisen at some point in the scheduling. It is possible to find in the series of Leipzig cantatas some not only more difficult to perform than others but spaced out over the weeks as if to allow the boys more weeks to prepare them. This is no more than conjecture, however, and depends on changing ideas of what is difficult or what standard was expected, when in both cases performer and listener know little else. On feastdays not only the cantata but certain Latin Mass movements had to be planned, perhaps copied, presumably rehearsed. Also needing to be planned were the daily teaching of the next Sunday's chorales to all boys in the school and, for each Sunday, the music to be heard during Communion.

Practical matters, such as a schedule for the diverse body of instrumentalists, also needed to be planned. Who prepared this, found the substitutes if necessary, checked the church instruments, managed payment? If, as was generally so at the time, some instrumentalists were expected to be able to play more than one instrument, did they know which beforehand? Until 1733 payments were also made to Bach for maintaining the modest harpsichords in the two large churches, probably (only?) used for rehearsals. Any of these duties he could consign to others, though that too needed planning. Little is certain about his arrangements for the tuning of church and school-house instruments after Friedemann left in 1733, but in any case, at some point Friedemann had also had to be taught in these arts. At least an organ's reed-stops must have been regularly tuned, but these were the responsibility of the successive organists, not the cantor.

There were also students to supervise, some of whom would be active in copying other kinds of music, including that for keyboard. One of them, B. C. Kayser, came from Cöthen and may have followed Bach to Leipzig, first as some kind of secretary, then as a law-student in the university, remaining in contact with the Bach family, and continuing to copy, elegantly and musically, important organ and harpsichord works even after his appointment to the Cöthen court in 1730 (Talle 2003). It is not clear how many students at any one time Bach was teaching privately, whether they had group-lessons, whether any lived in and how much time he gave them, but it would be safe to assume there were fewer such students in 1723 than a year or two later. Some had lessons 'both in public and private', according to one of them in a CV written in the 1740s (*tam publice quam priuatim*: Dok. V, p. 175), *publice* presumably denoting a group-lesson. Some could be useful in copying parts before they became matriculated university students (BJ 2012, 23). Not the least of the cantor's

concerns was the aptitude tests for the school's new applicants, for each intake at the start of the school year at Whitsun. Although his influence in the procedures would have been limited – hence the grumble in a letter of 1730 (p. 496)? – one can readily believe that Bach was not someone to relinquish control of a process that delivered his eventual singers.

The calls on the cantor's time and energy are barely imaginable, considering the other, more hidden duties that also fell to him. The moneys the town council allowed for hiring performers such as the university student G. G. Wagner in 1724, 1725 and 1726 (as a violinist) had to be applied for, managed and accounted for. So did the smallest items such as acquiring the candles (or claiming their cost) for the choir-gallery, supplied by Bach as cantor. A bigger and regular part of the job as municipal *director musices* was to approve the appointment of the municipal musicians or *Stadtpfeifer* (four wind-players, three string-players, one extra) which extant reports suggest was something he took seriously and conscientiously. So he would, since they were to perform often together. Many performances needed to have as many players again to supplement the regulars, and however much university students were paid for this, detailed arrangements still had to be made. The Passions needed other special arrangement, as did the annual election cantata in August, and in some years there were also special outdoor events for the elector's name-day. Add to the ceaseless activity all this entailed with the constant coming and going of visitors, and one sees how apt for the family home was Emanuel's word 'dovecot'.

At first, preparing cantatas must have been the main focus. A complete annual cycle of texts said to be *for the Leipzig church music* had been written once before, to be set by Johann Schelle and, perhaps soon after him, by Kuhnau (BJ 2008, p. 47). So Bach must have chosen not to follow any such single cycle. Furthermore, without doubt he could have used other composers' cantatas more often than he seems to have done during the first ten years or so, since at other points in each service he did use older music. It was said of his predecessor Kuhnau that he too seldom used other composers' music, so perhaps it was expected that in Leipzig, the cantor would regard the cantata as his prime concern. Nevertheless, the question remains how far the task of producing weekly cantatas was self-imposed. 'Largely', is probably the answer, for at least some of the time he could have re-used older music of Kuhnau or newer music of Telemann, as several former pupils including Bach's sons are known to have done in their later jobs. Four out of the ten cycles Emanuel used in Hamburg were by Telemann, who from the 1720s on had been expected to produce in

Hamburg two cantatas for each Sunday outside Advent and Lent, plus an annual Passion. Both he and Graupner produced more cantatas than J. S. Bach, contributing to the vast repertory in Protestant Germany at the time.

During his first August in Leipzig, Bach supplied and apparently directed a cantata, now lost, for the university's celebration of the birthday of Duke Friedrich II of Saxe-Gotha, one report of which event, written in Latin by a recent graduate, speaks of the music 'admired by all' and composed 'by the greatest craftsman, Bach' (*omnes admirantur*, *a summo artifice*, *Bachio*: Dok. V, p. 132). Formulaic flattery or not, the university annalist was noting that Bach's responsibility in the university was limited to four special services per year, while the regular new services were in the hands of the organist Görner (Dok. II, p. 105): this arrangement was bound to lead to trouble and did so from September 1723 on. Meanwhile, however, on 1 June the new cantor was formally introduced to the St Thomas School, which occasioned a mild row concerning the respective bureaucratic authority of town council and church, and which in turn led to further written exchange: not Bach's fault but another warning sign. Notwithstanding, two weeks later Friedemann and Emanuel were admitted to the St Thomas School, aged twelve and nine, for as Bach said in the letter written to his old friend Erdmann in 1730, one attraction of the university town of Leipzig had been that he had sons inclined towards studies (*studiis zu incliniren*: Dok. I, 67).

Since so little detail is known of Bach's previous daily life as Cöthen capellmeister, one cannot be sure how startling he found his heavy duties as Leipzig cantor, but within a month or so of his first cantata, he had delegated school-teaching (at least of non-musical subjects) to an experienced senior boy. Telemann's duties in Hamburg at that period were just as full and his productivity at least as great, with directorship of the opera added to his jobs as cantor and supplier of municipal music. Furthermore, Telemann was much more active in publishing his own music, though one cannot know whether Bach too had been making similar efforts by then for publishing keyboard music: the 'English Suites', the *Orgelbüchlein*, the Inventions and WTC. As things are, it certainly seems that opting to write weekly cantatas – works far more detailed in every respect than Telemann's – meant that for the moment, his musical emphasis was on the sacred.

So duties included selecting and directing the performers for four main churches, two major and two minor; supplying municipal music on occasion; auditioning the choristers (something Bach took care over, judging by the one surviving report of an audition: Dok. I, pp. 131–2); training them;

rehearsing the choir and the eight regular instrumentalists; scheduling prefects for certain music both in the Thomaskirche (directing the motet) and in the two minor churches (leading the hymn-singing); personally teaching the ablest boys; composing and directing music for the bigger funerals and weddings (sometimes one or two each week); overseeing the organs and their players; taking on university students as private pupils; and arranging for some of them to take part in cantata performances as players or singers. To an extent, it was probably assumed that on their voices breaking, the *Thomasschule* boys would gradually move on to the tenor and bass parts.

The singers, and the groups in which they were organized, also had a duty that involved instrumentalists less than the cantatas did: to perform the motets, a common term now but not consistent at the time for those new choral movements sung at occasional services outside the regular Sunday liturgies. They were made for adaptability: the motet 'Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf', BWV 226, had double vocal and instrumental choruses for the funeral of the late school rector in October 1729 but could have been trimmed for any other funeral. Some funerals seem to have drawn on the printed source-book for such motets, the Latin collection *Florilegium* (on which see also p. 295), and these could have been directed by a senior boy or a student or the organist. There is little uniformity between the motets that have survived any more than there is uniformity in the exceptional set of 'Brandenburg Concertos'. Some cantata movements look very much like motets or extracts from them, unaccompanied or merely doubled by the instruments: the first movement of Cantata No. 38, for instance, or the chorus 'Vom Himmel hoch' in the early E flat version of the Magnificat. Movements in old-fashioned counterpoint, the *stile antico*, are not confined to motets and might appear anywhere.

Uncertain as to date and occasion, and their sources sketchy, are five very different and apparently complete works now known as 'Leipzig motets':

'Singet dem Herrn': two choirs; a psalm of rejoicing;
'Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf': two choirs with instruments; music for an interment;
'Jesu, meine Freude': five-part chorus; funeral;
'Komm, Jesu, komm': two choirs; funeral;
'O Jesu Christ, meins Lebens Licht': four-part choir with wind instruments; funeral.

While 'Singet dem Herrn', BWV 225, for example, can be confidently dated 1726/7, at least in one particular form, what is unknown is whether it was

for New Year's Day, Reformation Day, a royal personage, a funeral or more than one of these. The various uncertainties belie the undoubted musical significance of the motets and the convincing impression they generally give of being conceived as pure vocal music. In often producing a distinct sound, especially when the two choirs sing antiphonally, they could be seen as another genre to which the composer gave a character of its own.

A further duty was to direct music in the university church at Christmas, Easter, Whitsuntide and Reformation Day, i.e. at four times of the year when there was already much happening. Although as noted he did not keep overall musical direction in the university, Bach's annual fee for the 'Old Services' and the 'quarterly sermons' (*Quartalsorationen*) meant, it has been suggested, presenting about one hundred ensemble pieces in the course of his twenty-seven years in Leipzig (BJ 2008, p. 179), few if any of them specially composed. While it remains unclear exactly what his rôle was and how much of a commitment it involved, one can assume it rankled permanently that he did not succeed Kuhnau as official director of university music. Repeat performances, even premieres, of the main churches' cantatas are possible if the university could call on the same performers, but more appropriate and easier to organize would have been older published Latin motets for adult male voices. Either way, whatever the repertory, somebody had to plan and rehearse it.

For funerals and weddings in the main churches, a fund of works was adaptable for those occasions grand enough to need music beyond simple chorales, and such grand wedding cantatas as Nos. 195 and 210 had several performances. One cantata from the 1730s, BWV 118 (called *Motetto* in the autograph score), seems to have been first performed with the accompaniment of outdoor instruments only, then re-used about a decade later with the more usual ensemble of strings and wind. There are uncertainties about the handful of extant motets (were all of them accompanied or not?) which imply that the pieces had a history of being adapted to requirements, not necessarily in Leipzig only. Motets composed in the century from Schütz to Bach, i.e. choral works without solo arias and specifically called *motet*, were almost always 'occasional' pieces, not regular service-music, whether or not they had more than one movement, whether they included parts for instruments, and whether these were optional or obbligato.

Further uncertainty in the case of funeral music is whether all or any of it was sung only in the service or during the procession or at the graveside committal. Unaccompanied voices would particularly suit the latter two. The wedding cantatas, such as they are known, are major works, articulating in their way the idea of marriage as one of the sacraments and not

a merely happy event, music full of detail and complexities of the kind that require adequate rehearsal. Unfortunately there is no record of exactly how many weddings there were over the years or who qualified for the full 'Bridal Mass' with cantata (*Braut-Messe*), as distinct from simple matrimony with chorales, but some thirty-one 'Bridal Masses' have since been counted for each of the two main churches during Bach's tenure (NBA I/33, KB, p. 12). There must have been hundreds of simpler weddings with simpler music, but these still required supervision. (One of the rector's later complaints against Bach was that he was absent for the simple weddings.)

What still survives of funeral and wedding music, i.e. works composed in full or in part, revised or copied specifically for these purposes, represents only fitfully what must have been more than a minor job for the cantor. While such works needed as much effort on the composer's part as any other kind of cantata, on some occasions (and sometimes with little notice) there must have been a throwing together of movements to create *pasticcios* (qv). Or other motets and cantatas were simply re-used. For both funerals and weddings, works were probably adaptable in comparable ways, as is suggested by the three or more versions of the Wedding Cantata No. 195.

A further group of non-regular Sunday 'church-pieces' is the twenty-seven cantatas that Bach would have expected to supply during his tenure for the Council Election celebration in Leipzig each August. Much of this music must have been recycled or derived from other works, and only four musically complete examples are now known. The likely evolution of Cantata BWV Anh. I 4 illustrates a common enough history for such 'civic' works: probably composed for the Election in August 1725, revised in 1730 for the 200th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession and used again for the Election in 1741.

The cantata alternating in the two main churches, one week the Thomaskirche, the next the Nikolaikirche, was not in itself a heavy duty, except when feastdays required performance in both. Cantatas that were premiered in the Thomaskirche Sunday services have sometimes been described as more demanding, less traditional than those in the Nikolaikirche, but a distinction is possible (I think) only after special pleading. Where assistance was customary, as when students participated in cantatas or copied out parts, or when prefects supervised choristers at funerals and weddings, someone still had to be in overall charge. This too was necessary for the processional visits choristers made to prominent burghers' houses at Christmas/New Year, involving street-music of a kind. Even the

welcome income for boys and cantor from their various extra duties had to be managed with efficiency and propriety. If prefects auditioned choristers themselves, they still had to be supervised, and distributing the boys between services in four churches cannot have been problem-free.

How far Bach was obliged to pay for assistants himself, and how often he paid them in kind (private lessons), is not clear from the records. Before him, Kuhnau had already found that some items of income were decreasing, a sure sign that the 'authorities' interest in a well-ordered church-music was dwindling' (Schering 1941, p. 99) before Bach ever came to Leipzig. Probably, the cantor's traditional duty to check and make an annual inventory of the string and wind instruments owned by the two major churches became less pressing for much the same reason, i.e. they were becoming less and less the church's responsibility. It is easy to believe that Bach was a no-nonsense director of the school's and church's music, and administered firmly the school's rules for behaviour (including fines for musical mistakes) published in the various issues of the school regulations, the *Thomana Ordnungen* (qv). He too, presumably, obeyed its rules, so that for one week each month he was responsible as cantor for leading the morning and evening school prayers, and for checking the infirmary, any boys returning from other duties elsewhere, their general behaviour, etc. Surely an onerous and time-consuming responsibility even if delegated!

Whether Bach's industry in the first two years was aimed at creating a new kind of musical composition *per se* or, rather, at giving his churches' congregations a new spiritual experience, is not a simple either/or. A point made earlier about Cantata No. 115 containing music far richer than the words seem to require raises the question (which also needs to be raised later, see p. 613) of *supererogation*: a born musician would take a great deal of trouble and always turn a cantorate into a creative musical office, whether or not aspiring to stir the beliefs of his listeners, to impress other potential employers or, in Bach's case, to surpass his university-educated predecessor. It seems therefore all the stranger that in the Obituary neither Emanuel Bach nor Agricola says anything about this extraordinary cantata output, except as one item in the list of unpublished works (called simply 'church pieces for all Sundays and Feastdays'). Nor are there many clues about their impact on congregations over a period of twenty-seven years and nor even how large they loomed in the Bach family life during the first Leipzig years when Emanuel was a child.

Perhaps the authors took the hundreds of cantatas for granted as part of the duties of a cantorate. Perhaps Emanuel had seen his father compose

them quickly as a job of work, to be copied and rehearsed and then put away for later use. Perhaps he recalled very little from those years and was aware that cantata production had slackened off during the 1730s, needing little to be said about it. Had his father ever conveyed a sense that he regarded this work as paramount, one would (wrongly, perhaps) expect this to have emerged in the Obituary. There are certainly many cantata movements that, for various conjectural reasons, drop below the most inspired levels: one reason must be Bach's falling back on conventions or musical formulae widely associated with particular sentiments in a standard text and even one with individual words. Sometimes he too could use formulae and do little new with them, though this is not always identified in the massive amount of attention given today to the cantatas, an attention usually focused on their expressive and moving qualities. Not to add further to this approach, the following sections aim rather to summarize their part in the biography itself.

The church cantatas, earlier years

Though not normally called 'cantatas' by the composer, the name has stuck for Bach's 'church pieces' since the nineteenth-century editions. A distinction in Breitkopf's earlier catalogue of 1761 between a 'little spiritual cantata' (*geistliche kleine Cantata*, No. 54) and the rest of the 'church music' (*Kirchenmusik*) is clear. In the 1790 catalogue of his father's manuscripts (Dok. III, pp. 493–501), Emanuel lists the regular church pieces only by their opening text. Certainly with the term *cantata* in two respects important distinctions are being blurred.

The few solo works the composer did call 'cantata' (e.g. Nos. 51, 84) deserve, like the solo No. 54, to be distinguished from what were variously called 'church piece' or simply *Stück* ('piece'). Congregations in a major town church came to expect that the most up-to-date music in their services would be transmitting the Scripture complete with familiar chorale-texts over several movements, but the result was not a cantata in the sense familiar to them in chamber or theatre. Secondly, like *sonata*, *cantata* has Italian connotations, implying a particular scoring (solo voice) or aura (secular) or shape (fewer movements) or language (not German) and therefore signifying something. For the Lutheran service and on the music's title-pages, the term was not appropriate, although librettists themselves did use phrases like *geistliche Cantata* ('spiritual cantata'). Other terms might distinguish between works with verbatim texts from

Scripture (psalms and Gospels) and those with new paraphrased texts in verse (as sometimes misleadingly called 'madrigalian' in later times). Although the present book keeps the now conventional word 'cantata', more in step with Lutheran practice would be to speak of church piece.

The main weekly service in the Thomaskirche or Nikolaikirche was a big event. Beginning with bells at 7.00 a.m., it proceeded with a series of musical items interspersing the prayers and readings. This was music mostly in older styles: hymns with a prelude, a motet, other special works on some twenty feastdays, plus regular interpolations of liturgical chant. But it also included one substantial work in more modern styles, i.e. the cantata immediately before the Creed, perhaps with a Part II or second cantata later, after the sermon and/or during Communion. Traditional quasi-plainsong sung by officiating clergy included intonations at certain moments (before the Gloria and Creed, the Collect, Blessings) and, possibly, recitations of the Epistle and Gospel. Important feastdays (*Hohe Feste*) would include full-choir settings of the Kyrie, Gloria and Sanctus in more antique style than the cantata, while fasting periods (*Fastenzeiten*) had simpler music throughout the service, with no cantata. It is certain neither that the usual main service was as long as three hours, as often claimed, nor whether people remained for the whole time; as Roman Catholics might step in for the Elevation, so Lutherans treated the sermon as the focal centre. Complaints of congregational behaviour, as in England at the time, are not rare (e.g. BJ 2011, p. 295).

A rare order of service made out by the composer, perhaps in connection with Advent Sunday 1736 (Dok. I, p. 251), includes six separate references to *praeludiret*, which seems to mean that at those points the organist plays a prelude to what follows, including the congregation's own chorales. Why Bach should write out this order raises questions about the usual practice in the services. If he was away in Dresden at the time, as seems to be the case, was it for the sake of a substitute cantor or a substitute organist? Was one of them unfamiliar with the service? If the organist and not the cantor was responsible for preluding, why did he need an order? Was there something exceptional about Advent Sunday, the first in the church year? Which church, St Nicholas or St Thomas?

At least a dozen cantatas in Bach's first Leipzig cycle had a Part II, or were matched by a second cantata, but how regular a practice this remained is not clear. More than the sources suggest? It is certainly possible that any original intention to provide a complete church year of such 'double cycles' like G. H. Stölzel's at Gotha, 1720–1, became simply impractical with the kind of music Bach was producing. The first cycle of

Leipzig cantatas was mixed and included revised versions of most of Weimar's seasonal cantatas; the second year focused more on chorales and chorale-texts; and the third favoured beginning with an instrumental sinfonia. Not until the second year at Leipzig was there much 'sign of a concrete plan' (BJ 2011, p. 12), strengthening the impression one might have that Bach often formed a plan only gradually (as with most of the compilations of his last fifteen years) or formed one that was not fully realized (as with the *Orgelbüchlein* and the 'Chorale Cantatas' (qv), discussed below).

The inaugural Leipzig cantatas Nos. 75 and (a week later) 76 had their second parts begin after the sermon with an instrumental sinfonia, measured and elegant, something quite appropriate after a long sermon. Such a voiceless sinfonia served as a welcome 'interlude' moment in the service, wordless, inviting contemplation after so much clerical rhetoric. Such large-scale cantatas were particularly appropriate for the cantor's first Whit Sunday and the following Sundays, First and Second Trinity. Yet even when there is no full instrumental movement, only an introduction for instruments before the voices enter, such sudden moments of modern instrumental music in a service were always special, positively striking. Such substantial introductions, especially those for the 'Chorale Cantatas' (see p. 288), gave congregations a moment when the whole character of a long church service suddenly changed.

After all the traditional hymn-singing, organ-playing and regular liturgical texts earlier in the service, listeners suddenly heard melodies from strings and woodwind, sweet or boisterous, comforting or alarming, sometimes anxious, but a new and refined sound. Or they might hear something less 'Lutheran', reminding them of any frenchified or italianate music they were lucky enough to have heard elsewhere. But either way the introductory bars will have transported them into a new frame of mind. One can only imagine the startling effect of the opening bars of Cantata Nos. 1 or 180, calculated to please, or the trumpet in their new cantor's first Leipzig cantatas, Nos. 75 (Part 2) and 76. If, as is likely, strings tuned while the organ was *preluding* before the cantata began and even improvising on its final chorale, expectancy will have only been raised.

However, despite the usual working assumptions today, many prosaic details of these services are unclear, especially concerning the rôle of the organ and who played what at each moment. When the School Regulations, the *Thomana Ordnungen* of 1723, direct the boys not to sit down as the organ plays before the chorale but to keep standing by their desks, ready to sing the hymn, does this mean they are already standing and the

organ goes straight into a prelude for the chorale? Are they standing for prayers, for the cantata, for a motet? When Bach remarked in a letter to the king in 1725 that the organist must play through to the final hymn but the cantor can leave after the cantata (Dok. I, p. 37), at least he is implying the cantor has nothing to do with a concluding organ voluntary. It is easy to assume, as with modern cathedral practice in England, that the organist preluded before the service, prefaced all the hymns, accompanied them and closed the service with a postlude. Yet in fact each of these steps is quite uncertain: whether the preludes were modest intonations or expansive fantasias, interludes between the congregation's verses or even between their lines. If there were no such interludes, it must mean that old Protestant practices had died out at some point.

There can be no doubt about the effort put into the services and their new music by the new cantor. In particular, his first Christmas season meant a massive amount of work, presumably undertaken during the weeks of Advent when there was no ensemble music in the services. From Christmas Day up to 9 January 1724 some seven full services in thirteen days meant nine major works for choir and instruments, including the Magnificat at Christmas vespers and other service music. At the time Emanuel was probably too young to be fully aware of the effort involved in all this, and the Obituary is altogether silent on the daily obligations of a cantor, saying nothing about whether these church pieces were regarded as anything more than a duty. Only when asked about activities twenty years later does Emanuel say anything about the church work, and then only that in composing cantatas his father worked devoutly according to the whole text, i.e. not illustrating individual words (Dok. III, p. 284). Since that is not quite true, however, it must be that Emanuel was contrasting him with composers who were more naïve or old-fashioned and who did graphically picture words in music.

The chief feastdays when the service music in one church was heard in the other at vespers the same day at 1.15 p.m. were Nativity, Easter, Whitsuntide, New Year, Epiphany, Purification, Annunciation, Ascension, Trinity, St John, Visitation, St Michael, and Reformation. Regular congregations in each of the two largest churches could have amounted to some 2,500+ people (about 10 per cent of the city), among whom the elite classes (officials, merchants, professionals) were represented out of proportion to their number, by a factor of four or more. It has been variously estimated that the number of Bach's church performances alone over the period 1723–50 came to between about 1,500 and 2,100. For some in the congregation, the cantata's impact and significance probably exceeded the much

longer sermon's, though how many people came specially for the musical performance, were not distracted by noises in the church, attentively followed the text or could even read it, are just a few of the unknowns.

Judging by the various origins of cantata-texts used over 1723–8, so many of which are strikingly direct in using the first person and the present tense, Bach was constantly searching for sources he personally found suitable. This was yet another demand on his time. Even choosing the final chorale needed some thought: if it suited the day in the church year, it suited the text of the cantata, but in some cases the final chorale serves as a response to what has gone before, rather like a Greek chorus. As also with some of Handel's anthem-texts, there is often uncertainty about who wrote or compiled them, and in particular who provided the new recitative-texts when a cantata came to be rewritten for some other occasion. Whether Handel's texts were as subject to clergy approval as Bach's were, however, is not known.

The first two cantatas to be performed after the new cantor's arrival raise interesting questions about his expectations. Cantata No. 75 is a big two-part work, meaning to impress, with each half closing with a vigorous setting of the chorale. The librettist could have been the composer himself, and the text reads like a sermon on the rich man and poor man, integrating psalm-text, chorale-text and biblical exegesis. In this way, it could be taken as a musician's 'personal statement', and if so, was something like a musical equivalent to the inaugural speech customarily given by a cantor in Hamburg when his appointment was publicly confirmed. In October 1721, Telemann entered on his cantorate in Hamburg with an inaugural public lecture 'on the excellence of music in church' and heard it received 'with big applause' (*mit grossem applausu*: Kremer 1995, p. 136), just as Bach's inaugural Cantata No. 75 was heard in Leipzig (*mit guten applausu*: Dok. II, p. 104). There seems to be some supposed equivalence here.

Certain comparable points could be made about the following week's cantata, No. 76, whose extant score has many corrections, looking as if conceived at first on too large a scale, then written in a great hurry and quickly completed. It too has a prominent part for trumpet, no doubt for Gottfried Reiche, the venerable musician ('town piper') who happened to be an acquaintance of Anna Magdalena's parents and no doubt her trumpeter-brothers. There was another two-part cantata the following week, No. 21, but now making use of an older Weimar work. Cantata No. 24, new for the next Sunday, was shorter and coupled with another one brought from Weimar, No. 185, lighter in style and scoring. (At Weimar, its original opening and closing key of F sharp minor, irrespective of

pitch, must have been very adventurous, deliberately modern.) Such two-part or paired cantatas appear to have dropped out later in that first year, and in their performing time Bach's works become more modest, closer to Kuhnau's.

It is reasonable to suppose that the singers or the instrumentalists or the composer or indeed everyone concerned, including clergy, had found the cantor's initial efforts too taxing. That he had become overtaxed himself is suggested by there being four earlier non-liturgical cantatas being reworked for the Thomaskirche over the last months of the first cycle (Easter and Whitsuntide, 1724). Typically, in the Cöthen Cantata No. 134, Bach seems to have found the recitatives matching the new texts so unsuitable, or so outmoded, that he recomposed them. This was easily done. Nevertheless, whatever the strains of the first few weeks in Leipzig, the mass of new duties barely hindered what he seems to have seen as his prime duty: to compose, in the first instance, a set of appropriate cantatas for the services. There were some sixty per year, the first set straightway on taking up appointment, all of them major works.

By the middle of July 1723, he is writing an opening chorus in Cantata No. 136 that startles with its scoring (horn solo), its form (a striking vocal fugue) and inventiveness (e.g. an aria 'rewriting' the recent B minor Invention *à 3*). By the late summer, he is introducing a chorale-melody into the opening chorus of Cantata No. 77, with yet more startling effects in its harmony. Choruses generally needed adequate rehearsal, especially for the boys, and the arias of the first Leipzig cantata-cycle can give the impression of a driving creative energy not always hitting a tone of natural melody and effortless construction. If this is a fair judgement, perhaps one might suppose that in his first year or two in Leipzig, Bach was still in some sense competing with the original candidates for the job, Telemann, Fasch and Graupner, all Leipzigers with a good name in the city. One can imagine why he might be showing signs of strain from the sheer industry that is necessary in a short space of time when a composer resists conventional solutions. After all, his 'competing' with others could have led him to imitate their much simpler music, and one possible sign of wishing to reduce the workload after the first Leipzig cantatas is the appearance of simpler settings of the final chorale, without idiomatic orchestration.

The very availability in Protestant Germany of so many cantata-texts in the period after 1710 encouraged hundreds of settings that exceed by far the number of anthems produced by Anglican composers of the time. The better German courts would have a composer and poet who collaborated, as Bach had at Weimar with Salomon Franck, but it is unclear how

familiar he was in the first Leipzig year with the practice of capellmeisters and cantors elsewhere, as at Schleiz or Gotha (where G. H. Stölzel produced eight of his double annual cantata-cycles), Darmstadt (some 1,400 cantatas by Christoph Graupner) or Zerbst (a double cycle of cantatas by J. F. Fasch). Fasch's experiences at Zerbst offer a parallel to Bach's at Leipzig, in that he composed cantatas intensively at first and built up a repertory which then allowed him to turn to other things. Fasch even made efforts to exchange his work with other cantata-composers, something Bach is not known to have either tried or rejected – a pity, for either would be instructive.

Further on cantatas: other works, the Magnificat, chorales

The only series of other composers' cantatas known to have been performed in those first Leipzig years were the eighteen works by a distant cousin, Johann Ludwig Bach, chiefly from February to April 1726. These had been written some years previously and were not unlike Sebastian's in their sequence of movements, courtly in style and, like Ludwig's polychoral motets, melodious. They begin with words from the Old Testament, as do those cantatas of Bach that drew on the same textbook of 1704, made for the court at Meiningen: Bach used seven texts from this book, Ludwig eighteen, which suggests that he found a particular poetic cycle useful. In all respects Johann Ludwig's settings are polished enough for one of them to have been formerly regarded as Sebastian's work (BWV 15), though one on a less demanding level. Perhaps the minor rôle played by the choir in some other cantatas of 1726 meant that by then Bach was having to put his trust in solo singers, much as Telemann did, though there must often have been little local difficulties that prevented the performance of a work as intended.

Why exactly cantatas of Johann Ludwig were used during a church year in which yet another outside work was chosen for the Good Friday Passion (the Anonymous St Mark), cannot be answered from known events. Since the St Mark received two new chorales with Leipzig melodies, plus other changes and (it seems) new performing parts, its performance in 1726 suggest it was no mere substitution but had been specially adapted for the Good Friday vespers, made while the cantor was too engaged in his other work. In 1734, the lone use of a Telemann Advent cantata copied by Bach may also explain why outside works were sometimes used: in this instance, his own work on the forthcoming Christmas Oratorio was too pressing?

During Lent in 1726 work had also begun on the St Matthew Passion, a project carefully incorporating some earlier music and, without doubt, fully realized only over time.

The care and thought employed for the cantatas result in works as free of conventional short cuts as possible. Amazingly rarely do they call on common-property formulae of harmony, counterpoint and melody such as one recognizes in Handel's sets of anthems, likewise written to order. When a familiar formula does appear in Bach's cantatas, such as a certain bit of imitation or a certain dance characteristic, it gives the impression of being a deliberate citing: not a mere formula but a weighted allusion, a useful association. Handel, in endlessly drawing on italianate idioms, had the advantage that they were not very familiar to English church-congregations, however conventional they may now seem. Bach, on the other hand, was participating in a more thoughtful and productive musical culture and making his mark by using convention critically, developing the work of predecessors, outdoing them with a general complexity leavened by his immense melodic gifts, and in the end producing a far fuller musical panoply.

The Magnificat in E flat, BWV 243a, for the first Christmas at the Thomaskirche, is, if dated correctly, the most substantial piece written during the first Leipzig cycle before the St John Passion for Good Friday 1724, and a work of enormous charm and originality. There is a distinct aura to its melody, really not quite like anything else, immediately recognizable, of course without recitative or lengthy arias, the whole made as if Bach was aiming once again at a particular sound-world. Yet just as Handel in his early English anthems adopts stylistic details from older London composers (Purcell and others), so the versions of the Magnificat seem to allude subtly to the work of various earlier Leipzigers: Kuhnau (including the text), Melchior Hoffmann (composer of the 'Little Magnificat' Anh. I 21) and Kuhnau's admired predecessor Schelle, as well as two of the other applicants for the cantorate in 1723, Telemann and Graupner. Although the allusions to Schelle's Magnificat are by no means obtrusive either now or for listeners of the time, they are enough to view Bach's as 'in the context of Leipzig conventions for setting this canticle' (Rose 2014, p. xviii), such as the SSATB scoring, choruses mostly at similar points, a few melodic details. That Schelle's setting, still being advertised by Breitkopf in 1769, is closer to Bach's than Kuhnau's is might again hint that Kuhnau was not highly regarded by his successor.

To introduce some chorales between St Luke's verses had been tried in the court chapel of Zeitz: now with the copy of the Magnificat in E flat are

four substantial movements generally assumed to be sung between the verses from St Luke. They are included at the end of the score in the autograph manuscript, three for chorus and all appropriate for Christmas, and correspond to children's cradle songs, an idea dating from Schelle's time. But neither the purpose nor the date of these additional movements is fully certain.

A certain simplicity in the Magnificat's harmony, its delicate instrumental colours, appealing tunes, string of succinct arias, moderately complex counterpoint, five-part chorus: all this suggests an attempt to fall in with tradition but also towards a sound-world rather removed from cantatas. There may well be some Italian allusions, and it is clear that the petiteness of the work – no movement adding up to more than ninety-two bars, none in conventional *da capo* form – was carefully planned so as to create something more approachable than was often the case in the first year's cantatas. All this makes it difficult to believe the Magnificat had to wait ten years or so before there was another performance of it, now in D major and with more woodwind, and according to the autograph score with no interspersed movements. Whether their absence means none was sung, however, cannot be certain, nor whether the D major version was a work intended, with other works, for presentation to the Elector of Saxony in 1733 (see p. 354). Both are a possibility if no more.

Any natural tendency there is for substantial pieces of music to return in their final moments to their opening reaches new heights in the Magnificat: the opening theme returns at the end after a choral 'preface', and its very brevity actually increases the sense of finality.[2] The earlier key of E flat is puzzling, suggesting either that it was a particular experiment, perhaps already for the Feast of the Visitation, 2 July 1723 (BJ 2003, p. 41), or that on that occasion the pitch of the D of the trumpets was higher than it was for violins, thus requiring all other parts to be put up a semitone. Regardless of pitch, the hammering of 'Omnes generationes' in G minor (BWV 243a) is certainly more conventional than the F sharp minor of BWV 243.

Less original is the cantata compiled a few weeks before Christmas for the dedication of the church and organ in Störmthal on 2 November 1723, No. 194, revising arias from a Cöthen work and conveying a more conventional impression than either the Magnificat or the St John Passion, on which work was soon to begin. As generally the case with rewritten earlier works, Cantata No. 194 acquired its own recitatives (narrative links), with

[2] 'Mini-recapitulations' bringing a sense of finality also appeared in slighter works, e.g. the aria of the Harpsichord Partita in D major, BWV 828 (1728).

words appropriate to a new House of God (outlining and dedicating its purpose), and closing with a chorale in each half. There is no reference to music or organs: the church itself was the centre of attention, although a printed notice of the time does refer to the new organ (Dok. V, p. 133). Cantata No. 194's opening instrumental prelude and choral fugue are stylistic conventions of a kind far less in evidence in either the Magnificat or the Passions, which are so original that one is hard pressed to trace the musical pedigree of many a detail in them.

If the Magnificat did originate in summer 1723, then a new melodic sense was already flowering in shorter arias and richer choruses than usual, and these for the special associations of Mary's hymn. Particularly unfortunate is the loss of the music for the birthday of Duke Friedrich of Saxe-Gotha in August of this year, for it might have been much like, or even related to, the Magnificat. A similar, conscious aim to charm visitors at the Leipzig Michaelmas Fair in late September and early October 1723 with the Cantatas Nos. 48 or 95 is possible but hard to demonstrate. A clearer instance of 'the aim to charm visitors' might be found in certain cantatas sung around the time of later fairs, such as Nos. 114 and 96 (1724) or 149 (a few years later). It certainly seems that from autumn 1724 onwards, very appealing pastoral movements were not rare in cantatas and Passions any more than they were or had been in instrumental pieces, of which the slow movement of the Concerto in D minor for Two Violins is a conspicuous example.

The importance of the final chorale (or choral finale) is clear from the start of the Leipzig cantata output, as apparently it had not been in Weimar. For example, in their surviving form, Nos. 182 and 172 (1714) give chorales as the penultimate movement, and when a cantata like No. 152 (1714) has no final chorale in the source (unlike Telemann's setting of the same text) it could be that one was nevertheless chosen each time to follow on from the cantata. It seems that congregations in Telemann's churches in Hamburg sang the chorales, but perhaps the court congregation in Weimar was less enthusiastic about singing. In Leipzig, chorales are so integrated that with them Bach makes a contribution to the Good Friday Passion story, not only through their texts but in placing them (in the St Matthew Passion) so as to divide the narrative into six sections. The printed textbook for this Passion contains neither the Gospel text (only cues for it) nor the chorales, and it is not clear what this implies: that it was prepared before the composer had chosen them, or that the original score contained only cues, or that the congregation itself did not sing them or would know enough to recognize both melody and the verse, etc.

The various sources used for selecting the chorale sung during or at the end of a cantata suggest that there had been careful forethought. No known hymnbook was followed exclusively, nor were the newer books ignored. Although the listener can often sense a musical *raison d'être* for the choice, any Romantic tendencies to associate melodies as expressing definite feelings or meanings are not justified. It can only be a guess that the melody known in English as 'O Sacred Head sore wounded' appears with another text in the Christmas Oratorio in order to foretell or augur the story of the Passion (Spitta 2, 1880 pp. 400f.), since many and diverse hymn-texts were sung to this melody, as many as twenty-four, according to Mattheson (1739, p. 473). Even this number pales beside the popular melody 'Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten' appearing in eight different Bach cantatas and associated with fifty-six different texts in Schemelli's *Gesangbuch* of 1736.

Chorales have such a part to play in planning 'church-pieces' that it is easy to forget how unusual those plans are. Already in the early Cantata No. 4 the seven verses of Luther's Easter hymn 'Christ lay in the bonds of death' were planned symmetrically: chorus, duet, solo, chorus, solo, duet, chorus, with a prelude (sinfonia) and a postlude (chorale). In Leipzig, the text-plan of Part I of the inaugural Cantata No. 75 produces something less neutral than symmetry, more a convincing 'programme of faith':

opening chorus (trust in God);
lyrical recitative (the useless world);
aria (Jesus my all);
short dramatic recitative (heaven and hell);
aria (I suffer willingly);
lyrical recitative (clear conscience);
final chorus (trust in God).

The variety and contrasts in the music are more obvious than any theoretical symmetry or theological significances the work may embody, however. Whatever its plan, No. 75 is producing a strikingly varied programme of music, with seven movements of a kind mostly and significantly not heard previously in the Thomaskirche. In other music too there are other varied programmes and planned symmetries, as in the motet 'Jesu, meine Freude', BWV 227: here there is a kind of aria shape (A1 B A2) in which a central fugue is preceded and followed by sections adding up to the same number of bars. Though surely the result of musical rather than theoretical or theological priorities, symmetries of this kind are frequent enough to give the picture of a composer consciously planning them.

The demanding nature of the inaugural Cantata No. 75 does make one wonder how well it was performed and received and/or whether the performance served as a warning to the new cantor. By the time of the 1726/7 church year, the first nine works have an opening chorus but the rest are without, surely a response to practical problems with the choir.

Subsequent cantata-cycles

It is generally assumed that the cantata was performed from the back gallery of St Thomas or St Nicholas, with any brass instruments playing from a small second gallery above the main one, on either side. Detailed arrangements must have varied from time to time, but never, as far as is known, were the singers directly under the eye of the congregation in the nave or, as in England, in the quire.

Nevertheless, here in the cantata was a means for realizing the Lutheran's duty to 'God and his neighbour': recounting the Gospel was a duty to the first, conveying it to listeners was a duty to the second. Whether the congregation sang inwardly or outwardly with the cantata's final chorale, they certainly knew it and, inwardly or outwardly, participated. An experienced organist-composer could easily introduce the melodies into arias or even recitatives, and ideally, these melodies were recognized immediately by the congregation. Many a cantata's final chorale had probably been sung already in the service as a regular hymn, or was about to be – a point of great interest if only one knew whether or how often it happened. For if it did, it can be imagined to put rather a new aspect on the cantatas as works engaging the congregation.
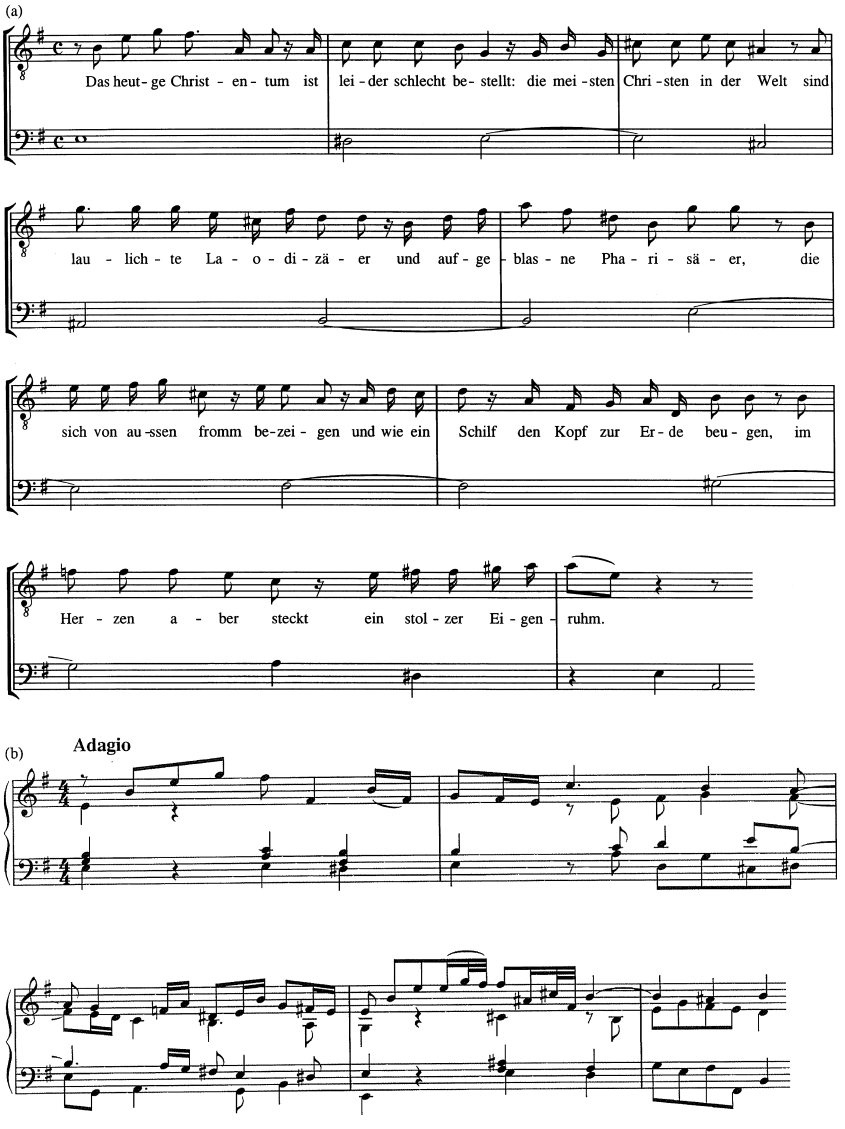
Like the Nunc dimittis in an Anglican evensong, the cantata in Leipzig followed the Gospel and preceded the full Credo. But unlike evensong, the Lutheran service went from Credo to sermon, and thus produced a sequence significant for the Reformation church: a reading of the Word, then a meditation on it through music, then the affirmation of faith, then instruction based upon the Word, and then prayers. To a Lutheran, the beauty of specially expressive music was God's gift to mankind and delightful sound the most direct 'path to the soul'. To Bach too: the fact that his cantata-texts drew on no single textbook and no single author, just as the *Orgelbüchlein* drew on no single hymnbook, implies that he thought for himself in matters of religious texts. Not least in their settings of complete hymn-texts, the cantatas of later years (Nos. 140, 80, 97)

especially stand out in detail and conception from choral works of any other composer of their time.

Simply put, the cantata's movements allowed its text, full of allusions and associations for the believer, to be presented in various musical sounds calculated both to please and so to alert. First, a stirring chorus expresses the Gospel sentiments; then a response to this in a recitative and aria; there follows a drawing of the moral in another recitative and aria, generally very different from the first in scoring and *Affekt*; and finally a verse taken from a related chorale serves as an epigram or epigraph, set clearly as an accompanied SATB hymn. Over 1724–5 a distinct type of cantata with six movements was to be found, sometimes including a pair of chorales (e.g. BWV 144) and therefore less demanding. All, even the final chorale, could be realized in music of widely different kinds, variously scored, from intense solemnity to startling ebullience. Any text could be conveyed *with effect and affect*, however apparently unmusical its message or theme.

For example, in the first few months at Leipzig, *hypocrisy* is chastised in most striking musical lines in Cantatas Nos. 179 and 24, despite their texts being too preachy, one would think, to inspire lyricism. The music of Example 18 is full of the gesture one might associate with an Old Testament prophet, drawing on a rhetorical motif from a much earlier work, making a gesture that is 'purely musical' as well as a scriptural, and producing a clear *effect and affect*. Such melodic resemblances between two different pieces, even as fleeting as this, are actually quite rare, but they do happen, and Example 18 can stand for others that attentive listeners might find from time to time in the cantatas. (Emanuel borrowed the same opening gesture for his *La caprice*, H 113.) A different but striking resemblance is found between the countersubject of two choruses in the trial scene of St John Passion (BWV 245.16b and 16d) and one in two fugues of the Art of Fugue (BWV 1080.8 and 11), again the first of them scriptural, the other 'purely musical'.

Of the first annual Leipzig cantata-cycle over a third are older works revised and rescored – indeed, almost the whole of the known Weimar repertory, hence in part our knowledge of it. For a cantata such as No. 21 four versions can be identified from about 1713 onwards, varying only in detail and perhaps reflecting performances on five different occasions in different places (Halle?, Weimar, Hamburg?, Leipzig, Zerbst), even perhaps six (the chorus ending Part I looks yet earlier in style). Generally, the conversion of the Weimar cantatas for performance in Leipzig meant relatively minor rescorings to allow for a bigger choir, different instruments and pitch, and a bigger church acoustic. The aim time and again was



Example 18 (a) Cantata No. 179.ii: 'Alas, Christendom today is in a bad way: most Christians in the world are lukewarm Laodocians [neither hot nor cold: Revelation 3:16] and inflated Pharisees, who make an outward show of piety and bend their head to the ground like a reed'; (b) Toccata, BWV 916.ii

to produce works in as many varied ways as possible, tirelessly seeking new ways to set the words, not least by using dance-like movements from Cöthen *serenatas* (qv) or italianate moments from earlier cantatas, such as the jig-finale to the Weimar Cantata No. 199 (see Example 10(b)).

At least three of four cantatas for Bach's first Whitsuntide services, in May 1724, drew on earlier music that offered less conventional ways of constructing such church pieces than was always the case later in Leipzig. Thus No. 173, in adopting five movements from a Cöthen serenade, has no opening chorus but begins with recitative, followed by three varied arias (the third, an unusually sectional *duetto*-minuet), another recitative (also a *duetto*) and finally a four-part chorale, again very like a minuet. When a cantata gives the chorus less to do than usually, one supposes some practical reason: insufficient preparation time, a less than reliable ensemble, temporarily reduced numbers, etc. The beginning of the school year on Whit Sunday might be one possible danger point for a cantor.

Of the second annual cycle, the first pieces (Nos. 20, 2, 7, 135, 10, 93, 178) have astonishingly varied ways of handling the chorale-melody in their big opening chorus. Surprisingly, perhaps, they are seldom like the organ's chorale-settings but show whole new ways to handle a hymn melody; and even when any of them are subsequently arranged for organ (see note 3, p. 289), they are not much like organ music or actual organ-chorales. At first, the lines of the hymn are set in separate phrases and scored simply enough to give the choir relatively little trouble; and in the second cycle, generally speaking the treble parts have become less demanding, a clear sign again of the practical composer. It does rather look as if in his first months at Leipzig Bach had overestimated both singers and players, including the brass-players and even the brass instruments themselves.

On the other hand, much of the second cycle (June 1724 to May 1725) has every appearance of having a coordinated musical-liturgical plan matching the cantata-cycles of Telemann and colleagues in other important churches elsewhere, though those of Bach are individually on a grander scale. The forty cantatas to March 1725, all new, keep up a strikingly high level of inspiration from their opening choruses onwards, beginning with what is charming and delightful (No. 1, Annunciation) and continuing with the stirring and disturbing (No. 26, Transience of Life). No wonder that after the Good Friday Passion of 1725, and this only five days after Cantata No. 1 (Annunciation 1725 was also Palm Sunday), two other older works were brought in for the Easter services!

No plan for selecting chorales has been discovered beyond their suitability to the season – they did not come from a prescribed hymnbook and did not always have melodies of a superior type, though their degree of familiarity to the congregation may have been a factor. The plain four-part harmonization closing a cantata has a curious and unrivalled sense of finality about it, and is so direct in its language that no congregation could

miss it. Following usual practice, the older chorales (those from Luther's period) have by now had their apparently irregular metres and rhythms ironed out, in effect simplified in a continuous 3/4 or 4/4. The cycle keeps up a 'purely musical' interest at an intense level by exploring an unpredictable variety of styles: a stately French *ouverture* for Cantata No. 20 (June 1724) but a dashing Italian string sound some weeks later for Cantata No. 26. Such national styles are by no means straightforwardly imitated and differ in this respect from their treatment in instrumental works. Cantatas were themselves: the dotted rhythms and strong beats opening Cantata No. 178 give only a superficial idea of the conventional *ouverture*, with an instrumentation, a counterpoint and an integrated hymn that mix the genres without precedent.

So from Trinity 1724, and perhaps as a further gesture towards aiding the congregation's understanding, these so-called 'Chorale Cantatas' predominate: some forty works, each in effect sophisticated variations of a strophic hymn, weaving around it musically but preserving its words and narrative, and taking the form of a suite-like succession of movements, including recitative. This bold and unusual plan was to open with a substantial setting for full ensemble of verse 1 of a chorale and using its customary hymn-tune in various ways, something Bach had already done with certain opening choruses, from at least September 1723 onwards (e.g. Cantatas Nos. 138 and 95). Then, after a selected number of hymn-verses were adapted as recitatives and arias the work closed with a simple four-part setting of the same chorale. The composer's lifelong engagement with chorales and their melodies was such that quite how he would use them in any given work can hardly be anticipated, whether they were vocal or instrumental, hidden or conspicuous.

Who or what prompted Bach to move towards conceiving the 'Chorale Cantata' is unclear: perhaps it was the idea of a colleague at St Thomas, such as the conrector, or a personal desire to put the organist's traditional chorale-variations on a higher plane, or an awareness of how a clear concept could help to convey the day's teaching. The result is a distinct genre, not imitated or attempted by other composers – not, for instance, by the ex-Leipzig student Homilius when composing cantatas for comparable forces in Dresden. But the earlier *Thomascantor*, Johann Schelle (d. 1701), had based cantatas on familiar hymns, not a direct model for Bach's 'Chorale Cantatas' but perhaps an encouragement for him to celebrate the bicentenary year of the first Lutheran hymnbooks, 1724–5. No doubt sermons of the time also brought this bicentenary and its significance to a congregation's attention. All the same, Bach is also pursuing his usual aim

as a composer who constantly worked towards maximum variety within the bounds of a single genre. For the first four cantatas of June 1724 (Nos. 20, 2, 7, 135), for example, each opening movement is given its own style, respectively an *ouverture*, the *stile antico*, a string concerto and an organ-chorale. But not only that: such details as which voice has the chorale's unadorned melody (here, S, A, T and B respectively) are planned, or look as if they are planned, to be different from piece to piece.

Clearly, a congregation would feel more *au fait* with chorale-texts than with a totally new poetic text. Increased emphasis on chorales, specifically the big settings for chorus and instruments composed around them, may have been responsible for the opening chorus of the St John Passion being replaced in 1725 by a chorale-setting. For in the Lent–Easter period 1725 there were at least four other such ensemble pieces: the big chorale movements opening Cantatas Nos. 1, 125, 126 (two days later!) and 127. It is remarkable that as far as is known, Bach rarely if ever re-used material from the 'Chorale Cantata series',[3] although he did return to a similar idea for a dozen or so later works, half of them with unadorned hymn-texts. In the sheer amount of music it led to and the part it ideally played in the church's spiritual programme, one can easily agree with those who regard the series of 'Chorale Cantatas' as Bach's most ambitious single project ever. Vocal-instrumental forces permitting, they were surely brought out in later years, perhaps individually and from time to time, and not for ever filed away unused.
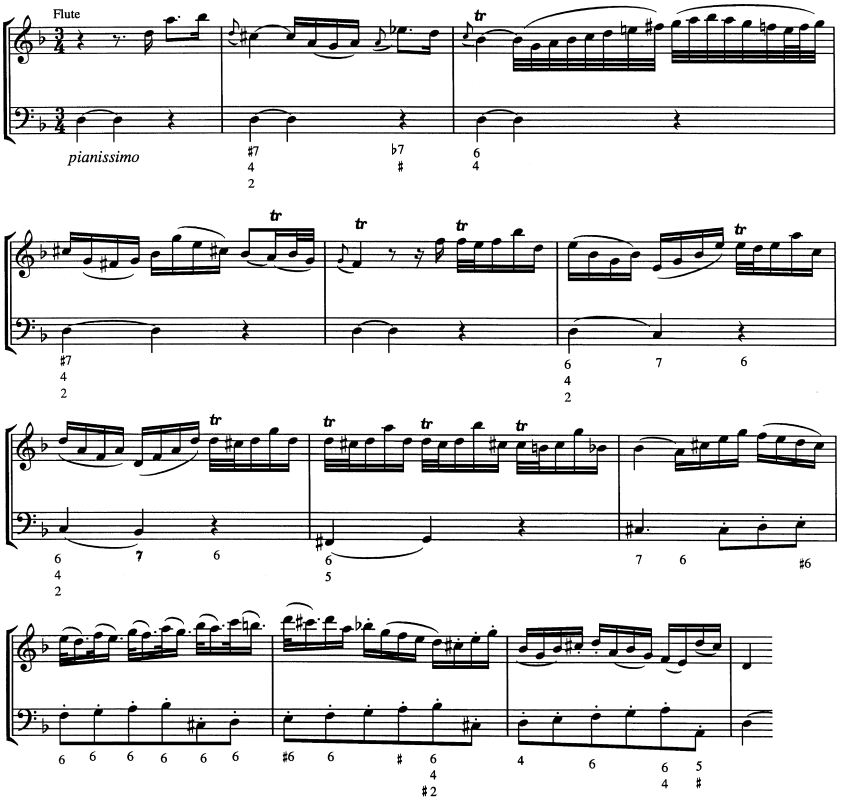
But these works, plus pieces for other occasions, constituted a huge drain on creative energies, whatever methods of work Bach developed in order to cope. There is no single model for the 'Chorale Cantatas', nor is there any concrete evidence why from 25 March 1725 he suspended (broke off, abandoned?) the series. Perhaps the librettist, whoever that was, died or moved away, though no librettist would have been absolutely necessary for deriving a cantata-text directly from a chorale-text had Bach himself desired to write more works of this kind. It is certainly possible to imagine that, as with the never-completed *Orgelbüchlein*, there was a certain 'wish to move on' not foreseen when he entered upon such a major project and had already produced so many examples. One could argue that the Passions were in a sense 'Chorale Cantatas' writ large, tracing the Gospel narrative step by step rather than a Lutheran chorale verse by verse.

[3] See the note below on the 'Schübler Chorales', which include movements from chorale-based cantatas Nos. 93 and 140.

The series often has important flute parts, so perhaps Bach had found a Leipzig flautist he could trust, even perhaps one he had brought back on a visit with Anna Magdalena to Cöthen a year earlier. A comparable explanation is also possible for (certain) cantata arias that require the violoncello piccolo: Leipzig had good string-players and makers, and an interesting question is whether Bach himself played this particular instrument. (Cöthen inventories list instruments of this kind, one from 1724. See BJ 1998, p. 70.) Keeping up contacts outside Leipzig is quite likely, as with the set of 'Sanctus' parts lent to Count von Sporck, an acquaintance who might also once have owned Bach's Calov Bible (see pp. 4, 543). In Leipzig as in Weimar, a viola d'amore player seems to have been available only for certain periods, but for trumpet-playing Bach could regularly call upon the virtuosity of Gottfried Reiche, active until October 1734. Doubtless because of Reiche's abilities Bach used the trumpet much more than he had previously, adding parts to earlier works where appropriate and producing some extraordinarily lyrical moments (BWV 77.v). He also used it for chorale-melodies and even for the fanfares that any Leipziger would associate with the town's watchmen. See Example 26 (p. 483) for Cantata No. 70.

The writing for flute is often graceful and rather rapturous, as in the aria of Cantata No. 114 and other movements of the time (1 October 1724 – see Example 19). There arises a sumptuous quality in such music against which the voice sings as if no more than one among equals, here a flute soloist whose melody, carefully articulated, is sustained with a length worthy of Rachmaninoff. Can it really be the case that Cantata No. 114's standard text, so formulaic and conventional, was the springboard for such extraordinary music? Or a similarly ordinary text for the luxuriant first aria of Cantata No. 115 (1724, see Example 12 on p. 165)? As the composer read the text for a cantata, distinctive musical sounds must have suggested themselves, and yet the sounds are generally of a quality far above the conventional words. The pathos and languor of the flute solo are hardly incited by the words in Cantata No. 114 ('Where, in this vale of misery, will there be any refuge for my spirit?'); nor are the throbbing bass, gorgeous harmonies and heavy siciliano (qv) rhythms of Cantata No. 115 obviously inspired by its words 'Ah, sluggish Soul how can you rest?' (Example 12 on p. 165). While both movements are as rich as the music of the two Passions, the relationship between words and music is not simple, for could one not exchange the two texts of Cantatas Nos. 114 and 115 and still find the music appropriate? This is not always recognized by admirers.

It would seem that the massive, beautiful choruses opening the series of 'Chorale Cantatas' from Epiphany to Annunciation 1725, especially Nos. 3,



Example 19 Cantata No. 114.ii, introduction. Text: 'Where, in this vale of misery, will there be any refuge for my spirit?'

1 and 127, exhausted either the composer's creativity or the choir's vocal energies. Each could account for big choruses becoming rarer after Trinity 1725. Since the subsequent 'third cycle', now occupying two years, also included the easier works by Johann Ludwig Bach and the anonymous St Mark Passion, it seems that Bach was reducing his commitment of time and energy, having also experienced the limitations of Leipzig performers. It is likely he was absent from Leipzig in May–June 1725, testing organs in Gera and even accompanying Prince Leopold to Carlsbad again, and just as likely meeting Count von Sporck there. (Nothing about any of this is known from documents, however, except for Gera.) Whatever the reason, there certainly seems to have been some reliance on simpler imported music for Leipzig church services over that summer and beyond.

Another notable group of cantatas is the eight written with important solo parts for organ between 1726 and 1729, plus a further five in which it substituted for another solo instrument. These solos were quite possibly for

Friedemann or some other reliable pupil to play in the Thomaskirche. (The absence today of a separate part for organ in the folder need not mean that the composer himself was the soloist playing from the densely written full reference score; this seems hardly possible.) The idea that an organist could step from his accompanying rôle into playing solo in a choral work was over much the same period gradually emerging in the work of various composers including, in the 'Bach circle', G. H. Stölzel at Gotha. It is an idea which for Bach had apparently lain more or less dormant since Mühlhausen, though *ad hoc* substituting for an absent soloist must have always been possible anywhere. Generally, the organs used to play solos in various eighteenth-century contexts, by Handel, Vivaldi, Brixi, Mozart, etc., were modest. But the idea of an organ solo received an especially splendid realization in the Election cantata of 1731, No. 29, where one imagines a bigger organ sound against a substantial ensemble.

Already, the fully fledged concerto movement opening Cantata No. 146 must have made a great impression on the many visitors to Leipzig present for Jubilate Sunday in May a few years earlier: perhaps the composer himself played, building his reputation as a 'world-famous organ-player', in the words of the Obituary. To turn to the organist for solos that one would otherwise expect to be written for a string or woodwind player suggests either that the budget for such players was diminishing, as is also implied in Bach's letter to the Council in August 1730 (see p. 492), or that able keyboard-players were more easily available – and unpaid if these included Friedemann, Emanuel or himself. Those movements with organ solo in Cantatas Nos. 146, 35, 169, 49, 188 and 29, whatever their occasion, create in effect a kind of concert music, occasionally related to the text in a clear way but mostly not at all. In turn this means a new kind of music, heard presumably with enthusiasm in church by a community by no means fully aware of the wider world of instrumental concertos thrilling audiences elsewhere. In some respects, a cantata's *organo* obbligato was an equivalent to Handel's simpler and more purely italianate organ concertos in the London theatre oratorios of the 1730s.

Cantata No. 198, the music performed in the university church in honour of the late Queen of Saxony, Christiane Eberhardine, in October 1727, was richly scored and demanding, carefully conceived at every point. Its text, an 'Ode of Mourning', was the work of J. C. Gottsched, university professor of philosophy and later of poetics, and Bach set it despite the complaints of the university organist Görner, who thought it his job because the university was involved. (He was then paid off.) One of the several reports of this royal event unusually describes the cantata as

composed in the Italian manner (*nach Italiänischer Art*: Dok. II, p. 175), which could refer obliquely to the fact that Bach set the poem, which was printed and distributed, not as Gottsched's single-movement ode but as a regular cantata with recitatives and arias, even dividing it into two parts. How many of the apparent changes to Gottsched's text Bach was responsible for is not as certain as once thought, but with or without the poet's approval, the cantor was probably well paid. (In 1738, collaborating with Gottsched on another work now lost but commissioned by the university to salute royalty, he received 50 thaler, a large sum probably intended also to cover payment for the string-players.)

Reports were united in praising the queen's Cantata No. 198, as well they might be, for its level of melodic and harmonic inspiration is high. The music of two movements was justifiably re-used in the funeral music for Prince Leopold in 1729 and of five in the St Mark Passion (1731?). The special mention in one report of an organ prelude and postlude in the memorial service (Dok. II, p. 174) prompts the conjecture that as well as playing harpsichord in the cantata, as reported, Bach was also organist, even writing or revising for this occasion one of his most striking organ works, the B minor Prelude and Fugue, BWV 544 (Wolff 2000, p. 317). The prelude is a suitably elegiac and majestic preface either to the service or to the cantata itself, which begins with a rich instrumental score including gambas. The organ fugue would likewise be an appropriate 'concluding voluntary', so much so as to make one suppose that other pairs of organ preludes-and-fugues had comparable associations.

Another and big unknown is still who wrote or amended the text set in many a cantata, including those verses of a 'Chorale Cantata's' hymn that are paraphrased in recitatives and arias. Was it Bach himself? From time to time or generally? Some ten settings of texts by G. C. Lehms of Darmstadt have been discerned in cantatas from two periods (1713, 1725–6), without recitatives and perhaps known to Bach one way or another through his acquaintance, the Darmstadt composer Christoph Graupner, who set several dozen of them. The work of other authors has also gradually been recognized in recent years, leading to further questions: how discerning was Bach, and why did he so seldom use texts that were also used by Telemann?

Some time after setting texts by Gottsched and a second Leipzig poet, Christiane Mariane von Ziegler (1725), Bach made use of up to a dozen by the Leipzig lawyer and poet, C. F. Henrici (calling himself Picander), in the fourth or fifth cycle (1728–9). The intention then could have been to complete a single series and so match other cycles being produced by

contemporaries. The texts came not necessarily from the publication of Picander's texts in 1728 but from personal contact between the two men, which is strikingly recognized when Bach acknowledges Picander's name on the autograph title-page of the St Matthew Passion (1736). But details of the composer's professional collaboration with any of his authors – whether the academic poet Gottsched or the popular versifier Picander – are uncertain and often the subject of speculation in the Bach literature today. He needed texts more specific to the church seasons than the freer poetry of Gottsched or von Ziegler, though whether Picander's cycle of 1728 was designed specifically for use in Leipzig's churches, or whether Bach ever set more than about a sixth of it, has not been established. Picander did praise Bach's settings in print (Dok. II, p. 180), but praise has seldom since been directed back to Picander himself by German literary critics.

In the absence of cantatas now presumed to be lost, too much is uncertain about the 1728–9 cycle: musical sources for the nine works that do survive are far less complete than for previous cycles. A 1727–8 cycle barely exists now, it being sometimes thought that work on the St Matthew Passion squeezed out other composition. Any such cycle would have been the fourth, and the cantatas of 1728–9 a fifth cycle as reported in the Obituary, assuming the Obituary was referring only to Leipzig works. The year 1728 does look like a fallow year, with not much more to show for it than the Wedding Cantata BWV 216 and which has old material in part. However, the exceptional nature of that work would not make it impossible for there to have been a more conventional set of cantatas as well, now not identified or dispersed after Bach's death. And not necessarily a complete cycle: other Bach projects remain uncertain or incomplete. But one reason for any fall-off could be that, as Telemann's cantatas were to prove, it would be hard to avoid a mortal sameness.

If the apparent fallowness was a sign of some pulling-back, it can only be guessed whether Bach was disillusioned, content with existing repertory, busy diverting his creative energy, or had some other reason. One very striking novelty of the year 1729 is the 'Phoebus and Pan' Cantata, BWV 201 (called *Dramate* in the textbook), a work in which there is not the smallest sign of any fall-off in musical creativeness. On the contrary, it looks as though Bach was enthusiastically taking on newer *galant* styles for his own purposes, caricaturing them in Pan's aria 'Zu Tanze' and contrasting them with the traditional gracefulness appropriate for an aria of Apollo. It could be that for his new duties with Collegium concerts in 1729 (see below), Bach was aiming to appeal with music that begins like a

concert piece, indeed a 'Brandenburg Concerto'. Or for a potential job elsewhere he was also demonstrating what he could do for music outside church. If it is true – a big 'if' – that in June 1729 Friedemann went over to Halle to invite Handel, then visiting his mother, to come to Leipzig and meet the cantor, as reported after Friedemann's death (Dok. III, p. 422), then any current work on a piece like BWV 201 would have been a fine example to show him.

After the initial efforts with Picander texts, there appears to be a falling-off: only one new cantata is now known for the Trinity season of June–November 1729, No. 188, and this re-uses as its prelude a movment now known as the finale of the D minor Harpsichord Concerto, BWV 1052 (another concert piece, itself an arrangement). The cantata requires the choir only for its final chorale, which also suggests some practical problem. Equally undemanding was an old collection of Renaissance-period motets purchased again for St Thomas's in 1729, Bodenschatz's *Florilegium* of 1618. These were used for *a cappella* introits in the two main churches, used often enough for new replacement copies to be needed, and also for funeral music, which must often have been called for at short notice. Did such motets, generally in Latin and with relatively simple textures, for a double choir of eight voices but no instruments, increasingly replace the cantata? Generally, the work of previous cantors was not much in evidence, although during Bach's tenure many Mass movements in Latin were held in the choir library (Glöckner 2011, 23). Motets with biblical or chorale texts were certainly appropriate for more occasions than the seasonal cantatas, as were Kyries and Christes.

In view of sparse documentation after the early 1730s, the question arises just how regularly the cantatas went on being performed. Less and less? Or on every Sunday until the end of Bach's life, with parts re-used and/or recopied, year in year out? Organized by the cantor or by his prefect? Sometimes unrevised? And the clergy indifferent, discouraging, hostile? The many instances of revised vocal and instrumental parts, surely more than are known about, imply many a cantata revival after the 1720s, and gradually a fuller calendar is emerging of the Sunday performances during the last twenty years of Bach's life in Leipzig. Nevertheless, the last known newly composed cantata for a regular Sunday seems to be the 'Chorale Cantata' BWV 14 of 1735, and a good case has been made for concluding that over 1734–6, Bach instead made use of complete cycles by G. H. Stölzel, including a Passion oratorio for Good Friday 1734 (BJ 2009, p. 103). There is no evidence ten years later that Telemann's cycle for the whole church year, the *Musicalisches Lob Gottes*

of 1744, was ever used by Bach despite being printed by the same publisher of the 'Goldberg Variations', Balthasar Schmid.

Though unreliable as evidence, the many strangely uncertain gaps in the record over a long period of time do suggest a less rigorously kept programme as time went by.

How many cantatas and Passions?

On the term 'Passion', see Glossary. The Obituary's list of 'unpublished works of the late Bach' includes 'five Passions, including one with two choirs' and 'five annual cycles of cantatas, for all Sundays and Feastdays'. How Emanuel would know the number he does not say, but no doubt both before and after the musical estate was distributed in 1750 he was familiar with the library, its scores and performing parts, even the way it was arranged, probably in yearly cycles. Since 'five annual cycles' makes a *prima facie* case for there being as many as a hundred cantatas now lost, some importance attaches to a phrase that has been much discussed in the literature.

In the now accepted chronology, there are various possibilities. Cycles I and II are more or less straightforward; cycles III and IV become increasingly patchy, represented by a gapped series over two or more years; 'cycle V' is largely missing, although the first cantata of the Christmas Oratorio was once suggested to be a remnant of it. The chances that there was ever a full fifth cycle of cantatas composed by J. S. Bach for Leipzig are not promising. A suggestion that so little is known post-1730 because the scores came into Friedemann's possession and were subsequently lost (BJ 2008, p. 109) is plausible as far as it goes. Equally plausible is that Friedemann would be attracted to the more recent cantatas of any 'cycle V' and especially to the charming aura of the Christmas Oratorio. But neither begins to lead to a definite answer to the question.

Three possible answers are that cantatas were shelved in a disorderly or confusing manner (unlikely); that the apparently isolated cantatas after 1727 were indeed grouped into a cycle at some point (more likely); and that since the Obituary's worklist includes instrumental works from before the Leipzig period, so it includes vocal works (more likely still). The Obituary does not say the annual cycles were all Leipzig works, nor that they were complete. A grouping of intermittently compiled or surviving works could still be ordered in a series according to the church year.

As for the Passions, again the Obituary does not say the five were all Leipzig works, but four certainly were:

St John 1724: revised 1725, again 1732?, incompletely 1739, finally performed in 1749 or 1750; perhaps directed by the composer on 27 March 1750 shortly before cataract surgery;
St Matthew 1727(?): revised 1736; last performed 1742?; first 13 leaves of the 1736 autograph score repaired sometime between 1743 and 1746;
a lost St Mark 1731, BWV 247: with two choruses and three arias from Cantata No. 198; the others, probably arrangements; enlarged for performance, 1744;
an anonymous St Luke: 1730, copied by J. S. and C. P. E. Bach; revived in 1745?

All four Gospels also served in turn for Telemann's regular Hamburg oratorio Passions, as the Obituary authors presumably knew. It certainly seems that although producing the work of other composers during the 1740s and leaving the extensive revision of St John incomplete, Bach did finally return to his first Passion masterwork. In general, however, performances after 1733 are not as clearly documented as before.

As for *five* Passions: Emanuel also knew another St Mark Passion, the old anonymous work attributed to 'Kaiser' (Keiser), and was probably aware that it had been worked on by his father at least three times: at Weimar in 1712, Leipzig 1726 (with additions) and again in *c.* 1747, with seven arias from Handel's Brockes Passion. This last is the only such oratorio by another composer thought with some certainty to have been performed by J. S. Bach, who, rather surprisingly perhaps, made few if any substantial changes to it (being indifferent, indisposed or otherwise occupied?). There is a possibility that Stölzel's non-biblical Passion oratorio was performed in Leipzig on Good Friday 1734 (BJ 2008, 84), a period when Bach was busy with, among other things, the Christmas Oratorio, the Ascension Oratorio and the new fair-copy score of the St Matthew Passion. His 'own' St Mark Passion, BWV 247, was a substantial work, apparently with thirty movements, of which at least eight are known in other versions, plus a further sixteen chorales.

It remains true that Bach's settings of St John and St Matthew's Gospels achieve a new, distinct, monumental representation of the crucifixion story, a representation with neither true precursors nor successors, a virtually new art form on a grand scale. Such was not known even in Hamburg, where two traditions were well established by the time of Bach's

St John: the liturgical Good Friday Passions annually for the last half century, and, by 1704 or so, also the 'Passion concerts' performed by opera personnel. Leipzig, very different culturally and confessionally from Hamburg, was slow to develop a tradition. And this may not by any means have become as fixed and accepted as now usually assumed, even for the whole of Bach's tenure.

By 1718, the Hamburg composers Keiser, Telemann, Handel and Mattheson had all set a free version of the central Gospel story as told in a libretto by B. H. Brockes, its conception remaining of spasmodic interest throughout the century. (Haydn had a copy of Handel's setting: see HHB 2, p. 60.) Telemann's might have been performed at the Leipzig Neukirche in 1717, and later, also in Leipzig, Bach drew on Brockes for eight of the thirteen non-Gospel word-texts in his St John Passion. Again, there is every sign that he thought out for himself how and what to set to music: the respective proportion of meditative arias between them indicates a change of gravitation away from the contemplative and passive towards the active and dramatic. Brockes had forty-two arias but the St Matthew Passion has fifteen, and the St John only thirteen. There had not been any formal and consistent tradition for full-scale Passions before Kuhnau, but his 1721 setting in two parts, either side of the sermon, had given a precedent for the Good Friday vespers at St Thomas's in Bach's time. According to a contemporary reference, such presentations were recognized as more of an attraction for the congregation than the sermon was, despite the length of the service (four hours or more, so it was said: Scheibel 1721, pp. 30–1). This attraction would hardly please the clergy.

Since Brockes's oratorio text tells the story in his own words, to base a Passion on the Gospel verbatim as Bach did looks like a deliberate rejection of the 'Hamburg concept'. A further Passion that Bach might have composed or compiled for Gotha on Good Friday 1717 – only his presence there is documented, not the reason for it – would probably have been of the Brockes kind, potentially bequeathing some arias to the St John Passion (1725 version) and Cantata No. 55 a year later, but not produced as a whole in the Leipzig churches. Though presumably having nothing to do with the Brockes texts, some of the arias in the 1725 St John Passion (i.e. the non-Gospel sections) could also be considerably older, and indeed it would be strange if all of the Passion's music was new, considering how often Bach used older music during that first Leipzig year.

It seems to have been there that 'oratorio Passions' setting the words of the Gospel came into their own by serving the liturgy. They did this in the special Good Friday vespers celebrated in alternate years in the two main

Leipzig churches, according to a Council minute. Vespers opened with a congregational chorale and included prayers, a sermon between the two parts of the Passion, and after Part II a motet followed by the congregational hymn 'Nun danket alle Gott'. Two important details follow from this procedure: the performances were truly liturgical, with major contributions from the clergy; and the final movement of each Passion was not, therefore, the last music heard in the service, though it was the last with instruments.

A story told in a musical sequence of choruses, arias and recitatives is common to both kinds of Passion, whether with the Gospel's words or a new text, but the intensity of the narrative, weight, length and liturgical placing of Bach's pair of Gospel settings give them a unique stature. Like a Greek chorus, the chorales can speak for a congregation, as when countering the despair of 'O Schmerz' in the St Matthew Passion. Having some appear more than once, in different keys, differently harmonized and given different texts is an imaginative gesture, especially as many of them, as with the arias, are speaking as if from the first person. Whatever theological significance these returning chorales invite us to conjecture (as when that known as 'O sacred head' is heard four times in the St Matthew Passion), repetition itself adds an element of drama, and a time-honoured musical one. While the two verses of a chorale sung with an aria in-between at the end of Handel's Brockes Passion (1716–17)[4] move towards the use of chorales, there the repeat is literal and its dramatic potential remains limited. Text and melody of Lutheran chorales were already taken into a Passion setting by Christian Flor in Lüneburg before Bach lived there, but the weight of chorales in the Leipzig settings appears to be original. In Good Friday services in any Protestant city, however, it is always possible that simple chorales (for the congregation to participate in or not) were introduced here and there, without the sources of either the music or the text saying so, or needing to.

Commentators have interpreted certain details in the St John and St Matthew Passions as suggesting that the composer consulted other texts and other settings, but a certain caution is required when assessing the jackdaw mind of J. S. Bach. Perhaps he had got to know that Handel's Brockes Passion was performed in Lüneburg in 1723. But the chief and foremost impulse was without doubt his own response to the terrible story told, in rather different ways, in the two Gospels, where different emphases

[4] Performed on five reported occasions in Hamburg between 1719 and 1724, and partly copied by Bach nearly thirty years later, but from what exemplar is not yet known.

reflect the evangelists' priorities. St John's focus on the trial scene results, in Bach's setting, in unequal parts (in raw bar numbers, 725 for Part I but 1,279 for Part II), while in St Matthew the various other episodes around the event result in a more equal division.

Enough exists of Kuhnau's own St Mark Passion to suggest it was dramatic in its text and perhaps also in its performance, but hardly adventurous musically (extracts in Schering 1941, pp. 25–33). Although it is likely that special funding was put aside by cantors for Passion performances in Leipzig before Bach's appointment (Schering 1941, p. 165), so little is recorded about performances of an annual Good Friday Passion before 1723 that it looks very much as if Bach himself took a major part in creating the tradition, such as it was. As the cycle of so-called 'Chorale Cantatas' also suggests, in his early years as cantor Bach made huge efforts to build up a special, unmatched position for Leipzig and its church music.

Further on the St John Passion

In its stature the St John Passion was positively avant-garde for the Leipzig congregations, and succeeded in adding a new dimension to the liturgical year. It would fix not only the tradition but also the concept, which was: to set the Gospel's narrative clearly (with *dramatis personae*) in a modern recitative that in its modern way corresponds to the old Gregorian recitation of the *passio*, and to intersperse this narrative with reactions of one kind or another from a soloist or a chorus. This was done in two ways: with lyrical interludes in which to contemplate the events, in the form of solo arias plus colourful instrumentation that suited the words in some way; and with choruses participating either as witnesses or as 'spokesmen' singing well-known hymns. Unlike most of the cantatas, a Passion was performed only once on the day, and what impact Bach's first, the St John Passion, had can only be guessed. No congregation had ever before experienced anything so gripping as its opening bars, its monumental choruses and its final chorale.

Bach assumed that his new Passion of 1724 was meant for the Thomaskirche and so announced it, but the Council insisted he keep to the current alternating plan and re-announce it for the Nikolaikirche. Thereupon he countered with requests for the harpsichord in the Nikolaikirche to be repaired and for more space to be made available in the choir-gallery (Dok. II, p. 140), though how this was to be done is unclear. It would

not be out of character for Bach to have known all along where the 1724 performance was to be, and to have tested his authority as *director musices* in this way, especially for a work requiring grander than usual forces. For these he could make a point of having the right conditions, despite having to give in on the location. With what looks like typical clerical sanctimony, boding ill for future relationships, the Superintendent of St Thomas's summoned him as a rebuke for his mistaken announcement concerning this first *Passions-Historie* (Dok. I, p. 250). Although the Superintendent must have heard the work by then, he said nothing on paper in praise of it but recorded that Bach admitted his error and undertook to consult fully in future, though with what complaisance or humility the Superintendent did not record.

At some time during the family's first winter in Leipzig, then, it is likely, though not fully certain, that the St John Passion was being composed for Good Friday 1724, perhaps its set of allusive texts collected with the help of the conrector of the Thomasschule. Whether Bach was responsible for there being a bigger part for Saint Peter than there is in the text of the Gospel itself is unknown. The versions of the Passion that can be discerned from later extant sources show varying degrees of change, some quite slight. What is assumed to be the first performance, in the Nikolaikirche, was of a version now not quite clear in detail but probably resembling the 'final' version begun in 1739 and worked on further in 1749, the one now most frequently performed. There is no surviving or recorded autograph full score of the '1724 version'; a new score was begun in the late 1730s presumably incorporating revisions and change, less than a quarter written by the composer and completed some ten years later by a Leipzig copyist. Why Bach did not complete the fair-copy score to match the one for the St Matthew Passion (1736) is not known. The year 1739, probably when it was begun, was filled with other preoccupations: answering attacks by his critic Scheibe about his style (see pp. 533f.) and by the town council about Passion performances (see p. 556); the death of a son (Johann Gottfried Bernhard) and lengthy stay of another (Friedemann); the preparation of *Clavierübung III* for publication in September, and taking on Collegium musicum concerts again in October (see p. 337).

For performance in 1725 ('the second version') the work was revised, with a new opening chorus, calmer and built on a traditional Passion chorale, 'O Mensch bewein', a hymn specially familiar in Leipzig during Passion time. The initial impact is now softened: the *tragoedia* of the original chorus is now replaced by the *lyrica* of the new one. Because calm contemplation was appropriate for prefacing the Gospel, or because the

clergy had been pressing for something less 'operatic', the first words of the Gospel are prepared with a familiar chorale elaborated in a big chorus, less unusual but still imposing. This replacement chorus, ending shortly after the chorale-melody is complete, is very ingenious in its musical detail (see below, p. 633), in this respect much like a revived Weimar organ-chorale, and was brought into use later, in the St Matthew Passion. The final movement of St John Passion was to be not the present plain four-part chorale but a major setting of 'Christe, du Lamm Gottes' in a key, G minor, rather jolting after the preceding chorus in C minor. If such changes imply that Bach was now seeing this Passion as part of the 1724–5 cycle of 'Chorale Cantatas' (cantatas that include a big opening chorus based on a chorale), nevertheless one easily understands why for later performances Bach would go back to the original opening chorus. Its drama is irreplaceable.

Among the 1725 changes is the passage added from St Matthew's Gospel describing the drama of Jesus's actual death, but this was removed for a performance in the early 1730s. Since no example of the printed text for the early 1730s has survived, there is some uncertainty about the contents of the 'third version', but a yet later version returns to the first and most familiar form, harmonizes some chorales with greater richness, keeps the excerpt from St Matthew's Gospel, and apparently requires a greater number of performers. The composer was not alone in seeing such major works as needing to be rethought, to a lesser or greater degree, each time they were revived. For them, in other words, there is not so much a final version as a 'version adapted for such-and-such an occasion', at that time the usual practice with opera revivals.

As with his first Leipzig cantata-cycle, Bach appears to aim at affecting a larger and more socially mixed congregation than he had at Weimar,[5] pleasing them with an impression of unbroken melody from first to last. The recitatives are almost as tuneful as the arias and all the more gripping by following some choruses immediately, without pause and virtually interrupting them in the urgency of a terrible story. Some people must have found this 'operatic'. As with the second Leipzig cantata-cycle, the choir's singing of chorales at key moments involves all the people in other ways. In 'Mein teurer Heiland', for instance, a charming aria with *spiccato* melody comes just as Jesus gives up the ghost, against a chorale sung in the

[5] Szeskus 1991, p. 53 calculates percentages of the usual congregations in Leipzig as roughly one-quarter upper/professional class, one-half middle class, and one-quarter the remainder, including students.

backgound by the chorus, who become a community of believers. Another aria, 'Es ist vollbracht', has an ABA shape made so as to illustrate the Saviour's duality: the middle section picks up a vigorous trumpet motif ('The Hero of Judah') which makes a hugely telling counterblast to the pathos of the outer sections (the Victim's 'It is accomplished'). The effect is reinforced by the last section being cut short: again, a most dramatic, even operatic, stroke. Clearly, Jesus giving up the ghost is not the moment for a formal musical convention.

Of course, both Passions' recitative gains in weight by having other *personae* share it with the Evangelist, particularly Jesus, and among the striking differences between the two is that only in St Matthew is Jesus accompanied by strings. This alone suggests a composer wishing to give a higher emotional charge to a telling of the story. Word-painting of a traditional kind is part of this narration as it is in the arias (the very close *following* in 'Ich folge dir' or 'I follow you', the obvious *hurrying* in 'Eilt, ihr angefocht'nen Seelen' or 'Hurry, you vexed souls'), but this too is done with a new, individual slant on the conventions. Furthermore, those two arias, the ninth movement in each half, were possibly planned antithetically, in their keys (B flat/G minor), their soloists (soprano/bass) and their instrumentations (flutes/violins), while being at the same time similar in metre, tempo and running semiquavers. Admirers of the work have found several instances of such deliberate planning, in sequences of keys or types of chorus or combinations of instruments.

So melodically inspired is the composer that the fughetta on the casting of lots for the vestments challenges the listener to say why it is so very syncopated and catchy. John's frequent allusion to Old Testament prophecies (as here) need not have led to such bewitching music. In both this and the 'Thunder and Lightning' chorus of the St Matthew Passion – an equally exceptional moment in the work as a whole – it is as if Bach is seizing the chance to revert to the splendid rhythms and harmonies of his concertos, writing sequences of simple triads and rhythms for the sheer sensuous excitement of it all. Presumably authentic, the notation here and there also introduces some dramatic loud–softs as well as occasional *détachés* (qv) (staccato dots) when the chorus of Jews is aggressive. Elsewhere, their malicious mutterings are accompanied by chattering woodwind.

Although Bach's two Passions might, just, have influenced others being performed elsewhere in Protestant Germany, as in Naumburg and Greiz and eventually Hamburg (Telemann's St Luke Passion, 1744), neither of them had anything like the influence on other German composers that

Israel in Egypt or *Messiah* had on English composers. But the level of inspiration for both Passions is unfailing: every aria tuneful, all harmonic movement without blemish, every word of the Gospel and every chorus set with an uncanny freedom from the easy formulae that riddled Handel's and Telemann's oratorios but made them easier for listeners. In the St John especially, the effect is ceaselessly dramatic, the recitative vivid and strangely tuneful, the whole, as far as it could be, astonishingly free of the day's Italian opera conventions. One convention the Passion did follow is that the first part took up just the allotted hour before the sermon was timed to begin.

Further on the St Matthew Passion

What setting was produced for the Good Friday vespers of 1726 in St Nicholas's is not recorded, but it seems that for St Thomas's in 1727, it was the St Matthew Passion. This found the composer drawing on huge creative energies to take the Passion concept further, indeed beyond any other musical work of the period.

Sources being incomplete, the dating is still unsure. No textbook for a conjectured Passion performance in 1727 survives, and for a long time the work was supposed to have first been heard on Good Friday, 1729. The earliest version survives only in a posthumous copy of about 1765, drawing on a copy made probably by a pupil of a pupil, J. C. Farlau, and probably for a performance under a later cantor, J. F. Doles (BJ 2002, p. 44). Some change of plan by Bach is suggested by the way that at one point the recitative suddenly and precipitously modulates to prepare for the aria 'Können Tränen'. More certain is that a double chorus was not the original plan but resulted from a major rethinking that led also to a large *instrumentarium* including two organs (Dok. II, p. 141), flutes replacing recorders in No. 19, a lute in No. 57, and more or less everything but brass and timpani.

Where the performers were located is less certain than generally assumed, but the idea of double chorus is clearly fundamental, sign of a special creative leap and set in stone in the autograph score of 1736. The Obituary refers to the Passion 'for double choir' (*zweychörig*), as does the title-page of Part II in the score, and it seems the idea of two choirs had evolved to have several functions. They are cued in (though not without ambiguity) in Picander's 1729 textbook. Perhaps this is why Bach acknowledged Picander later on the first title-page of his 1736 score:

Passio Domini nostri J. C. secundum Evangelistam Matthæum
Poesià per Dominum Henrici alias Picander dictus
Musica di G. S. Bach
Prima Parte

('The suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the Evangelist Matthew. Poetry by Dom. Henrici, known as Picander. Music of J. S. Bach. Part One')

Alternatively, Picander gave the cues for double choir because he was aware of how Bach had already set it. Chorus I remains dominant, Chorus II more in support and surely smaller. It tends to respond, react and accompany, almost as bystanders in the case of Chorus I's arias; occasionally it echoes Chorus I; and it doubles up when tutti is required. But the polychoral element never becomes as integrated as it was in, say, the motets for double and triple choruses by Johann Ludwig Bach. The Passion's 'double-choir treatment' is not standard but freshly conceived, as if *ad hoc* according to context. At the mocking of Jesus, for instance, there is a nicely calculated effect as Chorus II starts the mockery (a small group of people) and is then joined by Chorus I (the whole crowd, contemptuous and contemptible).

It is often assumed, though without sure evidence, that the Thomaskirche's second organ was the one in the little gallery on the wall above (or to the left of) the 'crossing' arch at the end of the nave, with room for a few trebles singing the chorale-line in the opening chorus, and facing across the nave to the back gallery where (it is also assumed) all such works were performed. The words of the Gospel and the melody of the chorale are written in red ink in the full score of 1736, the latter twice. (A faint possibility is that the Gospel too sounded out from this little gallery down to the congregation, as the preacher in his pulpit would.) But in these respects as in some others of a similarly practical nature, less is certain about the Passion performances than generally thought. It is only an assumption that Bach stood in the west gallery conducting the double ensemble, or perhaps even playing solo violin in the second orchestra. (If he did do this, the aria 'Gebt mir meinen Jesum wieder' was suitable.)

In addition to its greater length, weightier arias and double chorus, the St Matthew Passion is characterized by wide ranges of key, scoring, genre, timbre and volume, with an impact full of surprises for the seasoned listener. A much bigger rôle is now given to the arioso movements prefacing the arias. These 'aria-prefaces' already familiar in the St John Passion are now expanded in number, length and technique, and must

indicate some personal preference of the composer. Each of them again is coloured by its own characteristic and recognizable musical motifs, these rather as if they were 'figures of speech' marking each 'paragraph' of a story. Not for the first time there is an impression that here Bach was consciously surveying a range of motifs, something in his blood from the earliest age when he began writing organ-chorales. In the arias he seems to be carefully planning variety in his usual way, as in contrasting the cello obbligato in 'Geduld!' with the gamba obbligato in 'Komm, süsser Kreuz'. The arias themselves (almost twice as many as in St John) have a strangely affective weight that must come from the way their key, tessitura, motif, timbre, tempo, harmonic rhythm and new melodies collaborate in responding to a complex story of motives, action, reaction, emotion, prophecy, divinity, humanity, mystery. And yet no such observations go very far in pinpointing the sheer sadness of 'Aus Liebe' (between the mob's cries of 'Crucify him!') or the warmth of 'Mache dich' (after the effete cool of the evening).

The opening chorus, though not as theatrically startling as the St John Passion's, has the unmistakable tone of pending tragedy, a very serious movement in its sheer scale and its insistently throbbing bass. There is no vision here of resurrection or redemption. Whether its swinging metre could be considered more suitable for a story told in verse than for the verbatim Gospel that follows, as Spitta seems to have thought (2, 1880, p. 383), it is like an old-style elegiac chorus, Greek-like in involving the listeners in the inevitable tragedy. Two particular moments are, I find, always startling. The first is the sudden flash of a major key when in the parts the trebles enter with their chorale-melody 'O Lamm Gottes' (the Agnus dei), a calm, sustained line piercing a churning lament in the minor, which soon returns. (The 'flash' would clearly have been stronger had a group of trebles sung from the little gallery at the church's crossing-arch.) The second is the moment immediately after this opening chorus: a total change of tone (in all senses) as the Evangelist enters and goes straight into the middle of a story, ignoring the chorus. An interesting contrast is offered by the first recitative of the Christmas Oratorio (1734), which after the opening chorus begins its story very plausibly with 'and it came to pass' of St Luke Chapter 2. Chapter 26 of the Gospel of St Matthew begins in a similar way, but these words do not appear in the Passion.

While Bach himself may well have collected his non-Gospel texts for the St John Passion from various sources, and was mindful of the Brockes Passion popular elsewhere in Germany, he relied on his Leipzig acquaintance Picander for the choruses, arias and non-scriptural recitatives in the

St Matthew Passion, observing his division of the six main events into two clearly separated parts (preparation, Gethsemane with arrest, Caiaphas; then Pilate, crucifixion, burial and farewell). Quite apart from date (1729) and format (part of a collection), Picander's publication could not have served conveniently as a congregational textbook at a performance, since it had no Gospel texts and no cues for chorales. Current books of published meditations on the Passion were known to both men, and might well have been discussed between them. In particular, Heinrich Müller's book of sermons found in Bach's library, *Evangelisches Präservativ* (1681), has been suggested as a source or reference point for about half of Picander's texts (see BJ 1979, p. 115), though one should not underrate how pious language had generally become second nature in Lutheran Central Germany. Biblical knowledge too: in the recitative 'Am Abend' people would recognize Picander's reference to Genesis 3 and 8 (the 'cool of the day' in the Garden of Eden, and Noah's dove returning with the olive-branch). Although it is sometimes said that the different text-origins of the two Passions result in crucial differences between them, the listener will be hardly aware of what these could be. It is not in their texts that the most conspicuous differences lie.

For many, the St Matthew Passion is a work of even more obviously passionate commitment than St John: a work unique in scope and grandeur, revised and later recopied in a particularly careful autograph of 1736, with its red Gospel ink. (The Agnus dei melody has no words and appears twice in the score as if it were a stave for organ in each chorus's continuo group. The text 'O Lamm Gottes' appears in a separate voice-part for trebles.) The sharing of ten contemplative, non-Gospel movements with the mourning music for Prince Leopold, performed in Cöthen three weeks before the second (?) Good Friday performance in Leipzig in 1729, raises several interesting questions. If the Passion is reliably dated *in toto* to 1727, did the composer then choose to salute the late prince with such special music merely because Cöthen had better instrumentalists, and music caviar to the general in Leipzig would be better appreciated in a court setting? One might speculate further that the soprano arias (Nos. 8, 13, 49) were for Anna Magdalena to sing at the Cöthen event, as they are quite unlikely to have been in Leipzig. Or was it that music for Good Friday or any funeral or burial or general mourning was perfectly interchangeable? Nine arias from the Passion (Nos. 6, 8, 13, 20, 23, 39, 49, 57, 65) and a chorus (68) were as able to serve the mourning for a beloved prince as for a beloved Saviour? And their quality was fit for this beloved prince?

The movements for Leopold must have revived memories of him four months after he had died, months during which the Passion, had it indeed been completed two years earlier, was now being revised. The cantata's text for the arias Nos. 49 and 65 in the Passion matches the music so convincingly, with correct syllables and melismas, as to leave it far from obvious which version came first, especially as both texts are the work of Picander. With the Passion's No. 49 ('Aus Liebe'), especially challenging is the question of *Affekt*: what is the *emotion being expressed* by the music and its unique, bleak scoring? Its message of love ('out of love my Saviour will die') comes immediately before the crowd again cries 'Crucify!' (more stridently, up a key from before), making one of music's most unforgettable juxtapositions. But the *Affekt* of the Passion's aria is different from the cantata's, where the words 'may the world be left with joy' are more formulaic and less dramatic, therefore less *moving*. In the case of No. 39, an aria in B minor for alto and solo violin, the different texts of Passion and cantata –'Have mercy' (after Peter's Denial in the Leipzig Passion) and 'Receive me, God' (before the prince's Committal in Cöthen) – appear equally possible, despite the former now being associated, almost unbearably for some listeners, with the Denial.

In both arias, the Passion is more dramatic through being far more personal, as well as through its violent narrative. The overall dramatic effect results not only from the traditional musical devices (tempi, dynamics, keys, chromatics) but also from alert details such as the abrupt or almost abrupt ending to so many choruses, as the action presses on breathlessly. The St Matthew Passion, though less obviously symmetrical than the St John, is just as surely planned in its key-scheme, which wanders more than once from minor keys to major, from sharp to flat keys, moving from the elegiac E minor at the beginning down to a tragic C minor at the end. Part I's own progress, from E minor to E major, contributes to a different kind of drama, understated insofar as the big chorale-chorus in the major closes Part I, the story-so-far, calmly and without agitation or disturbance. So does the A major chorale closing Part I of St John Passion, as if both are preparing for the intervening sermon before Part II. The plans of each are much more complicated than in, say, Handel's *Belshazzar* (1744), which in principle begins and ends in the same key.

In the interest of giving the congregation its familiar associations, the word-setting throughout the Passions calls on traditional effects, discords for the contentious, concords for the peaceful, various conventional minor/major changes ('sinners' followed by 'my Jesus' in St Matthew, recitative 48), and countless instances of chromatics for a single word.

Many chromatic touches are momentary, not only in arias, choruses and recitative (as for *Armen*, 'the poor', in St Matthew) but also in the simple chorales ('fear and pain' in the final chorale). Seldom merely formulaic, these effects are often sudden, marking a word or sentiment. But in addition there are also certain 'purely musical' details that are the work of a composer prolific in unrelated fields, such as the organ-chorale structure of the E major chorus, or the pairing of the lively *fugato* of the 'Thunder and Lightning' chorus after the gentle prelude of the preceding aria. The penultimate chord of the St Matthew Passion, a certain dissonance needing resolution, is typical of a French *chaconne en rondeau* in C minor, just as the Neapolitan sixth at the end of the St John harks back to the Passacaglia. The final chorus in each of the two Passions resembles a *rondeau* in triple time, naturally 'heavier' than usual through the impact of their texts. The effect of their cadences may be much more voluptuously scored than any French antecedents, but their position at the end or near-end of a major work puts one in mind of a traditional allusion: the devotional dithyramb or choric dance closing a major drama.

In Leipzig in 1729, four new string instruments were made for the church. If they were ready in time for the Passion that year (Dok. II, p. 199) one can imagine that the accompaniments to Jesus's words were more than usually significant. (Soft string harmonies were also found in the anonymous St Mark Oratorio, 1726, and an arioso setting of Jesus's words in an earlier Passion, J. V. Meder's St Matthew of *c.* 1701.) Because of these string accompaniments, not the least dramatic gesture in the St Matthew Passion is their silence at the point when Jesus cries 'Eli, Eli', which isolates the bass soloist as the traditional *vox Christi*. In effect, intended or not, the strings' silence draws attention to a point made also by Luther in his translation of the New Testament: that Jesus's cry stands out, being in Hebrew while the rest is in Aramaic.

Further on the two Passions

I doubt if any baroque opera begins with such a sense of impending tragedy as the opening chorus of the St John Passion (those wailing oboes!), or leaves behind the impression of so terrible a story and cathartic exhaustion as the closing chorus of St Matthew. Neither reconciles one to the starkness of Good Friday. Even in Handel's operas, it is not easy to find passages as theatrical as the crowd scenes in St John, where the theatre is not a baroque opera-house but one's own imagination. The narrative itself

provides the drama, and while no elaborate music is more than optional to the Passion story (the Gregorian reading of St John at the Roman Mass of the Presanctified on Good Friday uses a simple tone), it is there to underline what is already written and already familiar. Not only this but for a congregation of the time, the effect would be all the greater because they had heard so little music in church during the previous Lent – nothing like the threatening pulsating minor chords opening each Passion.

Clearly the two Passions have different emphases which create a different *Affekt* or, as some people say, emotional power. Since the story itself in the Gospel is both laconic and powerful, music can be put to various uses: the arias in the St John Passion might be described as rather in the way of 'illustrating' the words; those in the St Matthew Passion invite a 'strong emotional reaction' to them. In the latter, Jesus's part in the narrative is so indirect through the 'reported action' that he hardly appears in the last section. There has to be a special pleading for the idea that a specific Johannine theology informs the earlier setting, for music's simple palette resists single significances, and individual interpretations cannot be categorical. It is true, however, that lessons read from St John's Gospel continued to be common in the weeks following Easter, as they are in those cantatas that followed the 1725 performance of the Passion, and certainly at times Bach (or a putative librettist) made choices as to what to bring to the fore. Both Peter's denial and the tearing of the veil of the temple use Matthew's fuller handling of these moments and thereby significantly increase their impact, though in different ways. The first excerpt has a human touch ('and he wept bitterly'), the second reflects more the rage of the gods. Neither is so clear in John's Gospel.

From the point of view of shape, the five Acts of the tragedy one may call *Passio Johannis* are already clear, but it seems a particular idea of Bach's to give five short scattered choruses unmistakably similar music and producing at least two effects: a musical feeling of unity and a recognizable picture of the crowd. From the point of view of musical grammar, one particular moment in each of the settings, Peter's bitter weeping after the Denial, is important in the hint it gives of the composer's increasing technical maturity. At this point in the recitative the St John is still very extravagant in a traditional way, pulling out familiar rhetorical stops, the plaintive melismas, the rising or falling chromatics, all of them baroque music's familiar conventions for conveying distress. (Spitta criticizes this moment for related but different reasons: 2, 1880, p. 354.) In contrast, at this moment St Matthew is simple, brief, light, with no old-fashioned rhetoric – and yet much more affecting. Perhaps it was for some related

reason, and not because it is taken from Matthew's Gospel or because the clergy objected, that Bach omitted Peter's weeping in one version of the St John. In another version, the recitative is followed by a more 'objective' chaconne-like aria than in St Matthew, another sign of their relative maturity, perhaps.

Other examples of the drama-through-reticence that is characteristic of the St Matthew Passion are the succinct close to the opening aria of Part II (it stops almost in mid-air) and, later, the brevity of the four soloists' final farewells. This is a touching moment, giving an impression that such farewells are temporary or provisional. (The Christmas Oratorio has a somewhat similar moment. But so, for a different kind of soloists, does the Concerto for Three Harpsichords in C major, where they bow out briefly at the end.) By no means is the St John Passion without simple pictorialisms, for instance in the chorus as the soldiers divide the vestment, where one can fancy the excitement of play in the sequence of resonant chords, and even fancy the dice being shaken or rolled in a certain little semiquaver figure. But that Bach knew the power of subtle understatement at particularly 'spiritual' moments is clear from the simple, brief, exquisite discord when the tenor asks the direct question, 'And in your place, what will you do?' in the St John Passion.

Especially in the St Matthew Passion, one can hear the simple chorales, and not merely the so-called 'Passion Chorale', as sad, not dramatically but implicitly so, already in the first of them when Jesus has just reminded the disciples of his crucifixion to come. More openly full of *Affekt*, as if in response to the sheer sadness of the story, is the combining of an old chorale and some new poetry, as in 'O Schmerz!' For this combination, surely Bach was thinking for himself: the cue for the choral responses given by Picander at this moment in his textbook is merely a 'Choir of the Faithful' (*Chor der Gläubigen*; Neumann 1974, p. 322). There is no hint here of a chorale as such; Bach's is a repeat of that same first chorale, now broken up into separate lines and put down a whole tritone (qv) – on both counts, a most striking compositional gesture, the result of a very alert response to the drama. Two extant Picander cantatas by Bach, Nos. 156 and 159, also combine chorale and new poetry, and if the two men ever collaborated closely, Picander must have been familiar with any liking Bach had for such combinations. Although the St John was performed some years before Picander published his first book of cantata-texts, to use complete chorales within arias or choruses was a natural extension of using bits of them, which the composer had done ever since the early Cantata No. 106. The Passion's aria-with-chorale 'Mein teurer

Heiland', however, has a sweet, newly composed melody beyond even the most tuneful moments of Cantata No. 106, and although the chorale enters periodically much as it would in an earlier organ-chorale prelude, it does so at a higher dramatic level.

However sustained and rich the St Matthew Passion is from moment to moment, with its long prayer-like arias and its hugely colourful layout, the St John Passion has a quality of its own that touches the listener from first to last, from – to cite two instances again – the dreadful opening reiterations of G minor through such dancing moments as the chaconne-like polonaise in a *galant* key ('Ach, mein Sinn', in F sharp minor) and so to the final, overpowering chorale. To respond to the trial scene in St John's Gospel as Bach does, with an organized key-plan (down, then up), with choruses that return, and a symmetry around the pivotal chorale 'Durch dein Gefängnis' in Part II, is not merely to construct abstract schemes but to be true to John's Gospel itself. The Passion's final chorale alone, with its unusually long hymn-verse, is a masterpiece of uncanny music, far more than a standard hymn as it moves towards an expression of hope. Could it ever be performed without raising the spirits of a congregation?

It might be that in recent times, key-plans and symmetries heard in the Passions have been proposed more enthusiastically than persuasively. Much has also been made of supposed anti-Semitism in the St John Passion, whose text might (or might not) refer to 'the Jews' with heartfelt scorn; one cannot say, since it was the composer's duty to transmit all elements contained in the given story, quite as much as it was for Shakespeare in the *Merchant of Venice*. Among details in this Passion that have tempted other fanciful interpretation are the chorus's three opening cries of *Herr* ('Lord'), suggesting to some the *Kyrie-Christe-Kyrie* at the beginning of a Mass. In the particular chorales closing each 'Act', key words relating to the main events of the story can be found, chosen because of it. Although in the St John the final C minor chorus required the following final chorale to be in E flat major, while elsewhere it appeared in other keys (C in Cantata No. 149, D in Cantata No. 174), yet at the same time the pitch-rise leaves an impression of defiance rather than despondency. In the St Matthew, the final C minor may have had another, more 'technical' reason, at least in part: a desire to make much of the heavy bottom Cs of the violone and organ. (These Cs are more insistent and powerful than in the chaconne of Couperin's *Premier Livre*, 1717, which in its way is comparable.)

The various revisions to the Passions suggest the composer to have made a tremendous personal and careful investment in them, part-musical, part-devotional. There is little evidence that the works were received

enthusiastically by congregation or clergy, especially after the St Matthew, which in some subsequent years was followed by those other, far more modest and even at times banal Passions already listed. Some at least of these must have suited a vespers service perfectly well, however, if not better. By March 1739, any resistance there might always have been to the grand Passion dramas, particularly among the clergy, seems to have come to a head, when an under-registrar of the town council (why he?) informed Bach that his piece for Good Friday vespers was not to be performed until he had obtained permission for it. This might have been the St John Passion, copying work on which abruptly stopped, it seems, to be picked up again only for a later performance in 1749 or 1750 (BJ 1988, p. 44).

Bach's reported reply was that there had always been such music, that he cared nothing about it, would get nothing out of it and that it was only 'a burden' (*ein onus*: Dok. II, p. 339). He would inform the church superintendent of the ban, though if it was the text that was objected to, the authorities should note (he implies) that the setting had already been heard a few times. All this suggests either that someone was objecting to the text, such as the interspersed non-Gospel sections set in emotionally charged arias, or that Bach had never submitted the text for approval, as he should have done. The latter is certainly possible, although if the objectors were officious or resentful clergy, as is more than likely, then they were hiding behind the clerk. Assuming that with age did not come indifference or undue indolence, Bach must still have been deeply affected by whatever reception was given these works, particularly if it had deteriorated during his years as *Thomascantor*.

History seemed to be repeating itself: Kuhnau's Passion had not been found appropriate for performance in St Thomas's until four years after it was done in the smaller New Church (Schering 1941, p. 24), and it is more than likely that not everyone cared for such dramatic presentations, at least as part of a regular liturgical event in a regular church. Oratorios in theatres or concert-rooms were a different matter, however, without much in the way of prayers or sermons, therefore less likely to offend. Some resistance to grand representations of the most sacred of all stories might be suspected when, in 1728, the Good Friday service in the university was expressly held without a full ensemble, or when simple congregational hymns took a major part in the St Luke setting for St Thomas's in 1730.

Either way, the composer's pique in 1739 is as understandable as it is unmistakable. Both Passions were open to criticism by puritans and Pietists, despite the fact that nobody with any discrimination could mistake their drama and sentiments for those of the theatre. Even an admiring

musician might find Chorus II's sole and theatrical interjections in the opening movement of the St Matthew Passion 'somewhat brutal', as Marpurg wrote thirty years later (*etwas brutal*: Dok. V, p. 202). In any case, as with cantatas, the composer is likely to have been increasingly indifferent to this very demanding part of his yearly duties as he saw them. Copies of the great Passions could be re-used, up to a point, but there are more documentary traces left of slighter works by other composers being heard than of revivals of the Passions. When the problem arose in 1739, for instance, probably Telemann's Passion oratorio *Seliges Erwägen* (1728) was performed instead.

Two further points can be made about the Passions, though with some hesitation, since they are not usually part of a modern listener's experience of the music.

The first point is that the Gospels' story, as told in Greek some time after the event, is not only central to faith but has something of the nature of an artwork: Greek tragedy as marked out by Aristotle. Basic to the structure of both the Gospels and the Passions, especially the St Matthew, is the tragedy's separation into *Acts* and the importance of a *choros* reacting to the events. The three *unities* are largely observed: of time (twenty-four hours), place (Jerusalem) and action (harshest violence off-stage). The tragedy protagonist's *hamartia* or 'fatal error' is Jesus's blasphemous threat to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. The 'potential reversal of circumstances' (*peripeteia*) is the 'high point' when he could have conciliated Pilate but does not (due to *hubris*, 'pride'?) though, according to St John, Pilate wanted to let him go. *Anagnorisis* or 'recognition, revelation' is there in the moments when Jesus is asked who he is, is named on the cross and finally acknowledged by the captain of the guard. After the *catastrophe* (the 'overturn' or death of the hero) there is a *catharsis* of sorts ('purification of the emotions') in the final dance-choruses of both Passions, reflecting, perhaps by chance, that the Greek *choros* is both dance and song. In the Gospels, the resurrection is a literal *apotheosis* ('deification, divine status') and follows on immediately, but not here in the Leipzig Passions. A Greek finality is implied in the St Matthew Passion when twice earlier the resurrection is mentioned: when Jesus speaks to his 'flock' (accompanied recitative) and when the Pharisees demand the tomb to be watched (full chorus).

Leipzig University's interest at the time in the Aristotelian rules was revealed most conspicuously in J. C. Gottsched's tragedy *Sterbender Cato*, which followed the French dramatists' understanding of them. Gottsched had lived in Leipzig since January 1724, become active in literary reform,

inaugurated the 'German Society' in 1727, and was variously in contact with Bach (see the Index). Although nothing directly connects Bach with any of this, the two Passion settings do fit in with new understanding of *tragoedia*, really for the first time in music. Later, a degree of ridicule attached to what was viewed as the Frenchness of 'rule drama' (see also chapter 8, note 16, p. 541), but that is unlikely to have been the case in the 1720s. A new function would have been given to the *choros* had the congregation joined in outwardly singing the chorales, which (for this reason alone) seems unlikely.

The second point suggests another dimension to the Passions difficult to envisage today: their story of a public execution being told to a Lutheran congregation by a group of performers who, along with members of that congregation, had all witnessed executions. New city regulations in Leipzig in 1721 specified that a procession of heavily armed soldiers was to accompany the 'poor sinner' to the place of execution outside the gates, just beyond the Johanniskirche where Bach himself was later to be interred. At certain moments in the formal procedures the night before, the choristers sang *Sterbelieder* (hymns for the dying), as they had done for many years (Schneider 1995, pp. 180f.). The school rules even specified that small boys be allowed home on the days of execution to witness with their parents the prisoner's walk to his own Golgotha (Schering 1941, p. 90). On one occasion during Bach's tenure, the town's wind-players, presumably the very same who played 'O Schmerz!' and 'Ach Golgotha!' in the St Matthew Passion, processed publicly with the workmen sent to build a new scaffold outside the walls, ready for use.

How far Bach, like the Superintendent of the Thomaskirche, was personally or ordinarily involved in these events is not established, but the procedures were public, and as 'director of Leipzig music' he was ultimately responsible for what was sung and played. The choristers were present at the start of the procession and perhaps beyond the start, and it was a contractual obligation of Bach's to accompany the boys at funerals. Although not very frequent, recent executions had been particularly grisly: a young woman or 'child-murderess' on 3 December 1723 and a botched beheading on 13 February 1727, a few weeks before the St Matthew Passion might have been first heard. There were others in 1724, 1740 (three victims, as in the Gospel) and 1739, this last on the market-place. Such events suggest very graphically that 'O Schmerz!' or 'Ach Golgotha!' aroused more than vicarious horror at an execution in Roman Syria seventeen hundred years earlier.

The Leipzig (kingdom of Saxony) regulations underline the important part that had been played by soldiers in the Gospel accounts: ensuring judicial process, saving Jesus from a lynch mob, confirming death and even (in accordance with Scripture) distributing his vestments. All this had a realism for the Passions' listeners. An especially affecting moment occurs in the St Matthew Passion when the captain of the guard finally and briefly recognizes the Son of God, with music in the soft lyrical key of A flat major and marked (for the only time in the autograph fair score) *due chori in unisono*. This was a telling gesture for those Leipzigers, including J. S. Bach, familiar with clearly stated military protocol, according to which soldiers of the Kingdom of Saxony accompanying the 'poor sinner' must not publicly sympathize or engage with him (or sometimes her). For a Roman centurion to have done so was a capital offence.

The first publications: Six Harpsichord Partitas

Despite other activities and a constant variety in staggering amounts of church music, Bach created sets of very different but substantial instrumental music during his early years in Leipzig, only one set of which was published ('made for general use', in the words of the Obituary's worklist):

composing and preparing six harpsichord suites (the Partitas, his first publication);
compiling and finalizing six organ sonatas;
finalizing or compiling six violin sonatas.

As already remarked, the title-pages of three previous autograph collections of keyboard music (WTC1, the Inventions and the *Orgelbüchlein*) raise the question whether they were intended for publication, which never happened. It was appropriate for a publication to have a fanciful title or title-page, and Bach's titles for these volumes were certainly less so than others published by previous Leipzigers: Kuhnau's 'fresh keyboard fruits' of 1693 and Christoph Graupner's 'monthly keyboard fruits' of 1722. This was the year Graupner became a candidate for the Leipzig job, and it would have been natural for the one eventually appointed to think of matching Graupner's volume. Were it certain that Bach was hoping the book-centre of Leipzig would be a good place for him to publish music, it would be equally certain that he was disappointed to find it was not.

Nevertheless, to publish some harpsichord suites, and to do so himself, must have seemed plausible in view of what was so common in France and England at the time. At first glance the most conventional of Bach's publications, the Six Partitas appeared singly in 1726, 1727 (Nos. 2 and 3) 1728, 1730 (Nos. 5 and perhaps 6), already planned as a set of six in 1726 but issued as such only in 1731, in at least two editions. Each partita was headed *Clavierübung* ('Keyboard practice'), as was the eventual set, the volume now called *Clavierübung Part I*. In several respects Bach is alluding to Kuhnau's suites of 1689 and 1692: in the title (*Übung* as Kuhnau's *Neue Clavier-Übung*), in the name for the suites (*Partita* as in Kuhnau's *Partien*) and in the manner of beginning each with a prelude. To publish them singly, as Bach did, suggests a still uncertain market for such publications in Germany, which could also be why Graupner had issued his twelve suites monthly, one at a time, and why Bach advertises that Nos. 2 and 3 can be bought from fellow musicians in Dresden, Halle, Lüneburg, Wolfenbüttel, Nuremberg and Augsburg, with whom he must have been in touch (Dok. II, p. 169; see chapter 8, note 17 on p. 547). The absence of Telemann's Hamburg is striking.

The completed volume has the appearance of aiming to surpass in all respects both Kuhnau's and Graupner's suites, as well as other sets of the time. This is clear not only in the musical language bar by bar but in the systematic plan to present six different ways to make a suite, a plan more thoughtful than the miscellany of, say, Handel's *Eight Suites* of 1720. There are even more individual plans in each of the three following volumes of the *Clavierübung* series, each breaking away from any antecedents in order to explore a particular theoretical idea:

in *Clavierübung II*, contrast between two national styles and genres;
in *Clavierübung III*, a complex programme part religious, part didactic;
in '*Clavierübung IV*', thirty-one ways to exploit a harmonic skeleton.

Such explorations are matched by others in later publications:

in the Musical Offering, twenty ways to exploit a theme;
in the Canonic Variations, ten types of canon, labelled in the print;
in the Art of Fugue, twenty (?) applications of a fugue theme.

A surprise about the *Clavierübung* compilations is not only how little Bach ever published (or succeeded in getting published – it is not always clear which) but how almost all manuscript copies of them derive in whole or in part from the prints, not from previous versions or drafts. This may indicate that he actively avoided the music's getting known

beforehand or distributed in other versions, as was often the case with unpublished works. An exception, however, is the versions of Partitas Nos. 3 and 6 (not so called) copied in the Anna Magdalena book dated 1725 on its cover, presumed to be earlier versions and in that case, indicating that Bach did stagger publication of the six for some reason. Another surprise is that there are no surviving autographs of the four compilations, suggesting he made only one fair copy of each, presented it straight to the engravers through whose work alone we know them, and discarded earlier drafts.

Being effectively Bach's first public offering in print, the Six Partitas deserve particularly close attention. They are certainly exposing a vast catalogue of musical ideas, repaying any amount of study by connoisseurs now as then. A seventh partita was advertised in 1730 (Dok. II, p. 202), but this either did not materialize or is to be understood as the next piece Bach did publish, in 1735. (Nothing is certain, however, about what the intention had been or why it was another five years before *Clavierübung II* appeared.) One conjecture is that all six partitas are, in their different ways, setting out to counter the tired French-Italian conventions of Handel's set of 1720. The first known reference to them is to *ein Opus Clavier Suiten* ('A work of keyboard suites', Dok. II, p. 160), but the associations with the word *Clavierübung* were important to a Leipziger. *Practice* (*Übung*) in this connection signifies not, as for musicians today, the 'repeated exercise in an art' but rather a 'realm of action' (*Oxford English Dictionary*). This is music in practice as distinct from in theory, thus keeping up the old apposition *teorica/prattica* of the *ars musica*, and doing so for the sake of pupils and buyers but also for the composer's own sense of an instructor's duties.

Having published this first set of keyboard works himself, Bach later issued Parts II and 'IV' through publishers elsewhere (Leipzig, Nuremberg) but Part III, the organ-chorales, again himself. What the financial implications of this are cannot be substantiated any more than how many copies were sold or how many manuscript copies were made from them. That a former student, J. G. Ziegler, seems to be the engraver for Partitas Nos. 3–6, following the much more professional work for Nos. 1 and 2 by the Nuremberg engraver Schmid (Butler 1986), implies that Bach might have been cutting costs. Judging by the order of movements in the earlier 'French Suites', BWV 812–17, Ziegler misleadingly saved space by placing the arias of Partitas Nos. 4 and 6 after the Courante rather than after the Sarabande, as normal. (Putting movements out of order for the sake of the printing layout is known also in Graupner's suites.) In the case of No. 4,

there is a sad contrast between the quality of the music and the quality of the engraving. This was not unique: an earlier *Clavierübung* (by Johann Krieger, Nuremberg 1699) is printed so clumsily by movable type as to be at times hard to decipher. But at least Bach's engraving work was farmed out, unlike that for Pachelbel's *Musicalische Ergötzung* which claimed, rather ambiguously, that it had been etched (*radiert*) by the composer himself.

Partita is a strange word, either Italian (like *Sonata*) or Latin (a past participle?), analogous to *partia* ('suite'), and though often in the past denoting *variations* or *divisions*, here it stands for *suite*. (See also the Glossary.) The six-part *opus*, as Bach called it, was planned to follow a key-order, and each *partita* or *part* of it was planned to demonstrate a way of reconceiving the keyboard suite. Practical reasons for publishing the partitas singly (time, cost, uncertainty of market) are matched by musical reasons: each is thought afresh, independently, proving how a composer might move in new directions. The styles vary greatly: some movements composed earlier, such as the Gigue in No. 6, have a grinding quality that is totally absent from the novel and elegant No. 1.

How much of an influence on the newer sounds was Rameau's *Livre de clavecin* of 1724 is guesswork, for Rameau's name crops up in no relevant document. (The copy of Rameau's *Nouvelles Suites* of *c.* 1728 made by Bach's pupil Agricola in about 1738 leaves many open questions about what circulated amongst the Leipzig musicians and when.) Rameau's *Livre* of 1724 includes both the old four-movement suite and various novel *galanteries*, and was quite the most modern keyboard music of the time. The word *Galanterien* also appears on the partitas' title-pages, as it does in some other keyboard music of the time (see the Glossary), raising the question of how alert Bach was to such rival publications.

One technical novelty in the Six Partitas was the appearance of 2/4 time, a new fashion coming from Italy via Dresden. It does not appear in WTC1 at all, and each of its three very different instances in the Six Partitas has, significantly, an Italian title (Capriccio, Scherzo, Aria). In Partita No. 4, the aria represents a certain kind of modern vocal aria found now increasingly in sacred music (e.g. Cantata No. 9) and secular (Cantatas Nos. 213 and 214) and in attractive tunes by Telemann and others. Aware of the new 2/4 metre from at least the time he transcribed italianate concertos in Weimar (BWV 592 for organ), Bach turned often to it in his more italianate music, as if it were a hallmark. 'Kron und Preis' in Cantata No. 214 (1733) looks like a tuneful version of arias in J. A. Hasse's

Italian opera *Cleofide* for Dresden, whose premiere in September 1731 Bach is plausibly conjectured to have heard.[6]

Even more than usual at the time, the partitas' traditional movements, Allemande, Courante, Sarabande and Gigue, have been carefully fashioned so as to present six quite different conceptions of each. There is nothing in common between them and yet they are undeniably allemandes, courantes, sarabandes and gigues respectively. The clear wish to create variety in every genre, as one finds in the opening movements of the cantatas, becomes especially clear in the Partitas. They offer the player (and in this case the buyer) six new ways to understand the four most common and conventional suite-movements, now all on a smaller and, may one say, subtler scale than in the opening movements of cantatas. While other composers' sets of suites and concertos are seldom uniform, the variety within the Partitas is conspicuous. Consistent with this search for variety is finding six different names for the six opening preludes, an idea Bach might have picked up from Mattheson's *Suites* of 1714 though resulting now in some rather puzzling names (why Fantasia, why Praeambulum?).

Including its most distinctive Praeludium, Partita No. 1 is an original, one-off masterpiece in which suite-conventions have been re-interpreted and given an unfamiliar elegance, with melody and harmony reconceived in new ways of writing for the instrument, as if inspired by some of Rameau's movements. Even by No. 1's standards, the last movement (a *perpetuum mobile* gigue) is quite extraordinary in its novel way of using the hands: one might well think it piano music *avant la lettre*. Elsewhere a dance or two begins to anticipate the 'character pieces' or *Charakterstücke* of a later period, as when the original minuet of No. 3 becomes a *burlesca* on publication, possibly influenced by a movement so called in Couperin's *Troisième Ordre* of 1722. The change of name must imply something new, either in the piece itself or in the way it is meant to be played. On the other hand, it rather looks as if Bach had no wish to follow all French customs, including the picturesque names for suite-movements, even though here in the Partitas is the nearest thing to the French *petite reprise* and the *rondeau*, in Nos. 6 and 2. Nor does he any longer follow the old custom of Froberger and others of giving movements an immediate variation or *double*, something still there in the earlier Solo Violin *Partia* in B minor.

[6] E.g. the aria 'Se mai più sarò geloso', used at least twice in Hasse's *Cleofide* and in the version made for Venice in 1736, *Alessandro nell'Indie*.

It might be claimed, somewhat against the grain of much Bach commentary today, that there is a finer art in such inventiveness than in setting texts for church cantatas, since cantatas rely on a fund of musical conventions for a fund of textual conventions. Contemporary cantatas such as Nos. 88 (July 1726) or 102 (August 1726) seem to me barely to approach the modernity of the Partitas in B flat or C minor, except occasionally in a dance-like movement, such as the fourth of Cantata No. 102. As with the two well-known harpsichord Fantasias in C minor ('Arpeggio') and D minor ('Chromatic'), there are by now no established conventions or antecedents for the composer's keyboard music, everything is thought afresh. The very differences in shape between these two Fantasias alone is typical too of the Partitas. The tight 'sonata binary form' of the one (C minor) contrasts with the 'free narrative form' of the other (D minor), each with its own harmonic rhythm and each profoundly idiomatic for the keyboard: they are in turn a modern *étude* and a traditional *toccata*.

As the Gigue in B flat major might be in part Bach's response to remarks on hand-crossing in Rameau's *Livre* of 1724, so a lot of Partita No. 5 reminds one of the subtle, delicate writing in Rameau's *Nouvelles Suites* of *c.* 1728 – in which case Bach's response, if this is behind No. 5, was immediate. Other up-to-date details in *Clavierübung I* have been likened to the simple gestures in the violin sonatas by Friedemann's violin teacher at the period, J. G. Graun, which is likely enough. Graupner's suites, though 'mostly for beginners' (which the Partitas decidedly are not), are also in their way original and unpredictable, raising the question whether in the 1720s, German composers were searching to write suites with as much novelty as possible, far away from the much-worked formulae of old.

However, whether Graupner or Rameau or anyone else would conceive a suite consisting entirely of different kinds of triple time, as Bach does in Partita No. 5, is doubtful. Here are examples of slow, medium and fast triple time, wittingly or unwittingly reminiscent of late medieval theory (*modus*, *tempus*, *prolatio*), the result of a plan that can hardly be accidental. In the Minuet there is even a fourth kind of triple time, completing the catalogue of possibilities: a simultaneous 3/4 + 6/8 expressed in the movement's odd notation, which is otherwise difficult to explain. That Bach had already shown an interest in the different ways of writing in triple time – something he could have learnt from Frescobaldi – can be seen in each of the five movements of Cantata No. 137 (including its final chorale, 1725), and clearly it was not only in keyboard music that he had such ideas.

Rethinking the conventions of the suite is the hallmark of the Six Partitas and would lead him, in the Partita in C minor, to another work

in which there seems to be no familiar convention that is not drastically reconsidered. It starts with the rhythms of an *ouverture*; then an *andante* follows, its melody unlike any other; then a two-part (!) fugue, followed by a seamless allemande, a courante with powerful hemiolas (qv), a seamless sarabande, a terse breathless *rondeau* and finally a totally uncapricious capriccio. Not one of these is conventionally handled, all are coloured by a peculiar seriousness that is unmistakable from the Partita's very first chord.

With the announcement in a Leipzig newspaper of 1 November 1726 that the first of the *partitas* was now available (Dok. II, p. 160), Bach begins an occasional series of advertisements for music by himself and others he has for sale. This is an activity far removed from church and school duties. Kuhnau had published sets of suites and sonatas but only while serving as organist at the Thomaskirche, i.e. not yet as cantor with a cantor's responsibilities. Echoes of his suites in Bach's set include a planned sequence of keys (in Bach's, not straight but zigzagged), varied preludes, inverted themes in gigues, a reference to French *Art* and even the final inscription ('to God alone the glory'). The appearance in the same year, 1726, of the fourth edition of Kuhnau's *Clavierübung*, Part II, could have been a further goad for his successor to venture into publishing for himself.

Cantatas and suites have this in common, that they are likely to consist of six or seven movements organized as a sequence of contrasts, alternating the vigorous with the contemplative. Just as the Six Partitas' overtures have little in common, so any six cantata choruses will work their counterpoint in six different ways and vary the sequence of movements, sometimes rather puzzlingly – as when a cantata has two consecutive arias without intervening recitative or vice versa. Performers of both kinds of music still find them demanding, and a big question for the partitas is how many original buyers could play them. Their difficulty was remarked on at the time, both by a professional musician and an amateur, the former Johann Mattheson and the latter the nineteen-year-old Luise Kulmus (Dok. II, pp. 221, 223), who described them as 'making me seem like a beginner each time', a sentiment shared by many a player ever since.

Other instrumental music: Six Violin Sonatas, Six Organ Sonatas

Also probably belonging to the early Leipzig years is the compilation of the Sonatas for Violin and Harpsichord, collected as a set of six, possibly in some connection with Friedemann's violin lessons in Merseburg in 1726.

The Organ Sonatas were also said to be 'for Friedemann', apparently a little later (see below). Probably other poorly documented instrumental works (transcriptions, sonatas, concertos), in at least one of their versions, belong to much the same period and were useful for music-making of various kinds, including domestic. Though none of these works was published, the two sets of sonatas had potential as publications, an ambition achieved only with the first harpsichord partita.

Like the cantatas, these collections scarcely ever follow current conventions idly. At times, the Violin and Harpsichord Sonatas, BWV 1014–19, betray a driving earnestness and artifice, producing some ungrateful moments for violin that suggest they were compiled from mixed originals, in other keys and/or for other instruments. At other times, there are striking melodies, expressive (Nos. 4, 6) or positively perky (Nos. 1, 2, 3), as well as fugal *allegri* pitting violin against the harpsichord in a new kind of trio. The result once again is a newly created genre with a distinct aura, music not quite like anything else. On paper, because of their four movements these sonatas are similar to the three for solo violin in the earlier set of *Sei Solo* (Nos. 1, 3 and 5), but only in plan. The contrast between the solo and the 'trio' sonatas produces more profound differences between the corresponding four movements than merely in the texture: the trios more frankly melodious, at times far more like a cantata movement than the solos ever are, and altogether more approachable for a listener, less *étude*-like.

In involving the keyboard as an equal partner, the six violin sonatas resemble more closely the three known as the gamba sonatas (whatever their other versions might have been) in which priority is given to melodies that are mostly treated contrapuntally, i.e. in three-part invertible counterpoint. That such trios could take various forms – i.e. with the counterpoint adapted to different instruments – was not something exclusive to Bach, though his works in this format do form a conspicuous group. The result is so different from the dominant violin sonatas of Corelli that one might think the most italianate feature of Bach's is their four-movement plan, mostly slow–quick–slow–quick. Although Emanuel did refer to the Six Violin Sonatas as *Trios* and rather more strangely as *Clavirtrios* (Dok. III, pp. 492, 279), several of the movements have more than three voices, unlike the true trio-sonatas for organ, and so give the keyboardist several rôles. But such fuller written-out accompaniments are also unusual, being not, as they usually are, improvised above a *basso continuo* nor yet with the textures of the later piano and violin sonata, but resembling more a *basso continuo* realized in a specified way. In the sonatas containing both kinds

of movement, *trio* and *accompagnato*, one recognizes that J. S. Bach was once more creating his own genre, one familiar neither in the 1720s nor quite as it became in 1800. As Emanuel wrote in 1774, they were 'still sounding good' fifty years after they were composed, and several of their Adagios 'could not be more singable [*singbarer*] if composed today' (Dok. III, p. 279) – a pertinent observation for works by then half a century old.

For private or public performance, one can easily imagine a gamba or cello participating in the accompanied violin sonatas, making another kind of trio by playing the keyboardist's left-hand part and so duplicating the bass. (Yet another kind of trio was the 'sonata' from the Musical Offering two decades later: here, two solo instruments plus *basso continuo* produce a more common kind of trio.) Adding a bass string instrument to the harpsichord's left-hand part in the violin sonatas was already suggested in a copy of *c.* 1725 attributed to Johann Heinrich Bach (nephew, a student in the choir-school): *col Basso per viola da gamba accompagnato se piace,* 'optionally accompanied by gamba playing the bass part', but a part that has to be specially made, and quite possibly was.

The mood, texture and characteristics of genre vary over an even wider range than is usual in any *set of six* other than J. S. Bach's. They have little more in common than in keeping to the four-movement plan, and not even that in the Sonata No. 6. The wide survey of violinistic devices (double-stop, *dolce* melody, jolly dance, soaring line, fugal motifs, fast/slow, *détaché*/legato) could be a sign that they were indeed practice-music, and although there is little of the flashy Italian rhetoric increasingly popular in the 1720s (the various cadenzas, *bariolage*, *perfidia*) nevertheless if Friedemann could play them he was a gifted violinist. Another violin-student was the composer himself, and since his violin parts are as consistently demanding as his keyboard parts, they might equally be seen as witness to his abilities, whether at home or in the Collegium concerts (qv).

In general terms, one occasionally recognizes in the violin sonatas ideas from elsewhere, particularly cantatas (the Siciliano of No. 4, the Adagio of No. 6 or No. 1) and contrapuntal studies (a double fugue and a chromatic fourth, both in No. 4). But there are also lively idiosyncratic pieces (the Allegros of Nos. 2 and 3) and instances of soaring violin melodies such as one might find in the Passions (Nos. 3, 6). Fugue subjects and workings in, for example, No. 4 in C minor have not only that characteristic vigour of so much of Bach's fugal counterpoint but sound contemporary with the C minor Harpsichord Partita, the leaping subject of whose capriccio, by the way, is more than faintly violinistic. At the same time, the sonatas' keyboard part is often *sui generis*. The opening Adagios of Nos. 1, 3 and 5 are not

easily matched in other harpsichord music, as this has come down in written-out form: they are signs of the kind of accompaniment the composer might improvise above the bass when playing chamber music. In that case, they offer models and could be meant as such.

Although the rather scrappy sources for the Six Violin Sonatas are compatible with the repertory one imagines being played by Bach family members, it could be that a missing autograph score of the set, as is the case here, is a further sign of a publishing project that never materialized. Another sign is the arrangement as a set of six, the usual publishable number. The three Sonatas for Viola da Gamba, on the other hand, are not a group with clear origin and purpose, being reformed or partial arrangements, made not necessarily by Bach and derived from compositions of the Cöthen period. A date of 1742 proposed for the composer's copy of the Sonata 'No. 1' in G major (BWV 1027) suggests when it might have been used but says nothing about its origin. The sonatas could belong with other works as examples of what was played at chamber concerts of one kind or another from about 1720 onwards, not necessarily as a group of 'Three Sonatas for Viola da Gamba'.

'No. 3' (BWV 1029) has many hallmarks of a string concerto: the type of themes, the three-movement structure, and certain details of melody and harmony that are noticeably similar to moments in the 'Brandenburg Concertos'. The number of movements such as they exist in a single posthumous source may say little, however: Sonata 'No. 2' (BWV 1028) has four, a work possible to imagine either as a genuine gamba sonata or as a chamber trio to be scored in one of several ways. 'No. 1' (BWV 1027) has themes and textures equally evocative of other, even more plausible, versions, including one for two flutes (BWV 1039), a trio probably earlier than its form as a gamba Sonata. Posthumous versions of BWV 1039 for organ suggest a natural association between flutes and organ in the mind of Bach students, though the finale of 'No. 3' (BWV 1029) was also arranged by somebody for organ. No doubt Bach's chamber works circulated in more versions than are now known, leading one to suppose that he was aware of this and wrote accordingly.

Fortunately, much clearer in date and function, and therefore better able to illustrate a stage of development, is another *set of six*: the Sonatas for Organ, compiled in the later 1720s and fair-copied as a set in *c.* 1730. First and most obviously, these works are without precedent in the world of organ music: complete chamber-like sonatas in three movements, deft, succinct and, in being less diffuse than the chamber sonatas, almost miniature. They are uniquely taxing for the player while remaining

patently practical. The result is another genuine new genre. Probably it was Friedemann himself who said that his father 'drew them up' for him (*aufgesetzt*: Forkel 1802, p. 60), not only, one assumes, for practice while he was a student in Leipzig (1729–), but also to support him in his professional ambitions, as in Dresden from 1733.

The word *sonata* signifies italianate chamber music appropriate for a city on which Bach may have had his eye, for himself as well as his beloved son, who then made his own copy of the Six Sonatas a year or two later (probably complete, though now with the manuscript's second half in the hand of his stepmother). The manuscript made by the composer gives the earliest known complete set of the six, each headed 'Sonata 1 [etc.]' and ending, appropriately, 'Il Fine dei Sonate', but there is no title-page. Various versions of the movements circulated in the hands of close colleagues to whom the composer's final fair copy may not have been available, for some reason.

There is a clear picture here of Bach's method in compiling sets of works, for probably only half a dozen of the movements were composed for the compilation, the rest arranged from earlier organ or instrumental works, hence perhaps Friedemann's ambiguous term *aufgesetzt*. A title-page would be expected if the composer had been near to publishing the set. Nor, strange to say, is there any reference to the organ beyond the conventional (but unspecific) heading for two manuals, *à 2 Clav et Pedal*. Even that is not entirely definitive since the left hand does not go below tenor C, making it possible to dispense with a second manual if necessary (on a single manual, left hand plays down an octave). A double clavichord with a pedalboard would also serve, of course, but from the open score it would not be difficult to extract parts and make versions for other solo instruments.

Trio-writing for the organ is as old as anything in its repertory, either requiring pedal or (often in France) not, but three-movement italianate trio sonatas were a new conception and had no obvious function in church. Rather than old French organ trios or German chorale-trios, the model for Bach was the modern string trio, italianate in principle and with Italian tempo-words throughout: indeed, chamber sonatas. The concept 'trio' is now remodelled so that the bass-line becomes more appropriate for alternating feet than for the bowing arm of a cellist, though the pedal also takes the theme from time to time. Meanwhile above the bass, the hands are engaged in peerless invertible counterpoint. The movements are planned to show how many ways there are to write for two hands and feet, even to the point at which the hands play in unison (No. 6) – an unusual and unexpected challenge to the player.

As a group, the Organ Sonatas make a world of their own, distinctive, accomplished, intimate, giving the player a curious satisfaction (once the technique is mastered) as the hands answer each other, often with syncopations dancing from hand to hand. Even the melodies seem peculiar to the group, despite resembling or even originating in other instrumental music, such as a sonata for flutes in No. 1 or a movement for gamba in No. 4 – the first probably, the second certainly, a transcription. The keys and their sequence are planned (three minors and three majors, each in ascending order), and changes are consciously rung in the kinds of melody and the shapes of movements. The result is a catalogue of what can be done with trios:

a straightforward concerto-like ritornello in BWV 530.i;
a less sectional ritornello form in BWV 526.i;
rondo fugue in BWV 528.iii;
binary slow and fast movements in BWV 525;
simple *da capo* form in BWV 529.i;
complex *da capo* in BWV 527.i;
semi-fugal finales of Nos. 4 and 6.

Especially the last are surely meant as an *exercitium pedalis*, suggesting what could now be required of a student's pedal technique since Bach's earliest days in Weimar when, probably, he first drafted the entrancing Andante of the fourth Sonata.

There is much here that is very like up-to-date chamber sonatas or trios, especially those for winds (oboes, flutes), and extant sources are surprising for offering no more evidence than they do for the uses to which these pieces could be put. Some of the melodies have a distinctly *galant* colouring: rather doleful in BWV 525.ii, some sighing motifs in BWV 526.ii, a *dolce* flute duet in BWV 527.ii, etc. Though still fairly sketchy, articulation signs (slurs, etc.) encourage keyboard-players to match the niceties becoming more and more explicit in instrumental music of the day. For the performer, however, not only do many movements demand techniques at least as skilled as for certain later chorale-settings, but several finales lift organ-playing on to a new plateau of what can be expected of organists.

'Secular cantatas' and other activities

Not long after, the Duke of Weissenfels appointed him his Capellmeister. (*Obituary*)

'Not long after' relates to the Obituary's previous reference to Bach's 'funeral music for his deeply beloved prince in Cöthen', in March 1729. Now on Prince Leopold's death, but only now, a new titular capellmeistership is conferred, the old title de facto terminated and replaced by a new. Duke Christian of Weissenfels qualifies the new title as *von Haus aus*, for a musician 'not in residence'.

Court appointment at the grand and important residence of Weissenfels would have gone some way by then to enhance Bach's status, certainly on paper and perhaps in spirit. Before the move to Leipzig, it must have been clear to anyone that there were advantages in living in a major city connected in various ways to the capital and court of Dresden, as well as having its own international fairs and university of repute. But what it would have meant to Bach to be the first non-university-graduate in living memory to hold the Leipzig position is hard to guess, and a court appointment would have helped. In Walther's *Lexicon* of 1732 Kuhnau was still being noted for his publications and his knowledge of theology, law, oratory, algebra, maths, foreign languages, *poesi* and *re musica* (written music theory). As already noted, three preferred candidates to succeed Kuhnau (Telemann, Fasch and Graupner) had all been students in Leipzig, though not necessarily full graduates, and their withdrawal does raise the question whether they knew too much about the city and its ruling elite to want the job.

After moving to Leipzig Bach kept up connections both with Cöthen, where he and Anna Magdalena received a performance fee in December 1725, and with Weissenfels where he stayed for some time in February–March 1729 (Dok. I, p. 58). After its conferment, the Weissenfels title (noted in the Obituary but not confirmed in any known document) remained valid until the Weissenfels *cappella* was disbanded in 1736, to be in effect replaced by the King of Saxony's title of *Hofcompositeur*. In official documents Bach consistently gave his secular court-title first (Cöthen, then Weissenfels, then royal Dresden), and only secondarily the title he assumed in Leipzig, *director chori musici lipsiensis*.

Whether formally recognized or not, this municipal *directorship* carried a certain status in the city, especially for musical visitors to the regular Leipzig fairs. These, at New Year, Easter and Michaelmas, brought to the city many publishers and authors of books of music and music-theory, and its cantor was as likely as any retailer to have benefited from those who came to buy. One Slovakian-Hungarian musician, Johann Francisci, reported visiting Leipzig for the Easter Fair in 1725 with a certain merchant and having the good fortune to meet with 'the famous capellmeister Bach'

(Dok. II, p. 379). For Bach himself, the question of writing books and publishing them did not arise: there is no sign that Mattheson's mass of publications (of which there were 'as many as he had lived years', according to Charles Burney 1785, p. 8), ever encouraged him to write.

The titular appointment at Weissenfels in 1729 is likely to have come about because Bach sued for it, making representations after the Cöthen prince had died in November 1728. That he still used the Cöthen title for a further two months (BJ 1994, p. 15), suggests that the Weissenfels title came in January or February 1729, probably connected with Duke Christian's visit to Leipzig in January 1729, when another such cantata was presented, BWV 210a. Successive dukes of Weissenfels had not been indifferent to gifted musicians, and the ducal castle was the nearest major noble residence to Leipzig, with a splendid baroque chapel and rather glamorous organ. It had probably been in this castle, in February 1713, that Bach had had a non-liturgical cantata performed, BWV 208 (BJ 2013, p. 91). Soon after this the Duke of Weimar had raised his salary, possibly aware of the attractions of Weissenfels. The duties of the capellmeister were informal and unsalaried, and how long the title remained valid is unclear: the present to Bach of some venison from Weissenfels in 1741, under the next duke, suggests an annual gift still made to a (former) honorary appointee.

The Weissenfels connection tempts many a speculation. It may be behind Bach's particular acquaintance with older Latin works by Palestrina, Peranda and Kerll, for a tradition of using Palestrina Mass movements had existed there since the 1680s. Here also in the town lived Bach's mother-in-law until her death in 1746, as did Anna Magdalena's trumpeter-brother with whom one can imagine her performing the dazzling Cantata No. 51 (*c.* 1730) in the baroque chapel. This piece certainly reflects contemporary musical tastes at courts in Weissenfels or even Dresden, where its scoring for singer and trumpet was not unusual. No. 51 is not the only exceptional work amongst the 'less regular' cantatas about which little is known but which, if only there were documentation about its origin and purpose, might reveal Bach's spheres of activity outside Leipzig.

A work that consciously brought to Leipzig the brilliant, light tastes of a court and its chapel would no doubt appeal to a potential future employer just at the moment that Bach, so one might conjecture, was looking into the possibilities of a good court position. One cantata apparently written for and performed at Weissenfels for the duke's birthday on 23 February 1725, BWV 249a, is interesting for being Bach's first setting of a text by Picander (another of his soon in the St Matthew Passion), and also one of

three forms of a work that has become known as the 'Easter Cantata' (called 'Easter Oratorio' from 1738 or so). Pastoral elements in one version of the work were not out of place, five weeks later, for celebrating the resurrection of the Good Shepherd and Paschal Lamb. This alone makes the usual term 'secular cantatas' for such works as BWV 249a questionable, and more is said about this below.

A second Picander text, likewise set to the music of the same arias and now catalogued as BWV 249b, was another birthday offering but this time, in 1726, to Count Joachim Friedrich von Flemming, Governor of Leipzig and Saxon *Premierminister*, who was acquainted with Handel and, it seems quite likely, had been host for the intended Marchand–Bach 'competition' in 1717. (Of course, one wonders whether Bach knew of the connection with Handel, about whose performances in London Flemming was kept informed.) As Prince Leopold of Cöthen's funeral music shared certain arias with the St Matthew Passion, linked by different recitatives, so these three cantatas shared arias, resulting in two 'secular' works and one sacred. It is not clear whether in February 1725 Bach already had written the Easter Oratorio and used its arias for a birthday cantata meanwhile, but all the movements have a distinct, festive feel to them, their sounds more of a concert than a liturgy, suitable for those events outside church that were clearly relished by their composer. His subsequent reworking of the material in the 1730s and again in the 1740s signifies that he had more than a casual interest in it and therefore in the potential of a small-scaled 'oratorio'.

One hears a similar festive feel in cantatas written in honour of two professors in the University of Leipzig in 1725, BWV 36c and 205, the first such works by the new cantor, who evidently worked with enthusiasm and a wish to please. The fifteen movements of BWV 205, 'Zerreißet, zersprenget', show every sign of this. It is difficult not to imagine in them a welcome, even a delighted, turn away from the first two years' liturgical repertory, with its brilliant choruses and arias, its unmistakably graphic depictions (rushing winds, etc.), all melodically not only inspired but quite distinctive. The brass and timpani alone in the first and last choruses, and even in an aria surrounded by refined recitatives, establish the cantor as a municipal music director. BWV 205 in particular sustains that distinctive quality of other so-called secular works, and was perfectly appropriate with other words to celebrate the coronation day of the new elector as King of Poland nine years later.

That less than half of these documented 'secular cantatas' have survived so as to be performable today in that form is a great blow to the true

understanding of J. S. Bach, for he brought to such works the same restless inspiration as he did to the Passions. This is a serious loss. There is every sign he saw them as musically equal to the church cantatas, working with the same if not more care, and – so one might guess – viewing them as pieces of high musical quality fit to be re-used, revised or mined for other music. If their sources had been preserved as systematically as those of the church cantatas were, or if the church cantatas had survived less well than they did, common perceptions of the Bach oeuvre ever since might have been very different.

The thirteen-movement cantata Anh. I 196 on a text by Gottsched for the wedding of important Leipzig personages, composed already in 1725, is unfortunately lost in this form, but a reconstructed aria suggests a distinct *galant* style deliberately adopted for such events. Dedicatees might not always have been present during the performance of such homage or congratulatory cantatas, but in some cases the texts were printed for distribution, in as many as two hundred copies for BWV 206 on the birthday celebration of August II, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland: a sign that this was an important celebration for the Leipzigers. From the extant cantatas and serenades now representing the fifty or so known to have originated for various dedicatees (royalty, nobility, academics), one can conclude that Bach was, in some degree, an active member of certain social circles in the city, not merely their paid purveyor of suitable Sunday music.

Only from hints, however, can one visualize what these social contacts were. Probably it was through the local landowner at nearby Störmthal, one responsible for restoring the church and giving it an organ, that Bach was invited to participate in the inauguration of both, just a few months after moving to Leipzig. (It was about then, probably, that he and the organ's builder Zacharias Hildebrandt formed what seems to have remained a firm friendship.) Similarly it would be from some such personal connection that he obtained the texts for nine cantatas in April and May 1725 from Mariane von Ziegler, the daughter of a property-owner involved in Bach's original election as cantor, and connected to later godparents for two of Bach's children. Quite how the connection came about between poet and composer (or his wife) and whether there was personal collaboration between them remain unclear. Certainly Bach knew von Ziegler's texts before they were published as *Versuch in gebundener Schreib-Art*, in two volumes, 1728 and 1729, and several free conjectures could follow from the fact that nine of the thirteen post-Easter cantatas of 1725 draw on her texts.

But actual 'collaboration' between Bach and von Ziegler is a matter for speculation. Why, for instance, was there a gap after 'Chorale Cantata' No. 1 (Annunciation, 1725) before the collaboration with von Ziegler flourished in April and May 1725 – because other texts had already been selected for the printed textbooks? Is it significant that the texts are particularly close to the day's Gospel and that, for some other quite different reason, the music itself gives some emphasis to woodwinds? The finished works do suggest that the composer was responding to the nine texts (BWV 103, 108, 87, 128, 183, 74, 68, 175, 176) by rethinking his musical details, possibly to reflect somehow their common view of that peculiar empty feel one might have in the post-Easter liturgies. There are fewer *da capo* arias than in the other recent cantatas, and the familiar pattern of chorus–recitatives–arias–chorale is there only some of the time. It could be that no more than nine texts were set either because of some now uncertain theological qualms or because Bach's third cantata-cycle, starting after Trinity 1725, found the composer simply less vigorous in conceiving cantatas anew for every Sunday than he was before. It is hard to argue that the presence in some cantatas of an unusual instrument (violoncello piccolo) is a consequence of poet's and composer's shared knowledge of St John's Gospel.

It seems that by the mid- to late 1720s Bach was well known in some professional circles, being 'very well received' for an organ recital in Dresden in September 1725, frequently called 'famous' in print (*berühmt*, *rühmlichst bekannt*, *praestantissimo*, *clarissimus*, *celeberrimus*), praised by a visitor from Brunswick above the organists in his own town, and compared favourably with Frescobaldi, a comparison that would have held great significance for any knowledgeable musician. If Handel was usually portrayed as more of a charismatic figure than Bach, he had the advantage of living in a royal capital city whose people in polite society talked and corresponded a great deal about the theatre and its musicians, and lionized its foreign geniuses, especially opera-singers. It was in that same English society, within a dozen or so years of Bach's death, that three of his pupils or reputed pupils were achieving great success, on keyboard and in vocal music (Johann Christian Bach), lute (Rudolph Straube) and gamba (Carl Friedrich Abel).

Cantata No. 169 (October 1726) might relate to Bach's visits to Dresden in 1725, for it includes two substantial movements for the organist as soloist, conceivably part of a complete work played during such visits. The newspaper report on the Dresden recital is ambiguous about this, however (see below, p. 376). A likelier location for true, three-movement

keyboard concertos was the Leipzig Collegium musicum concerts, even before Bach became director in March 1729. It is certainly easy to visualize Bach taking part in public chamber music as soon as the pressing duties of cantor permitted, either composing anew or (mostly?) re-using music from his time in Cöthen. The following years saw chamber and keyboard music of great originality, barely conforming to the musical norms of the time, whether published or not, and a match for the vocal masterpieces of the first Leipzig decade. In addition, and despite the various uncertainties surrounding them, the non-liturgical cantatas such as the serenades say much about the cantor's musical life and tastes. They raise questions, also looked at further below (pp. 444f.), about what these works might suggest about 'Bach and opera', especially in the middle and later Leipzig years.

Whatever results came from the Dresden visit, over the following year and a half Bach wrote and performed several major cantatas in honour of the royal family (BWV Anh. I 12, 213, 214, 205a, 207a, 215). Those that he put on in Leipzig for successive imperial electors, in 1727, 1733, 1734, 1735 and 1738, must have been a highlight of such 'evening music' performed out of doors, in April or August. Performed by the university's students after a procession, these, such as they survive, were pieces that share their tone, text, exciting rhythms and a melodic style with Dresden's tastes – more so, one might feel, than the birthday cantatas for non-royalty (Nos. 205 and 207) who were less familiar with opera than was a king who paid for it. In particular, to commemorate the anniversary of the elector's naming as 'King of Poland' in October 1733, Cantata No. 215 was given a grand evening performance in October 1734, in the open air, with a procession, torches, students, marshals etc., and found great favour with the new king who, to the evident surprise of Leipzig's town chronicler (Dok. II, p. 250), actually stayed on his balcony to listen to the music.

Any director of the Collegium concerts is likely to have consciously developed connections with Dresden musicians, quite probably engaging in the 'game of reciprocated invitations' still known to many an organist and academic today: Bach invites them to Leipzig, they invite him to Dresden. More importantly, perhaps, several times in 1733 and over the next three years, Bach not only celebrated royal birthdays, name-days and the formal coronation of the King of Poland (the redrafted Cantata No. 205 had to be performed indoors in the coffee-house, it being winter-time), but is himself likely to have been responsible for the notices of such Collegium performances appearing in the Leipzig newspapers. The performances had nothing to do with the church, and doubtless reports of them reached His Majesty in due course.

The very title *dram(m)a per musica* normally used for Bach's various festive or homage cantatas, some fifteen times between 1727 and 1742, means he was aware that here he was dealing with a specific genre. It was not a liturgical 'church piece' but not entirely secular either, given the divinity of the monarchy and the secular hierarchy. As part of the awakening interest in literary language, the poet Gottsched had categorized secular works according to whether or not they had *dramatis personae* and classical story-lines, but for a composer, musical language was not totally exclusive to one or the other. The first such *dramma* in 1725, this one not for royalty but a university professor, already has the catchy rhythms and drive, as well as length, typical of the 'secular' cantatas (BWV 205). With such festive works based on allegorical or mythological themes, including actual characters (*dramatis personae*) and a story-line of sorts, and running to a greater number of movements than church cantatas (nine to fifteen), one can see that from a musical point of view, the border into opera would have been easy enough to cross. Like the earlier 'secular' or 'Hunt' cantata No. 208, such works are rather like an opera Act.

Distinctions sometimes made between the 'secular' cantatas as works for nobility, royalty, university dignitaries, the Collegium or local landowners are only partly useful from the categorical point of view, since such a work as No. 205 saluted both a professor and a king. Their output spread into the next decades, leading in important instances to versions re-arranged as church cantatas, something to be reconsidered below.

6 | Leipzig, the middle years: other activities

The year 1730 began with the death at three or four days old of the seventh child Anna Magdalena had borne in eight years. That year also saw fewer than a handful of new church cantatas but several signs of serious problems for Bach: a reprimand from the council and a long letter of complaint from him about working conditions, plus at least one solicitation for a job elsewhere.

Judging by Passion settings prepared around that time – St Luke (anonymous) and St Mark (lost, mostly a parody (qv)) – less effort was now being made on work for the Thomaskirche. In its musical language, the St Luke Passion of *c.* 1731 is so juvenile that whoever wrote it, and however interested Bach was in preparing such simple works for the Leipzigers, it is by no means sure that he ever performed it, any more than he did his later copy of Handel's Brockes Passion. If in about 1735 an unknown number of cantatas from G. H. Stölzel's collection *Das Saiten-Spiel des Hertzens* took the place of Bach's own cantatas in the major Leipzig churches, as circumstantial evidence suggests (BJ 2008, pp. 137–46), various reasons are possible: they matched current tastes in Leipzig better, were simpler to perform, provided a change and were needed because of the composer's other activities. Since such reasons would not prevent older substantial cantatas being revised, the biggest advantage Stölzel's had was probably the nature of his musical language, competent but undemanding.

The decade saw Bach arranging a great deal of earlier music (including concertos adapted for keyboard), working in various new areas (Lutheran Mass, oratorio, a simpler Passion, a book of music for harpsichord, another for organ), seeking publication (more often than documented?), creating Latin church music of his own (virtually unknown before his Leipzig appointment), studying/performing more music of this kind by other composers, cementing connections to Dresden and its court (gaining a royal title) and all the while – perhaps misleadingly – leaving very few signs of being enthusiastic for the work of the Leipzig cantorate. To what extent or how systematically the earlier cantatas were revived during the 1730s, individually or in cycles, cannot be clearly documented since the (re-used) scores and parts belonged to their church year of origin and contain only hints of later use.

The Collegium musicum

The Leipzig Collegium indicated a concert series for polite society run by a group of musicians and students since it was reportedly founded in 1701 by one of the students at the time, Georg Philipp Telemann, and following the long-standing tradition for musical activities in and out of the university. Not by any means was the Collegium series unique at the time in larger European cities, though it is better known than most because of its connection to J. S. Bach and the likelihood that some of the world's best-loved concertos were performed there.

It is unknown whether in March 1729 Bach was freely chosen as director in recognition of his authority or had himself solicited the directorship, which brought contact with instrumentalists useful in church (Schering 1941, p. 344). In the performances later that year, the Whitsuntide Cantata, BWV 174, and Funeral Ode, BWV 198, could well have benefited from various instrumentalists who were now Bach's colleagues in the Collegium, requiring two players of lute, two of gamba, two of horn, three of oboe, two of hautbois d'amour (usually so called), nine string soloists (three violin, viola, cello) as well as the regular ensemble. No doubt some played more than one instrument. That Cantata No. 174 begins with a fuller rescoring of 'Brandenburg Concerto' No. 3's first movement rather confirms a link between church and Collegium players, and the only question would be how reliable did the collaboration with those players remain over the years. Since earlier in the century between forty and sixty performers had been mentioned in reports, it is possible that Bach's smaller ensemble was more rigorously selected.

Although the previous director G. B. Schott, with whom Bach had good professional relations, had left in 1729, something later said by a student implies that by 1724 Bach had already been directing its concerts (Dok. III, p. 476). Hence the copy of instrumental parts of the Overture in C, BWV 1066, made about that time? A surviving cantata by Schott, probably from the earlier 1720s, has moments so like a thinned-out version of the opening of the 'Brandenburg Concerto' No. 3 as to lead one to picture the concerto being already known in the Leipzig Collegium, with or without Bach's involvement (see BJ 2007, pp. 95ff.). In 1726 and 1727 a similar Collegium far away in Ulm listed two string concertos by 'Bach' (Dok. V, p. 140), and it would be odd if by then Leipzig itself knew no such pieces.

How soon after taking on increased duties with the Collegium in March 1729 Bach worked on his concertos and other music for mixed ensembles, and for performance in its concerts, remains vague. Very soon, one imagines:

he certainly made copies about then of suitable pieces from elsewhere, such as full-length instrumental *ouvertures* or suites by Johann Bernhard Bach of Eisenach, successor to the admired Christoph (d. 1703). To have directed these concerts until 1741 (when the coffee-house proprietor Zimmerman died) and possibly 1744, with only one certain hiatus from March 1737 to October 1739, must have meant drawing on a copious stock of works, though how many of these were his own composition is not established by extant scores or parts. There are various possible reasons for the eighteen-month gap during which C. G. Gerlach, organist of the New Church, took over the concerts: robust quarrels between Bach and the church shortly before (in February 1737: see p. 551), pressure of work, temporary depression, indifference, etc. Scheibe's public criticism of his music a couple of months later (p. 533) cannot have helped.

But presumably Bach notified the newspaper that he was returning as director on 2 October 1739, for it duly advertised accordingly, a day or two after it had also advertised the publication of his volume of organ music, *Clavierübung III* (Dok. II, pp. 370–1). Whether or not there is any direct link between Collegium activities and the apparent falling-off in church cantatas, there was certainly in the 1730s a flurry of activity in suitable instrumental music: the violin concertos in A minor and D minor, the overtures in B minor and D (BWV 1068), an earlier version of the Flute Sonata in B minor. Little sign that the composer was focusing exclusively on the Collegium repertory and instrumental or keyboard music during the 1730s, however, can be found in the 'Chorale Cantatas' from the 1730s, such as Nos. 9, 14, 80, 97 and 100, though some (e.g. Nos. 80, 100) do use older material.

There seems a distinct possibility from the years around 1730 that harpsichord duets were part of the Collegium repertory, played in public by the two elder sons (or one son and his father). The Concerto in C major for Two Harpsichords, BWV 1061, is an interesting case, for it has every sign of being originally a straightforward keyboard duet without accompanying strings, its two keyboard parts copied by Friedemann and Anna Magdalena in 1732/3, and suitable for father and son to play together. This would be an Italian duet-concerto matching the French duet-allemande from Couperin's A major Suite (*Second Livre*, 1717) copied out by the teenage Emanuel and now his earliest surviving major autograph (see Wollny 2007, p. 268). That such duets remained popular in the family is not only likely, for obvious reasons, but is suggested by certain other duets from later years: Friedemann's Concerto in F (F. 10, *c.* 1740) and the unique duets in the Art of Fugue.

Quite what the duties of a Collegium 'director' were is not as clear as often assumed, i.e. how much Bach himself played, organized, governed, directed, prepared or budgeted for the programmes and their performance. A set of rules written down in 1729 claimed to be signed by eight members, all university students, agreeing to levy fines on each other as players, for any absence and unpunctuality. They are obliged to bring their own instruments, to be there for the *ouverture*, to play the assigned part in the *concerto* and to keep accounts; the director reserves the right to appoint the music, acts as cashier, and declares the money monthly (BJ 2013, pp. 111f.). Since the students were actual performers, one can probably take their reference to *ouverture* and *concerto* literally, as one cannot always from inexpert witnesses. However, the origin and status of these rules are not certain: they sound like the officious rules of an Oxbridge or Princeton society for its student members.

Nor is it documented whether Bach was directly paid for his services: there are no surviving accounts, whereas payment for the extraordinary performances he directed (on the king's visits to Leipzig, in October 1734 and April 1738) was made and recorded by the university. Nevertheless, while he was director it must have amounted to a pressing commitment, very willingly undertaken, no doubt, since by now the cantata repertory was rich enough, one way or another, to satisfy any church's Sunday requirements if needed. Although the Collegium depended on the goodwill of the performers and may have been informally run, open to gentlemen and ladies who paid only for what they consumed, nevertheless such people were capable of judging 'the worth of a clever musician', according to a report of 1736 (Dok. II, p. 278). Bach's student Mizler, who wrote this report, said that 'any musician' who wanted to be heard could play there, especially students, among whom were potential virtuosi. What organization or paperwork all this required of Bach himself can only be guessed.

According to contemporary notices, Bach's Collegium held a concert once a week in the winter, Friday 8 to 10 p.m. in the *Cather-Strasse* coffeehouse in the city centre, known as *Zimmermann's*: twice a week during the New Year, Easter and Michaelmas fairs; and 4 to 6 p.m. in the 'coffee garden' beyond the walls, out past the university church and towards the Johanniskirche (Dok. II, pp. 234, 277). No programme in detail has survived, but the series, amounting to well over a hundred hours of music a year, surely provided Bach with opportunities to try over or repeat overtures, concertos, songs, sonatas. A common assumption that various secular cantatas, including those with big forces like BWV 205, were heard in the concerts is reasonable. Both the splendid 'Phoebus and Pan' *dramma*

per musica, BWV 201, and a lost work on the death of a local student may well belong to 1729 and thus even suggest his high aims for the society. Very suitable were the non-sacred cantatas for smaller ensembles, containing more intimate solos for the singers who could, under these auspices, include women – cantatas such as BWV 204 (with its stress on *Vergnügen*, 'delight') and the Coffee Cantata. Bach's sons and pupils certainly benefited as players and presumably composers, as several of them later found useful to mention when applying for jobs (see Dok. III, p. 408). At least one outstanding pupil, J. L. Krebs, seems to have participated while still at school and into his early twenties (Dok. III, p. 654), and Emanuel was writing out parts for the instrumental ensembles while still in his teens. It is likely that Emanuel's own Concerto in A minor, Wq 1, was first heard and played here.

Complaints about Bach in respect of his school duties at this period, that he slighted, neglected or abandoned them (see Dok. II, p. 205), could be a consequence of these other interests, assuming the complaints were justified. Any disgruntlement he felt with school or church was more than likely reciprocal, though it would not be a contradiction if he also brought into church various musical ideas derived from his Collegium experience, such as the *instrumentarium* supporting two choirs in the St Matthew Passion or the 'Brandenburg' movement in Cantata No. 174. This last is of particular interest since the added horns and oboes reinforce the main themes (i.e. the ritornello sections) and so leave the episodes to the original strings, which then function as soloists. The effect is a novel kind of concerto, quite possibly a direct result of Collegium experiences and, for all anyone knows, one of several such modernizations.

The new court-title at Weissenfels used by Bach from mid-1729, the taking on of the Leipzig Collegium, the work with new kinds of instrumental music in the later 1720s and the various contacts made with Dresden, all suggest that some years after appointment as cantor Bach was setting increasing store by his activities outside church, as would any creative composer and potential job-seeker. Directing the Collegium showed a certain involvement in Leipzig life outside the Thomaskirche, as did in other ways the 'Phoebus and Pan' cantata, which could be heard as a satire on pedantic Beckmessers in and out of the university. It is odd that the Obituary's worklist does not specifically mention such crowd-pleasers as the three extant violin concertos, each as representative of Bach's original achievement as anything else: were they considered more dated than the harpsichord versions?

The Collegium directorship going to Bach, rather than to his predecessor's assistant C. G. Gerlach (a former pupil, who continued to play and

sing in the Collegium), might have been due to the influence of burgomaster Lange, who was surely aware that in many cities of Europe well-to-do subscribers hired a professional composer-director to run regular up-to-date concerts of vocal and instrumental music. In Britain, the Music Society in Edinburgh, also dating from the 1720s, was soon joined by others in English cities, newly formed clubs run by a board, employing musicians and keeping better records of accounts, programmes and even committee meetings (so-called *sederunt* books) than seems the case in Leipzig, either for the Collegium or with the later series, the *Grosse Concert* (see p. 499). These concert associations were a kind of municipal substitute for the events in royal and ducal courts at the time, such as the queen's concerts in Dresden during the 1730s. It is possible that the competitive non-event between Marchand and Bach in 1717, in the time of a previous electress, was an early manifestation of musical events in Dresden sponsored by royalty.

It was in the Collegium's summer garden in June 1733, in a concert taking place as soon as the state mourning for the late king was lifted, that a new *Clavicymbel* was first played, the like of which had not been heard before, it was said (Dok. II, p. 238). This claim could just be referring not to a harpsichord but to one of the new fortepianos, something novel for Leipzigers and its term not yet familiar. Fortepianos were very much in keeping with the royal music-making of Dresden, and it was also about 1733 that the maker of various types of keyboard instrument, Zacharias Hildebrandt, moved his workshop to Leipzig. Presumably the new Leipzig instrument was paid for by the coffee-shop owner Zimmermann and stood in some kind of raised, covered loggia of the kind found in London pleasure gardens at that time, including Vauxhall. (The youngest Bach son was later to play concertos and write songs at Vauxhall, where Handel was already honoured in 1738 with a statue of fine Carrara marble.)

Whether or not the various duets and multiple harpsichord concertos were arranged in order to play in an indoors Collegium concert, there must have been an efficient organization for the instrument removals, tuning, rehearsing, etc. Not only are programmes of the indoor and outdoor concerts missing but there is little information on the nature of these events: are we speaking of concerts as such or more convivial gatherings? Chance references imply that visiting musicians participated, as no doubt they did in philharmonic societies across Europe at the time. Bach concertos performed by a Collegium at Ulm in 1725 and 1726 have already been mentioned. According to a Leipzig city guide of 1732 (the year the city was welcoming Protestant refugees from Salzburg), on Thursday evenings at a

similar time and in another house, a second Collegium was held by the Thomaskirche's regular organist, J. G. Görner (Dok. II, p. 235). But how truly open such events were, and whether they always admitted mixed audiences, is not clear. Neither?

Collegium repertory – concertos, sonatas, songs?

The long-standing traditions of *Tafelmusik* ('table music' at banquets, etc.) could have bequeathed to any Collegium a programme of instrumental music of the kind found in Telemann's *Musique de table* (1733): overture, quartet, concerto, trio, solo, finale. Suitable vocal music included not only Italian cantatas but also perhaps songs of the kind briefly represented in the second Anna Magdalena Bach Book: straightforward tuneful songs far simpler than the formal arias of sacred or secular cantatas.

No doubt such items reminded some of the listeners of Telemann's lost Leipzig operas from earlier in the century. Like those elsewhere, the programmes are likely to have been dominated by Italian chamber music, concertos and cantatas, and by more local imitations of these, including works by several Dresdners. One consequence of the Italian musical *lingua franca* is that the exact nature of Bach's contacts with other musicians in his last twenty years, such as the Grauns or Quantz or the Dresden lutenists, may never be clear enough for it to be sure with whom a certain chamber sonata originated. Participation by university students and local musicians would not lead to the kind of systematic planning of programmes or preserving of performance materials as normal for services in St Thomas's, but a few hints in extant sources or in known personal connections suggest various italianate works (sinfonias, quartets, trios, concertos) by composers from Germany as well as from Italy. Well-documented interest Bach personally had in older French music is not known to have been often shared, if it was at all, by Collegium audiences and players; the rage was for Italian.

A list of music books left by one Leipzig merchant on his death in 1734 suggests the kind of repertory interesting to such amateurs: flute sonatas, violin sonatas and concertos, all by a range of Italian composers from Corelli to Veracini (Szeskus 1991, p. 60). So-called secular cantatas had been a regular item in Collegium concerts during Schott's time as a director before Bach, especially when a special guest was being honoured with *libretti* of a familiar kind. According to the published text for the electress's birthday cantata BWV 214 of 1733, some 150 copies of which

were printed, it too was performed by the Collegium musicum, in the coffee-house or elsewhere. Even oratorio-like settings of such stories as *Joseph and His Brothers*, to a text possibly by Picander, may have found a place there (BJ 2007, pp. 71ff.). That Picander had his own contacts with nobility is clear from the dedication of his first book of texts (1725) to Count von Sporck, a Roman Catholic and the potential patron who was to receive a set of parts for the Sanctus revised later in the B minor Mass. Picander's name is also listed on the textbook for Cantata No. 30a prepared for the wedding on 28 September 1737 of a member of the Dresden nobility, Minister J. C. von Hennicke. Bach cannot have been alone in nurturing high-standing contacts.

Pupils and sons were also involved in copying music suitable for these concerts, just as they were for the church music, and there are indications of a wide repertory, partly, largely or wholly – it is not clear which – under Bach's active direction. Copies made locally, some by the Leipzig organist C. G. Gerlach, and supposed to have been heard at the time in house or Collegium concerts, include works by native composers, and indicate a range of native Italian composers being represented by both instrumental and vocal works:

Bernhard Bach (overtures);
Friedemann and Emanuel Bach;
F. Benda (up-to-date symphonies);
Handel (cantata 'Armida abbandonata', 1731, some copying done by Emanuel);
other German chamber music (J. G. Graun);
works of those associated with the Collegium (Telemann, J. F. Fasch, Heinichen);
Locatelli (Concerto Grosso Op. 1 no. 8, with the *pastorale*, a copy of *c.* 1734);
Albinoni, Vivaldi, Conti, Porpora (cantatas) and Steffani (see BJ 1981, p. 69).

Not many composers of Corelli's generation are likely to have featured much, Vivaldi and his imitators rather more. Only in such general details as their rhythmic repetitions can their style be heard in Bach's transcribed harpsichord concertos, whose dates suggested by their extant sources make it likely that these versions originated for the Collegium in the earlier 1730s.

Depending on circumstances such as finances, occasion or personnel, Bach's further contributions as composer can be guessed to include some or all of the four of his instrumental *ouvertures* including the D major,

BWV 1068 (for a special event in about 1731), and the Flute Overture in B minor, BWV 1067 (for a special visitor in about 1738). Two other overtures, in C and D, appear in earlier sources, evidently prepared for performance in the first Leipzig years. All master the *ouverture* conventions and dance-types with a grasp of orchestral writing some have seen as typical of the Cöthen period, though nothing quite prepares the listener for the rapt originality of the air in the Overture in D major, BWV 1068. Its melismatic melody, the held notes, the stepping bass, the responsive inner parts, all defy prosaic verbal description. Anachronistic interpretations of this movement in later centuries only underline its originality.

An unusual characteristic of the overtures' first movements is that the dotted prelude is followed by a light ritornello fugue again taking *fuga* literally ('flight') and working its subject speedily at some length. Whatever kind of fugue Bach was continuing to write elsewhere, and for other purposes, here in the 'orchestral' overtures he has again produced a distinct type to fit a distinct purpose. It is not obvious what led him to this idea – local versions of the model *ouverture*, not direct French models? Then in each instance, after this fugue there follows a rather unpredictable series of dances (gavottes, bourrées, minuets) of characteristic elegance, each with a wealth of melody that alone raises such works above the stilted melodies of France. Those overtures with trumpets and drums (BWV 1068, 1069) necessarily recall or anticipate the big vocal works that share their full-chorus resonances. The characteristic sounds of 'Bach in D major' are unmistakable.

For the Flute Overture in B minor, BWV 1067, the sources support (if they do not actually confirm) what the listener might feel: that this is Bach's most mature essay in the full *ouverture* form, and is more likely to belong to 1738/9 in Leipzig than to 1720 in Cöthen. The prevailing mood of its elegiac B minor is very appropriate for transverse flute and strings. Many a detail in it would have satisfied up-to-date Dresden tastes, not only the style of its various dances (a refined polonaise, a boisterous badinerie) but the harmonic language that is coloured with appoggiaturas (qv) and a certain languor. However, that there was a probable (earlier?) version in A minor with violin or flute solo rather leaves such stylistic observations in doubt, unless one sees the key of B minor as a calculated *galant* touch.

The Solo Violin Concerto in A minor and the Double in D minor, doubtless older works, have parts copied by the composer in about 1730, and transcriptions of them for harpsichord would also have satisfied the demands of the Collegium. The same could be said about the Violin Concerto in E major: surely having all three concertos available in both

versions, for solo violin and for solo harpsichord, was something not to be missed by the Collegium musicians? That three of the best-wrought of all violin concertos have such uncertain origin is not so much a sad irony as a reflection of conditions: they were useful when circulating in different forms, they were preserved less systematically than the church cantatas and at the time their careful construction and texture would always have left them quite isolated. Once again, though they are astonishingly different from each other outwardly they have a lot in common, sharing an imaginative shape (ritornello), a richly detailed texture and an unfailing melody. They all make demands on the soloist beyond mere violinistic *stravaganze*, and sometimes subvert the conventions. For example, the Concerto in E major's Finale is not a standard minuet but a faster-than-usual *menuet en rondeau*. Another probable transcription, the Concerto for Two Harpsichords in C minor, BWV 1060, is of a comparable quality, with touches reminding the listener of Vivaldi concertos (echoes in the first movement) and of other Bach works (the hectic 2/4 Finale in C minor). Its earlier (or an earlier) form has been lost. The Concerto for Two Harpsichords in C major, BWV 1061, already mentioned, must also have been inspired by Vivaldi in its gestures, straightforward harmonies and structure (fast–slow–fast movements).

There is more than a faint possibility that all the harpsichord (and violin?) concertos, whether transcriptions or not, involved the sons and other pupils in Collegium presentations. It is particularly regrettable that nothing is known about whether Anna Magdalena also participated in the concerts, singing simple songs or adapting cantata arias (an example in her book of 1725) or participating on a grander scale, as for instance in the solo part of the 'Farewell Cantata' No. 209, 'Non sa che sia dolore'. (This too has an elegantly polished, modern concerto movement, again for a melancholy flute and strings.) It could hardly have been that a female soprano was never acceptable in the Collegium, whatever the rules in church. This is another strangely uncertain detail but a clearly important one. If No. 209 was composed and performed in honour of a local musician (a teacher or even a student), it would surely have been performed in a Collegium concert, like other works of the kind no longer surviving.

As it is, Cantata No. 209 is a unique work, and its substantial opening Sinfonia, two melodious arias and utterly typical recitatives suggest italianate chamber music of a kind fashionable in concerts of the period around 1740. But who the soprano was for which it was composed, even whether male or female, is an open question. If the text partly draws, as it does, on an opera-libretto set in Rome and Venice *c.* 1730 and includes some not very polished

expressions (BJ 1990, pp. 7ff.), it is representing someone's knowledge of Italian opera at the time, and this 'someone' might include Bach himself, whose growing interest in *galant* Italian music during the 1730s and 1740s is obvious. The two arias lead one to consider the secular/sacred divide in Bach's thinking (see below, pp. 635f.): the first aria is conceivable in a church cantata, the second, which is like a passepied, less so.

Later in the 1730s the three other flute masterpieces, the Sonata in B minor, the Overture (Suite) in B minor and the now incomplete Sonata in A, were copied, but at least the first and probably all three of them also existed in another version, even in another key and for different instruments. Many a sonata made for flute and harpsichord, or two flutes or violins or lute and flute, etc., had several contemporary versions, not all of which need to have been made by Bach himself. However, the bigger part he played in the copying of parts or scores, as in instrumental parts for the Flute Overture, the more he may have had Collegium performances in mind. Alternatively, his visits to Dresden in the 1730s were reason enough to make copies of new or redrafted works for flute, to be played by one or other of the celebrated court flautists, Buffardin and Quantz. To suppose the incomplete Flute Sonata in A major, BWV 1032, to be in some way influenced by Quantz and/or contemporary Dresden tastes is plausible, and it is tempting to guess that the length of the B minor Sonata's first movement, at 119 bars the longest of Bach's sonata movements, was catering for Buffardin's well-known virtuosity. Challenges for the flute-playing connoisseur in the B minor Sonata include the little chromatic canon, the misleadingly sweet slow movement and the unique drama in the finale as it suddenly shoots off from a fugue into a gigue.

Equally likely to have been revived, arranged, recopied or even composed for the Collegium during the 1730s are the Three Sonatas for Viola da Gamba, referred to earlier. For one or more of these it would be reasonable to suppose the presence of a particular gambist available to the composer during the 1730s, in the coffee-house or privately in his apartments. Typically, little information about origins can be gleaned from the surviving copies, and as with so much of the other chamber music, circumstantial evidence or style analysis has led to conflicting suggestions. From especially the faster movements, two of these sonatas (now numbered 1 and 2 by convention) look as if they belong with other sonatas with harpsichord obbligato, in particular the Six Violin Sonatas (*c.* 1725), likewise with four movements. No. 3 sounds more like an arranged string concerto, its three movements clearly matching in detail those of several 'Brandenburgs'. Unfortunately, even less can be surmised about Bach's music-making at home than in the Collegium.

Since the composer not infrequently transfers or transforms one genre into another, broad conclusions are unreliable. As usual, so much care was put into the adapted works that each version disguises and even blots out signs of earlier and/or alternative forms. It is as if many a work was written in order to be adaptable, which is something very feasible with trios of all kinds. The Gamba Sonata 'No. 1' (BWV 1027) has a convincing layout as a trio for two players, gamba or flute plus keyboard, and (as noted) attracted a transcription for organ during Bach's lifetime, which one cannot quite imagine of the Sonata 'No. 2' (BWV 1028). A more likely alternative version for this would be an instrumental trio with flute. One cannot always say, however: the G minor Sonata 'No. 3', despite its feasible alternatives as (i) a tutti concerto or (ii) a chamber trio sonata, also attracted at least two organ transcriptions, possibly more.

How suitable the older Six Sonatas for Violin and Harpsichord were for performing at the Collegium no one knows. The virtuosity they require is for the sake of a counterpoint as carefully wrought as that of the Six Sonatas for Organ, which at times they resemble, and the end-result is quite different from the Italian violin sonatas circulating in concert societies elsewhere at the time. In the Collegium it would have been the *Kenner* or connoisseurs in the audience who would most like them, while the *Liebhaber* or music-lovers were drawn more to pieces with flute or oboe, as no doubt they were to simple songs and secular arias. But in that case, a different question arises: if this is so, where are these more popular songs and woodwind sonatas? Were the songs merely the familiar favourites of the day? And the woodwinds: if the Organ Sonata in E flat originated as a mixed trio sonata, did this form of it disappear like so much ephemera? Is this the case generally for woodwind sonatas and trios? There were once many but they have disappeared or been disguised? Considering the use made of wind instruments and solo singers in the church music, there is a striking absence of concert music for them in the known Bach worklist – sonatas for the one, songs for the other – and this despite the Obituary's mention of 'a crowd of instrumental things of all kinds and for all instruments' in the worklist.

It is important to recognize that hardly any instrumental ensemble works of Bach can now be identified that 'did not undergo some kind of reworking', and it is quite possible that 'he in fact wrote only a limited number of such pieces … adapted to ever new situations' (Rifkin 2007, p. 59), some for the Collegium, some not. The appearance of works in different forms means that in some cases what was the original version is not only unknown but, as normally defined, may never have existed. It is not impossible that Bach (like Handel) kept a portfolio of music in a

'neutral open score', for different applications. Thus all the movements of the Concerto in A minor for flute, violin and harpsichord, BWV 1044, are known in other versions, and the sketchy sources for it in this form tempt conjecture about who made it (not the composer?), when (after he died?) and why (for house-music and royal concerts in Berlin?). Leipzig Collegium pieces could have included the 'Partita in A minor', BWV 1013, either as a solo for flute (extant source) or as a solo for violoncello piccolo (conjectural). And yet, while it is easy to imagine the Gamba Sonata in G minor as a 'Seventh Brandenburg Concerto', just as clear is that in his concertos Bach imitated sonatas, and in his sonatas imitated concertos.

There remains a puzzling absence: simple songs, an absence puzzling in view of the obvious success of those apparently authentic few that survive in the second Anna Magdalena Book and those other few attributed to Bach in G. C. Schemelli's Songbook (the *Musicalisches Gesang-Buch*, Leipzig 1736). There must be gaps in the record here, resulting in no more than a partial picture of what Bach was doing in the middle Leipzig decade from the point of view of popular music. The Schemelli book was to have been followed by at least one other volume, some two hundred further songs of which were ready for the engraver, according to the original preface (Dok. II, p. 267), and Bach's relationship with the project, insofar as he had one, is discussed further below (p. 602).

Something emerging already in the instrumental works before 1730 is of great interest in the history of musical form, though only indirectly relevant to what was played in the Collegium. In the first movement of the C minor Organ Sonata, Bach, having a long experience of paraphrasing melodies, introduces a long passage that takes up almost half the movement and picks up the themes, extends them, alters them, modulates with them, varies the bass-line and moves back to the tonic in time for the return of the opening theme. In symphonies and sonatas of the classical period, this section would be called 'The Development', and it anticipates the work of the symphony and sonata composers in Esterhaza and Mannheim, though unknown to them.

The royal title and the *Missa*

In 1736 [19 November] he was named Royal Polish and Electoral Saxon Court Composer [*Hofcompositeur*], after he had previously had himself heard several times in public on the organ in Dresden, to great applause, before the Court and music-experts there. (*Obituary*)

This sentence follows immediately on the one naming Bach capellmeister in Weissenfels (above, p. 327) and with it the Obituary is in effect bypassing all his other work in Leipzig – with the Collegium, the university, the school and the city's churches. By now, his fame had spread enough that in 1735 the Prussian Crown Prince, later Frederick the Great, referred to him by surname only, in a letter to his sister (BJ 2008, p. 330). At Dresden, however, in the court and state calendar his name first appears only in 1738 in connection with his court-title.

In this latest instance, 'Court Composer' was an honorary title, probably given in recognition not of public recitals in Dresden, as Emanuel seems to have assumed, but of performances publicly saluting the elector in his kingdom's second city of Leipzig by its *director musices*. (These comprise the nine or so known salutations between 1733 and 1736, including coffee-house performances.) Either way, the court calendar's new title for Bach, *Kirchen-Compositeur tit.* ('by title'), implied no regular functionary such as capellmeister, concertmaster or *director chori musices*. But it would justify his offering and performing works at the Dresden court if asked, as it would justify the title *Hoff-Compositeur* on his next publication (*Clavierübung III*). In London, Handel's appointment as 'Composer of Music to His Majesty's Chapel Royal' in February 1723 was also less than a regular capellmeistership – the wording is not unlike Bach's – but evidently he was asked and did produce a few pieces for the chapel, often by reconstructing earlier works. Royally commanded to supply a special work from time to time, Handel was paid well. It is possible that knowledge of his appointment had penetrated to Leipzig before 1733 when Bach sent his *Missa* (the large-scale Kyrie and Gloria of the 'B minor Mass'), but what part this gift played in conferring the royal title is not documented, nor was he recompensed like Handel.

The *Missa* gift had been accompanied on 27 July 1733 by a petition to Friedrich August II for a court-title (*Praedicat von Dero Hoff-Capelle*: Dok. I, p. 74), in which *Hoff-Capelle* probably refers, like the English 'chapel royal', not to a place but to a body of musicians. The new king had succeeded in February and, as customary, was also petitioned by court musicians for their employment to be continued, and only after a second petition on 27 September 1736 (Dok. I, p. 91) did Bach receive his title, three months after the Duke of Weissenfels died and with him Bach's title as capellmeister. Given how many offerings were being made to rulers by all kinds of authors and artists at that period, Bach's gift of 1733 is unlikely to have been a decisive factor on his behalf, whether it was employment or a title that he was interested in. The delay in receiving the title might be

insignificant, irrespective of the Duke of Weissenfels's death: the king was largely absent from Dresden between 1734 and 1736, and his chapel appointments would have to wait. But it might be significant, for there must be doubt whether a Protestant cantor could hope to be employed by a Roman Catholic monarch in any senior position in his church.

Bach must have known at the time of his offer that although there was as yet no official vacancy for a Master of Chapel Music, Hasse had not yet been formally appointed opera director. He offered to compose *Musique* for the church and also for the *orchestre* (on this word, see p. 489), using two French words for repertories of which he was not a widely recognized master, i.e. for the Roman Mass and for the ballet/theatre. No known document suggests he was ever invited to compose music for either, but there is bound to be a question of how far he was willing to become a Catholic chapel composer and what that might imply. There is no clear sign of either, of course, but to serve only the Protestant community at such a court would not be promotion for a Leipzig *Thomascantor*. Something hangs on what he is implying in his petition:

Ich ***offerire*** *mich in schuldigsten Gehorsam, iedesmahl auf Ew. Königlichen Hoheit gnädigstes Verlangen* . . . (Dok. I, p. 74)

I offer myself in the most due obedience, each time at your Royal Highness's pleasure . . .

Is the obedience most due because of the title and *Protection* he is asking for on occasion, or because if fully appointed he would be always obedient to the king's wishes, as was due?

Despite the frequency with which works of music or literature were offered or dedicated to kings and queens, and despite the many titles of royal appointment conferred on various kinds of artist or craftsman in the Kingdom of Saxony, such a title for a composer was exceptional. Bach may have been suing for recognition behind the scenes since at least August 1731, when for a second time he wrote a birthday cantata for an influential Dresdner who had already appeared in connection with the 1717 'competition', Count J. F. von Flemming. The second petition for a title was sent later in the summer of 1736, shortly after or during a period of contention between Bach and the Thomas School rector (see p. 551). While the public acclaim of Bach in the elector's city might have been in his favour there, as Emanuel assumed, what he was offering in 1733 was his services as a composer, not knowing at that point whether the other court composers and musicians were going to be recommissioned by the new king. This was a formality anything but automatic. If they were not recommissioned,

was it possible he might be called to Dresden? If he had been, the *Missa* would not (or not yet) have been practical for the royal chapel's ensemble, which in 1733 had been reduced to six boys.

It seems that Emanuel recalled his father playing the dazzling new organ in the dazzling new Frauenkirche, still unfinished. For this organ's inauguration on 25 November 1736 Friedemann wrote a poem (Ahrens and Langrock 2003, p. 97), probably as part of soliciting the appointment committee on his own behalf. If so, he was backed by his father, who was presumably there for some days in late November before playing the organ's first full concert on 1 December in front of courtiers including the Baron von Keyserlingk, who had been involved in Bach's court appointment (Dok. II, p. 279) and was to be associated with the 'Goldberg Variations'. A Dresden newspaper of 1 December 1736 reported the inaugural event and referred to the same three items as did the Obituary: the organ-playing in public, the 'special admiration' of the crowd of listeners (for whom 'applause' may indeed have meant hand-clapping), and the subsequent court appointment. Though uncommon, such praise was not entirely exceptional and appeared in the newspaper partly because the splendid Silbermann organ was brand new. In 1720, in much the same way, the Dresden organist Christian Petzold had inaugurated the Silbermann organ in the Sophienkirche with 'music worthy of astonishment' (BJ 1979, 57). 'A great virtuoso' reported by Mattheson as playing 'most of the most beautiful organs' in another city, in this instance not Dresden but Hamburg, is presumed to have been J. S. Bach during his visit in 1720 (Dok. II, p. 187).

The Obituary's phrase 'heard several times' might reflect its authors' knowledge of other published reports, like the one in a Hamburg paper about another Dresden recital by 'the famous *Virtuose* and organist Bach', in 1731 (Dok. II, p. 214). Once again one is left to wonder if it was from a preserved newspaper cutting that the Obituary authors knew such details, generally rare for them, and that if they neglected other public successes of Bach it was because they had no such printed evidence to make use of. No wonder gaps in the Obituary, which presumed its Leipzig readers remembered their deceased cantor, led a later reader, Forkel, to ask Emanuel a whole series of questions! Neither knew that on 28 November, fresh from his royal appointment, Bach had written one of his letters of complaint about the Thomas School rector to the Leipzig Consistory but then kept it back ten weeks or so before sending it. Apparently he drafted a strongly worded letter, had it professionally copied and at some point signed it with his proud new title, having meanwhile waited to see if the quarrel in Leipzig could be resolved.

So half a year after the death of the previous elector on 1 February, Bach was seeking a court-title from his successor, Friedrich August II. Meanwhile, the elector had made an inaugural *ommage* visit to the Leipzig Nikolaikirche (20–1 April 1733), at which Bach presumably officiated in some capacity. In June Friedemann had applied and been appointed organist at the Dresden Sophienkirche, often called the *Schloßkirche*, i.e. the centrally placed 'palace church' for Protestants. This appointment must have given a further motive for his father (who had written in support of his application) both to compose the music for the king and to draft the petition. A period of royally decreed mourning for some months after February 1733 had kept instrumental music out of the churches of Saxony, affecting even the Leipzig Passion on Good Friday. Hence, perhaps, the never-resting composer had an opportunity to work on composing/arranging a big two-movement *Missa* and completing a score ready for part-copying, probably about the time mourning was lifted on 2 July, or in connection with the birth of a prince, celebrated on 19 July.

Also probable is that these twenty-one vocal and instrumental parts of the Kyrie and Gloria, made with exceptional care by himself, Anna Magdalena, Friedemann and Emanuel, represented Bach's first setting of these words, the opening texts of the Mass Ordinary. If so, they were particularly apt for presenting to the new monarch. The large-scale *Missa* that results is in principal typical of Dresden's style, although the Gloria, despite its grandeur, is not as long as some other settings in the court's repertory. The uncommon involvement of so many family members in the project (plus one other copyist), and the exceptional care with which the parts were copied, suggest the whole project to have been for Bach something 'beyond his Leipzig obligations' and more 'a private affair' of the composer (Schulze 1983, p. 5). Indeed, more than private: it was in confidence that the petition spoke of his suffering 'one or other injury' in Leipzig (Dok. I, p. 74). This could lead one to conclude that these movements, the first steps towards the grand 'Mass in B minor' (whether at this stage planned as such or not), arose from disgruntlement as much as ambition.

Appropriately, the Kyrie and Gloria for the new elector were larger scale than the cantata movements Bach drew on for some other, somewhat later and less ambitious *Missa* settings, the so-called 'Kyrie-Gloria Masses', BWV 233–6. These interesting and careful works from the 1730s, too often underrated in the past, in fact repay careful study for understanding the composer's methods. His purpose in compiling them, by selecting earlier cantata movements and revising them in a variety of ways for words of the Latin Mass (also familiar to Lutherans), have not emerged from

documents. Nor has his reason for choosing particular cantatas to draw upon: the text of the Mass itself is so imbued with biblical notions and biblical phrases that many a cantata-libretto will invoke them just as well. As with other two-movement Masses associated with Bach, such as one by J. C. Pez (1724), there were occasions in Leipzig when such works were appropriate and continued to be so in later years.

There is nothing casual about the selection of movements for arranging in the *Missae*, BWV 233–6, since each of the Latin Masses draws on more than one cantata; nor is there anything casual about their rewriting, for no movement merely takes over Latin words; and nor are any obvious short cuts taken. Each tends to divide the Mass's liturgical movements in its own way.[1] Some such settings could have been made with an eye to Dresden, where *Missae* of this kind were known, and not necessarily only for the Roman Catholic royal chapel: a *Missa* of two sections and six movements (one Kyrie, five Gloria) suited church-practice in Leipzig, with a specific Lutheran reference to *altissimus* in the Gloria text. The same goes for the major Lutheran churches in Dresden, including Friedemann's Sophienkirche, where indeed the *Missae*, BWV 233–6, with their relatively modest instrumentation, would not have been out of place. Was this (partly) why these works were compiled? From 1737, the court's Protestant services were held in the Sophienkirche.

The big Gloria in the elector's own *Missa* of 1733 also made careful use of selected movements from earlier cantatas, drawing on them for their quality and underlaying them carefully with the new Latin. Such music as the little opening prelude based on the prayer *Kyrie, kyrie* is appropriately italianate for a major Dresden work: its phrygian cadence (qv) and its very brevity can be found in a work of the court's much-admired church composer, J. D. Zelenka's *Responsoria pro hebdomada sancta* of 1732. On the other hand, a comparison of it with the more modestly scored *Missae*, BWV 233–6, suggests that in both the king's *Missa* and later complete 'Mass in B minor', Bach was consciously selecting from earlier works movements which were bigger and more imposing, more varied and demanding in ensemble, often longer and 'heavier', and frankly more inspired and memorable. In both its forms, the *Missa* and 'Mass in B minor', the work is that of a composer with an expert eye for exceptional potential, beyond merely what was convenient for the parody treatment.

[1] Not all movements in BWV 233–6 now have a known precedent, but for those that do, one cannot assume the earlier version to be the one used. The question whether the introductions to some movements were made shorter or longer cannot be answered with certainty, therefore.

Despite some later conjectures, there is no evidence that in April of that year any part of the *Missa* of 1733 was performed, or was even ready to be performed, at the service of fealty to the new king in the Leipzig Nikolaikirche. Nor is there evidence of any actual or proposed performance in the court's regular Roman Catholic chapel at the time, the converted old Dresden opera-house at the Tachenberg. One suitable place for a performance would have been Friedemann's church, where an expansive work for the new elector might also draw attention to the composer's gifted son working nearby. (Unlike his predecessor at the Sophienkirche, Friedemann had no court position.) But there is no record of performers being assembled there, and on the contrary, in August 1733 Friedemann reported that its organ was badly out of tune (Schulze 1983, p. 8).[2] In any event, although father-and-son collaboration cannot have been rare at the time, any such hypothetical performance with Friedemann would have used a different set of parts from the elector's.

A question is why, since the Dresden court is known to have employed full-time music copyists, Bach sent a set of elegantly made parts rather than the full score, as he did with two other royal offerings, the 'Brandenburg Concertos' and the Ricercar *à 6* of the Musical Offering. Or he did send a full score and it is lost. Sending parts may have been customary with chamber works offered to a patron (e.g. the Sonata *à 3* in the Musical Offering), but with such a work as the B minor Kyrie, it is hard to see how the Court Capellmeister, on to whom such musical offerings were presumably passed, would have much idea from them what kind of work this was, beyond its obvious complexity. On the other hand, the parts, carefully notated with details (tempi, slurs), were made for performance and needed no further scribal work. As usual, at least those parts for voices and strings would have been duplicated, and in themselves provide no evidence that single voices or instruments were expected, intended or desired.

In the years around 1730, J. G. Pisendel, Dresden concertmaster and an advocate of music combining Italian and German styles, had been inviting new compositions from court-musicians across Germany and, being a former student of Leipzig University, is likely to have included Bach in the invitation, though this is not documented. Another composer in the same circle of acquaintance, J. F. Fasch of Zerbst, also wrote Masses and instrumental works for performance in Dresden over the same period.

[2] Or Silbermann's tuning did not suit the newer keys found in the *Missa*'s two Kyries (B minor, F sharp minor). However, even a reference to the organ's tuning might indicate that a performance was being considered.

In the case of Bach's two movements, maybe Pisendel asked for parts, but it is not likely that those sent were ever used. By 1757 or so, a set of parts, assumed to be those sent in 1733, was listed among the musical property of the electress (Dok. V, p. 198). Had a full score ever been sent, it would have been kept somewhere else.

Like the music's title-page, Bach's petition attached to the parts of 1733 was written out neatly by a scribe in Dresden, someone who also worked for the court composer Zelenka. Contacts needed to be made for such scribal work, which adds to the impression that the labour involved in composing, copying and dispatching the two *Missa* movements represented a big investment on Bach's part, an effort that was presumably worth it if he were asking for *Protection*, which he was to do again in October 1737. The 1733 dedication implies that there would be other 'slight works' he could offer. This could be a reference to another Latin work, the Magnificat in D, revised and recopied about this time, in a calligraphic fair copy on paper with the same watermark as the *Missa*'s. According to the petition for the royal title (Dok. I, pp. 101f.), any recognition would be of help in combatting the 'one or other injury' (*ein und andere Bekränckung*) Bach was experiencing in Leipzig, including a reduction in expected fees. His problems 'might disappear entirely' (*gänzlich nachbleiben möchte*) if he were granted a court-title. However, he cannot have realistically expected Leipzig problems to lessen if the king notified the authorities there of his support. Town councillors and clergy were not above being resentful, openly or otherwise, of a royally favoured employee.

It is not impossible that Bach's visit to Dresden in September 1731, and another recorded absence from Leipzig in March 1729, had come about with some regard to a paid position at the elector's court, especially if it is true, as Emanuel later said, that about then his father was heard by three important Dresden court musicians, J. A. Hasse, his wife (a court diva) and J. J. Quantz, and enthusiastically praised by them (Dok. III, p. 418). The incumbent capellmeister, J. D. Heinichen, had died in July 1729 after a sickness, Zelenka took over in the interregnum, and only two years later did the young Hasse apparently take up his governing position. Considering that Bach was in some sense well acquainted with significant musicians in Dresden – Volumier the violinist, Pisendel (his successor), Weiss the lutenist and above all Zelenka – the fact that he is not known to have ever been officially considered for a position there does leave some room for speculation.

According to the newspaper, the 1731 visit to Dresden included recitals 'on different occasions' (*zu unterschiedlichen mahlen*, Dok. II, p. 214) both

at court, presumably on harpsichord, and on organ in the nearby Sophienkirche. (Heinrich Schütz's original but modest chapel within the palace, well known today from an early print of his *cappella*, was still partly there but much altered.) A couple of years later, a big Latin Kyrie and Gloria for mixed ensemble was certainly not inappropriate for Friedemann's church, any more than Latin Mass movements and a Magnificat on Christmas Day had been for important Lutheran churches in north Germany. For the Dresden court itself, in 1733 Zelenka was also composing Masses that shared certain details with Bach's, such as using flutes in 'Domine deus' of the Gloria; he also supplied some duplicated parts for at least a pair of violin-desks. Whether or not these composers were knowingly competing, Bach found it useful to end his petition with the offer to supply other music – a point to consider further in connection with the topic 'Bach and opera' (below, p. 484).

Questions are whether Bach's fitness for the highest musical job in the land was as obvious to the Dresdners as it might be today, and whether the music of the *Missa* overestimated local tastes and abilities much as the earliest cantatas in Leipzig had probably done. Meanwhile, however, the other royal cantata music performed in Leipzig was not wasted: movements were re-used for arias and choruses in the Christmas Oratorio (see below) and again carefully planned, beginning and ending in the festive D major.

As is not always the case with Handel, Bach's re-use of his own material suggests he was perfectly aware of what was well wrought and beautiful in his own music, knowing (as we might say) a fine piece when he saw it. His parodies demonstrate that one and the same music is able to match both the *Affekt* and individual words of quite different texts. Whatever the immediate reason for adapting an older work – he liked it, was unwilling to 'waste' commissioned pieces, was sparing (instrumental pieces were also re-used) or was pressed for time, indisposed, slowly losing energy – he may have had a composer's natural urge to work further on his music. Carefully re-using would be part of his drive to 'return God-given talents with interest'. That explains too why he would sometimes select the texts of church cantatas himself, for although the Gospel events are familiar enough, it is the case that the Leipzig list of readings for the church year (the Lectionary) are not always identical with those he did set. He must certainly have had an efficient filing system, in his memory or on paper, calling up suitable movements to re-use, and evidently aware that the new king favoured Italian music over French. It is difficult to find anything French in either the *Missa* or the eventual 'Mass in B minor'. (For some further remarks on the music of both, see below.)

Festive music was festive music, and in the days when a monarch was God's anointed, what was suitable for a new-crowned king in Dresden was suitable for the new born king in Bethlehem. Once converted to a version for church services, the music was not then re-revised for other purposes, though a 'secular' version of a church cantata might be changed again (Cantata No. 36a–c). It is misleading to assume that through a fundamental piety, bringing non-church music into church was *ad majorem gloriam dei* but taking it out was not – misleading because fundamental piety could just as well lead a composer to do either.

A note on the Christmas Oratorio

Three narrative works are called by Bach *Oratorium*, a term rather out of the ordinary: for Christmas 1734–5, Ascension 1735 and Easter ?1737. (There may also have been a Whitsuntide or Pentecost *Oratorium*, about which nothing is known.) Except for the newly made recitatives and interspersed chorales, the three were compiled in the 1730s from previous music, all tell a story, all concern named persons, all have striking pictures of moments in the life of Jesus presented to the mind's eye and, unlike the Passions, all use brass instruments. They do this with more movements than most cantatas, in one case with distinct Acts representing six different days over the Christmas festival. The Easter Oratorio seems to have been a natural consequence of the other two: Bach revised a cantata of 1725, itself a revised version of a birthday cantata BWV 249a, and now called it *Oratorium* despite its containing no chorales like the others.

A particularly interesting decision of Bach's in 1734 (assuming it was his) was to bring together the texts of six cantatas for the Christmas and New Year period and to publish them in a booklet as

Oratorium, welches Die heilige Weyhnacht über In beyden Haupt-Kirchen zu Leipzig musiciret wurde. Anno 1734.

Oratorium, which at the Holy Christmas in both main churches at Leipzig is to be set to music. 1734.

The text is based on the Gospel readings for the six festival days, in an unbroken continuous sequence, of Luke for the first four, Matthew for the last two: birth, shepherds and angels, adoration, naming after eight days, the call of the Wise Men, and their departure. As in other cantata textbooks published for Sunday services, though not the Passions, the words for the chorales are given in full. Locations and services are also specified:

Christmas Day, St Nicholas early (*frühe*) and St Thomas afternoon (*Nachmittage*);
second Christmas Day, vice versa;
third Christmas Day, St Nicholas (only);
fourth day (Circumcision), St Thomas early, St Nicholas afternoon;
fifth day (Sunday after New Year), St Nicholas;
sixth day (Epiphany of Christ), St Thomas early, St Nicholas afternoon.

Something out of the ordinary was intended by grouping them in this way. In Thuringia-Saxony, Passions were very occasionally divided over several days; at the same time, separate works for the festal period had already been part of the regular cantata-cycles, from Bach's first Leipzig Christmas onwards. The first of the Oratorio's six cantatas could have been planned for Christmas Day 1734 in the usual way before the notion of a published compilation took root; yet the arias in Parts I and II draw so heavily on two recent birthday cantatas for Saxony's royalty (Nos. 213 and 214, September and December 1733) as to suggest that the composer was already moving towards a more 'Dresden-like' work than usual. Only Part VI appears to be based on a regular church cantata, again with new recitative.

No more than the textbook does the list above suggest that these parts or Acts were ever given a single, complete performance in the usual way of oratorios. This is not impossible, but none is recorded nor, in view of variously increasing problems in St Thomas, is it likely. There is no way of knowing how far the composer regretted this. Emanuel still lists the autograph score and parts for each cantata separately, heading the first 'Oratorium for the time of Christmas' and the others 'Oratorium. Pars II', etc., as did an earlier advertisement by the bookseller Breitkopf (Dok. III, pp. 493, 165). This is not the least way in which, though both tell a story, this *oratorium* differs from the contemporary italianate *oratorio*. And although the Christmas story can be seen as in its way comparable to the Passion story, the *oratorium* is not shaped towards a 'conclusion' in the same way: neither its distinctive sectional structure nor its completion at Epiphany required a great final chorus on the scale of the Passions. Of course, they both tell an incomplete story. From the first chords and drums in D major to the last, the tone of the Christmas Oratorio is unmistakable: a Christian joyfulness, sometimes pensive sometimes exuberant, full of melody not least in the new recitative. The 'tonal symmetry' is surely not only a matter of what key is most suitable for three trumpets.

Equally unmistakable is the work's position in the biography. This is music of the 1730s by a mature composer looking towards Dresden and its

tastes, hence – among other things – a certain tenderness in two arias with solo violin, apparently composed specially, both in B minor and both unfettered by a strict *da capo* form. The one chorus that is somewhat reminiscent of moments in the Leipzig Passions, in particular the Jews' dramatic choruses in the St John Passion, appears to originate in the lost St Mark Passion of 1731, only now demanding to know 'Where is the newborn king?' Arias of a more distinctly *galant* cast include those in 2/4, such as those two in B minor, and it is certainly possible to hear a particular harmonic maturity in the chorales, two or three per cantata, mostly in the major and often very familiar: newly thought progressions, imaginative accented passing notes (qv), more fluid lines than usual, in every case demonstrating some new thinking. In addition, the final chorales in four of the parts close with specially developed chorale-settings, jollier than the chorale closing Part I of the St Matthew Passion. The many texts known for the Oratorio's final chorale (the last chorale of Part VI) might leave one sceptical that it 'looks towards' the Passion story, as some have thought. And yet – scepticism can be misplaced, especially when the same chorale has already been heard in Part I, set more simply and to more reflective words ('how should I receive you?'). Here, then, is a second symmetry in the Oratorio: the same melody for the first and the last chorale.

Of the sixty-four movements, twenty or so of the big choruses and arias originated in existing birthday cantatas or *dramme*, adapted without any evident trouble to very different words. Several parts depend heavily on the two birthday salutations of 1733, BWV 213 and 214. An echo aria with pastoral overtones serves the Christian soul searching for salvation (Christmas Oratorio, Part IV) just as well as it does Hercules searching for virtue (BWV 213, this perhaps already a parody). So many classical *topics* such as the pastoral occur in biblical contexts – here, salvation through the Good Shepherd – that they can plausibly appear in several contexts, even if the aria in this instance seems a little naïve for a Christmas cantata. (Just as it is also, arguably, in the original aria.) But although the melodious style of these original congratulatory cantatas was in general perfectly suitable for Christmas, not all of it was. The gavotte-chorus originally closing BWV 213 and apparently intended to open Part V of the Christmas Oratorio was then discarded and replaced by another chorus, apparently new, just as catchy but more like a long, flattering polonaise.

A certain flavour of the regular Leipzig church liturgy is also provided by five of the newly written recitatives which, narrating the story as melodiously as they do in the Passions, lead in to chorales in which it is conceivable the congregation joined. Among the chorales, *Ich-lieder* ('I songs',

hymns with first person pronoun) are significant; so too are original Luther texts. At times, one could suppose oneself to be hearing the St Matthew Passion, especially at the end when the soloists sing a kind of farewell. These two farewells (already remarked on) appear to be the composer's own idea for closing a story of birth and a story of death – a personal touch, for in neither case does the libretto specify that the soloists should 'take leave' in this way. In the Passion there is no rubric, and the Oratorio says merely *Recit* (facsimiles in Neumann 1974, pp. 324, 455).

The overall tone of the Christmas Oratorio is immensely warm and light, meticulous in its contrapuntal detail, wide-ranging in its melodies and with startling moments of unexpected charm, as when the oboes return in the final chorale of Part II with a reminder of their 'pastoral symphony' at its beginning. Both movements appear to be new to the Christmas Oratorio, confirming a 'gentle' G major for Part II. The musical survey is so comprehensive as to make it clear that in both the new and the recycled movements Bach was endeavouring to find fresh approaches. Melodies vary from a dashing violin theme that could have come straight out of Corelli or even Legrenzi (the parody aria 'Ich will nur dir zu Ehren leben') to the 'pastoral symphony' that faintly recalls Locatelli (Concerto in F minor, performed by the Collegium in 1734) though it is in the same key as Corelli's (Op. VI no. 8, 1714). There is also a courtly aria-dance very much at home in Royal Polish Dresden ('Nur ein Wink von seinen Händen'), coming at the point when Herod asks to be told where the Christ-child lies, and as much like a polonaise as another A major aria in the earlier royal birthday *dramma* (BWV 214) on which Part I is partly based. Like other movements in Part VI, 'Nur ein Wink' might belong to a 'prototype' work for Christmas, not much older but with its text now lost.

Were one to look for allegory, the unmissable graciousness and puzzling metre of the aria 'Nur ein Wink' seem to allude to the persona of Herod as depicted in the first Gospel: outwardly charming but in fact deceitful (where is the first main beat?). More generally, such polonaises are surely to be understood as dutiful allusion to the union of Poland and Saxony. Several reports speak of a polonaise opening the ball celebrating the elector's son's wedding in 1719 and one can hear other examples of this dance in various genres: keyboard ('Goldberg Variation' No. 1), vocal (Cantata No. 184), chamber music ('Brandenburg Concerto' No. 1), etc. Another polonaise in Cantata No. 210a appears in several versions, some addressed to the elector's subordinates, including the Governor of Leipzig.

The Christmas Oratorio's wordbook appeared just two years after a *Lexikon* certainly familiar to Bach appeared in Leipzig (Walther 1732) in

which *oratorio* or *oratorium* was defined as a 'musical representation of a spiritual story in the chapels or chambers of great lords'. Here was music already written for 'great lords', so it was plausible for either composer or librettist (Picander?) to take over the term. *Oratorium passionale* was Bach's title for his later copy of Handel's Brockes Passion, with German text and therefore not quite appropriately called *oratorio*, despite the word's obvious origin in *orare*, 'to pray'. (This origin was pointed out by Gottsched himself in another book published in Leipzig, *Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst*, 1751.) Naturally, the Christmas story is less fraught and dramatic than the Passions, with a result that the new recitatives are markedly lyrical throughout.

The idea of six linked cantatas was not unique, though not necessarily familiar to Bach. How involved he was in an old Leipzig tradition for the choristers to perform nativity plays is unclear, and presumably any such presentation would have been before Christmas and not into Epiphany; but some connection between the plays and the cantata-chorales is always possible. On linked works, see also a note on Buxtehude's Advent concerts above, p. 77; his 'Membra Jesu nostri' was a version of the Passion story in seven cantatas. G. H. Stölzel had composed what is assumed to be a cycle of six Christmas cantatas at Gotha already in 1719, and in some places such as Zerbst, the Passion itself was divided over services in Holy Week. In Dresden at much the same period Georg Gebel was setting a St John Passion to be performed later on six days in Holy Week.

For further remarks on the Christmas Oratorio, see p. 384.

A note on the Keyboard Practice volumes, especially *Clavierübung II*

It is hard to imagine that while in Dresden during December 1736, Bach played only the new Silbermann organ in the Frauenkirche and not also harpsichords in the apartments of such courtiers as Keyserlingk and Flemming. Two plausible guesses are that Bach took with him his recent publication, Part II of *Clavierübung*, published in Nuremberg for the Easter Fair 1735, and that he played in private or even semi-public its two startlingly different pieces: the Italian *Concerto* and the French *Ouverture*, this often now called the 'Partita in B minor'. These are new works expressing up-to-date Dresden tastes for 'Italian vigour' and 'French suavity', though in both cases with an attention to detail previously unknown. Being engraved in Nuremberg where various first editions originated

(in contrast to the many reprinted/pirated volumes elsewhere), the volume suggests that Bach chose carefully, for a more professional design and wider publicity than for the Six Partitas.

In number of bars, Bach's *Clavierübung* Parts I and II together amount to more or less the same as the next part, III. In being so modest in size, Part II resembles another recent *Clavierübung*, Vincent Lübeck's jejune volume of 1728, containing a prelude, a fugue, a suite and a chorale. It also recalls the Leipzig tradition established in Kuhnau's *Clavierübung* of assembling French with Italian idioms. And it also, in its own way, fulfils Bach's earlier advertisement for what seems to have been a seventh suite or partita, which otherwise did not materialize (Dok. II, p. 202). It would not be impossible for either the *Concerto* or the *Ouverture* of Part II to be the piece advertised, perhaps worked on some time before Part I was republished in 1732. The advertisement spoke not of *partita* but of *suite*, which an *ouverture* can be taken to be: that it did not come first in the volume, and so be more obviously the promised seventh suite, might have some other purpose discussed below.

Differences between French and Italian music that had inspired Bach for thirty years or so are now expressed in unambiguous and perfected form, in an exceptional publication. Both also take advantage of a newer but growing interest of the time: in two-manual harpsichords. If the first work in the new book, the Italian Concerto, was some years old before it was published twice in 1735,[3] perhaps it did not originally specify two manuals, any more than the transcriptions of Vivaldi's string concertos had done so during the Weimar years. It must be that keyboardists with only one manual either distinguished between a concerto's solo and tutti sections by touch or they ignored them, perhaps 'imagining' them as Vivaldi would have had to do on the Venetian instruments he knew. In *Clavierübung II*, Bach responds to the two national styles not least by the way he writes for the instrument: in the Concerto, following the Italian taste for solo versus tutti; in the *Ouverture*, following the French taste for the rich tenor range.

The *Ouverture* also exists in C minor, almost certainly an earlier version, more idiomatic and natural under the fingers than B minor and resulting – to offer a personal view – in the greatest of all baroque keyboard suites. It cannot be missed that this and the other Partita in C minor (No. 2 of

[3] If both J. S. Bach in the Italian Concerto first movement and W. F. Bach in his Sonata in F, Fk. 202, do derive their first theme from a certain ballet (Georg Muffat's 'Impatientia', in *Florilegium primum*, 1695), they may have been working on them at much the same time, about 1733. But the derivation is conjectural.

Clavierübung I, presumably composed some years earlier) are as different in all respects as they can be within the bounds of *ouverture* form, both in the nature and even the sequence of movements. In such works, Bach is once and for all discarding the old prosaic Reinken school of keyboard-writing and doing so with an inventiveness as startling as anything in the body of cantatas. A comparison between any pair of movements in these two C minor suites, such as their first-movement fugues, their courantes or sarabandes or finales, reveals a turn towards a sensuality easy to see as a sign of a maturing expressiveness. The tessitura alone of the new courante takes one into the world of Couperin and Rameau, but with novel subtleties of rhythm and harmonic tension worked by a composer freely choosing what few Parisian conventions he pleases. Not only Parisian: there seems more than a passing memory of Froberger, for whom Bach's admiration could have been partly based on familiarity with his *10 Suittes* of 1698.

Equally indicative of the composer's thinking in the 1730s, the Italian Concerto is a clear-cut example of an idealized Venetian concerto of three standard movements, and with a slow harmonic rhythm that is itself italianate. Since both works in *Clavierübung II* resemble solo versions of orchestral music, neither is quite like other keyboard music of Bach though just as useful as a model for his students. The Concerto is full of details he learnt from transcribing Italian works twenty years previously, from starting with an emphatic full chord through to a breathless finale. In practice, Bach's three movements could well have a pulse or beat in common (see p. 565), whether this was entirely his own idea or one he had surmised from close acquaintance with imported concertos. Both Prince Johann Ernst's concertos of twenty years earlier and various remnants of students' concerto-exercises imply that some young German composers did work on such styles, just as Bach's pupil J. L. Krebs also took up the idea of contrasting the French with the Italian. On the wider stage, however, the French *ouverture* conception was dying a natural death in the new age of musical societies and their new orchestral symphonies.

Neither piece in *Clavierübung II* represents the most up-to-date styles in either Italy or France; both resist the lighter styles current far and wide in those countries. There are also examples here of J. S. Bach's 'thoroughness', one slight, the other more arcane. A slight example: the engraving of 1735, in at least one issue, has *Il fine* at the end of the Italian Concerto (as also Sonatas for Organ) and *Fin* at the end of the French Overture, just as the title-page refers to *Gusto* (qv) (Italian) and *Art* (French) – little pedantries to raise a smile, but in their way significant. (As too when a more youthful

Bach added 'tournez' for some page-turns in his copy of de Grigny's *Livre* that are not there in known originals.) A more arcane example: the keys of *Clavierübung II*, F major and B minor, are as far apart as possible, major-to-minor at the distance of a tritone – hardly an accident. The first, F major, actually continues the wedge-like key-sequence of *Clavierübung I*'s partitas:

B flat – c – a – D – G – e – F

although, strictly, F minor (f) would be more logical. Either way, B minor (*H moll*), the eighth key, completes the eight German note-names, A B C D E F G H. This tonal plan is not merely a paper-scheme: the keynotes themselves make a curiously melodious line completed by the very next chord Bach published and then 'contradicted' by the next piece after that. See Example 20.
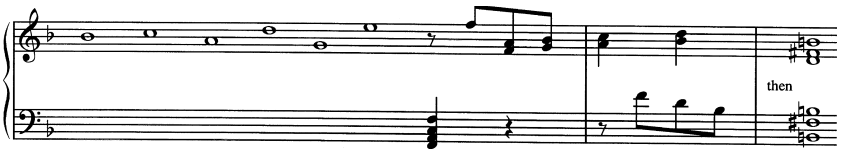
Sometimes in his other keyboard volumes, the thorough exploration of all available parameters comes close to the pedantic. The Four Duets in the next publication, *Clavierübung III*, systematically include maximum varieties of pulse, metre, time-signature, mode, key, form, imitation, counterpoint, motif, chromaticism and diatonicism, as if each of these were a pre-planned item to be ticked off on a 'list of things to do'. In being so systematic, the Duets are 'tidying up' the looser kind of counterpoint usually found in duos elsewhere, especially those in French organ Masses.

If Example 20 says something about a composer's manner of thinking, so does another curious detail of the four printed volumes of keyboard music. The suite in the second half of *Clavierübung II* opens with the dotted rhythms of a French *ouverture*; this is about halfway, as is the ouverture in the other three volumes:

Clavierübung I (opening Partita No. 4);
Clavierübung II (*Ouverture*);
Clavierübung III (chorale 'Wir glauben all an einen Gott');
Clavierübung 'IV' ('Goldberg Variations', No. 16 of 30).

Moreover, the keys of these four *ouvertures* produce a pair of relatives and a pair of dominants:

relatives:	*Clavierübung I* and *II* (D major and B minor);
	III and '*IV*' (E minor and G major);
dominants:	*I* and '*IV*' (D major to G major);
	II and *III* (B minor to E minor).



Example 20 Keynotes of *Clavierübung I* and *II*

The idea of a central *ouverture* is plausible, like the *inner exordium* of a sermon when the preacher 'starts again' for extra rhetorical effect. In *Clavierübung III*, this effect is comparatively slight, while in the 'Goldberg Variations' it is a big moment, possibly the climax of the whole book. But why the four keys of Parts I–IV were so planned, if they were, is a puzzle. Another arcane game? An esoteric link to be spotted by *true connoisseurs*? Because organization was second nature to the composer, whether or not it signified anything?

Whatever the answer, there is a most disturbing implication: that the 'Goldberg Variations' are in G major because the middle chorale of *Clavierübung III* had been in its relative minor. Is this really possible? Was the G major bass theme, though familiar and used in part for decades, chosen because the key was the one needed for this overarching plan? Is there an overarching plan? Either that, or there is a strange set of coincidences here.

The set of harpsichord concertos

Because of the fitful survival of sources, the series of unknowns about Bach's concerto repertory as a whole allows only more or less plausible suggestions about their origin – not about only the date, place and purpose but also about the instrument and original key. As well as the fitful survival of sources, there are other reasons for the uncertainties.

Dating a work, which will often involve comparisons with other works, can be difficult because the various kinds of music are kept so distinct: a solo suite for violin or cello will have too little in common with a 'Brandenburg Concerto' for one to be able to reason which is the earlier. The question would not be decisively answered even if a copy of either or both were dated by the composer. As for what in each case was the original solo instrument, the question would be, rather, whether there was only ever one 'original solo instrument', and even if there were, whether the composer from the beginning had it in mind to make another version. To leave

performance options for the players of chamber music, whether string, wind or keyboard, was familiar enough in French publications of the time for Bach to have done the same more or less automatically.

If the three outstanding violin concertos leave such questions open, even more so do the eight harpsichord concertos BWV 1052–9, gathered and written out in score by the composer in about 1738. Transcribed largely if not entirely from movements originally composed for other solo instruments plus strings, they appear to be intended now as a set, though with the last left incomplete. The violin versions of the harpsichord concertos mostly had different keys, and not a few movements may go back to some years before Leipzig. What is clear, however, is that these are concertos in the sense of a soloist or two standing out from an ensemble that itself consisted generally of other single instruments: so concertos could as well be called *consorts à 5, 6* or *7*. Obvious to players, on the whole, is also how idiomatic the transcriptions turn out to be for the 'new' instrument, as do the multiple keyboard concertos (those for two, three and four harpsichords). When a putative violin version does not exist, as for the C minor Concerto for Two Harpsichords or the D minor for Three Harpsichords, the 'original' becomes quite speculative: 'reconstructible', to be sure, but still speculative.

The deliberate effort to create a set of novel works such as Eight Harpsichord Concertos must have been inspired by circumstances: these were works useful for the Collegium or as concert-items in the career of the elder sons, scores from which they would have to make playing parts. The composer himself may well have felt an urge to make and collect new kinds of ensemble music, perhaps with publication in mind, though this last would have been more feasible if the music was in parts rather than score. (A score suggests something more 'archival' from which parts were made and could be engraved.) The last of the eight concertos is a fragment of only nine bars, with no sign that it was ever completed: the page it occupies is the last in the surviving manuscript. It could be that Bach found too many problems, practical or musical, in converting this particular earlier work (BJ 1979, p. 36); but it could also be that any idea of making up a conventional set of twelve, comparable to Handel's published *Concerti grossi* of 1736, was too demanding at the time.

The old dictionary definition of concerto as being some kind of 'struggle' between hero and the rest might seem justified by certain violin concertos of Vivaldi, but it is particularly inappropriate in the case of Bach's harpsichord concertos and indeed the 'Brandenburgs'. Over the period *c.* 1720 to *c.* 1745 there is still little sign of bigger string-ensembles for such *consort* pieces, which presumably would have still been the case if they were being

played on the new pianofortes, some of which did gradually became louder and so gradually needed a bigger ensemble. In one important respect, however, these concertos speak for a practice that continued in piano concertos until the early nineteenth century: the keyboardist played continuously with the band, 'stepping out' from the tutti only for his solos.

The Concerto in E major, BWV 1053, might be one of the first concerto transcriptions, and had resulted in an outstandingly polished, viable and new-sounding genre: the harpsichord concerto. Whether in this particular concerto the three movements originated together is something that can be argued from surviving sources, but some concertos certainly seem to have been compiled from different originals: the Concerto in D minor, BWV 1052, the fragment BWV 1059, the F minor, BWV 1056, and the G minor, BWV 1058. It is not unlikely that some students were familiar with these and other works before they were brought together by the composer as a group, though Emanuel's own concertos from 1733 onwards already go their own way, being less like Italian violin concertos.

The autograph score of the whole set BWV 1052–9 makes it neither less nor more likely that the first six were being thought of by the composer as a *set of six*, the only such set of concertos other than the 'Brandenburgs'. The last of them, BWV 1057, would stand out as an exception, as was not unusual in such sets: it has two solo flutes as well as harpsichord, and is a version of the concerto familiar in another form (not necessarily the original form) as 'Brandenburg Concerto' No. 4, there with recorders. All eight concertos exhibit ingenious musicianship in converting violin lines to the harpsichord in different ways, preserving the harmony and counterpoint while adding idiomatic keyboard flourishes and continuo-like accompaniment in the string parts. These are very accomplished arrangements, witness to the careful attention given them and, one can guess, to the composer's affection and delight in playing them: a new genre.
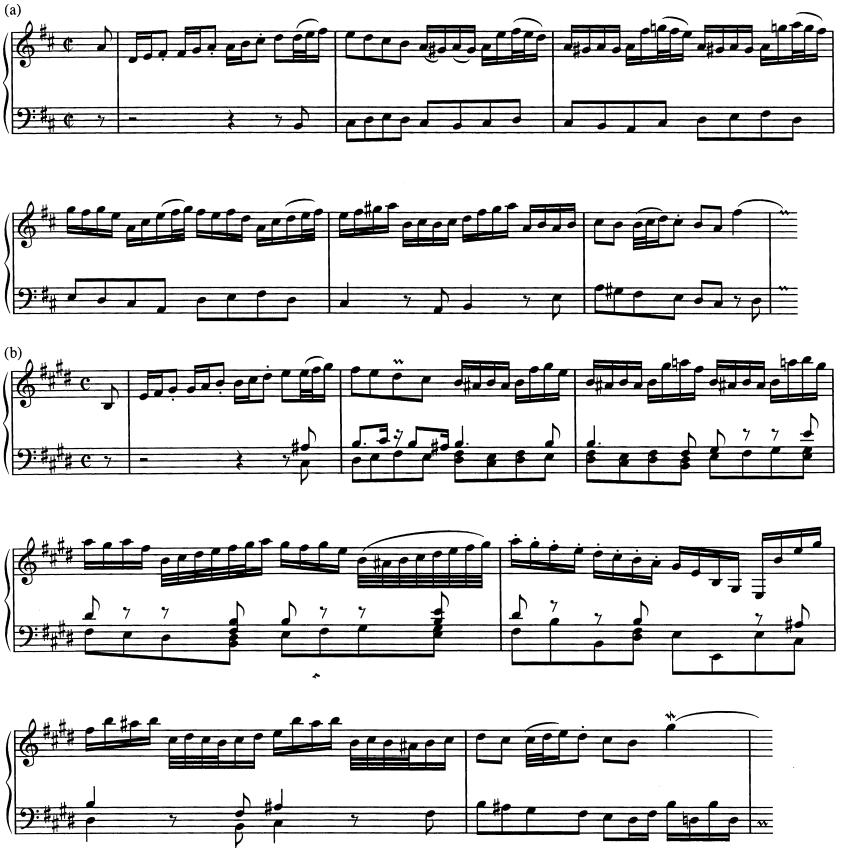
Especially in the 1738 version of 'Brandenburg' No. 4, the harpsichord part explores a range of techniques and textures unmatched before Mozart's piano concertos forty years later, and is clearly the result of a great deal of thought – about what a keyboard is capable of, how it converses, contrasts and balances with the ensemble, how it can produce a *cantabile* melody. Though they often recall superficially some of Albinoni's concerto-sets up to his Op. 9 (which had probably circulated before publication in 1722), these keyboard transcriptions must have stood out from any other similar arrangements of the time, whether or not the composer knew this. If the earliest works in the compilation existed as keyboard concertos well before some movements appeared in the Leipzig

church cantatas of 1726, as is possible, then Bach was a notable pioneer. Perhaps experience as violinist and chamber-musician in Weimar was already leading him to apply some of the characteristics of the new violin concertos to the keyboard, which one can imagine him playing in the prince's concerts at Cöthen, on the new harpsichord.

Before the compilation of 1738 Bach seems to have reworked much of the solo part of the first concerto of the set (the D minor Harpsichord Concerto, BWV 1052) and continued to work on others, making changes in certain figuration as if he was working out for himself how to give the comparatively low-amplitude harpsichord (or early fortepiano?) a solo rôle in the string ensemble. One could claim that he was working out for himself the possibilities of a new kind of instrumental music, like Haydn and his symphonies a few decades later. Such harpsichord concertos would be altogether 'busier' than an organ concerto, where the organ would easily overpower strings if its part were not thinned out. It seems that the idea of a 'solo keyboard concerto' had been gradually maturing over time and was certainly accomplished by the 1730s. When some concerto movements had been scored or rescored for organ in certain cantatas of the third cycle, a new advantage arose: because organs were louder, wind instruments could be added, producing virtually an orchestral sound.

The first and second movements of the E major Harpsichord Concerto are a good illustration of a reworking, in this case a dozen years after they had appeared in D major for the *organo* obbligato of Cantata No. 169 (1726). If either or both versions go back in part to a yet earlier concerto for hautbois d'amour, as is possible, they are providing us with some idea of how the composer's idea of transcription developed. (At one point in his oratorio *Saul*, also from 1738, Handel revised an oboe part for solo organ: this must often have happened.) See Example 21, for the first solo entry.

Assuming the fifth complete bar of Example 21(b) had not been unintentionally omitted for some reason in the cantata version, which the sources do not suggest, it is striking how both versions are feasible with or without that bar. Had its original movement been for oboe, the harpsichord's bar 5 might be the relic of a breathing-space, between beats 3 and 4. But one can be certain about very little in these concertos, not their original form, instrument or key. Nor, though several movements appeared more than ten years earlier in Leipzig cantatas, is it often clear on what they were based. So with the three movements in the E major Concerto of Example 21: these could be derived from three different originals from different periods, or conversely, they were specially written or arranged for a concert. One such concert was Bach's organ recital in



Example 21 (a) Cantata No. 169.i, organ obbligato part, b. 9; (b) Harpsichord Concerto, BWV 1053.i, b. 9

Dresden in September 1725, but the newspaper's reference to *Concerten* is ambiguous (see p. 376).

Emanuel's version of the well-known Concerto in D minor, BWV 1052a, now dated to *c.* 1734, must be based directly or indirectly on a violin original ten or more years older, and could have been made for Emanuel to play. In 1739 Friedemann came back to Leipzig for a month-long visit, with two lutenists from Dresden (one of them the renowned Sylvius Weiss), and it is easy to imagine family concerts with such works, concertos also helpful to Friedemann and Emanuel in their burgeoning careers. A student, J. F. W. Sonnenkalb, later reported often hearing house-concerts played by 'the whole Bach family', including Friedemann, Emanuel, Christoph Friedrich, Johann Christian and son-in-law Altnickol: but he must be speaking of the later 1740s, when Sebastian no longer played much outside

his home and when the eldest sons were there in Leipzig only on visits (Dok. III, p. 148). Nevertheless, it is easy to suppose that especially the two elder sons had long been playing in formal or informal house-concerts. One appropriate work for such occasions was the Six Sonatas for Organ in a version for harpsichord duet, possibly laid out by the composer (NBA IV/7, KB, p. 99): harpsichord I takes the original right hand and bass, harpsichord II the original left hand and bass.

A set of six solo harpsichord concertos would have coincided with the first complete set of keyboard concertos ever to be published: Handel's Op. 4, 'for organ or harpsichord' and strings, which appeared in London in the same year (1738), in parts. Like Bach's, they were compiled from several kinds of source, one of them originally a concerto for quite another instrument (harp). Although there is no evidence that Bach or the Collegium musicians knew these Handel works, they were also published in Paris, caught the public taste for new kinds of concerto, had a huge sale, were much imitated and have never been out of print. It was unlikely that concertos would be published in score, but if parts had been prepared, they would have joined the many publications becoming popular in the new concert-rooms across Europe, works of Handel, Locatelli, Veracini, pseudo-Pergolesi, Rameau. Nothing is known, though much might be speculated, about a possible connection between Bach's work on his manuscript score and a visit to Dresden (and Friedemann) in May 1738.

It could be that the concertos for two or more harpsichords, likewise arrangements but not known to have been collected in the same way, belong to more than one of Bach's Collegium periods and were regular favourites. Quite why it is so difficult from internal evidence to date any of these concertos in their different versions is a question already asked above. It must have something to do with the nature of the Vivaldi idiom as Bach knew it. For while it was of course possible to shape longer movements than Vivaldi's, as Bach did, nevertheless the kinds of themes, harmonies and especially rhythms that are the hallmarks of Italian concertos were more of a fixture, none of them particularly open to much further development and therefore not easily datable. In their length, thoroughness and relatively complex harmony Bach's lose something of the Vivaldi dash, but keep enough of it to make even pinpointing the decade of origin uncertain.

Since sometimes the part for first harpsichord in these 'multiple' concertos makes bigger demands on the player than the other parts do, it is reasonable to suppose them to have been arranged for the composer to play with the assistance of sons and pupils. Not out of the question is that

concertos as fresh and vigorous as those in D minor for Solo Harpsichord, or in C major for Three Harpsichords, are works from Cöthen or even (in embryo) Weimar, originally for violin and only later transcribed for the gifted Bach sons. Although a case can be made that the first true keyboard concertos are not Bach's but those of his two eldest sons and their contemporaries, who far away from Venice set out to create a new genre, the special sound-aura of Bach's transcriptions is all the more striking, especially in the multiple concertos. These are unique, elusive works unlike any other music, even string concertos by Vivaldi or Bach himself. In the opening bars of the C major Triple, for instance, one is immediately aware of this special aura, the sound-world of a composer once again adopting italianate concert-music of a kind only hinted at in a few church cantatas and not much more so in Italian models.

Since the concerto was after all a violin genre, to have produced an equivalent for harpsichord is not the least of J. S. Bach's original creations. They must always have dazzled hearers. Especially in the three- and four-harpsichord concertos there are some startling conceptions: the bare fifth opening the A minor Quadruple (where the key is not at first clear), the unique sound of four harpsichords together in the Largo, the extraordinarily winsome dance in the middle of the D minor Triple Concerto, the antiphonal effects in the C major Triple, and in each the shimmer of harmonies produced when embellishments are played by several harpsichords at once. To give a typical opening theme in bare octaves (a traditional feature in Vivaldi) to three keyboards instead of three violins in the D minor Triple Concerto might on paper be only reinforcing a typical Vivaldian effect, but in the process it produces a sound-world quite unknown anywhere else.[4]

In cantata movements with solo organ, the organ-writing is usually similar to the harpsichord's, entirely different in form, texture, tessitura and figuration from the organ's own preludes, fugues and chorales. There are several answers to why Bach of all composers did not move towards the fully formed organ concerto for large ensemble and large organ. First, *genre*: concertos were italianate string music, not Lutheran church music, although some concerto elements would be heard in cantata movements with a part for solo organ (twice in Cantata No. 35, 1726). Standard types of 'German organ music' were as distant in genre from such music as were strophic songs or ballets. Secondly, *tuning*: Full Organ and especially its

[4] The opening bare octaves alone of the 'Toccata and Fugue in D minor for Organ' make it likely to be a transcription.

sustained chords were found tolerable against an orchestra only very much later in music history, when listeners' sensitivities to tuning became blunter than they were in 1730. Thirdly, *function*: before orchestral concerts in the new symphonic concert-halls of a later generation, which gradually acquired bigger organs, there were no practical opportunities for Full Organ concertos.

To see any of these works, particularly the solo concertos, as 'anticipating the classical piano concerto' is misleading. Rather, they are conveying in their busy figuration how the keyboard, like the violin, might participate in a consort, embellishing the harmony with lots of keyboard figurations (scales, arpeggios) and stepping forward from time to time with its own solos. That remained true in part of the classical piano concerto up to Beethoven's 'Emperor'. But as there is no 'orchestra' as such for Bach's harpsichord concertos, only solo string ensemble, the relationship to the keyboard is different, too different for them to serve as precursors to the classical concerto. Nevertheless, as a group, but especially in the solo concertos in D major and D minor, Bach's could claim to be the most developed and significant keyboard concertos before Mozart's piano concertos of 1784–6. Extrovert in their outer movements and rapt in their middle, these concertos encourage no unbridled virtuosity, and in fact, on the whole the harpsichord versions are less demanding on their soloist than the violin versions are on theirs.

There is another respect in which the autograph compilation of the eight harpsichord concertos deserves attention: see below, p. 413.

Major organ works

The publication in 1739 of *Clavierübung III*, a substantial collection of chorale-settings by a cantor (not a regular organist!) raises many questions about why a composer would assemble and publish such a volume. Chief among them is the question raised by several collections of Bach's keyboard music: how far was it a practical volume (who could play it) and how far a theoretical (what was its agenda)?

Because of its complex significance to a musical biography, *Clavierübung III* deserves separate consideration (below), but questions can also be asked about the other, unpublished organ music, most of which is technically more demanding than was usual at the time. A problem with organ-chorales, for instance, is that if Bach's intentions were purely practical, they become unnecessarily elevated, certainly far above the modest repertories

represented by the early 'Neumeister Chorales', more at home in the average church and played by the average organist. If earlier works had a practical use, the later (already with the *Orgelbüchlein*, 1713–) give an impression of being taken up more and more with the language of music, exploring it beyond the familiar, and resulting in music not quite like anything else. That is also the case with the 'Goldberg Variations', Bach's next publication after *Clavierübung III*.

This is a moment to consider Bach's unique preludes-and-fugues for organ, large-scale and imposing works that still dominate the world of organ recitals, isolated peaks of grandeur approached by at most a few foothills. They must also have dominated listeners of the time: preludes like the C minor, BWV 546, or the 'Fantasia' in G minor, BWV 542, bursting out on full organ with massive chords, must have had a huge sound impact on listeners – something far bigger and louder than any cantata or Passion, and exceeding any orchestral overture with trumpets and drums. The opening of the Praeludium, BWV 546, compared with, say, the theoretically similar opening of Cantata No. 47 is a case in point: it is far more shattering. Even if a prelude begins apparently rather like a subdued cantata before the choir enters, as do the C minor, BWV 537, and the C minor, BWV 562, the pedal's bottom note, held unbroken for some bars, will sound only as an organ can sound, a far weightier bass than in any orchestra of the time. (The bottom notes for bass instruments at the beginning of the two Passions are repeated, not held unbroken.) The composer's direction *pro organo pleno* for the Prelude in E flat ('for full organ') provides for a massiveness of sound at the time unknown outside organ music: through it, a church could provide a unique sound-experience for any listener.

Further mention is made elsewhere of particular masterpieces for organ, including those that survive in autograph manuscript with the title *Praeludium pedaliter* (in E minor, BWV 548, B minor, 544, G major, 541) and also those of comparable stature known only through copies, which is most of the rest. There are special questions surrounding these exceptional compositions, especially about their dating:

Were they written with a known occasion in mind (e.g. B minor, BWV 544)?

Or for an occasion now unknown (E minor, BWV 548)?

Or *revised* for a certain occasion (G major, BWV 541, D minor, BWV 538)?

How many versions were there (C major, BWV 545) over how many periods?

Is there authority for pairing them (F major, BWV 540, G minor, BWV 542)?
Was there more than one such pairing (C minor, BWV 546 and 562)?
What stage of the work does an extant copy represent?
Have other stages been lost, or perhaps disguised?
Have whole works been lost?

What seems to be without doubt is that in each case, Bach was devoted to the 'purely compositional' aim of creating massive organ compositions in an integrated movement and discarding the old sectional praeludium. This he had already achieved well before Leipzig with the organ Toccata in F major, a Weimar work of quite extraordinary impetus, leading one to ask just how much he did need to lean on the Venetian composers in order to understand integrated musical shape.

However much this was, clearly when producing substantial works for organ, he was rethinking musical forms, alone, consciously and differently each time, as he did in his concertos and the first movements of Leipzig cantatas. Every work is an accomplished exercise in musical form, and there is a roll-call of possible forms in the organ works. One result might be a straightforward but integrated structure of alternating themes for the prelude (BWV 541); a prelude might have several episode-themes (BWV 548) which could themselves be fugal (BWV 546). Similarly, fugues can have straightforward ritornello shapes on an expansive scale (BWV 538), or take a new shape entirely (BWV 547) or move towards a *da capo* ABA shape (fully realized in BWV 548). And surely as part of a conscious programme, each fugue explores various contrapuntal devices such as augmentation and melodic *inversus* (qv) (BWV 547.ii) or a whole range of stretti (BWV 538.ii) or a whole range of countersubjects (BWV 544.ii). The very notion of a *da capo* fugue is startling, a contradiction in terms though something interesting him quite often in the 1730s. In the one published prelude and fugue for organ, in E flat, BWV 552, Bach furthers this idea of *exploring* form by giving the Prelude three themes and the Fugue three sections, two of the themes finally combined. Coolly calculating or not, this combining produces a climax, and the sense of build-up in all these works, particularly the fugues (which by tradition had not often led to great climaxes), is hard to match before the symphonies of a later period.

Compositions of all periods, but especially in Leipzig, could have arisen in connection with particular organs, recitals or inaugurations. One such occasion during the Cöthen period was the only well-documented organ-examination Bach is known to have undertaken in Saxony, of the large

Leipzig University organ in 1717, for which the university paid him well (20 Reichstaler) and on which occasion it is likely he also performed. For the Gera visit in June 1725, he received 30 thaler to check, test and play two organs, one of which in the Johanniskirche was a substantial three-manual instrument on which, again, he could have played an inaugural work like the C major Praeludium, BWV 545. In September 1732 the Martinikirche in Kassel paid him 50 thaler plus 26 for travel expenses and 84 for hotel expenses for himself and wife (*et uxori*: Dok. II, p. 228). Anna Magdalena may have accompanied him to Gera too, but Kassel was less than a month after they had lost their one-year-old daughter Christiana Dorothea and three months since Johann Christoph Friedrich had been born. (It does not seem far-fetched to suppose that the Kassel visit, possibly travelling via family relatives in Thuringia, gave the parents a brief interval of quiet, or at least of change.)

That Bach officiated regularly as examiner or played as recitalist in other Leipzig churches during his years in the city cannot be assumed, since a cantor could leave such duties to his organist. But one cannot be sure. There is no record of solo organ music in Störmthal when church and organ were inaugurated in November 1723, nor at Gera, but on both occasions Bach was probably there to do more than accompany chorales or, at Störmthal, the cantata he had written for the dedication service, No. 194. There are other documented performances at which one can plausibly suppose that he played big works: Dresden Sophienkirche in September 1725 and 1731 (Silbermann organ) and probably at Weissenfels in 1725 and 1729; then Kassel Martinikirche in September 1732; perhaps Mühlhausen Marienkirche in 1735 (where he accompanied his son J. G. B. Bach for his audition), then Weissensee in 1735 (en route home from Mühlhausen) and again in 1738, Laucha in 1738, Altenburg in 1739, Naumburg in September 1746 (Hildebrandt organ) and Potsdam in 1747 (Wagner organs). Although each of the last three of these had a new, large and celebrated instrument, lesser organs were also involved in Leipzig itself and environs (Stöntzsch 1731–2, Leipzig Johanniskirche 1743, Zschortau 1746), and it seems that autumn was a popular time for such visits. They make an important item in the biography. At the Kassel organ-examination in 1732 the newspaper referred to him as the 'famous organist and music-director Herr Bach of Leipzig' (Dok. II, 226) and he was handsomely paid, as, one hopes, was the town organist who also played on that occasion. The invitation to him probably came from personal contact with the builder J. N. Becker, former apprentice of the organ-builder who had supplied the Mühlhausen instrument in 1708, Bach's first known organ-project.

By chance, a late copy of the outstanding Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 538, refers to the Kassel visit. The work is unique in shape, texture, melody, 'feel', even the way the hands behave. Its great interest lies not only in its melodious and tactile lines but in being uniquely conceived as two dialogues: one in which two manuals play simultaneously and one in which they play responsorily (answering each other). The nearest relative of this unusual conception would be certain kinds of duets for voices which, although in fact not a very close parallel, can appear conversational, especially when the lines become intertwined, as they do in the Toccata, again almost as if heterophonically (qv). BWV 538 seems to have been played in the presence of the young prince of Hessen-Kassel, apparently inspiring an enthusiastic eye-witness account published years later (Dok. II, p. 410). It also implies Bach paid close attention to the job in hand, for the Kassel organ differed from any other familiar to him at that time in having a strong second manual, which he would recognize as excellent for the stereophonic dialoguing.[5] So he knew beforehand what kind of organ he was to play, possibly through a former Kassel musician, David Wahl, who was in Leipzig at the time. It is certainly tempting to speculate, as some have done, what other major works were carefully selected to play at special services, such as the one in the Leipzig University church when the Electress died in 1727 (B minor, BWV 544?) or the one marking the Peace of Dresden on Christmas Day 1745 (a version of the C major, BWV 545?).

As readers of the Obituary would assume, on formally testing an organ Bach was likely to follow the examination with an inaugural public recital, both improvising and taking along bigger organ pieces including chorales. Some of these in the years before Leipzig must have originated precisely as the Obituary implies: to please the Weimar duke. And judging by extant copies, students worked on them just as they did on the chorales, again ordering or pairing them in various ways, perhaps in connection with their studies at certain moments. The students were probably more consistent than Pachelbel's pupils/copyists, who sometimes coupled a prelude composed by one composer with a fugue by another. Some reports of Bach's playing could be speaking of organ music played for admirers gathering to listen after services, much as Handel is said to have played after evensong in St Paul's. When there is a contemporary reference to organ music being

[5] The main stop of both manuals I and II was a Prinzipal 8', something unusual when the second manual was a Chair Organ (qv) but ideal for the music's overlapping counterpoint played only on those stops. The Fugue can also be interpreted as a dialogue, but now in alternation (subject entries on I, episodes on II).

heard every Sunday, as at Eisenach in *c.* 1710 (see BJ 2008, p. 254), presumably this was more than merely the chorales, and played by the organist not the cantor.

Particularly tantalizing is the reference in a circulating Hamburg newspaper dated 27 September 1725 to a recital shortly before in Dresden, when, for over an hour, Mr Bach played at the Sophienkirche, 'preludes and diverse concertos with interspersed sweet instrumental music in all the keys' (*Praeludiis und diversen Concerten mit unterlauffender Doucen Instrumental-Music in allen Tonis*: Dok. II, p. 150). Although 'diverse concertos' has sometimes been taken to mean 'various organ concertos', more likely is that for a newspaper reporter unsure of his terms, *concert* meant 'various ensemble pieces' (*in consort*) in addition to the solos for organ (*Praeludiis*). Or, since massive organ preludes were sometimes called *Concerten*, 'preludes and diverse concertos' could mean much the same thing. In any case, 'in all keys' is an untrustworthy phrase: it cannot mean all twenty-four, impractical on any Silbermann organ. The reporter garbled the reference.

A more reliable eye-witness account speaks of hearing Bach play during the Leipzig Easter Fair in 1729 (Dok. II, p. 197), and while it is not clear where and what he was playing, the visitor compares him favourably to Frescobaldi and Carissimi – not only high praise for an organist, but implying someone who was outstanding internationally. It is easy to believe that at least in his earlier years in Leipzig, Bach put on concerts for visitors to the fairs, and if he did, he is unlikely to have been alone in doing so. J. G. Görner, from 1716 organist at various times in all three main city churches, was evidently gifted and active, and his successor at the Nikolaikirche in 1729, Johann Schneider, was highly praised by another eye-witness (Mizler III, 1752, p. 532). Significantly, in saying of Schneider that his 'preludes' were of such 'good taste' (*Vorspiele . . . gutem Geschmack*) and that nothing better was heard in Leipzig except Bach's, Mizler could be implying (wrongly?) that Bach played voluntaries for the regular services. A later eye-witness speaks specifically of Schneider's fugues as an opening voluntary (Schering 1941, p. 66), part of his job as organist.

Bach apparently reported on the old organ at Naumburg in August 1743 or so, where today the restored organ represents the more important of the regional instruments built in his later years. It is assumed that he recommended the builder Zacharias Hildebrandt (see Dok. I, p. 113), whose work resulted in a largely new organ. Hildebrandt was a former pupil of Silbermann with whom Bach eventually tested the completed organ in September 1746. Since the tonal quality of surviving instruments

by Hildebrandt and Wagner does not, in my view, equal Silbermann's, an interesting question is whether Bach did prefer the first builder to the last and if so why. Because Hildebrandt was more amenable, agreed to build a new organ in old casework, and like Bach, favoured heavy bass tone? Or Bach had a sense of loyalty to him as the one who had built the Störmthal organ, had tuned the harpsichords in the big Leipzig churches, and had made a lute-harpsichord Bach owned. Or Hildebrandt, having fewer contractual commitments than Silbermann, was available.

Any of these reasons is possible, and may say something about Bach's friendships, part personal, part professional. Something of the kind seems to have been between him as a young man and the organ-builders in and around Eisenach and Mühlhausen. Evidently, like many an organist-adviser of today, Bach had no problem in reporting for the authorities on work by builders with whom he had collaborated. That Hildebrandt worked on new organs and repairs in and around Leipzig in the 1730s is probably a sign of the cantor's support for him, which indeed he cited in letters to prospective clients (e.g. Dok. V, p. 148). So probably is the presence of many locally owned clavichords and harpsichords by Hildebrandt: thirteen out of sixteen in his inventory of 1745 were located in or near Leipzig (Dähnert 1962, p. 231). Equally possible is that if the two builders Hildebrandt and the once-litigious Silbermann were reconciled by the time that Bach participated in the Naumburg organ-test in 1746, he had helped bring it about.

Published organ music: *Clavierübung III*

As already remarked, it is not with Bach's achievements in composition but as an organist 'world-famous in organ-playing' that the Obituary of 1754 introduces him:

> The third and last [Memorial] is the Right Noble Mr Johann Sebastian Bach, world-famous in organ-playing, Royal Polish and Electoral Saxon court composer and music director in Leipzig. (*Obituary*)

The composer's dominance of organ-music will always secure attention to him in this connection, though the number of his documented recitals and organ-examinations is modest. It cannot have given him a public exposure comparable to Telemann's as a performer in Paris, playing in court and

public concerts for eight months in 1737, or composing and publishing new editions of his music, or defending his publications from piracy, and much else. Telemann, moreover, had he so wished or been able to profit from them, had much finer organs at his fingertips in Paris or Hamburg than Bach had in Leipzig, as well as far more opportunities in cities so much bigger.

In naming Bach first as a famous organist even before giving his official titles, the Obituary is evidently identifying his claim to fame among its readers, making it all the more ironic that the composer of what is generally regarded as the greatest single corpus of organ music should publish not a note of it until he was fifty-four years of age. Why this was so is not entirely clear. Because he had not been a regular organist since (at most) his early thirties; or there was no fixed schedule of liturgical organ music in Protestant Germany as in Italy or France, so no tradition for printing and selling it? What Bach himself played in occasional recitals was beyond the needs of most organists who might want to buy a volume, as it was surely beyond their capacity. What, therefore, he intended in 1739 by publishing the third volume of keyboard works, *Clavierübung III*, is not straightforward. As an actual programme for one of his or Friedemann's recitals? As an ideal for regular organists, probably few of whom could play it but would benefit from practising it? That there was not much obvious effort to make it 'popular' for player or listener must mean it had some other purpose: to teach, by demonstrating a vast array of musical treatments; and to offer a Lutheran agenda of chorales and belief.

A particular little irony is that the first chord of the first organ music Bach ever published was in E flat major, a key unfamiliar to most organists, according to Mattheson in 1731 (see below, p. 568). Was it therefore deliberately stretching the boundaries? There is no evidence for what one might suspect: that the Prelude and Fugue in E flat originated in D major and was transposed for publication, and yet transposition is feasible – for one thing, in D major the piece is easier to play. Transposing it would offer a parallel case to the published Ouverture of *Clavierübung II*, apparently transposed from C minor (Anna Magdalena's copy) to B minor (the print). In *Clavierübung II*, changing the key to B minor would be to remove it as far as possible from the previous piece in F major; in *Clavierübung III*, changing the key to E flat could be to allude to the volume's various *threes* (see below). So one might guess.

The likely gestation period of this unique publication, at an advanced stage by January 1739 (nine months before publication: Dok. II, pp. 335, 370), is close enough to the Dresden recitals for admirers to see it as an

ideal concert programme. As a collection of chorale-settings it can certainly have served very few organists for their regular Sunday services. Its plan is:

a prelude of large proportions, concerto-like in shape;
a set of extensive chorales, each followed by a smaller setting, first of the *Missa* texts (Kyrie and Gloria), secondly of Luther's six catechism hymns (Commandments, Creed, Lord's Prayer, Baptism, Penitence, Eucharist);
four *Duetti* demonstrating strict invertible counterpoint in four different ways;
a closing and monumental three-section fugue in the key of the prelude.

The exceptional appearance on the page of the Duets (each on two facing sides, with unused space) very much suggests that they were additions, fill-ins at the last stage in order to produce a volume of eighty pages. The total of twenty-seven pieces is evocative: a Trinity of Trinities ($3 \times 3 \times 3$), the number of books in Luther's New Testament, the number of subject-entries in the final fugue – and even the number of movements in the eventually complete 'Mass in B minor'. Especially this last raises the possibility that if the complete Mass had a particular connection with Dresden, so did *Clavier-übung III*. The possibility is discussed further below, but with or without the connection, a Christian commitment to the doctrine of the Trinity was definitive. It was one on which Bach had been tested when appointed at Leipzig, whose dominant hymnbook of 1682 had included the Kyrie and Gloria texts in the section 'of the Holy Trinity'.

Details in the engraved pages suggest that the composer's plan evolved from something well short of needing eighty pages (Butler 1990): first came the big chorale-settings (melodies from the Kyrie, Gloria and Catechism hymns); then some but not all of the smaller chorale-settings; then the 'framework' prelude and fugue; and lastly the four keyboard *Duetti*. Four engravers appear to have worked on the various batches, three in Leipzig and one in Nuremberg (B. Schmid, engraver of the 'Goldberg Variations'). This general picture is of a work-in-progress, the composer replanning as he proceeded, using what engravers he could, all so as to produce a major publication for the Michaelmas Fair 1739. Whether the hand-written corrections or emendations made in extant copies of the volume (eighty-four marks in one of the composer's 'hand-copies': BJ 2010, p. 40) were necessary because the original preparation was hasty or because the composer always aimed to copy-edit meticulously his volumes post-publication, is another open question.

In its complex make-up, *Clavierübung III* is peculiarly revealing of a certain kind of musician and of his priorities, including his abiding technical interests. Had the book been published by the Easter Fair 1739, as may have been the intention, it would have been an appropriate marking of the bicentenary of Luther's sermon in St Thomas's. Like its opening key of E flat major, the three settings of the Trinity hymn 'Allein Gott' in keys rising a third (F–G–A) are often taken to be an allusion to the Trinity. As it is, tonally the Prelude prepares for the following Kyrie chorales, though these too did not have to be in their present key: both could have been a semitone lower. The complexity of the greater Lord's Prayer setting is legendary, and throughout the book a level of contrapuntal imitation and thematic inversion constantly tends to push the music away from what contemporaries would have found immediately pleasing. The larger of the two Eucharist settings, BWV 688, is another example of connoisseurs' music and the tendency of the mature composer towards building a monument to the past.

The volume's quasi-doctrinal plan differs fundamentally from the *Orgelbüchlein*'s, which is a seasonal hymnbook. Finding reasons for some of its unusual details has been popular among later commentators. For example, why it is that two of the big chorales, the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, have the melody in complete octave canon (possible only through great ingenuity) must be because canon = law and represents the commands of Moses and Jesus. Or when the theme is inverted in the lesser Baptism setting, it must be because inversion = immersion.

A more purely musical programme in the volume can be glimpsed with more certainty, however, in the smaller settings, compact fughettas deriving in an exceptionally intricate way from the plainsong melodies. Both these unusual and finely moulded miniatures and the big Kyrie settings could be seen as directly inspired by the varied settings of the Mass plainchant in Frescobaldi's *Fiori musicali*,[6] and also, though less directly, by the instruction in classical counterpoint offered in different ways by Fux and Palestrina. The final Fugue in E flat, beginning with the same archetypal four notes that are transformed in Frescobaldi's sectional *Fantasia sesta* of 1608, could be an allusion to such ingenious music, now updated in the expansive baroque sweep of its harmony, organ-scoring and sense of climax. Frescobaldi too sometimes syncopated his themes, a precedent for

[6] 1635: so exactly a hundred years old if *Clavierübung III* was first conceived in 1735, as is possible. Another point in common is that *Fiori musicali* and *Clavierübung III* (described as *mainly* for organists: Dok. II, p. 335) contain pieces well or even better suited to harpsichord.

the final section here. Another possible allusion is that the Praeludium – i.e. the first organ music Bach published – is in five parts (as is its Fugue) such as Bach had learnt in certain published organ music of de Grigny he had copied many years before.

Alone amongst the *Clavierübung* volumes, Part III was 'prepared for the lovers and especially connoisseurs' of music, according to Bach's formulation on the title-page, while Parts I, II and 'IV' were only for 'the soul's delight of music-lovers'. The distinction between connoisseurs (*Kenner*) and music-lovers (*Liebhaber*) might itself allude to Frescobaldi's contrasting of *virtuose* and *ignoranti* in the preface to his *Fiori musicali*. *Kenner* are mentioned less often in the literature of the time than *Liebhaber*, but the distinction is already clear in the letter Bach wrote to his friend Erdmann in 1730 (Dok. I, p. 67) and was clearly important to him.

The rubric *alio modo*, 'in another manner', implying an alternative setting of the melody, could also have come direct from *Fiori musicali*, as when it also appears already in the *Orgelbüchlein*, about the time Bach dated his Frescobaldi copy. *Fiori musicali* is a planned volume giving a lesson in, among other things, how to create fabrics of sound around given melodies, and this alone makes it especially relevant to *Clavierübung III* – so much so as to raise the possibility that with the volume Bach was consciously accepting Frescobaldi's challenge. He had also seen how Frescobaldi had influenced de Grigny and other French organists whose books, in being liturgically ordered and musically diverse, included such genres as trios and duos. Usually, French duos and trios are slacker in all respects than the *Clavierübung*'s, suggesting another challenge accepted in Bach's first organ-publication.

There is nothing to say whether Bach was thinking of the twenty-seven pieces as a work to be played complete and in order, for although the Four Duets rise in key (e–F–G–a) so as to lead to the very next note (the Fugue's B flat), this is a 'lead' more seen than heard. An organist of the time would have no previous experience to know whether the smaller chorale-settings (the 'Lesser Catechism') were alternatives or were meant to be included in sequence. Of course, it could be either, and the idea that they speak for the 'Lesser Catechism' of Lutheran practice is plausible. But taken out and grouped as a sequence, they also give the harpsichordist a chance to play some uniquely detailed settings of familiar chorales, strangely sensuous and melodious, in textures far closer to harpsichord than to organ. Frescobaldi too speaks of his principal aim being to assist organists while including pieces equally suitable for harpsichord. The Four Duets, on the other hand, are not conventionally idiomatic to either instrument, though again playable by either.

An early reference to the volume had spoken of it being not solely but 'mainly for organists' (Dok. II, p. 335), who of course would also play chorales on the harpsichord away from church. They were also likely to be teachers and would find the volume to be a practical if ideal textbook in the arts of chorale-setting, though as beyond young organists as much as the first fugue of WTC1 was beyond young composers. (A relevant question is how far beyond most organists were Frescobaldi's open score and four clefs until they made their own keyboard score.) For its astonishing tapestry of allusions to the original chant, the smaller Kyrie, BWV 672, can stand for so much in the book. Its very intricacy creates a new kind of beauty and gives form to it, original, free of formulae, rich in harmonic tension and practical for two hands practised in up-to-date techniques. The bigger Lord's Prayer, BWV 682, represents another intricate but much bigger way with a chorale-melody: a multifaceted setting of it, combining many compositional techniques and requiring the player to distinguish touch, from phrase to phrase ('counterpoint by articulation as well as theme'). The result is an extraordinary amalgam, taxing to the composer and not a little to the player.

Whether or not *Clavierübung III* does represent Bach's actual Dresden programme of 1736, the report of 'great applause' at the recital fits in with other things said about him at the time, as he earns a reputation as an incomparable organist and contrapuntalist. Such recitals were evidently not unusual in Dresden: G. A. Homilius, according to Forkel a Bach pupil and certainly gifted, was described later as attracting 'all connoisseurs and music-lovers' to his Sunday vespers recitals in the Frauenkirche, carefully on the previous day preparing for them various chorale-preludes and a fantasia with fugue (John 1980, 36ff.) – rather like *Clavierübung III*. The praise he attracted was not so different from Bach's. Such organ recitals were more than concerts, for in sight and sound, the Frauenkirche organ was designed to cap a symbolic structure as one lifted one's eyes from the reading-desk at the lowest level (the Word) up to the font (Baptism), then the altar (Sacraments and Gospel), then above this the flamboyant retable (Revelation) on to the organ at the apex (God's gift of music) and this under heaven. While the organ played, the eye would inevitably be drawn up in contemplation, as in a more sober way it was to the bleak crucifix scene at that period above the altar in St Thomas, Leipzig during a Passion performance.

As for the possibility that *Clavierübung III* had particular connections with Dresden: its delayed publication at the end of September 1739 coincided with a most important dedication in the city – the *Dreikönigskirche*,

the new garrison church across the river, in Dresden Neustadt. This was one of the biggest new churches in Saxony, dedicated (unusually) to the Three Kings and ostensibly a gift from the same king whose birthday Bach as *court composer* was about to celebrate. Is there another allusion to *threes* here? News of the church's dedication, important to Saxony and its elector, circulated through the kingdom, and *Clavierübung III* could have had more than one *raison d'être*. Since the archival research in Dresden remains incomplete, one cannot be certain there is no reference there to Bach and his publication. A copy of *Clavierübung I*, possibly in Dresden at the time and possibly a special presentation, suggests other, similarly unexplored fields.

Developments other than keyboard music

Soon after the Dresden visit in September 1731, an older cantata, No. 70, was revived in Leipzig, and its earnestness is hard to distinguish from that of the first cantata-cycle. But the following week's newly composed cantata, No. 140, is much more immediate in its impact, with a majestic opening chorus as well as a chorale-aria with one of Bach's best-known tunes ('Wachet auf').

This aria is useful in showing a composer at work rethinking convention, for while in theory the setting is old-fashioned (a new melody runs against an old hymn-tune, sung intermittently line by line), in fact the melody goes its own way and becomes as independent of the hymn-tune as it was possible to be. This is not at all like traditional counterpoint, where the lines pretend to be independent of each other but are rarely anything of the kind. Here, the counterpoint is new and the harmony unexpectedly dissonant. Also significant are Cantata No. 140's two duet-arias, developing the traditional dialogue between Jesus (bass) and the Soul (treble) much farther than the duet in Cantata 145 from two or three years earlier, and now indeed in the barely veiled erotic language of opera. (Modern feminist interpretation of such duets raises problems when the sopranos were boys.) Like the Song of Solomon to which much of its text relates, Cantata No. 140 seems to be challenging the believer to hear the spiritual in the amatory, as if the higher purposes of existence subsume the lower.

More concretely, this and other cantatas known from the 1730s give an appearance of benefiting from sheer experience. Works include newly conceived choral variations (Cantata No. 80); arias with *galant* solos for wind-instruments and another with catchy syncopations

(Cantata No. 100); a huge fund of melody both traditional and new (the 2/4 metre in Cantata No. 97); more stylish details such as *appoggiature* than in earlier works (Cantata No. 177); and hints here and there of other kinds of music, such as Hasse's operas (certain arias) or even Couperin's dances (Cantata No. 14.iv). Cantata No. 100 (*c.* 1734/5) has several leanings towards Dresden's modern music, for instance in the shape of the opening chorus (with the hymn-tune line by line), the siciliano-like and gigue-like arias, a syncopated 2/4 aria, all the *appoggiature*, and some simple harmonizations. As with two other works from the 1730s, *Clavierübung II* and the Flute Overture in B minor, one recognizes here a most original and distinctive aura given to types of music that are now, in the main, becoming superseded. This would be so even if *Clavierübung II* had evolved from earlier versions (as it had in part) or if the Flute Overture originated earlier as a work for violin in A minor (as it might well have done).

It is hardly an accident that some of the few cantatas belonging to the 1730s onwards have no association with a particular Sunday (Nos. 117, 192, 97, 100), since they would then be more widely useful. If after 1735 no complete new Sunday cantatas are known for sure, some surviving remnants suggest that Bach continued working in this area, in particular by revising works in one way or another. Two wedding cantatas, Nos. 197 and 195, are witness to continued composition and/or arrangements of music being made for special purposes or occasions. Although it is more difficult to discern changes of tone (as distinct from technique) between later and earlier Leipzig cantatas than between later and earlier Leipzig keyboard music, there are some pointers. In two B minor arias of the Christmas Oratorio previously mentioned as probably not adapted from earlier works, Nos. 31 'Schließe, mein Herze' and 51 'Ach, wenn wird die Zeit erscheinen', it is possible to hear in the solo violin melodies a new longing, a distinct *Affekt*, the first in responding to Mary's 'keeping all the sayings in her heart', the second in preparing for the infant Ruler of Israel. The arias' subdued tenderness is new even for the composer of the 'Chorale Cantatas'. The aria apparently planned originally in the place of No. 31 had a bright, neutral flute solo, something quite different.
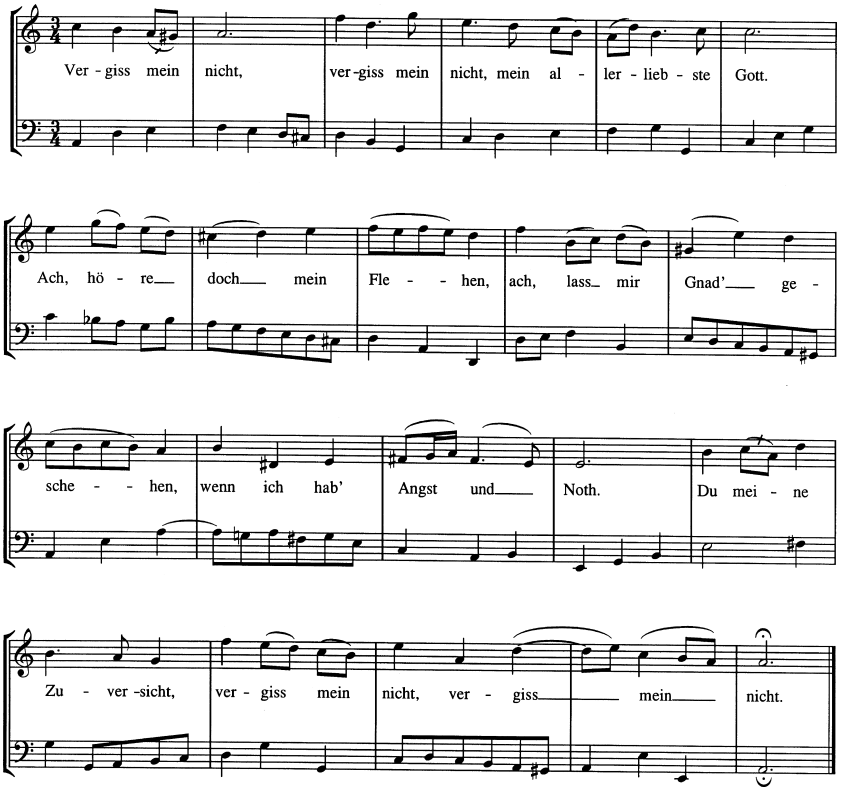
Particularly in the sound-world of the Christmas Oratorio it is possible to sense Dresden, especially when compared to either of the Passions, although over these years Bach was also working again on them. The difference is a matter less of chronology and subject-matter than of the newer tastes that were transforming parish-church music in general. In comparing the first moments of the Passions with the Christmas Oratorio's, one hears, within one and the same musical conception – both a

grand opening chorus of voices and instruments – the clearest differences of which music's rhetoric is capable. These include their mode (one is minor, one major), their pulse (one is heavy, one light), their rhythms, tempi, instrumentation, scoring and not least the word-setting (one melismatic, one syllabic). If today the Passions are more popular than the Christmas Oratorio, I can only think that listeners now are, for whatever reason, likely to be more lastingly moved by what is affecting and touching than by what is exciting and exhilarating. But what was the case in the 1730s when Incarnation and Nativity had doctrinal resonances now largely unknown, is another question.

In a very different way, there is also a modern flavour in the devotional songs of G. C. Schemelli's contemporary songbook, the *Gesang-Buch* of 1736. Bach's involvement is described in an advertisement that speaks of 'songs and arias' (*Lieder und Arien*) of which the 'unknown melodies' were either 'newly composed' and others 'appropriately improved' by Capellmeister Bach (*nach Befinden verbessert*: Dok. II, p. 266). *Songs and arias* signifies a move towards modern hymn-types and devotional songs, in a new kind of family hymnal presumably of interest to the capellmeister. Although publishing his book in Leipzig, Schemelli was at this period cantor in Zeitz from where Anna Magdalena had come, and it is not going too far to see the Schemelli song 'Vergiss mein nicht' as recalling the easy kind of melody Bach had created for the Anna Magdalena Books. Such songs might well have suited a hymnal for Zeitz more than one for Leipzig (Example 22).

This shows Bach to be more than capable of miniatures when it was requested or appropriate, in this case for a local publication. Why are there not more examples? The imitation (bb. 1–2), the marking of certain words (*Noth*, *Flehen*, *Gnade*), the final hemiola, the easy melody: in principle, these are characteristics not only of Telemann's songs but, on a grander scale, of many a cantata aria. Yet in being so straightforward in this song, they form a total contrast to the decade's complex choral and keyboard music.
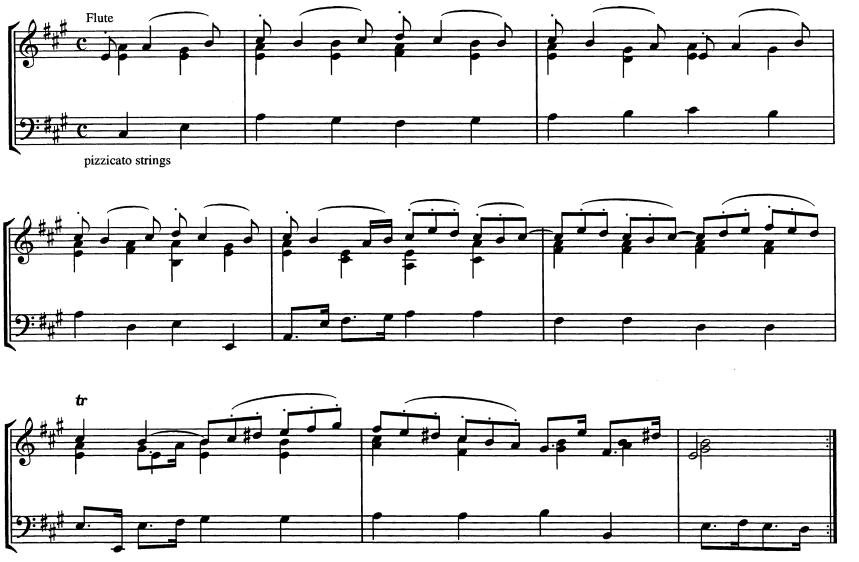
How many of the Schemelli songs are owed to Bach is not certain, and it is probably going too far to see him as the collection's musical editor. The superintendent in Zeitz described Bach as improving the songs' *General-bass* (Dok. II, p. 266), probably meaning that he checked the bass and its harmony throughout, though that is not claimed so clearly. Some seven new compositions and ten arrangements by Bach in the book have been suggested, based on graphic and musical details (Butler 1984). But in view of Leipzig's position as a publishing centre, did the idea not occur to Bach,



Example 22 Song, BWV 505: 'Do not forget me, my dearest God. Ah, hear my beseeching, ah, let Grace come upon me whenever I am anxious and in distress. You, my assurance, do not forget me'

or his wife and his pupils, to assemble his own collection of songs for domestic buyers? He could also use them in teaching harmony and figured-bass playing, just as Telemann did with his own songs. But seeing that *Clavierübung III* was his next publication, and quite likely being prepared over the period of the Schemelli Songbook, a conclusion seems to be that his thoughts were moving in other and more complex, rarefied directions. Anyone, it might be said, could contribute to Schemelli, but no one else create what Bach was creating in the 1730s.

Full of modern touches, but now on a big scale, is a homage cantata of the time, No. 30a (1737), one version of a work that took various forms, a *dramma per musica* with *dramatis personae*, several catchy tunes in 2/4, a startlingly suave flute aria (all to be played in triplets?), and pretty dance-arias. An aria such as Example 23, complete with pizzicato strings and unison flute and violin, could serve many an opera text quite as well as it



Example 23 Cantata No. 30.v, introduction. text: 'Come, you afflicted sinners, hurry, run, you children of Adam, your Saviour calls you'

had served two cantatas already. These had been a church-cantata version ('Come, you afflicted sinners', for John the Baptist's day) and a *dramma* version ('What can delight the soul'), and it is not difficult to find an explanation for how the music might suit either text. In the second, for instance, one could say that 'sinners are tempted by the sweet tune to hurry to baptism and their comforting Saviour'. Such interpretations are possible with many an aria that steps over the theatre–church divide, though the *manner* in which the aria is performed on each occasion has to match each of the different texts. The aria 'So hat Gott die Welt geliebt' ('God so loved the world') in Cantata No. 173 requires a manner rather different from its earlier version in a Birthday Serenata for Prince Leopold, which had been marked there to be sung and played *al tempo di minuetto*.

7 | Leipzig, the final years: a concentration on the language of music

As it happens, 1740 came in the middle of a seven- or eight-year period in which, among regular activities with choral music, Bach was engaged in an extraordinary series of keyboard works: original and isolated, each quite different from the others and, in their musical detail, from any other composer's works in the period:

- a set of harpsichord concertos in full score, evidently not completed;[1]
- a volume of twenty-seven exceptionally substantial organ pieces (*Clavierübung III*), published;
- a uniquely conceived set of exceptionally substantial variations for harpsichord ('Goldberg Variations'), published;
- a second complete set of twenty-four large-scale preludes and fugues (WTC, Book 2), not totally finalized;
- a set of short organ fughettas (Advent and Christmas Chorales), intended number, purpose and dating unknown;
- a set of revised and substantial organ-chorales (the 'Leipzig Chorales'), intended number and purpose unknown;
- a set of strict fugues and canons based on one theme and its variants (The Art of Fugue), intended number and order uncertain.

One cannot overstate how unusual each of these was. The last two especially appear to have been still in progress over the following years when two further and smaller keyboard-books were published:

- one version of a set of canonic variations on the Christmas hymn, 'Vom Himmel hoch';
- a set of six chorales transcribed from cantata arias (the 'Schübler Chorales').

There also remains the possibility that earlier sets of keyboard works in manuscript, including the Six Sonatas for Organ and the *Orgelbüchlein*, even WTC1, were being considered for publication. That is very unlikely to

[1] To complete the set might not have been such a challenge had Bach used the easy solutions adopted by Handel for his sets of keyboard concertos from the same period.

have been the case with some other products of the 1740s, such as the copies of other composers' vocal works and the revisions of Bach's own.

Because much of this list could be considered esoteric in a way that the great choral works usually are not, its very privacy gives some idea of the composer's own priorities as a musician, a theorist and a teacher. Even in the organ-chorales he can appear to be indifferent to what the organist requires for church services. Since very little in the list above could be considered popular or expressive according to the tastes of the day, as Bach must have known, it does give some idea of what he would himself opt to compose.

One curiosity is that over most of the half century following his residence as a chorister in Lüneburg, he apparently made virtually no copies for himself of keyboard music by other German composers. If he did, what happened to it? If he did not, was it because he had a low opinion of it? Although it must be true, as Emanuel said, that he 'loved and studied' the music of nine earlier German composers, all of them keyboardists (*geliebt u. studirt*: see p. 68), there are no surviving copies of any of their music made by him after he was a teenager. That others in the Bach circle did make such copies, in some cases transcribing tablatures, is well documented. But if he was not a 'regular organist' after 1714 or at least 1717 and had besides got to know significant imports, he could literally have had no use for German organ music and was more interested in developing his own. Reasons why he would do so include giving occasional public recitals, considering possible career moves and above all satisfying an alert composer's interest in Italian concerto forms. These he would work with great originality in three genres of organ music: the big preludes, the fugues and the chorale-settings.

Other musical activities: copying, performing, selling

The number of names and musical works in this section is uncomfortably large, chiefly because as time passed, Bach's attention evidently developed in many directions.

There seem to have been various unfavourable conditions for ideal music at St Thomas's: the unreliable ability of the boys, uncertain support from the clergy, discouraging attitudes of the town council and even the complex authority to which Bach was subject (superintendent, rector, pastors, burgomaster). Probably, things had been moving in several unsatisfactory directions since the later 1720s, for even a foundation of eight good singers for the cantatas could not always be relied upon. It is easy

therefore to suppose him turning more and more to other musical activities, including those of a more private kind such as (but not only) contrapuntal essays of one kind or another. These he could justifiably view as contributing to the more essential traditions of his profession: to contribute to the science and instruction of music, a goal rather higher than producing music for church, court or municipality.

Gifted sons and a spate of gifted pupils, including the performers Altnickol, J. G. Goldberg and C. F. Abel (son of the Cöthen gamba-player, later in London) and the prolific writers Kirnberger, Agricola and Kittel, all helped to form a lively background to the work in two quite different kinds of music: the *stile antico* (quasi-Renaissance counterpoint) and the *style galant* (affecting melody and harmony). The contrast between the two, roughly demarcating sacred and secular repertories, was characteristic of musical life in Dresden, which was broader than Leipzig's and remained a clear source of interest for the Leipzig cantor and visitors from abroad.[2] Dresden's court composers are likely to have been visited by an even greater number of foreign musicians than J. S. Bach was in Leipzig, and their public music ranged more broadly. What Dresden congregations heard at the Latin Mass on a Sunday morning was surely different from the opera music they had heard the night before.

The active and time-consuming interest shown by Bach in so many kinds and styles of music may never be fully documented or itemized, but it lasted his whole life and took various practical forms. The following list, starting with his early activities, is largely chronological:

imitating acknowledged masters (e.g. Buxtehude) and local composers (e.g. J. M. Bach);
reworking movements (Corelli) or themes of other composers (e.g. Raison, ?Bononcini, ?Marchand);
copying foreign keyboard music and its characteristic notation (e.g. de Grigny);
copying vocal music (e.g. excerpts from Palestrina Masses already at Weimar);
acquiring foreign music and assimilating its idioms (e.g. Frescobaldi);
transcribing whole works (e.g. Vivaldi, Prince Johann Ernst, Marcello, Albinoni).

[2] However it was that three movements of the 'Goldberg Variations' reached London in time for Hawkins's *History* (1776), travellers from England such as Charles Burney in the 1770s or Edward Holmes in the 1820s still found Dresden of wider musical significance than Leipzig.

Typical of later years was much work on adaptation, generally with the help of (younger) copyists:

a new Christe added to F. Durante's Kyrie, late 1720s;
a movement from Caldara's Magnificat in C, *c.* 1740 with two extra voice parts;
a Magnificat by Pietro Torri with extra trumpet and drums;
sections of Gasparini's Missa canonica with alternative instrumental parts, *c.* 1740/2;
bass and instruments added to Palestrina's Missa Ecce sacerdos magnus *à* 4, *c.* 1745;
a 'Sanctus' by J. C. Kerll, *c.* 1747;
Pergolesi's Stabat mater rewritten with new text and viola part, *c.* 1747.

The work involved in re-presenting the Palestrina, Gasparini and Pergolesi anew implies that Bach thought highly of their quality, selected them and intended to perform them, the Pergolesi with parts made by Altnickol from Bach's score under his supervision, the Gasparini with alternative scorings giving three 'possibilities for realisation' in the two main Leipzig churches (BJ 2013, pp. 136–7).

Related to these activities was copying and/or overseeing the copying of choral works in whole or in part, again especially in the last decades, for example:

an Advent cantata by Telemann, 1734;
an anonymous Mass in E minor (late 1730s);
Palestrina (Missa Sine nomine *à 6*, 1742);
G. B. Bassani (six masses, *c.* 1735);
works by Ludwig Bach;
Handel's Brockes Passion (completed by J. N. Bammler, a student, ?1748/9);
works by Johann Christoph Bach (d. 1703) and S. Knüpfer (1746/7).

Since Knüpfer (d. 1676) was a previous cantor whose cantata-scores may have still been represented in the current cantor's library, there could be an indication here that Bach was still occasionally searching out his predecessor's music. The industry implied by these lists is staggering.

All these lists evoke a discriminating musician, and where the musical quality might now seem not to be outstanding one can suppose there was some other reason for including a work. Such activities were not exceptional in a lifetime of acquiring, owning, copying, reworking, adapting and transcribing a range of works by other composers, and what survives of

Bach's work in these categories could well be only a part. In principle, the kind of additions and fillings-in of harmony and rhythm he often made remains much the same, whether to Vivaldi's concertos arranged for organ in Weimar (*c.* 1715) or Silvius Weiss's lute suite arranged for accompanied violin in Leipzig (*c.* 1739). Particularly striking is the adding of parts in Italian liturgical music, creating a choral/instrumental ensemble in Bach's rather old-fashioned manner. For the greatest influence of the old Latin Masses on his own composition one would look for instances of classical counterpoint, the *stile antico*, in *Clavierübung III*, the Musical Offering, the 'B minor Mass'.

From what has survived, it does seem that when busy with other kinds of music over those years Bach made use of sacred choral works of a more conventional nature and drew on a variety of sources to do so. The late version of Kerll's Sanctus, complete with newly added instruments, becomes a discrete work, BWV 241, in which Kerll's plain lines are decorated to produce a much livelier setting, though, significantly, without the harmony being much changed, and without Kerll being named. Perhaps something similar was intended for the Palestrina Mass but never completed. It is notable that the pieces by Kerll, J. C. Bach and Knüpfer (an earlier *Thomascantor*) are for double choir, which suggests they were used or planned for occasions outside the Sunday services.

Although Bach often made additions or improvements, as he did to Telemann's cantata 'Der Herr ist König' (before 1725), he did not always do so. Of nine Latin Mass movements he copied, mostly by various minor composers, more than half were unaltered (BJ 1991, p. 158). In some instances a puzzle is why he took the trouble at all to make a copy: for performance, for an archive, for teaching, for self-instruction, for curiosity? All of these? Lotti's Missa, copied between 1732 and 1735, never rises above the very ordinary, leaving one to suppose there was some other reason for making a copy of it. Perhaps it had some connection with the owner of the original MS, Zelenka, and its home in Dresden where Lotti had held a position some years earlier. Some kind of homage was being paid?

Certainly, from the similar dates for the Kyrie and Gloria of Palestrina's Missa sine nomine (complete with two continuo parts written out at different pitch) and the anonymous Kyrie and Gloria, BWV Anh. 25, one could suppose copies were made with an eye to Dresden, although these and other Latin works (the Sanctus, BWV 239, and excerpts from Italian Magnificats), were not without use in Leipzig, hence perhaps supplying two pitches for continuo in the Palestrina and, perhaps, for other works. As with earlier copies such as Durante's Missa, most of these had a whole range of possible purposes in catching the taste of the day. Bach was

an outsider desiring to be an insider, bringing such music to Leipzig or preparing it for Dresden, his visits there and acquaintance with Roman Catholic nobility. That personal connections were behind the work on the Dresdner Sylvius Weiss's lute suite is likely, for in the summer of 1739 he and other Dresden musicians made a visit to Leipzig, which led to some 'especially fine' music-making, according to one eye-witness (Dok. II, p. 366). To Weiss's simple suite Bach adds new counterpoints for harpsichord and violin, aiming to give the original a sense of drive. Improvising a new melodic line to another composer's trio is what Emanuel said his father used to do when he was playing continuo, if – so he says – the composer did not take it amiss (Dok. III, p. 285).

Since according to title-page advertisements and similar evidence, Bach also acted as agent for his own and some other composers' publications, one supposes he had in the cantor's office a little stock of such items as the following for sale, especially during the Easter and Michaelmas Fairs, and increasingly so during the 1730s and 1740s:

the *Clavierübung*, four volumes;
eventually the 'Schübler Chorales', Musical Offering and Canonic Variations;
Hurlebusch's *Compositioni*, 1735 (keyboard works);
Heinichen's *General-Bass*, 1728 (figured-bass tutor);
Walther's *Lexicon*, 1732 (dictionary of names and terms);
J. L. Krebs's *Clavier-Ubung III*, 1741 (keyboard works);
W. F. Bach's *Sonate*, 1748 (fortepiano music).

Some of this music would now be regarded as minor, though it had its uses in the way that superior music by a Handel or a Rameau did not. Perhaps Bach had other local publications for sale, such as Schemelli's Songbook and G. H. Stölzel's book on canon (*Praktischer Beweis*, 1725, dedicated to 'some musical friends'). But the number of his own compositions listed is small compared to the forty-two self-publications that Telemann had for sale in Hamburg during his directorship, as well as other music for which he was agent or editor. Yet Leipzig cantors are also likely to have acted as agents for colleagues elsewhere during the three annual fairs,[3] and when Bach bought some major theological works at auction in 1742 (Dok. I, p. 199), it may have been on behalf of someone else. No doubt the musicians who made a point of visiting the cantor when in Leipzig,

[3] For example, while he was *Thomascantor* from 1657 to 1676 Sebastian Knüpfer had available manuscript parts for Schütz's unpublished Christmas Oratorio (Schering 1941, p. 436).

according to Emanuel (Dok. III, p. 255), were also sometimes hawking their own compositions. While having works for sale need not imply enthusiasm for any of them, the amount of non-keyboard music by other composers that Bach clearly had access to is large. His reference in Mühlhausen to building a library there implies that this was not automatic and deserved credit, since he was only organist; for a cantor, however, especially in a book-centre like Leipzig, expectations were higher.

Bach seems not to have worked on any of Handel's Lenten oratorios written for the English theatre, though why is not entirely obvious, especially considering the concert opportunities in Leipzig in the 1740s. Their musical style? Their language? Priority given to Dresden's interests? When in 1746/7 he adapted and gave a German text to a particularly significant modern piece *à la Dresde*, Pergolesi's Stabat mater (his adaptation now numbered BWV 1083), one reason might have been sheer admiration, one shared by others of the time. Perhaps he noted its 'modern four-part setting' when he came to set the words 'et incarnatus est' in the 'B minor Mass' (Wolff 2009, p. 87), complete with its Pergolesian *appoggiature* in the melody. The Stabat mater frequently shows a harmonic sense not unworthy of J. S. Bach, certainly the Bach of earlier cantatas such as No. 21, so much so as to leave one wondering whether in turn Pergolesi had come across any of the Leipzig cantatas and had learnt from them to explore harmony beyond standard Italian commonplaces.

Just as J. C. Altnickol worked on the Pergolesi copy as a student, so various sons and students did the copying of vocal and instrumental parts, something that certainly suggests performances, actual or planned. As a teenager, Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach was entrusted with copying very carefully the *cembalo* continuo part of one such composition sometime between 1746 and 1748 (this was the Handel/Keiser Brockes Passion). Both for his and Altnickol's parts as copied, generally the bass figures were contributed by the master himself, which again implies he was anticipating performances, whether realized or not. It could be that *cembalo* also implies that there was, or was planned, a performance elsewhere than in church.

In view of these activities, a puzzle is why Bach appears to have been neither an agent for nor an acknowledged contributor to another of the popular songbooks published in Leipzig over nearly a decade, the *Sperontes Singende Muse* (four parts, 1736–45). In the same period he had contributed to Schemelli's Songbook (see above, p. 393), and the *Singende Muse* was printed by the same firm, Breitkopf. Was he asked, did he decline, did he contribute anonymously? Perhaps the devotional songs in Schemelli

had been more appropriate for a cantor to be involved in than were Sperontes's domestic songs? If so, this too is telling. Other composers he admired had compiled or contributed to books of devotional songs, as Georg Böhm did in his *Geistreiche Lieder* of 1700. Perhaps for the Schemelli Songbook Bach had been under some personal obligation to its publisher, whose son had until recently been at the St Thomas School. Or he had friendly relations with the Friedrich Schultze who wrote the book's preface and had been married in St Thomas's, possibly with music by Bach. Whatever the case, the gap in style and taste between the two songbooks published in 1736 is not huge, although the marches and minuets among the two hundred melodies in the *Singende Muse* seemed trivial for some sensibilities, no doubt, and the song-texts are rarely elevated.

A further possible indication that Bach became more selective as an agent-retailer is given by the Hurlebusch volume, a collection of outstandingly effete quality, for although he was advertised as agent in 1735 and 1736, someone else was by 1742 (BJ 1986, p. 71). There is no evidence that in 1729, when Vincent Lübeck of Hamburg sold his modest *Clavir-Übung* at the Leipzig Fair, Bach had anything to do with it, though it quite possibly encouraged him to complete his own vastly more ambitious *Clavierübung* volumes over the next year or two. Nor is he known to have had anything to do with a most important book of the 1730s, Mattheson's *Vollkommene Capellmeister* or 'Complete Capellmeister', an unrivalled source of information, published in Hamburg in 1739 but printed in Leipzig and referring several times to Bach. Mattheson's call in his book *Capellmeister* for a practical demonstration-book on fugue, and his praise for Kuhnau's variations (1739, pp. 441, 232), might – just – have encouraged Bach to work on the Art of Fugue and the 'Goldberg Variations' respectively, although other music is a likelier inspiration.

As striking as his absence from the Sperontes songbooks is that Bach did not, at least according to its title-page, serve as agent for G. F. Kauffmann's comprehensive book of organ-chorales, the *Harmonische Seelenlust*, which began to appear locally in 1733. Engraved in Leipzig by J. G. Krügner (who also worked for Bach), published by its composer and sold in ten issues over the very years that *Clavierübung II* and *III* were appearing, the collection's ninety-eight settings are amongst the most competent organ music by any contemporary of Bach. To one copy of the *Harmonische Seelenlust* Bach's pupil J. G. Müthel appears to have added a group of *Orgelbüchlein* chorales, as if he found them complementary. Kauffmann had been a rival candidate for the Leipzig cantorate

and was a colleague of Friedemann's former violin teacher Graun, so his and Bach's mutual acquaintance is not much in doubt.

To show its usefulness, Kauffmann's volume gave the player far more information than did Bach's *Clavierübung III*, laying out the chorales as actually sung in church (i.e. with interludes and simple harmonizations), and adding both organ-registrations and a useful preface. To publish organ music in Leipzig without involving the cantor seems to imply something, but what? That Bach again declined? If so, it can hardly have been on grounds of quality, for Hurlebusch's efforts are much feebler. Perhaps the two composers' previous rivalry had resulted in estrangement; or Kauffmann's large instrument in Merseburg, which inspired the registrations he gave in the volume, occasioned envy; or uncertain sales for both Kauffmann's and Walther's chorale-publications in the 1730s (Dok. II, p. 268) persuaded Bach not to get involved (although he did recommend an engraver to Walther); or of course, he was intending to publish his own organ-chorales, pitching them above any practical, everyday use. The comparative bareness of *Clavierübung III,* with nothing but the music, does seem to be making a point, however.

It is certainly possible that Kauffmann's first issue in 1733 encouraged Bach for the first time to think further about publishing chorales of his own, including the *Orgelbüchlein* whose autograph manuscript has a pair of interesting additions probably made in the late 1730s, one complete and one broken off but very promising. Or, since the *Orgelbüchlein* was so very incomplete and redolent of earlier times, a new set of major organ-chorales was thought to be a better way to answer Kauffmann's 'challenge', if such there was. Hence, perhaps, the chorales published in *Clavierübung III*, in all respects more cleverly conceived and executed than Kauffmann's and therefore nothing like as useful to the average organist. Some settings seem to share enough minor details with some of Kauffmann's – a motif or two, some canonic imitation, etc. – as to suggest that Bach was consciously or unconsciously improving on Kauffmann, both in the quality of the counterpoint and in giving the volume a more abstractly conceived plan, theological rather than liturgical.

Other work in the late 1730s and 1740s might also have originated as a challenge to improve on something else in circulation, such as when the canons of the 'Goldberg Variations' or Musical Offering build in some way on practices and traditions also found in Stölzel's treatise on canon. There is room for more speculation of this kind than one often meets with in Bach studies today. So there is if Bach did indeed feel 'challenged to improve' in this way, for why, one might wonder, did the music he

produced and in some cases published go so far beyond the abilities and needs of those musicians for whom Kauffmann and others were composing? Because it was not for them but for himself, or perhaps for his smartest pupils, and in any case for his Maker? The reasons for making several revisions to the Passions and other vocal works were no doubt entirely practical and therefore simpler.

In 1738 Bach may also have made his one known subscription to a publication of music, Telemann's second set of 'Paris Quartets', whose musical style, marked by simple question-and-answer melodies, does not seem so very distant in general terms from certain moments in the Peasant Cantata. The Collegium concerts were suitable for such music. However, whether indeed it was Sebastian or one of his two eldest sons who subscribed is not certain. The subscription list says 'M[onsieur] Bach of Leipzig', which could have been Emanuel (Telemann's godson), soon to move to Berlin and thus arguably more in need of such flute-and-violin music than either his father or brother.[4] If Sebastian was the subscriber, little if any sign of its direct influence on him is obvious, certainly when compared to Handel's patent purloining of tunes from Telemann's *Musique de Table* after he had subscribed to it in 1733.

In the realm of church music, there was doubtless a more active hiring-out or selling of cantata parts to visitors and students in Leipzig, or relatives and pupils elsewhere, than is now known about. By 1726–7, Bach was already loaning out parts for the Sanctus later incorporated in the 'B minor Mass', and it is a pity one does not know how in this instance the contact between composer and patron came about or why the parts were requested. The same period seems also to have seen a copy being made of the Cello Suites by Anna Magdalena for the student G. L. H. Schwanberg, perhaps as a quid pro quo for acting as an agent for some of the harpsichord partitas. A letter of 20 March 1729 shows that Bach could not or would not always oblige when a pupil requested some parts (in this case for an unnamed Passion: Dok. I, p. 57), also that sometimes he had to pursue debts from those who had hired pieces. As is clear from another letter, to his cousin Elias in 1748, he would expect payment even when letting a relation have a copy of a published work (Dok. I, p. 118). There was little unusual in this: J. G. Walther would charge a friend for manuscript copies he made on request and even, in 1740, for the list itself of works he had available (Beckmann and Schulze 1987, pp. 224, 252). If it is not known in

[4] Other local subscribers to the Paris Quartets were Fasch (Zerbst), Kirchhoff (Halle), Pisendel (Dresden) and Ziegler (Bach pupil in Halle).

detail what Bach charged either for a requested copy of an original or for loaning an original to be copied by the buyer, one can be sure no copy or loan was gratis.

Records show that between 1732 and 1740, J. W. Koch, cantor in Ronneburg and possessor of an exceptional library, regularly borrowed Bach works (apparently, some forty-three cantatas, four motets and four other scores) as well as music by other composers, the former Weimar pupils J. C. Vogler and J. T. Krebs. How good such performances as Koch's were is impossible to know, but it seems that when cantatas were borrowed the pitch might have to be changed. Those without a marked seasonal relevance were particularly useful to Koch and presumably to any ex-students of Bach's who bought music from him for their future job, as they did (see Dok. V, pp. 151f., 146f.), despite the challenge such works must have given to the average cantor. Conversely, these documented loans make it likely that throughout the Leipzig period, Bach himself also borrowed works to perform, hence perhaps some of the copies of other composers' works he made or had made, with or without permission. He surely sold and rented out far more than is now known, and all this would have meant some amount of paperwork and book-keeping, organized by himself or a secretary. A few receipts indicate that especially in these later years, he also hired out harpsichords quite regularly, especially, one assumes, to aristocratic students in the university (Dok. I, pp. 204–6).[5]

While it is impossible to imagine Handel ever selling a piano, a receipt of May 1749 suggests that Bach did exactly that – either his own or one for which he acted as agent, dispatching it to a buyer in Bialystok in eastern Poland and referring to it with a term closely associated with Gottfried Silbermann, i.e. an *Instrument, Piano et Forte* (Dok. III, p. 633). Its price of 115 Reichsthaler, as against a more common 400 Reichsthaler or so, suggests it was second-hand (Rampe 2007, p. 313). The receipt for this sale, significantly dated soon after the opening of the Easter Fair 1749, may represent a mere fraction of such arrangements made over the years. Only now and then does a bit of evidence emerge about the practice of hiring out instruments or parts, the rent for which Bach would pursue even within a few weeks of his death, as he did for a certain borrowed harpsichord or *Clavicin* (BJ 2009, p. 228).

[5] A letter of 1748 in which Bach appears to be demanding return of an instrument (Dok. III, p. 627) is probably inauthentic (see BJ 2007, pp. 179ff.). However, while the threat might be satirical – unless it is soon returned 'we will never be friends' (*werden wir nie Freunde*) – it does not seem out of character.

Bach's business activities and, in particular, the very possibility that he was an agent for the sale of fortepianos jars against many a Romantic picture of him. But the piano receipt of 1749 is also interesting as a further piece of evidence for his contact with aristocrats from Slav countries. How such contacts came about is unclear. It was perhaps through intermediaries in Dresden, or through visitors to the Leipzig fairs, or personal contact already made in Carlsbad during the Cöthen years.[6] Leipzig University also counted 'Easterners' among its students, including one Bohemian count to whom Bach loaned out a *Clavierzimb* for a month in 1747 shortly after another, also for a month, to an Austrian former student (Dok. I, pp. 204ff.). Often, no doubt, distinguished men with an official Saxon court-title such as Bach did find themselves approached by patrons from the east. Hence perhaps it was that the court organ-builder Silbermann was invited during these years to the cathedral of St Vitus in the Castle of Prague and even to Saint Petersburg, so it was said (Müller 1982, pp. 389f.).

As to musical influences: one problem with pieces of music in the more modern styles of the time and attributed to Bach either then or now, is that as with the earliest works, some are too close to the music of contemporaries for one to be reasonably sure of who wrote them. A *galant* chamber work like the Violin/Flute Sonata in G minor, BWV 1020, could just possibly be a genuine Bach work written in the unpretentious style of young and fashionable composers; or, more likely, it was music by a young and fashionable composer familiar with genuine Bach work and able to pick up some of its characteristics. The Flute Sonata in E flat, BWV 1031, is likely to be an imitation of Quantz's similar sonatas, specifically his set of *Sei sonate*, Dresden 1734, but its (young) composer, whoever that was, could also have been familiar with Bach's Organ Sonata in E flat or with an early version of it. The tune of the aria 'Zu Tanze, zu Sprunge' in 'Phoebus and Pan', BWV 201, could be an adapted, even misremembered, version of an aria in Montéclair's recent cantata *Tircis et Climène* (1728), not otherwise known in any connection with Bach, or it could be the accidental result of Bach deliberately aping the more simplistic idioms of the time. Something similar could be said about superficial resemblances to any Telemann works one might propose from time to time, in a song or a

[6] In this last instance, Count Jan Klemens von Branitzky in Bialystok. Other aristocrats were Hermann Carl von Keyserlingk, Russian ambassador in Dresden; Franz Anton von Sporck in Lissa, Bohemia; and Adam von Questenberg in Jaromerice, Moravia, all of whom had known musical establishments. The last two were frequent visitors to the Carlsbad spa, where the contact with Bach could have been made.

harpsichord piece (Gigue of French Suite in E flat) or even a concerto (slow movement of the F minor Concerto for Harpsichord).

Writers now find reasons for preferring one attribution of authorship above another, for as is generally the case with J. S. Bach, dating on the grounds of musical style is hazardous, and there are many surprises for the analyst. Any idea one has that some choral and keyboard music associated with his early years could not be his work because of their 'uncharacteristic' simplicity misses how easy, and sometimes worth doing, he must have found imitating run-of-the-mill styles, such as simple songs. Any idea one has that the bright and appealing style of the Gloria from the Mass in G, BWV 236, reflects court music in Dresden in the late 1730s needs amending, since the movement is reworked from a much earlier cantata. But this earlier version, in the cantata for Reformation Day, BWV 79, was sung a few weeks after another important visit to Dresden and is credibly touched by the lighter spirit of the royal city. Only up to a point, perhaps. While he inevitably responded in many ways to the music of his contemporaries, Bach's indubitably authentic work that does adopt a modern *galant* style, such as slow movements of the Musical Offering's Sonata or the D minor Triple Concerto, has a texture still relentlessly contrapuntal in the way the harmonies move. These works are up to date but could not possibly belong to anyone else.

A note on the 'Goldberg Variations'

Even more of a *unicum* is the fourth-to-appear volume of keyboard music, commonly called '*Clavierübung IV*' or the 'Goldberg Variations', published probably in late 1741 as, simply, C*lavierübung*. There is no 'IV' either on its title-page or in the Obituary's worklist, since presumably its publisher in Nuremberg, Balthasar Schmid, did not want to say 'IV' when he had not published Parts I, II or III. The anecdote that the variations were created for the young house-musician J. G. Goldberg to play to Hermann Carl, *Reichsgraf* von Keyserlingk during his sleepless nights (Forkel 1802, pp. 51f.), had probably been recounted by Friedemann, with whom the work is more likely to be directly connected, for his own teaching or virtuoso repertory in Dresden. For so expressive a work, it is almost unfathomably technical in its structure and, though less so to a listener, challenging.

A *unicum* both in concept and bar by bar, the 'Goldberg' is exceptionally important in revealing its creator's interests. It is difficult to place: an

isolated work, hard to play, complex in plan, ripe with stylistic allusion, each movement itself virtually a *unicum*. Something similar might be said of *Clavierübung III*, leading one to suppose that the 'Goldberg' was begun soon after that volume's publication and even, to some degree, overlapping with it. No more than *Clavierübung III* is '*Clavierübung IV*' a regular volume of keyboard music, and it is doubtful that a greater number of harpsichordists mastered the one than organists mastered the other. One important point about the 'Goldberg' is that it is the only collection of pieces by Bach to be played in order as a single, uninterrupted and integrated work, even ending as it began, with the aria.

In what respect the movements are 'variations' is less straightforward than appears. Obviously not the usual 'variations on a melody and its harmonies', these are rather 'variations on a bass-line and its harmonies', in which – unexpectedly – the bass-line notes actually appear in each variation, in this respect like a theme. Complex counterpoint in the shape of a canon has to be treated with some licence, but elsewhere the notes of this bass-line appear not only in due order but on successive main beats in each variation, even more or less in the fugal half of Variation 16. This is not something that happens by accident. One might guess that this was how Bach came to write a work so very unlike the period's usual 'variations on a melody': he was more interested in the idea of a persistent bass-line (as in passacaglias and chaconnes) than in ordinary variations, amending the bass only when expedient. It is even conceivable that his first step was to sketch in the plain bass notes in each bar of each 'Goldberg' movement before composing the rest of it, just as he first wrote in the chorale-melodies of each *Orgelbüchlein* setting. The working manuscript of the latter shows this clearly; there is no manuscript for the former.

Like the other *Clavierübung* volumes, 'Part IV' aims to rethink a familiar genre to produce something new and at the same time to engage in somewhat hidden, extra-musical explorations, hence its being such a pointer to its composer's thinking. His title *Clavier Ubung bestehend in einer ARIA mit verschiedene Verænderungen* ('Keyboard Practice consisting of an Aria with several variations') is, in its modesty, misleading, for the variations are not of the aria itself, and 'several' is an odd word for such a highly organized sequence of thirty movements.The work allows for two recent fashions in harpsichord-playing: for players to use (to possess) a pair of manuals, and for the compass to reach up to d'''. The second is less obvious than the first despite a special point being made of this note at the halfway point (end of No. 15), at the close (No. 30) and at the emotional highpoint (No. 25). To return to the aria at the end might have been

following fashion, found in Gottlieb Muffat's recent variations on a similar theme in G major, in his *Componimenti*, *c.* 1739. But returning to the aria is also another way in which the publication could be seen as a dialogue with *Clavierübung III*: both are 'framed', one by a prelude and fugue, the other by an aria.

One aspect of its hidden-but-significant nature concerns simple numbers, one of many technical details. The aria is longer than in the usual theme-with-variations, thus making a gesture as conspicuous for performers of the time as does the complexity of the variations. The aria's thirty-two bars (2^5) are matched by the overall total of thirty-two movements and by the thirty-two pages they take up in the original print. (The 32 bars of 16 + 16 might be notated as 8 + 8 or, in the *ouverture* variation, 16 + 32.) Since the pagination was surely planned, it would have been necessary to collaborate with a first-class engraver, but how the collaboration with Balthasar Schmid in Nuremberg was managed is not recorded – written directions sent from Leipzig? Whatever the case, the original pagination has a significance lost in all later editions, especially those that reprint the aria at the end (as the print does not). One possible reason for the thirty-twos is suggested below, at the end of this section; another, that the multiples of fours allude to the unspoken *Clavierübung* volume-number, like the various threes in Volume III. Another and simpler reason could be that the base harmonies consist naturally of thirty-two notes (four phrases of eight bars each), and Bach was just such a composer to play further with the number.

As in effect a countermeasure, the movements are organized not in groups of two as might be expected but three. Each group contains a freely invented *étude* (often arabesque-like), a canon at ever-widening intervals (unison, then at the 2nd, at the 3th, 4th, etc.) and then a variation in one or other distinctive genre (a dance, a trio, etc.). All of them have the nature of harpsichord 'lessons', with the dances sustaining the tradition for variations to take on dance-characteristics (minuet, jig, etc.). Except that the canon always comes third, the 'set of threes' is at first not quite consistent, suggesting, as does a surviving other version of Variation 5, that this organization emerged only gradually. At what point it occurred to Bach to give the canons not only nine different intervals but nine different metres is impossible to say: the different time-signatures (**C** is used twice but for different metres) suggest early planning, another example of 'ticking off a list'. Such notational details are not unique: the Six Sonatas for Organ use seventeen different ways to couple tempo-word and time-signature, and arias in the Passions and Mass have the same kind of variety.

Considering that each of the thirty-two movements is made up of two exact halves (something already found in *Clavierübung I* and *II* but not automatic), the prevailing two-bar phraseology of the work could seem to be courting disaster, a symmetry too far. Such constant two-bar phrases are as 'popular' as anything in the latest opera, Singspiel (qv) or theatre song: in principle simple and appropriate for the aria that also appeared at some unknown point in Anna Magdalena's second album. Even the three popular tunes brought in for the final Quodlibet (Variation 30) have two-bar phrases and are appropriately demotic; see below for a further remark on these tunes. All the movements, with a few exceptional moments in certain canons, are made up of two-bar phrases and, at times, starting with Variation 1 and including Variation 8, there is a modern and even perilous tendency towards one-bar phrases. The point is, however, that these structures are barely noticeable, so cleverly integrated and moulded as they are.

In two other unique sets of Bach variations the structure is quite different: in the D minor Violin Chaconne, four-bar phrases; in the Organ Passacaglia, eight-bar. One might think that in their different ways, all three show a composer accepting a challenge that is fundamentally a purely musical one: to build on various square phrases (two-, four- and eight-bar) in such a way as to deny the potential dangers they each bring. The Chaconne and Passacaglia offer a special challenge insofar as by definition they come to a full perfect cadence every four or eight bars, even both four and eight in the Chaconne, whose theme states its four bars twice, more or less, in the style of many a French chaconne. To manage this well was a further challenge for the composer of the D minor Chaconne.

Including its canons, the 'Goldberg Variations' could be understood as thirty-one different but equally stylized dances. The first is an aria of certain sarabande-like qualities, including pulse, clear beats and filled-in final bars; however, other qualities, such as an emphatic second beat, are not there. Nor in *c.* 1740 was 'sarabande' likely to be as fashionable as 'aria', either as a term or as a dance. In general, the dances manage to give the impression of being both original and true to type, as does even the pair of *allabreve* variations (Nos. 18 and 22). Conspicuously, all movements except for the borrowed tune that opens Variation 30 begin without upbeat. This is despite the tradition for some dance-types to have an upbeat – allemande, courante, giga, passepied – in contrast to the others that do not (sarabande, minuet, sinfonia, *ouverture*, coloratura aria). To make use of dance-types was familiar enough in very different music such as organ-chorales, but each 'Goldberg' movement pushes a boundary,

producing something superficially as remote from the theme as many much later sets of symphonic variations are. But only superficially: each variation is in fact kept in tight control by the thirty-two-bar structure and by the ever-present sequence of bass notes (which in Variation 17 do not fall on each beat but rise!). The result is a new definition of what a *variation* is. One can choose a pair of variations, such as Nos. 1 and 30 or 25 and 27 or the two in G minor, and ask in wonder, 'Do these really come from the same theme? How is that possible?'

There is the ghost of a simple and beautiful sarabande in the left hand of Variation 26, a most elegant dance. It never fully reveals itself. Yet it could be regarded as potentially the original theme of the work, or one form of it, in comparison to which the aria itself sounds like a variation, quite as much, in its way, as does the vigorous *duo* Variation 1 that follows it. This No. 1, unlike the usual first variation in conventional sets of the time, changes the atmosphere entirely, and as a dance (a *polonaise doublée*? (qv)) sets the scene for the dances that follow. They do not go from simple to complex but allow one of the composer's favourite tactics: to create counterpoint from 'melodic cells': the little leaping figure drenching every bar of Variation 4, or a so-called dragging motif in Variation 15. The arpeggio figure in Variation 19 is so thoroughly worked that exactly what kind of dance it is is not obvious (a minuet?). In some variations such as Nos. 6, 11, 17 and above all the *Ouverture* (No. 16) there appears some self-reference, as when (for example) No. 11 reminds one of the Prelude in B flat, WTC2.

Despite being a *unicum*, the work has a close relation with previous variations. The first phrase of the bass-line is widely found as an ostinato theme in earlier works by J. C. Bach, d'Anglebert, Handel, Muffat and others further afield including Purcell, and also as an elementary progression in keyboard dances, such as two gavottes in Couperin's first published suite. The eight bars of J. C. Bach's theme have now been developed into thirty-two, complete with a new, elaborate and up-to-date opening aria. All these composers agree mostly on three details: the key (G major), the simple eight-bar bass-line and the increasing embellishment. Like Bach, some of the composers including Couperin vary it in the minor. A sign of Bach's particular admiration for Frescobaldi is not only that the G major Bergamasca in the *Fiori musicali* of 1635 provides one of the tunes for the final variation, the Quodlibet, but that it continues to appear there right to the end, as it does, in the same voice, in the *Fiori*.

The Quodlibet is a useful example of the complex heritage Bach could call upon, though how consciously he did so is by no means easy to

establish. On the one hand, the 'Goldberg Variations' as a whole could be seen as a response to Buxtehude's thirty-two variations on the theme's first eight bars (a work one can suppose Bach to have known), and now massively expanded. On the other, Frescobaldi's Bergamasca (in a volume he certainly knew) is likely to have been a stronger influence than earlier German pieces by Buxtehude and Scheidt drawing on the same melody, since it already establishes the idea of combining themes ingeniously and is altogether more imaginative than theirs. But the Quodlibet also has a closer and quite unexpected resemblance to a work with no known connection to Bach: the Capriccio sopra l'aria Bergamasco of the Viennese organist, Wolfgang Ebner (d. 1665, see Edition Breitkopf 8419). Here over 131 bars, there runs a counter-theme to the Bergamasca identical to one of Bach's in the Quodlibet, also in G major, so leaving the usual question: allusion or coincidence?

Unlike the cantatas of the Christmas Oratorio, there are not many individual movements here reminiscent of popular music in Dresden (arias, songs, *galant* chamber music). But there may be other Dresden connections. Whether Bach knew the set of simple canons written by the Dresdner J. D. Zelenka in 1721 or so (ZWV 191) has not been proved, but they do suggest a common interest of the time. These short, simple exercises were in the 'scholastic' manner of J. J. Fux, canons playing with note-patterns at different intervals above a simple rising bass, C–D–E–F–G–A. Another instance of such shared interests was Bach's two other brief canons on the first eight bass notes of the 'Goldberg', BWV 1076, 1077, perhaps dating to just before and after the canons in the Musical Offering, which at times they resemble. To these might be added twelve other two-bar canons making the set of 'Fourteen Canons', BWV 1087, appended in the composer's hand to a print of the 'Goldberg Variations', not published at the time (listed below with those in the Musical Offering: see p. 433). As in the 'Goldberg', the fundamental bass notes they share (only the first eight in the 'Fourteen Canons') appear plain, on the beat.

It is easy to understand the enthusiasm aroused today by this work. The aria immediately creates a new and extraordinary sound-world beyond other workings of this or similar (shorter) bass-lines, such as that in Handel's G major Chaconne, HWV 435. However, the player may fancy a faint similarity here and there between the aria and the sarabande of Bach's fifth French Suite, or hear in the very first chord the open sound of certain WTC2 preludes (two octaves separating the hands). And there are other resemblances to moments in WTC2, such as that between Variation 1 and WTC2 G major Prelude, or between the *allabreve*

variations and the E flat Fugue. Variation No. 10, as Kirnberger pointed out in 1777, is 'a regular four-part fugue' (Dok. III, p. 231), though 'regular' is not an obvious word for a fugue whose theme enters on so many different degrees of the scale. In such variations as No. 2 one hears echoes of an even more common genre, the Italian sonata for two violins and bass.

In Variation No. 25, which modern sensibilities regard as the work's most moving variation, exceptional even for Bach's slow movements, the atmosphere is so strong as to distract from the sheer technical artistry with which he is treating another topic: the *Adagio piangevole* of Italian sonatas. This is a distinct genre in which a long-breathed *affettuoso* solo for violin or flute hovers above a steady left-hand accompaniment. In Variation No. 25 this accompaniment is far more intricately woven than usual in Italian slow movements, and its change to the minor key is also rhetorically very astute. Somehow, Variation No. 24 appears to prepare for it by 'sinking', while Variation No. 26 appears to shake it off by dashing away.

Only Handel's Variations even faintly approach the 'Goldberg' in technical demands, with its crossed hands, scales, arpeggios and ornaments. The last virtuoso variation, No. 29, gives a particular problem not found even in Scarlatti: if the chords are played as notated (alternating between the hands), they will need to be more slowly played on one manual than on two manuals; but if they alternate on two a softer sound will result, and this contradicts the usual conception of No. 29 as building up the climax. It is possible for the hands to share the chords, playing them faster, losing a certain elegance, and ignoring Bach's notation. Either way, the several ways of crossing the hands scarcely ever resemble anything found in Rameau or Scarlatti (compare Scarlatti's Sonata Kk 29).

As for strategic shapes: neither here nor in other works of conspicuous symmetry, such as the opening chorus of Part VI of the Christmas Oratorio, does the structural planning interfere with the music's expressive qualities. In no way is the unusually touching quality of the aria and the gentler variations affected by the plan of thirty-twos. In no way is the Christmas Oratorio's joyful chorus hindered by its symmetrical halves. And nor is either of these mature works hampered by the constant squareness of the four or two bars. One intention of the 'Goldberg Variations' could be not so much to create an ingenious artefact as to work variations beyond conventional norms, deliberately setting out to make use (like the 'Diabelli Variations') of basic elements like scales, arpeggios, leaps, runs, chords, imitations, familiar groups of notes old and new.

As well as the strategy of providing a set of canons from the unison up to the ninth, spaced out as every third variation, there are other tactical or

technical details for the professional musician to savour: for example, that there are six different time-signatures of compound-time (6/8, 9/8, etc.) and – another unique detail – a rubric for every movement. (On this point, see below, p. 507, 'Harpsichords etc'.) All this is the result of a kind of wished-for comprehensiveness, though one can never be sure of extracting all the purely musical information from such details. There are other signs of a very careful planning behind the differences between the two arioso variations (Nos. 13 and 25) and between each and any two canons (e.g. Nos. 15 and 27); or between the pair of variations marked, also uniquely, 'for 1 or 2 manuals' (Nos. 7 and 29); or between model counterpoint that sounds like a canon but is not (No. 2) and counterpoint that sounds like a dance but is a strict canon (No. 6).

If the 'Goldberg Variations' appeared in print just before the composer's visit to Dresden and *Reichsgraf* von Keyserlingk in mid-November 1741, as is now supposed, copies were doubtless in Bach's baggage. Von Keyserlingk received Sebastian and his secretary Johann Elias Bach with 'undeserved graciousness' (Dok. II, p. 399). This was shortly after Keyserlingk had received his title of 'Imperial Count', and it would have been especially appropriate for the honorary Saxon court composer from Leipzig to present him with a copy of his latest work. A question much discussed ever since is whether the variations really were composed for Keyserlingk's young harpsichordist J. G. Goldberg. There is no record of such a commission or a special dedication copy, and during the work's gestation, Goldberg would have been only twelve or thirteen years old. Publication had its own *raison d'être*, of course, and Friedemann was at some point young Goldberg's teacher and could have learnt, before leaving Dresden in 1746, that his pupil had put or was hoping to put the variations to such a use. More relevant, perhaps, is that on 22 November 1741 Friedemann entered his thirty-second year and could hardly have missed all the thirty-twos in the engraved print.

A note on the 'Well-tempered Clavier, Book 2' (WTC2)

An intensive focus on keyboard music of conspicuously different kinds continued into the 1740s. It could have been soon after the royal appointment in November 1736 that work went ahead on planning to compile and publish *Clavierübung III* in 1739; and it could have been already about that time or soon after its publication that a second book of twenty-four preludes and fugues was projected.

The origins of the new collection of forty-eight pieces were diverse, some of them revised or redeveloped, some newly made or transposed. Much of this is open to conjecture, even as to when or even why the composer decided on a second book. The main surviving autograph manuscript is not a unified fair copy of 'Book 2' like the one for 'Book 1', nor is there known ever to have been one. According to the manuscript's different papers and other details it seems to be rather a compilation of twenty-one separate manuscripts in three *tranches*, from the early 1740s (NBA V/6.2, KB, pp. 25, 32). One possible implication is that the composer worked on the project intermittently for some years, contributing numbers to it piecemeal, revising earlier versions but, according to what is implied by surviving manuscripts, never quite making a final complete text. Nothing in the copies makes it clear whether the hope was to publish it at some point or to preserve it as an item in an enlarged Old-Bach Archive, but the latter is not out of the question.

The title cannot be proved to be the composer's, and nor did he label the pairs 'prelude and fugue', any more than he did those in WTC1. But Bach's student Altnickol does call the volume *Des Wohltemperirten Claviers Zweyter Theil* ('Second part of the WTC') in his own complete copy, which he dates '1744' at the end. As a new pupil, Altnickol must have regarded the task as educative on several levels. That Bach knew this copy is proved by corrections or additions he made in it, but at what point he did this, or why (to prepare for publication?), or whether he approved the title, cannot be established. For one thing, by now outside the narrow circle of organists, the term *wohltemperirte* was already archaic, the talk of temperament enthusiasts and not necessarily what a prolific composer in the 1740s would have thought appropriate or particularly interesting.

Why a second collection of preludes and fugues in all the keys was made is not obvious. One reason must be the composer's creative 'swerving away' from his first book, introducing forms and styles not known there: so the new *galant* touches in the F minor pair in WTC2 make a colourful contrast with the traditional language of the F minor pair in WTC1. WTC2 is an encyclopedia or compendium not only of prelude-types and fugue-types, compendious enough even to admit Weimar work now and then, but also of newer ways to write for harpsichord and, sometimes, fortepiano. The collection applies old and new styles towards a distinct repertory that is elevated, instructive and appealing to connoisseurs, one result being that most preludes and fugues are bigger than most preludes and (especially) fugues in WTC1.

There is no prelude in WTC1 that has the grand expansiveness of the D major Prelude WTC2, from which it is possible to suppose that Bach had moved on not only from WTC1 and even the Six Partitas, but was reacting to modern Italian sonatas in binary form, the kind his sons were by now playing. Form, how to organize music without words or soloists, is a ruling interest of WTC2. The Preludes in E major and B flat could be viewed as a personal response, even a corrective, to the simple binary movements being so widely produced during the 1740s. In a comparable way, the Fugue paired with the D major Prelude applies its characteristic technique (stretto) with more originality than did the C major Fugue of WTC1, although that too had already moved beyond the stretto work of previous composers. That the stretto theme in C major Book 1 moves by step and the stretto theme in D major Book 2 by leaps produces a musical contrast of the kind often met with in Bach – another coincidence or another rethinking of what can be done with one particular technique?

As in other Bach collections, Book 2 seems to have been something like a portfolio of pieces, made in more than one copy, singly or collectively, not all of which need be a final version, and each probably amended when the forty-eight were brought together. Reasons for undertaking such a volume must include the composer's familiar compulsion to collect or gather together example after example from widely scattered styles within one and the same musical genre. To make a 'sequel' to WTC1 means taking its concepts further, not only introducing some more up-to-date styles but stretching others to greater length, and moreover testing not only players' technique but also their staying power. With the book Bach was supplying pieces for current students, leaving a legacy for others, completing a conceived plan, preparing some kind of legacy and, not least, giving each of the common keyboard instruments of the time some especially suitable piece, for himself included. It is certainly possible to hear in many of WTC2's preludes a richer, more sensuous harmony than before.

To include earlier and revised movements is a characteristic of other compilations of the 1740s, including of course the 'B minor Mass' itself. All these compilations mix new and old pieces freely, though in WTC2 it is probably clearer which are the new. These would include the Preludes in E flat and B major and also those in the binary form usual in contemporary Italian keyboard sonatas (C minor, D major, etc.) or those with unmistakable *galant* touches (F minor and G sharp minor). Another new element in some of the melodious fugue themes was to begin on an untraditional degree of the scale (the leading note (qv) in the F sharp fugue, the supertonic in the B flat). This is a significant technical point, for at the

time it would have been striking, almost subversive, for composers to start a fugue on notes other than tonic or dominant. This is a rather obscure but indicative development also found at times in the Art of Fugue and taken farther still in the Fughetta (Variation No. 10) of the 'Goldberg Variations'.

Concerning transposition: the Prelude in G sharp minor is so much more idiomatically fingered when played in G minor as to imply – though no more – which key was the original. In the case of the E flat Fugue, a version in D major is again more typical of such pieces written in the *alla-breve* style. In neither case is a firm conclusion possible, since the point might have been to do what was unexpected. In any case, a copyist might well change a key on his own authority, as was likely the case for one extant version in C minor of the C sharp minor Fugue. Chronology is equally uncertain, the criteria for it unreliable: it is a reasonable guess that the Fugue in A flat, being twice as long as a version of it in F (BWV 901.ii), is maturer, but this remains a guess – one needs to ask why, in the 1740s, Bach would still be working with a tired chromatic formula in the longer A flat version. More justifiable is the view that the rich and original gestures of the F major Prelude in WTC2 make it far more appropriate here than the Prelude with the other version of the F major Fugue (BWV 901.i) would have been. Its unusually generous slurring in the autograph marks it out from both the previous and the following preludes.

Again as with WTC1, extant sources also suggest that some preludes and some fugues circulated alone, either without a prelude/fugue or with a different one. Although some preludes are bigger than their fugues, one of the three preludes found in various manuscripts to accompany the Fugue in G major is in a succinct binary form that is appropriate to the Fugue. If WTC2's fair number of preludes in two sections ('binary form') reflects the tastes of younger composers, such as is evident in Philipp Emanuel's sonatas, they could be seen as models being offered to those with ears to hear. The binary preludes in F minor, G sharp minor and B minor offer some of the most modern idioms in the book, but these are far removed from the simple, rattling, repetitious keyboard music found increasingly often across Europe in the 1730s and 1740s. It is rather as if Bach was countering it by showing that binary form need not be empty-headed.

The several surviving and apparently authentic versions of the C major Prelude look as if there existed a 'prelude-matrix' serving Bach and his pupils over many years, the 'germ' of a standard prelude-type that could be further improvised or extended and given different forms according to the player's ability or imagination. Or according to instrument: a similar Prelude in C for Organ, BWV 545, makes interesting use of the organ's

pedal and again exists in more than one surviving version. There may have been others like this, raising the question whether such 'matrices' were for students to continue or amend as they wished, on paper or in performance. This implies improvisation, as also with those incomplete pieces inviting the player to take matters further – players who were family members in some cases. As there is no single fund of 'early versions' for the preludes of WTC2 as there was for many of those in WTC1, one cannot be sure how variants differed or offered players other ways to develop a piece. The C major Prelude is a model for its kind of open praeludium, contrasting with preludes in binary form that cannot be so open to alternatives.

Certain preludes, in E flat major, F minor, B flat major and (especially) B major, are striking in a quite different way: they are ideal for the fortepiano, with just the right textures and snatches of *cantabile* melody to suit the new instrument. (Perhaps Emanuel's own copies of the Prelude and Fugue in B flat and the Preludes in B major and B minor were made as 'piano works'.) How surprising, positively prophetic, is the B major Prelude, especially its second theme! Two more potential fortepiano pieces are the F sharp major, among whose many felicitous touches is the way the Fugue's subject begins on the very notes that had just closed the Prelude. And yet despite a certain *pianism*, these six pieces in WTC2 have little else in common, each is as individual as the other forty-two pieces. Among other subtleties are the number of allusions to the theme in the last phrase of the B minor Fugue, the complete change in articulation between the *détaché* E minor Fugue and the following slurred Prelude in F, and the way many a fugue-subject seems to follow on from the prelude. In the case of the B flat major, the Fugue enters as if *in medias res*.

WTC2, whether or not compiled wholly or in part with Friedemann in mind (who was involved in some copies), can be seen as a harpsichordist's thoughtful handbook or compendium, a *vade mecum* surveying styles from strict counterpoint in *stile antico* to the various *galanteries* in *stile moderno*, an antidote (so to speak) to the frothier music of the time in Europe. There is so much carefully considered difference between the forty-eight pieces that by no means is their dating or chronology straightforward. The *stile antico* in a piece like the E major Fugue or the array of stretti in the B flat minor Fugue gives no reliable indication whether it is old or new. Similarly, not all those in the more modern keys are newer in style, though how many movements were transposed for WTC2 is not much clearer than it is for WTC1. Nor at all certain is how or when some preludes were paired with their fugues.

Heavier in effect than Book 1, WTC2 is also generally harder to play, and there is also a wider array of styles old and new. On one hand, the E major Fugue could well be Bach's strictest-ever fugue, almost every note in it derived from the old-fashioned subject and its old-fashioned counter-subject; on the other hand, the F minor Prelude goes in another direction altogether, with modern 'sighing' motifs, a modern key, modern time-signature, binary form, simple phraseology and a conscious prettiness. In such ways as this, the range of WTC2 is unmatched and would have made publishing it as useful as publishing the equally educative 'Goldberg Variations'. However, the demands on the player and engraver made by the weight of its forty-eight movements, especially the big stretto fugues in G minor and B flat minor, would have hardly been selling points, having for contemporary players none of the attractions of an aria with variations.

On the tuning for WTC1 and WTC2, and whether the books are 'cycles', see below, pp. 567f.

Concerning the last decade

Apart from reporting events surrounding the composer's death, the Obituary's only reference to the last decade is the account of Bach's visit to Frederick the Great in 1747 and the music it led to, an account which owed a great deal to what had already been in print about the event and was probably familiar to many readers. Such sparseness of information is typical; from the nuggets of information about Bach's professional and personal life surviving in miscellaneous sources, today's energetic scrutiny has been able to draw not much more than an outline. Yet a glance at the keyboard works alone, or at a list of the works copied by others, leaves the impression of unfailing industry.

It can be assumed that a lot of copying, often of much older works, was going on around Bach, with family members and students contributing to the work in several repertories, vocal, instrumental and keyboard. The outstanding series of major collections he completed during the last decade are all compilations that have no precedent: immensely hard work for the composer in each case, three of them leading to prompt publication, none of them like any other music of the period. Such work would be extra to any revisions, for bigger forces, of music more closely connected with Bach's job as cantor, such as the St John Passion in 1748 or 1749, and the Brockes Passion in 1750. The St Matthew Passion on Good Friday 1742 is its last known performance during his lifetime (BJ 2002, pp. 29f.).

Three of the major collections of keyboard music from the last dozen years or so were apparently never completed:

eight or more harpsichord concertos (see above, p. 364);
fifteen or more organ-chorales (the 'Leipzig Chorales', revised earlier works, sometimes considerably expanded);
fifteen or more fugues and canons on a base theme (the Art of Fugue, probably for publication).

For the second and third, see below. Though it is possible that from the start all these collections were intended for publication, none of them so far had a discernible plan or was given even a working title in the composer's hand. As mature compilations, they present three repertories that Bach was evidently still finding useful and of great interest: chamber music for public or private music-making; organ music for church or for instructing organist-students; and a practical demonstration of counterpoint for studious performers. Whatever theoretical aims each may have had, including the characteristic urge to 'cover all possibilities' in each kind of music concerned, they are both a *summing up* and a legacy of live music for keyboard-players from one who was, in the first instance, a keyboard-player.

For the Obituary's readers, however, obviously the visit to Potsdam in 1747 was of greater interest. Emanuel may not have known much about his father's visits to Dresden while Friedemann was there (1733–46), but one of them must have said later that their father 'often went to Dresden to hear the opera' (Forkel 1802, p. 48). If he did, and openly showed an interest in modern secular tastes, all the more striking is the very different music to which he gave such priority in his last decade: the antique counterpoint, the fugues, canons, chorales. Even the harpsichord concertos look back to Bach's own individual way of working in the Italian baroque forms. Now, all European music was turning towards something simpler with far less contrapuntal detail, including music for church, a tendency realized in Telemann's cantata-cycle *Musicalisches Lob Gottes* of 1744, where the scoring is as adaptable and modest as possible. Bach never did anything of the sort, and the attention he gave on one hand to copies of other composers' vocal works and on the other to writing his own complex music gives the impression of someone preferring the latter but perfectly aware of how useful was the former.

Although church work did continue in the 1740s, there is little indication of the relations between cantor and school and clergy, even of what happened each Sunday – what was sung and how enthusiastically the

cantor performed his duties. Some cantata parts from earlier years, such as No. 33 from 1724, show autograph revisions dating from the 1740s, presumably for revivals. In general, however, sparse evidence could also mean less rigorous documentation than before, itself a sign of less intense activity generally in church music throughout Protestant Germany. By mid-century, the traditional cantatas even in the major churches might be curtailed or dropped entirely, less so in Leipzig no doubt, though even there it would not have been easy to escape national trends. The town council still required special music on the election each August, but whether an older cantata such as No. 29 was often repeated or an earlier cantata reworded and reworked (as BWV 69 in 1748) is not fully documented. Similarly unknown, when Anna Magdalena was given power of attorney as early as May 1742 (Dok. I, p. 179), is whether such a move was as a matter of course after twenty years of marriage with a man so much older than herself, or a response to some health problem of the time, or a precaution against planned absences from home of either husband or wife.

During the 1740s students were still being taught and testimonials were being written on their behalf, a few organs were tested, visitors and fellow musicians were received, and journeys were made but about which little is known. (An absence of five weeks in April–May 1744 is referred to as a *Reise*, 'travel', Dok. V, p. 271: but where, why?) But the biggest witness to professional activity in the last decade is not only the four major publications of music but the careful preparation of large and ambitious collections, potentially also for publication. Other composers' sacred works being adapted, potentially for performance in Leipzig, include some arias from Handel's Brockes Passion to replace less dramatic ones in a Passion by C. H. Graun and in the anonymous St Luke Passion. Yet others over this late period include sacred works of Telemann, Kuhnau and Bach himself (first movement of Cantata No. 127), probably arranged by Altnickol and probably for performance in 1750.

These arrangements are known from copies or chance reference, though whether they were prepared for regular church services or for use in choral concerts in Leipzig's *Grosse Concert* series from 1743 is not known. It is not even known whether Bach attended or participated in this new concert series, except perhaps in 1748 or 1749 with Handel's Brockes Passion. The various italianate oratorios, lighter in *Affekt* than the verbatim Gospel Passions, were more appropriate to 'a concert-society of middle-class merchants' – more for a Passion-week concert than a Good Friday service in church. That such updated performances were popular amongst the literate classes is suggested by there being up to three hundred text-copies

printed, this also in 1749. In Protestant countries, oratorios in which the Gospel's words were not the main narrative were made generally for concert-rooms or theatres, not church, or at least not for its services. If, as seems possible, cantatas and motets from a range of sources were being introduced in the Thomaskirche services, then during the 1740s a greater range of music was being heard there than in St Paul's, London or St Mark's, Venice or Notre-Dame, Paris.

How much a turning towards other composers reflects, on Bach's part, exhaustion, indifference, a failing drive, even a more positive wish to enlarge repertory, is not at all obvious. Whatever the extent to which his own participation was falling off, there does not appear much of a falling-off in his musical activity as a whole. He does seem to have kept up his paid duties at the university's church, supplying service music once a quarter; and he still called himself *director musices* of the city. In general, the picture given of the repertory in the Thomaskirche by the extant scores, parts and other documentation is so cloudy as to encourage speculation, especially the reasons for choosing particular works from elsewhere. Older or newer, they were easier to perform? If increasingly in the last decade or so Bach deliberately withdrew into writing 'private' and complex counterpoint of various kinds, mostly non-liturgical, it may be hasty to assume the motive was anything other than musical curiosity, the happy accepting of a challenge. After all, he did not have to continue composing at all, and to deliberately withdraw need not have anything begrudging or resentful or wilful about it. But of course it might.

Professional visits of various kinds did continue, often to important places with personal connections, such as Weissenfels in 1739 along with Anna Magdalena, Berlin in August 1741 where Emanuel was court harpsichordist, and Dresden in November 1741 where Friedemann was organist. Such trips must have meant correspondence before and after, considerable fore-planning, arranging for deputies and service-plans in the interim, travelling at considerable expenditure of money and time (four days by coach to Dresden), in some cases preparing solo works for performance, and always with the risk of ill health for himself or one of the family left at home. (While away in Berlin, Bach was informed by letter of Anna Magdalena being seriously unwell, surely giving him presentiments after the experience with Maria Barbara in 1720.)[7] Such trips facilitated and created contacts with

[7] Dok. II, p. 391. A month later she still had to decline an invitation from the Chamberlain of Weissenfels. Perhaps she was having trouble with her final pregnancy; her daughter Regina Susanna was born five months later.

potential patrons. Hence the call on works like Cantata BWV 210 for solo soprano: already in the Cöthen years, perhaps, then more likely when the Duke of Weissenfels visited Leipzig in January 1729, and again with new recitatives for a wedding during the Berlin visit of 1741.

And as was the case for anyone in his position, Bach continued to receive invitations to test new or rebuilt organs, and it is unlikely that all of these are now known about. Another reason for trips in the last two decades was to give support to his professional sons, as at Dresden in 1733 for Friedemann, Mühlhausen in 1735 and Sangerhausen in 1737 for Johann Gottfried Bernhard, and Berlin later for the sake of both elder sons. At Mühlhausen on this occasion Bach also examined the organ on request and apparently without fee, a *quid pro quo* for his son's appointment? It may not be as discreditable as it seems that in 1737, after Bernhard had given in his notice, father and son claimed expenses for Bernhard's original audition in 1735, on the reasonable grounds that he had needed to spend some time there to practise for it. (The claim was apparently fruitless but sheds some light on auditions and their formalities.) Letters to Sangerhausen concerning Bernhard's application there not only draw on personal contacts from the past but twice ask about the salary, which rather suggests that money matters arose for perfectly sensible, professional reasons.

When Bernhard, then aged twenty-three, reneges on debts, his father will not pay unless he sees a signature of liability and wants to know whether Bernhard left any belongings behind when he fled (Dok. I, pp. 108–9). So there is both solicitude and cautious acceptance of responsibility for his son, and Bach appears to be distressed when Bernhard moves on without letting him know where. (In the genealogical table, the note that Bernhard died in 1739 was added by Emanuel.) Caring support of a similar nature for Friedemann might have been behind the trips to Dresden in 1736, 1738 and 1741 (twice?). Of particular significance is that although the sumptuous new Frauenkirche had had local musicians as organist from its initial dedication in 1736 until February 1742, Friedemann then applied for the post, no doubt with support from his father, and in person (see Dok. II, p. 400).[8] However, not Friedemann but a younger ex-Leipzig student, G. A. Homilius, was appointed and became a leading figure in Dresden's Protestant church music.

[8] Also early in 1742, a structural fault had developed affecting the Silbermann organ of the new Frauenkirche (Müller 1982, pp. 268f.). Whether either or both Bachs were consulted is not recorded.

The Art of Fugue

In revealing as profoundly as it does the composer's way of thinking in music, more so perhaps than any other work except perhaps the 'Goldberg Variations', the Art of Fugue needs a similar, special consideration. It is just possible that it was first conceived as a further part of the Keyboard Practice series, for keyboardists cannot be in doubt that this is music for them – though difficult if the open score is to be mastered and especially on the organ if the note-lengths in the part-writing are strictly observed.

The work's background is most complicated, due to two factors: the uniqueness of the project, both as a whole and piece by piece; and the survival of some original manuscripts as well as the printed version, without any certain connection between them. According to the handwriting of the main surviving manuscript, it seems that over the years from 1742 to 1746 (not long after the appearance of the 'Goldberg Variations') and again later a set of fifteen fugues and canons was being fair-copied, all in the same key and based on a single but changing theme. Several manuscript workings, accumulating over the years and making a not-yet organized portfolio, must have been made, revised in various ways and prepared for publication, though evidently without a complete or at least a clear plan. Work towards engraving began a year or two before the composer died, presumably still without there being a decisive, complete plan for it, and a not very coherent selection of fugues, canons and a final chorale was published posthumously, probably in 1751 and again in 1752, all in open score. There is no clear evidence who was the publisher, who had overall responsibility (after and possibly before Bach's death), and even where it was published, though Anna Magdalena Bach in Leipzig played a part in the publication, perhaps initiating it (NBA VIII/2, KB, p. 90) along with Friedemann, Emanuel and their brother-in-law Altnickol. The engravers, who also worked on the Musical Offering, have been convincingly proposed as Johann Georg Schübler, a student of Bach's, and his brother Johann Heinrich (Butler 2008).

The Obituary's worklist says of it:

> This is the composer's last work, containing all kinds of *Contrapuncte* and canons, on a single main subject. His last illness prevented him from bringing to a close the penultimate [*vorletzte*] fugue according to his plan, and from working out the final one, which was meant to have four subjects and be subsequently inverted in all four parts, note for note. (Dok. III, p. 86)

But much of this is guesswork by authors who were not generally present over the period concerned and may have had before them no more than a

'not-yet organized portfolio' containing a greater number of pieces, perhaps, than the surviving manuscripts do. Agricola's cryptic mention of *einen anderen Grund Plan* ('another [or 'a second'] ground plan), after the 'incomplete fugue' in a note in the manuscript, had several possible meanings, such as: there was more than one order authorized by the composer; or other orders were conceivable by the editors (or had already been conceived); or there was a plan to publish this last fugue separately; or he was speculating.

Whatever Emanuel knew of the work-plan or whether he recognized a selling point in claiming the Art of Fugue to be 'Bach's last work', nothing is known from the surviving manuscripts of a final piece as described here. That such a fugue was planned is not out of the question, since it is just possible for the incomplete fugue's three themes to combine with the original subject, though it does not do so in either the print or the manuscript. (The potential combination was demonstrated only much later, in 1881: see Tovey 1931, p. 41.) If the composer had spoken of a fugal work of four subjects, knowing Frescobaldi's (or Samuel Scheidt's imitations of them), the Obituary authors could have had some inkling of a fourfold combination and simply garbled their reference to it. Or a mixture of admiration and regret could simply have led them to expect it. The title of the last fugue in the print is 'Fuga *à 3*' not '*à 4*', and stops before the three subjects are heard together (see note 11, p. 426). Hence, perhaps, Emanuel assumed that there was yet another fugue to be written after the incomplete one '*à 3*', which he therefore thought to be 'penultimate'.

When the idea of exploring at length a single theme and its derivatives had first taken root in the composer's mind cannot be pinned down, but recognizable elements of this theme (including the key) already occur in exercises evidently prepared with Friedemann in the later 1730s (see NBA VIII/3). It could be that Bach's last known marks on paper are some page-numbers in the surviving manuscript of the Art of Fugue (BJ 2010, p. 68), perhaps in recognizing a need to give order to the contents. After he died the material was in the hands of Christoph Friedrich Bach (BJ 2009, p. 143), though how well he was aware of his father's intentions, and how clear these were, is unknown. The publication is certainly a volume with no obvious precedent in either Bach's or any other composer's output, once again a *unicum* for which neither he nor his editors had a usable model.

Whether the manuscript's set of pieces is a work-in-progress portfolio, a miscellany or an inchoate compilation; what exactly the composer's part in the preparations for publishing it was; whether the intention was to publish the work in two instalments or parts (the second starting with

Contrapunctus 11); whether Bach had fixed an order and if so what this was; and whether any such written order implied a playing order, as with the 'Goldberg Variations': these are all open questions. One possibility is that, as in other big projects, Bach changed his mind while working on it, having no precursor to fall back on, and was some way from finishing it. Another is that the surviving autograph manuscript of fifteen pieces does convey what at some stage was a plan of sorts, hence in particular the sequential grouping of the first four fugues, a subtlety totally lost in the print.

Many attempts have been made to reason both a coherent history and a coherent order for the Art of Fugue, allowing for such factors as these:

- along with the manuscript of fifteen pieces is now a further group of manuscript pieces (the 'Appendix' or *Beilage*), possibly prepared for the engraving;
- this appendix now contains the two harpsichord duets, a version of the published Augmentation Canon, and the 'unfinished fugue' (without title);
- some published movements derive from versions not contained in the MS as it now is (Contrapunctus 4), others appear only in the engraving (Canons at the Tenth and Twelfth. Late contributions?);
- various details are not found in the manuscript, whether major (all the titles except for the canons) or minor (e.g. slurs in Contrapunctus 2, occasional ornaments);
- in the print, three fugues have note-values double those in the manuscript (to make them easier for the player to read? Also intended for a fourth, BWV 1080.vii?);
- what intermediate manuscripts there were is unknown, but some corrections in the main manuscript (not there in the print) suggest that it remained in use;
- some altered page-numbers in a part of the MS imply 'a second installment in the engraving of the plates' (Butler 2008, p. 114);
- there is no known source for the chorale printed at the end, often claimed to be derived from a 'deathbed dictation' (see p. 457).

How big a part the composer played in preparing the print cannot be established. *Some* part is suggested by the Augmentation Canon having its Latin title rethought by him (Dok. III, p. 3), but any 'improvements' between the surviving manuscript and the print could have been taken from other copies by the editors themselves. In various ways the print implies that its editors had not entirely mastered their sources: the order

was probably their own in part and is inconsistent. Amongst the titles, two at least are inappropriate (for the fugues 'at the twelfth' and 'at the tenth'), and one fugue is given redundantly in two different forms.

The appendix as it is now raises the question whether there were further additional pieces in the 'portfolio', for only there do the keyboard-duet versions of two three-part *inversus* or 'mirror' fugues (qv) appear (complete with a fourth part filling out the harmony). In the case of the unfinished fugue there is no rubric or direction in its extant manuscript to say whether it was to be included in any final publication; nor is there for the keyboard duets, and nothing speaks of a final chorale (this or any other). Some chronology can be conjectured with some certainty, for example the duets for two instruments must have been drafted after the three-part versions. And some order can be conjectured from what was likely, i.e. the work was to increase in complexity, gradually involving thematic combinations, difficult canons, mirror counterpoint, etc.

Two big questions are whether the 'unfinished fugue' was ever finished and whether or not it belongs with the rest of the music. Unlike the other movements, even in the print it is called *Fuga* not *Contrapunctus*. The keyboard score of the untitled autograph manuscript, at least four of whose five pages look mostly like a fair copy, leaves one to suppose either that someone prepared an open-score version from it for the publication (Butler 2008, p. 117) or that there was another manuscript (a working copy?) or that there was already a version of the fugue in open score. The pages are written on one side only, as if to enable an engraving to be made by etching directly through the paper, which is 'thin and porous' (BJ 2015, p. 14). This suggests a rather different kind of publication from the one called Art of Fugue, a single piece of six (?) sides such as could have made a suitable contribution to Mizler's Corresponding Society (see p. 442) if or when completed with the fourth theme. At the point at which the fugue gives out, Emanuel wrote in the manuscript: 'NB In the course of [*Ueber*] this fugue, in which the name B A C H is introduced in the countersubject, the composer died', a remark (like the similar one in the Obituary) of very great influence afterwards. But the composer did not die when making *this* copy – which in fact Emanuel was not claiming – but only some time later. Nor was it because of his eye problems and subsequent death, on which the two prefaces in the eventual prints put the blame.

That in the print the incomplete fugue stops before the three themes are combined as they are in the surviving manuscript is especially puzzling when one recognizes the moment of beautiful potential here. Did the editors not recognize it? If it was ever completed it could not have been

on the surviving manuscript's last page, which was unusable because of badly ruled stave-lines, like some late pages in the manuscript of the 'Mass in B minor', where both sides of the page were used. When or if the fourth subject had been introduced, perhaps it would have been as a long-note cantus firmus (qv), on the model of Frescobaldi's ricercars. In any case, in the manuscript the incomplete fugue could have been kept up a little farther but breaks off exactly where the B A C H theme has just combined with the two other themes. Altogether, the situation is so puzzling that hypotheses will doubtless continue, and here is one: the surviving manuscript, though starting off as a fair copy, was abandoned incomplete because of errors and faults; there was another copy of the fugue not held in the portfolio with others, having some other purpose and called 'fuga'; those preparing the print did not know this other copy, but in it the fugue had been completed or at least taken further.

Naturally, the final chorale chosen by the editors to compensate for the break-off (*Wenn wir in hoechsten Noethen sein*, 'Whenever we are in deepest distress') arouses sympathetic interest, as it was meant to, despite the sudden key change to G major. It is meant to match the rest by being printed in four-part open score (despite having to accommodate a fifth voice at the end) and headed with a 'learned' phrase, *canto fermo in canto* (not, as usual, *in soprano*). In all these respects, it is very revealing about the editors and their agenda.

At least three of the sons, Carl Philipp Emanuel, Christoph Friedrich and Christian (these last two still teenagers), were involved in copying, compiling and/or publishing the work. Although the composer is sometimes assumed to have prepared copies of up to eighteen movements for publication, the editors/scribes included six others, assembling what they could despite some overlap. Emanuel, probably, spoke of there being twenty-four pieces in the publication (Dok. III, 8), having counted each inverted fugue and the final chorale, so it seems likely that the editors were setting out to produce yet another book of twenty-four pieces. Had there ever been a plan intended by the composer, they muddled it, and several possible intended arrangements have since been proposed, one of which (Butler 2008) is:

four simple fugues;
then three contrary-motion fugues;
then four 'compound' fugues;
then three 'mirror' fugues;
and finally, four canons.

As in the case of the Canonic Variations, the two authentic versions (manuscript and print) were unlikely to be the only two sources, and neither work has a single, fixed form.

If the composer had ever written a full title-page, perhaps he would have remarked on the open-score layout, as Frescobaldi did in his *Fiori musicali*. As the preface to the 1752 print pointed out, it shows how 'each voice is worked out with as much vigour [*Stärke*] as the others'. That might be useful for the reader, but for performers the difficulties of reading the open score are not lessened much if they made their own two-stave version, for the crossing inner parts require a manual dexterity different even from that in the 'Goldberg Variations'. Yet as D. F. Tovey observed:

> no rule of counterpoint is kept more meticulously by Bach than the confinement of the part-writing to the stretch of two hands. (1931, preface)

To keep such complex part-writing so ingeniously playable by two hands required that a player even as experienced as J. S. Bach should make use of a keyboard nearby from time to time: to combine themes challenges manual dexterity as much as it does contrapuntal ability, and this alone must have taken a great deal of the composer's time. The challenge to performers was enormous, and even today players of the mirror fugues will find it hard to agree with Tovey. It seems unlikely that the modest number of copies pulled from the engraved plates – only thirty, according to Emanuel (Dok. III, p. 113) – ever found more than a handful of capable players.

Whether the title 'The Art of Fugue' and the name for the separate movements, *Contrapunctus*,[9] came from Bach himself, perhaps in an intermediate manuscript, is not certain, although reading proofs of the engraving in progress, as he did, would have given him the chance to reject them were they then in place and had he so wished. The surviving manuscript includes Agricola's title added in *c.* 1745 and twice uses the phrase *Kunst der Fuga* (*sic*), and perhaps this is how the composer did refer to the project – except that the word *Kunst*, 'art', was very fashionable with the younger generation, including those members of it writing the Obituary. Also, *Fuga* does not account for every movement, unless the word is taken in an archaic sense as including diverse forms of imitation and canon. The print's two unusual verbal conceits

[9] *Contrapunctus*, rather than the usual *contrapunctum* (Latin, as in Fux 1725) or *Contrapunct* (German, as in Mattheson 1739, p. 246), appeared in Buxtehude's memorial publication of 1674, *Fried- und Freudenreiche Hinfarth*, also printed in open score.

(volume-title and movement-title) contribute to a sense of mystique about the work, as the editors no doubt intended.

There is more than a possibility that Frescobaldi's *Fiori musicali*, the copy presumably still in Bach's possession in the 1740s, played a part here beyond the model offered by its counterpoint and open score, which uses the same clefs and begins in the same key (*tonus primus*, D minor). Bach's incomplete fugue even seems to quote Frescobaldi's opening toccata more than once (bb. 45ff., 66ff.). There is a distinct possibility that when Emanuel singled out Frescobaldi (the only foreign composer he names) as admired by his father, he had in mind something he had heard him say over the very years he was working on the Art of Fugue and earlier on *Clavierübung III*. (And perhaps Emanuel had inherited his father's copy of *Fiori*?) Another possibility already aired is that it was not only the *Fiori* that Bach knew and continued to admire: there are moments in Frescobaldi's *Fantasie* (1608) and *Recercari et canzoni franzese* (1615) that suggest some kind of precedent for moments in the Art of Fugue. Various fantasias or ricercars *di quattro soggetti* and various lively *canzoni* give a 'point of reference' for Bach's *Fuga a 3 soggetti*, as do those that introduce a chromatic subject only after two or three others have been treated at length. One ricercar has a four-note theme similar in shape to B A C H and how it is used. A plausible guess is that Bach not only knew more of Frescobaldi's music than the *Fiori musicali* but that one reason for his admiration was Frescobaldi's patent interest in weaving lines around long-note themes, modifying themes in order to produce convincing combinations, making the counterpoint playable and enjoying moments of whimsy.

Another potential influence was J.-H. d'Anglebert's *Pièces de clavecin* of 1689, whose ornament table Bach is said to have drawn on two decades earlier and which closes with five fugues. These are also based on a single, varied subject, with another on three subjects (!), all in the same key of D minor. That there was a more current and more local interest in fugue-writing is shown also by the volume *L'A B C Musical. Contenant des Preludes et des Fugues de tous les Tons Pour l'Orgue ou le Clavecin*, published *c.* 1734 by Gottfried Kirchhoff, Friedemann's predecessor in Halle. This circulated well enough to supply examples for a book of practical instruction said to have originated within the circle of Bach students, the so-called Langloz Manuscript (in Renwick 2001). Its short, *partimento* fugues (qv) stand in proportion to the colossus WTC2 much as d'Anglebert's fugues stand in proportion to the Art of Fugue's. If in the 1730s Bach did teach students via such semi-improvised fugues, he was doing much as other celebrated composers of the time were: Kirchhoff in

Halle, Petzold in Dresden and even Handel in London (see Mann 1978). All four of them draw on teaching methods and techniques traditional in Saxony, these methods and techniques taken farther in the Art of Fugue than anywhere else.

Yet another major influence around 1742 – the biggest, perhaps – must have been the work on WTC2, whose exhaustive variety of style, type of theme and of course key could alone have inspired the idea of making an *antithetical* collection of fugues: not twenty-four subjects in twenty-four keys but a single theme and a single key, inspiring a huge range of counterpoint, canonic and fugal. A remark by Mattheson in 1739, inviting Bach by name to bring out a 'double fugue with three subjects' (Dok. II, p. 378) in the interests of contrapuntal science, has sometimes been seen as a challenge that Bach could not resist when planning his 'unfinished fugue'. But the Fugue in F sharp minor WTC2 already did something of the kind. So outstanding are the Art of Fugue's new countersubjects (new themes combining with the master-theme) that one of its aims could have been precisely this: to inspire the learner to look for ways of writing independent lines as singable as possible. Episodes between the more complex passages are moments of inspired melody and harmony, especially in the three longest fugues.

Emanuel's reference to twenty-four pieces was made in the knowledge that sets of six, twelve, twenty-four and forty-eight pieces were conventional. But only in the broadest terms is the Art of Fugue's intended plan clear: i.e. for the music to become more complicated as the volume proceeds, and at or towards the end to include examples of strict counterpoint in which every note has to be carefully thought out. This means strict canons, comparable in their way to the penultimate explorations in *Clavierübung III* (the four duets) and in 'Clavierübung IV' (the Goldberg's Quodlibet). An unprecedented set of variations is the result, something beyond even the unprecedented forms of the 'Goldberg Variations', the Musical Offering and the Canonic Variations. Each of these solves in its own way the chief problem of ordinary sets of variations, i.e. repetitious harmonies, by avoiding them. One interesting detail is that a 'variation' of the Art of Fugue theme with jerky rhythms, headed *in Stylo francese* in the posthumous edition, comes about halfway in the manuscript, as a frenchified movement does in each of the *Clavierübung* volumes and even in WTC 2.[10] If there was any

[10] The F sharp major Prelude (in 3/4 time). Whether the phrase *in Stylo francese* is the composer's is unknown: he knew dotted-note countersubjects in Frescobaldi and would have found nothing particularly French about them.

significance in this, the Art of Fugue's editors did not see it, for they placed the *francese* fugue sixth out of twenty movements.

Some uncommon harmonic movement can be felt in the two harpsichord duets and their original three-voice mirror fugues, so called, which already could not be played by a single player. Not surprisingly, the lines move in ways they would not if they did not also have to work upside down, and the ear soon recognizes something rich and strange. Because of music's asymmetrical octave, the ingenuity required for mirror compositions results in an unusual idiom that could easily teeter on the edge of unintelligibility, for neither treble nor bass can go quite where it would be natural for it to go. The Art of Fugue's four mirror-fugue movements, possibly inspired by the mirror counterpoint in Buxtehude's publication of 1674 (a book surely in Bach's library), are matched by another set of four challenging pieces: two-part canons at the octave (a common interval), the twelfth (less so), the tenth (still less so) and in augmentation.

That during the 1740s Bach was especially interested in augmentation canons (qv), especially as the last of a series of canons, is suggested by five examples:

BWV 1087.xiv, the last of the 'Fourteen Canons' attached to the 'Goldberg Variations', probably composed after the publication in 1741/2;
BWV 1080.xv (Art of Fugue), first version of *c.* 1742;
BWV 1080.xv (Art of Fugue), second version 1747/8;
BWV 769/769a (Canonic Variations 'Vom Himmel hoch'), Variation 4 of the print, probably spring 1747;
BWV 1079.iv.d (Musical Offering), early summer 1747.

This chronology is suggested by the sources, the circumstances and the musical quality. The interest shown in canon by major writers such as Walther (1732) and Mattheson (1731) appears to have been gradually waning, though this was less obvious to the correspondents in Mizler's learned journal *Musikalische Bibliothek*. Perhaps it was for Mizler's sake that Bach applied several different canonic techniques, to offer them for the journal as apparently he did with his Canonic Variations on the melody 'Vom Himmel hoch'. Yet the technical challenge of an augmentation canon, though undeniable, seems scarcely enough to suppose that it was the 'point of departure' for this whole cycle (BJ 2014, p. 27).

All this ingenuity has a musical purpose, resulting in a new and unworldly harmony, a music not for concerts but study, and challenging conventional harmonic language as nothing else can. Hence one might venture the word *transcendental* for it. While one might be perplexed by

its relentlessness of the canon at the tenth, at other moments in the work there is much that is effortlessly beautiful, distinctive, direct, almost simple, with a logical harmony in principle indifferent to tone-colour though suiting the keyboard. The priority given throughout to combining themes not only leaves no clear alternative to the harmony at each particular moment, search for the alternatives though one might, but creates unusual, rich sounds. Although it is true that Contrapunctus 4 introduces 'a highly innovative modification of the inverted theme' (Wolff 2000, p. 435), the bewitching effects that arise here and elsewhere do so from something distinctly sensuous: the fleeting dominant minor ninths, the distant modulations, the unique countersubject. Despite their seriousness, the opening group of four fugues in the manuscript version remains some of the sweetest counterpoint ever created by any composer.

There is hardly a movement which does not contain a surprise. Even in the incomplete fugue there are whimsical and apparently spontaneous moments hard to imitate by anyone who has attempted to complete it in the same style: like the little flashes in Contrapunctus 2, they would not occur to anyone else. At times, the incomplete fugue[11] is very like earlier work in WTC2 and even the Musical Offering's ricercars, as well as Frescobaldi's *Fiori*. As with other incomplete, mature fugues (in C minor, for organ, BWV 562, and for harpsichord, BWV 906), a possibility is that the fugue never was completed, for its typical and exemplary counterpoint can appear relentless and, even to its composer, might have appeared rather tiring. Bach had certainly shaped the opening theme of the incomplete fugue by drawing it out so that its long notes would make it possible to combine eventually with B A C H – a sure sign that this was the plan. Bringing in a theme based on the notes B A C H matches that moment towards the end of the manuscript of the Canonic Variations[12] when the same notes appear, at the same octave pitch. The two instances are near-contemporary and are each richly harmonized, even ingeniously so, and do give the impression of a kind of 'personal and final signing-off'.

As in other mature works, the Art of Fugue leaves another impression: that the composer is setting out to answer the question, 'How can such-and-such a harmonic problem be solved?' There is scarcely a bar in the

[11] If the surviving manuscript was their source, it seems the editors preferred to break off at a cadence (b. 233) at the end of a page, and thereby forgo the seven bars in which the three themes are first combined.

[12] I.e. not in the print, which gives a different order. The bar concerned is one of the last (and richest) Bach himself wrote in this manuscript, P 271.

whole volume that does not repay careful study and deserve the admiration of *Kenner*, 'connoisseurs'. The stream of polished harmonies seems endless. As with certain chorale-melodies which have been thought to resemble the Art of Fugue's theme, its harmony is so fundamental and reliable that there is no limit to the number of good countersubjects and coherent inner parts it can inspire. One might feel that those fugues in which the theme is augmented gave Bach as much trouble in avoiding static harmony as they give the player in placing the fingers. But many a counterpoint teacher since 1751 has found that the best-ever fugue written by an individual student was one based on a theme from the Art of Fugue, confirming that at bottom, a fugue is a series of harmonizations of a theme.

The visit to Potsdam and the Musical Offering

Some seventeen months after the last Prussian troops had left Leipzig, following their occupation of Saxony in the Second Silesian War, Bach visited his son in Potsdam and played before his son's Prussian employer, Frederick the Great:

> In 1747 he made a journey to Berlin and on this occasion had the favour of having himself heard at Potsdam before His Majesty, the King of Prussia. His Majesty himself played over for him a subject for a fugue, which he at once performed on the piano [*auf dem Pianoforte*], to the particular delight of the sovereign. At this, his Majesty desired to hear a fugue in six real [*obligaten*] parts, which command Bach also fulfilled immediately, on a theme chosen by himself, to the wonder of the king and the musicians present. On his return to Leipzig, he set down on paper a three-part and a six-part ricercar, so-called, together with some other artful pieces [*Kunststücken*] on the very theme given him by His Majesty; and dedicated it, engraved on copper, to the king. (*Obituary*)

These sentences, not reliable in all respects, follow straight on the reference to the Dresden appointment as 'court composer'. In this way, therefore, the Obituary refers consecutively to the composer's standing in the courts of Cöthen, Weissenfels, Dresden and Berlin, and thus consciously or not puts Leipzig and its churches, and his work as a composer of cantatas, out of the picture.

Although Emanuel does not mention himself in this connection, his presence in Potsdam since 1740 as court musician surely played a part in his father's appearance before Prussian royalty, something perhaps already foreseen when Bach had visited Berlin in August 1741. No letters about the

visit survive, but it would be surprising if he had not learnt beforehand of the imminent completion of Frederick's spectacular new rococo lodge Schloss Sanssouci in the grounds of the new palace at Potsdam. With its provision for a music room, and allowing for Frederick's new interest in Silbermann's fortepianos, Sanssouci was dedicated on 1 May 1747, about the time Bach must have set out from Leipzig. Although it is usually supposed that he played to the king not there but in the 'city palace' of Potsdam (Wolff 2000, p. 427), the timing is a striking coincidence. (He was at least shown the new music room in which his son Emanuel would be playing the fortepianos?) What arrangement he had made for the two Sundays of his absence from Leipzig is not recorded, but he was back in time to take Communion some days before Whit Sunday, 21 May.

The first newspaper report says nothing about an invitation. Presumably after being received by Emanuel, Bach went with him to hear the king's usual chamber music on Sunday evening, 7 May, was graciously allowed in and remained at first in an antechamber (Dok. II, pp. 434–5). The king then ordered him to be admitted and played a theme on the piano on which he was expected to improvise. Assuming this theme was exactly as recorded on paper by Bach, it certainly was a challenge despite his finding it 'excellently beautiful' (*ausbündig schön*). Its length and its chromatics went rather beyond what inspired the kinds of improvisation customary in the public auditions of organists at the time. The newspaper's report that he intended to compose a *Fuga* on it and have it engraved must have come from the composer himself. The next evening, after a day visiting Joachim Wagner's organ in the Church of the Holy Ghost and playing it to a crowd of listeners – here, not the king's chamber, was the place for a public concert – Bach was in the presence again of the king, who charged him (*auftrugen*) to create a *Fuga* in six parts. The general assumption now is that the first *Fuga* was (a draft of) the three-part ricercar to be engraved, while the *Fuga* from the second evening was (a draft of) the six-part ricercar as published. It seems, or at least the newspaper was keen to show, that the King of Prussia was *au fait* enough with fugal theory to recognize the distinction between two different fugue-types.

Slightly later newspaper reports in Leipzig give a similar but briefer account, so in this instance the Obituary was not indebted to them for an event which some readers may still have remembered. Forkel (1802, pp. 9–10) adds several other little details: that the king pressed Emanuel to pass on the invitation to his father, which he did 'in several letters'; that Frederick received the composer with respect and deference; that he encouraged him to play and at some point try out the Silbermann pianos

(of which he had bought, or was to buy, no fewer than fifteen); that on the following days he took him to visit 'all the organs in Potsdam', wishing to hear some of his organ music as well; and that Friedemann was also accompanying him at least some of the time. (One of the king's musicians was Friedemann's original violin-teacher, J. G. Graun, now a senior and much better-paid colleague of Emanuel.) That Forkel's source for the extra details was probably Friedemann himself does not make any of them reliable though they are plausible enough, except maybe for the king taking him to see the local organs. The newspaper mentions the concert in the Church of the Holy Ghost without saying whether it was a separate event or following a service, if such there was on a Monday.

The final reference in the Obituary's report is to the *Musicalisches Opfer* ('Musical Offering') or parts of it. This is the work whose origin and purpose (if not publication details) are the most clearly documented of all J. S. Bach's works, and its title the most fanciful he himself ever published. 'Some artful pieces' must refer to the full-length trio Sonata as well as the ten canons, though it is not entirely certain from this that Emanuel was aware of all the separate fascicles of the complete work, including the Sonata. Did Emanuel's later duties include playing any of this work with his employer, as many have thought likely, or did Frederick make no more use of it than his late relative apparently did the 'Brandenburg Concertos'? Also significant in the report is the claim that on entering the room, Bach 'at once performed' his fugue on the subject played before him, for this would impress any Obituary reader who knew and recognized the difficulty of creating extempore counterpoint from it. Both fugues were clearly major works, probably the first movements of the *Offering* to be printed and, especially in the Ricercar *à 6*, giving the king's theme great prominence and, in the process, providing another example of fugue defined as 'a series of re-harmonizations of a melody'.

An account in the Berlin gazette is the one and only time Bach's name featured on the front page of a newspaper (see Dok. II, facing p. 401), but it was common to give publicity for the visits paid to Frederick by men renowned in the arts and philosophy. Four years after Bach, Voltaire famously visited and took up residence in Potsdam, having long corresponded with the king (as had an ancestress of his with Descartes), though the king inevitably quarrelled with him. The visit to Potsdam of a celebrated German composer, something remarkable enough to be soon reported in the syndicated newspapers, might have been facilitated by Count Keyserlingk, late of Dresden and recently appointed Russian ambassador to Berlin, who would have learnt from Emanuel of his father's

previous visit there. The Berlin newspapers were copied and distributed around Protestant Germany, in Hamburg, Frankfurt, Magdeburg, Leipzig and as far as Munich. (This last one was the first printed reference to Bach in Catholic Bavaria and probably based on the Leipzig report: BJ 2011, p. 271.) The 1747 visit is the composer's last public appearance to be recorded in the Obituary, and is full of implications, about both the event and the reason for reporting it.

No account describes exactly in which of the various royal buildings of Potsdam the meetings took place, for reports say only that the king invited Bach in, on learning he was in the antechamber. More important to the newspapers was the image of Frederick himself, ravager of neighbouring kingdoms (including Saxony) but musically so accomplished that he himself composed the theme for an event he was still recounting to the Austrian ambassador nearly thirty years later (Dok. III, p. 276). The Obituary refers to Bach improvising a six-part fugue *über ein selbst erwähltest Thema* ('on a theme selected by himself'), but there is no known second theme: perhaps Emanuel, present at one or both of the events, was referring to an improvised six-part fugue different from the eventual Ricercar *à 6*. Or, in the Obituary he was relying not on his memory but on the newspaper report that there was to be a bigger fugue on the king's theme. He was certainly not loath to imply that his father and the king collaborated closely.

For Obituary readers, the significance of all this was clear: Europe's most powerful living monarch invited Europe's greatest living composer to play for him. Some idea of the composer's sense of a conferred honour, as well as of his energy, is given by the fact that the Offering was conceived, composed, gradually assembled, carefully prefaced, engraved, presumably proofread and dispatched (piecemeal?) to the king and advertised to be on sale in Leipzig, all of it by the time of the Michaelmas Fair 1747, less than five months later (Dok. III, p. 656). This despite each of the steps involving considerable trouble. The Latin titles to several canons in the king's dedication copy and the acrostic on the word 'ricercar' have already been commented on above (p. 108). It is quite likely that 'ricercar' rather than 'fugue' was a term inspired by Frescobaldi, another sign of Bach's continued admiration for him in the 1740s. For Frescobaldi, *recercar* indicated a work in one sustained section, unlike fantasias and capriccios, and constantly exploring a grave theme and its potential in a poised, elegant counterpoint often marked by a chromatic colouring – all as in the Ricercar *à 6*; Bach is not otherwise known to have used the term.

Together, the newspaper and Obituary also relay a crucial detail not found in Bach's own dedication to the Musical Offering: that the king

played over his theme on his (new) pianoforte. Bach's dedication speaks only of 'Clavier', but for the newspaper so up-to-date an instrument as the *Forte und Piano* was newsworthy, a valuable sign for all to see that the king himself was up to date, a man of initiative, one valuing new German contributions to music, whether aesthetic or technological. Neither his collecting Silbermann pianos in the mid-1740s nor his interest in improving flute construction was a secret. The Trio Sonata in particular can be imagined to be in honour partly of both instruments: the two-keyed flutes built specially for the king by his flautist Quantz, and the new pianos built by the King of Saxony's organ-builder. Six years later, the Berlin newspaper reported another example of Frederick's interest in special musical presentations: Emanuel himself, as the king's keyboardist, demonstrated to the royal family and court another newly invented or re-invented instrument, a type of *Geigenwerk* (qv) (BJ 1999, p. 171).

The whole occasion in May 1747, though grander than most, must speak for many similar events across pre-revolutionary Europe. Here, the newspaper was establishing two patriotic things: how enlightened and accomplished was the kingdom's liege-lord, and how uncommonly gifted was this particular German subject. A famous capellmeister – this is the newspaper's phrase, *cantor* and *director* being inappropriate – visits the most famous Protestant court, is invited to play concerts to the king in chamber and to the public in church, sits down and improvises at length, to the conventional astonishment of those present. Then on his return home, in the hope perhaps of preferment (a title, a pension, a sinecure?), the composer works further on a theme he understandably admired, saluting his patron's connoisseurship by including both complex and fashionable pieces. To produce one or more *Fugas* on the theme, the only pieces mentioned by the newspaper, is likely to have been Bach's original idea. More than a year later he himself is referring to 'the Prussian Fugue' (Dok. I, p. 117), which might have been a nickname in the family for the whole publication.

If all the other pieces were added only gradually over the summer weeks of 1747, such an enthusiasm for the theme says much about the composer's pertinacity and about his wish to impress and flatter. In the dedication to the king, printed in Leipzig by Breitkopf in July 1747 (Dok. I, pp. 241–3), Bach claims his improvised fugue not to have turned out as well as the theme required. Hence the further work. There seem to have been two instalments of music sent to the king, some of it on very fine paper: the composer's dedication with the two Ricercars, and then the Sonata (parts, not score) and the canons. The pieces comprise not a single compact volume but a miscellany in varying formats, a collection of fascicles, a

multifaceted 'offering'. Engraved by at least two of the Schübler family members, possibly three (Butler 2002), the 'miscellany' looks like a further example of Bach's late collections growing as he worked on them. What form the King of Prussia's continued grace (*Gnade*) towards him might take when he requested it in his dedication, is left more open than it is in earlier dedications to the Margrave of Brandenburg and the King of Saxony, where he offered to compose other works for them.

A revealing and most important clue to the composer's interest in traditional techniques, one quite as fundamental as word-setting in the Passions or cantatas, perhaps more, is given by the Offering's ten very different canons. These join the canons similarly attached about then (1747/8) to a copy of the 'Goldberg Variations' in a hand-written compilation, the miniature 'Fourteen Canons' (see above, p. 405). There must be some significance too in the well-known portrait of Bach dating from this time (1746, copied 1748) showing not an instrument or a major score but a canon. It was clearly important to Bach to work on manoeuvring the notes of the diatonic scale, major or minor, in order to produce musical sounds not likely to be heard elsewhere. His interest was not unique among composers at the time, and partly for himself, partly for others, the scope of canonic techniques employed reads like a 'catalogue of diversity and difference' typical of him as a student of *ars musica*. The Musical Offering supplies the following *exempla*:

Canon perpetuus super Thema Regium: perpetual canon in two voices around the royal (or king's) theme, the *thema regium;*

Canon perpetuus: perpetual canon decorating the *thema*, above a bass, with the answer an exact inversion (i.e. *per giusti intervalli*);

Canon 1 à 2: two-voice 'crab canon' below the *thema*, each voice is the other backwards but sounding simultaneously (i.e. *cancrizans*, 'crab canon');

[No. 2] *à 2 Violin: in Unisono*: new theme in unison canon for two violins above the *thema regium*;

[No. 3] *à 2 per Motum contrarium*: canon below the unaltered *thema*, the two voices in contrary motion;

[No. 4] *à 2 per Augmentationem, contrario Motu*: two voices in contrary motion, one augmented, around the decorated *thema*;

[No. 5] *à 2*: below the *thema* decorated, a two-part canon at the fifth, modulating upwards, tone by tone (i.e. *per tonos*, 'through the keys' or 'through whole tones');

Fuga canonica in Epidiapente: a longer canon at the fifth on the *thema* treated as a fugue-subject (complete with subject-coda) above a bass (which eventually has the *thema*);

Canon à 2 Quaerendo invenietis: a puzzle canon ('seeking, you will discover') of the *thema* decorated, in two parts, the second *inversus*, without bass.

Canon à 4: a long four-part canon SATB on the *thema* decorated.

Here too there may be particular reminiscences of Frescobaldi's *Fiori musicali*: in one of his ricercars the theme passes through eight keys, as Bach's *canon per tonos* passes through six; in another the player has to discover how to complete it without being shown how to do so, i.e. it is left as a puzzle.

In the case of the miniature examples in the 'Fourteen Canons', it is certainly not easy, though not impossible, to think of yet other ways than these to create canons:

theme in canon; inverted theme; these two together (two examples); with new countersubject (four parts); four with new countersubjects (three parts); invertible and syncopated; two with two new countersubjects (five parts, second canon with augmented bass theme); one with two new countersubjects and canonic bass (six parts); bass theme paraphrased, extended, augmented and diminished (four parts).

These also have Latin headings typical of canons, one of which (the six-part) has a familiar theme reminiscent of the E major Fugue, WTC2, of one of Frescobaldi's fantasias, 1608, and of yet another in Fux's treatise *Gradus ad Parnassum*, 1725.

Presumably Bach worked his canons in score but presented them in prints and manuscripts in an abbreviated notation most performers would need to complete on paper. Traditionally, both the notation and the titles, one of which is deliberately uninformative, belong to the kind of music all this is. Several of the Musical Offering canons could be perpetual, and at least two have more than one solution. Several include canonic techniques anticipating moments in the organ variations 'Vom Himmel hoch', while some have a bass as third voice, in this regard like almost all of the 'Goldberg' canons. Especially the canon rising gradually through six keys, whole tone by whole tone, puts the work infinitely above other scholastic enterprises of the time: the minor keys, c, d, e, f sharp, g sharp or a flat, b flat, each of which modulates to the next through its own dominant. So described, as if this is merely dauntingly contrived and abstruse music, these movements will surprise the new listener with their melody and thematic harmonies, which seem to be always present.

There is no indication that the Musical Offering as a whole is a single 'work', and no performing order can be ascertained from the way the engraving is laid out with minimum wasted space. The publication and circulation in fascicles is also reflected in the incomplete state in which

almost all copies have survived. Such a presentation work being in print, and much less exceptional than it would have been at the time of the 'Brandenburg Concertos', would not absolve the donor from presenting a special copy to the royal patron, as was the case here. Thanks to the formality of royal libraries, this special copy survives, raising the question whether dedications for other printed works (the 'Goldberg Variations' for Count Keyserlingk, or even *Clavierübung III* for the King of Saxony) were made but are now lost. That there are *ten* canons tempts speculation about the number's significance, none of it indisputable.

The report in the newspapers was more detailed than usual in such accounts, making one wonder whether Bach himself instigated it and was as renowned as it implies. Another distinct possibility is that the correspondent was Gottfried Silbermann, organ-builder and maker of Frederick's fortepianos. If Silbermann was the first to use the term 'Piano et Forte' in Germany, as seems to be the case, the report from Potsdam was a fine advertisement for him.[13] And if it is true, as J. F. Agricola reported thirty years after his student-days in Leipzig in 1738–41, that Bach had at first been critical of Silbermann's pianos, finding the action too heavy and the treble tone too weak, but then after improvement gave them his complete approval (Dok. III, p. 194), perhaps this approval was expressed publicly at Potsdam in May 1747. By then, any such improvements could have come from Silbermann imitating an actual Florentine piano with 'improved' action, imported to Dresden for the Italian court musicians.

Had Frederick played over his theme on the piano in the treble, with the same notes now opening the Ricercar *à 3*, then one understands why it begins in the upper range of g'–c''', something uniquely high for a three-part fugue of Bach. For this part of the fortepiano compass would be what Silbermann was by now mastering, giving it that silky or pearly tone one still hears in Viennese pianos of Mozart's time and used by him for seductive melodies in his concertos. For similar reasons, the G major Fugue of WTC2 suits fortepiano, and perhaps was even inspired by the soft celesta-like effect through its as yet imperfect dampers. Despite the softness of early pianos, which are always more *piano* than *forte*, some dynamic contrast was possible, whether sudden (*forte* or *piano*) or gradual (*crescendo* or *diminuendo*). So in the Ricercar *à 3*, as in suitable preludes and fugues in WTC2, there are many places at which louds/softs are

[13] The term is found inside Frederick's piano still at Sanssouci, Potsdam (dated 11 June 1746), in another now in Nuremberg (1749), and again in a cantata-text composed for the inauguration of a fortepiano at Marienberg, Saxony, in 1744 (for this, see Ahrens and Langrock 2003, p. 308).

appropriate, so much so as to leave little doubt that the composer was quite aware of the piano's *crescendi/diminuendi*.

In a striking contrast, the Ricercar *à 6* requires no dynamic change beyond the constantly changing textures; its rich, massive moments are just playable on keyboard and present a uniquely rich phalanx of harmonies that time and again alludes to older consort music. The harmony and its changing texture produce a unique aura, and the listener sometimes senses rather than hears the theme. The contrast between the pair of ricercars cannot be missed: in effect, modern and ancient, a dramatic-rhetorical piano capriccio versus a quasi-organ contrapunctus. A surviving fair-copy autograph of the Ricercar *à 6* has no title, but the music and its two-stave score are probably earlier than the print and its open score. Its layout on four sides recalls that of the Canonic Variations for a reason they may share: as suitable works to be (but which were never?) presented to Mizler's Society (pp. 329f.). If the title *ricercar* appeared only in connection with Frederick, all the more reason to see it as alluding in some way both to the king's erudition and to the legacy of Frescobaldi.

Because of its solos for flute, the Musical Offering was allusive in another way: as the canons flattered Frederick's scientific musicianship, and the four-movement sonata his up-to-date italianate tastes, so too using the flute in the difficult key of C minor was a challenge and a recognition of the king's ability as a flute-player. Especially since his teacher Quantz had worked with him on various improvements to the flute's construction, as Silbermann could well have done to the piano's, it seems that the Musical Offering was as much prompted by recent instrumental technology as by Potsdam's group of gifted performers. The very key, C minor, probably bears on this, for the 'king's theme' has a fashionably sinuous effect when played by flute, fortepiano, violin, or cello, whether in its basic version or as paraphrased in the Sonata's two *Allegro* movements.

Throughout the work, the king's theme is decorated differently on each occasion, but its essential qualities of harmony and melody survive so hauntingly throughout the chamber sonata, the canons and the ricercars (especially the richly harmonized six-part), that the listener can be in no doubt what exactly is happening at certain points. The haunting sense of melody and harmony created by the theme's chromatics is as if deliberately chosen for dominating and producing a new kind of *galant* flavour. Being both chromatic and fugal calls to mind Frescobaldi's *Recercar cromatico* in the *Fiori musicali*, now re-exposed in the tight counterpoint of one Ricercar and the flashier, looser, more modern shape of the other. Much of the harmony in the Ricercars and Sonata is a direct response to these

chromatics, how to harmonize them and where to allow them to wander, and there cannot be many fugues in C minor that modulate to A flat minor and D flat major, as the Ricercar *à 3* does, briefly. There is a double allusion in the obsolete title '*Ricercar*' ('to search diligently' in Walther's *Lexicon*): to musical tradition and to classical learning, both surely flattering the king.

Although similarities have been found between the Sonata and *à la mode* chamber works by Zelenka in Dresden and Quantz in Potsdam, the systematic way its four movements explore the underlying theme, while on the surface appearing to be a regular chamber sonata, is much more typical of Bach. The theme is heard in the first movement in the bass, in the second as a further subject in a *da capo* fugue, in the third as a source for various chromatic motifs, and in the last as a jig fugue. Four very different and inventive paraphrases: to treat a theme in this way is to produce another type of theme-and-variations comparable to the 'Goldberg Variations' a few years earlier. At the same time, the slow–quick–slow–quick structure of an Italian sonata is in no way compromised by the unusual (unique?) thematic agenda, though few if any Italian sonatas will have such substantial movements, including a *da capo* fugue of almost 250 bars – indeed, a royal offering. In this, and in the constant chromatic flavour and the strangely unfrivolous feeling of the whole, there is something very different from the more conventional trio sonata one recognizes in an earlier work like the G major for two flutes and continuo, BWV 1039.

The remaining doubt is still whether Frederick himself composed – surely not improvised – so outstanding a theme. Perhaps he played a simpler form of it, and Bach extended the chromatics and added the syncopation? Or Frederick prepared it beforehand with the help of Quantz, who sometimes composed in a superficially similar vein? How trustworthy were the king's later remarks about the work is unclear, seeing that he also spoke of fugues in four, five and eight parts, none of which is known about (Dok. III, p. 276). In any case, the titles found in the print are not unambiguous: *thema regium* (Latin for the canons) and *soggetto reale* (Italian for the Sonata) mean both 'royal theme' and 'king's theme', i.e. as much composed for as composed by the king. More so than most subjects in WTC2, it includes some easily recognized common-property elements.[14]

[14] At one point the Ricercar *à 3* creates something of a thematic canon *in diminutione*, but elsewhere the theme is either paraphrased in order to produce a canonic line or is itself surrounded by a canonic countersubject. (The latter technique also in, e.g., the Canonic Variations and the Cantata No. 83.ii.)

The common-property formulae making up the whole theme are: a tonic triad, then a diminished seventh (qv), a descending chromatic fourth, a Neapolitan sixth and an emphatic perfect cadence.

Just as revealing of the composer in their way are three hand-written Latin inscriptions in the king's copy, either composed or commissioned by the composer: the acrostic on *ricercar* (also in the published print) and laudatory tags to two canons, all signs of some intimacy with Latin (see p. 108). How obsequious these are is now unfathomable, but they show two things about J. S. Bach: that he liked making verbal allusions, and was willing to use music to convey a message, as in the canon passing up through the keys. A modulating canon is so unusual as to suggest not only a musical *tour de force* (like the circle of modulations in John Bull's Fantasia *Ut re mi fa sol la*) but a political allegory, one shared only with the king. It is possible that Frederick was well read enough to know that *away from the keyboard*, six keys rising by an exact tone each time would end up at a pitch slightly above where they started (see 'ditonic comma' in the Glossary). But this would not invalidate the allegory; it would if anything reinforce it.

Unlike the newspaper, the Obituary says nothing about the following day in Potsdam when Bach played Joachim Wagner's new organ of *c.* 1730 for the Heiligegeistkirche. Such a pair of performances, at court and church, closely matches Bach's appearances at Dresden, and no doubt he played other organs in Berlin/Potsdam, including the Garrison Church. (Here, some moving statuary in the organ-case represented the Prussian eagle rising towards the sun, a physical equivalent to the musical portrait of 'so may the king's glory rise' in one of the canons! The Prussian eagle motif also appears conventionally at the head of the newspaper reporting the visit.) What the large number of listeners heard in such recitals is not known, but a description in 1741 of Bach's playing gives a broad picture: he first begins with 'something on paper', and this something (by another composer?) is 'simpler' than his own ideas; then from this beginning his 'power of imagination' (*Einbildungskraft*: Dok. II, p. 397) is set in motion, and he proceeds to improvise.

On which visit to Berlin it was that Emanuel accompanied his father to see the new opera-house on *Unter den Linden* in the city centre is not recorded, but it led Emanuel later to remark on his father's practical understanding of acoustics (see below, p. 486). In January 1748, only a few months after the 1747 visit, Bach appealed to Frederick for privileges (qv) for the organ-builder H. A. Cuncius, son of the builder whose organ in Halle he had helped examine over thirty years earlier (Dok. V, pp. 88f.). It seems that after his widely reported visit to Berlin Bach's name was one to have in support, though in this instance whether he actually knew Cuncius's work for himself is not certain.

Four late chorale collections for organ

There is something alarming in the realization that without the visit to Berlin, such exceptional and isolated achievements as the two Ricercars and the Sonata in C minor would never have been. Other works from the composer's last decade or so, however, were very much the kind of music one can imagine him having permanently in his mind: organ-chorales. No fewer than three and probably four collections of such pieces represent a significant item over the years in which he was active in other ways, working on other composers' works, making parodies of his own, exploring complex counterpoint. They also testify to the enthusiasm, even passion, for making collections.

Each collection represents a particular lifelong interest: in compiling practical settings of Lutheran chorales for organists, on two contrasting scales, large and small; in re-using cantata movements when suitable; and in creating unusual music by means of canonic counterpoint. All four collections contrast in all obvious respects with the other keyboard music of the period and which are themselves different from each other. None has a biographical background as certain or colourful as the Musical Offering's, and none has a straightforward origin.

The first, a large collection often known as the 'Leipzig Chorales', exists in a manuscript compiled during the 1740s but never given a title-page or a clear plan or even a determined number of settings. To the first fifteen chorale-settings in the composer's mature hand (the first thirteen by 1739–42, the next two 1746/7), then, later, a pupil of Bach's pupil Altnickol (one J. C. Farlau; see NBA IX/3 KB, pp. 172 ff.) added two others (hence one name for the collection, 'The Seventeen'); in the surviving manuscript there follow the five Canonic Variations in the composer's hand; and after these, on their last page, a further chorale was added by yet another person (hence an alternative name 'The Eighteen', though never 'The Twenty-three' for all of the settings). Who authorized the added chorales is not established, but the second of the two chorales copied by Farlan (BWV 667), like the opening pair written by the composer (BWV 651, 652), sets a Whitsuntide hymn. This gives a symmetry or framework whether authorized or not by the composer. In focusing on texts of the central Christian mysteries (Pentecost, Communion, Trinity, Incarnation), 'The Seventeen' differs conspicuously from Bach's other major collections of chorales, which centre on the Lutheran Mass and Catechism (*Clavierübung III*) or the church year (*Orgelbüchlein*). This difference does not seem accidental, nor would it have seemed so if all three had ever reached publication,

for they would have been supplying three useful resources for those professional organists of greater-than-average skill. If the intention had been to contribute to the growing number of organ-publications in Germany, other Bach chorale-settings could have been found for adding to the biggest of these collections, especially if they were now subjected to rewriting as much as the first of them (BWV 651) was. That Bach did intend publication is suggested by the very full title he gave to each setting in the manuscript.

Unlike most settings in the earlier volumes, every one of the 'Leipzig Chorales' appears to have been selected from the composer's archive, just as movements for the 'Mass in B minor' were. Each is a less or more revised version of an earlier piece from the Weimar years or, in two or three cases, even earlier. Possibly there were other revisions elsewhere. But the manuscript's late Leipzig versions have been taken as definitive, hence the modern title 'Leipzig Chorales' – a title no better than the others, however, since *Clavierübung III* also consists of Leipzig chorales. The 'revisions' generally become less radical as the collection proceeds with the older pieces, which may be significant or simply reflect the composer's fallible stamina: the first, the Whitsuntide *Fantasia*, is over twice as long as the supposed first version. The musical style varies between the settings, and not the least striking thing is how little Bach revised (or felt the need to revise) earlier work, even in such a testament-like compilation. Uncertainties about its contents, plan and purpose leave one unsure whether some discernible *threes* in the overall contents are significant: three Communion hymns, three 'Agnus dei' settings, three Trinity hymns, three Advent hymns, three texts to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; and on the purely musical side, three trios and three sarabandes.

What is clearer is that once again a substantial collection of pieces was demonstrating the number of ways a technique can be applied, in this case to making use of hymn-tunes or chants. The first two alone do this in different and highly contrasted ways, one using the hymn-tune for a plain vigorous theme in the bass (a cantus firmus), the other for a sweet *cantabile* melody in the soprano (a paraphrase). They serve as two ways to view Whitsuntide: the original, noisy, rather violent event (Pentecost), and the subsequent quiet contemplation of the Spirit (Paraclete). Each of the collection's group of three settings makes a point of giving an optimum interpretation of the hymn-tune and its text, so that in the three Advent chorales a gentle (and incomparable) *cantabile* setting is followed by a rough, unique trio with two bass-lines, and this in turn by an energetic

perpetuum mobile fugue the opposite of *cantabile*. Like Whit, Advent too is open to different musical approaches, reflecting the *personae*: Jesus the Comforter, Jesus Harrower of Hell, Jesus the Hero-Saviour. Both hymn-tunes can be used simultaneously in two or more ways, paraphrased and in plain notes; they can be lyrical or startling, heard against themselves in stretto or turned upside down *inversus*; treatment is succinct or very drawn out, long-breathed phrases here, short there. As much as any other of Bach's collections, including the Mass, this one illustrates an abiding agenda, the search for musical differences.

The second group of late chorales, now generally known as the 'Seven Advent and Christmas Fughettas' or 'Leipzig Fughettas', is not so grouped in any contemporary copy and has no clear or certain identity. In contrast to the 'Leipzig Chorales', these tiny settings explore an extremely well-conceived fugal counterpoint, for manual only, of one or more lines from Advent and Christmas melodies. Surviving in semi-order in a posthumous manuscript of *c.* 1760 catalogued by the Leipzig publisher Breitkopf,[15] they could have been originally conceived to provide settings more useful than the bigger chorales. This is a possibility strengthened by the fact that all the chorale-melodies used are also set, in a very different way, in the *Orgelbüchlein*. Sometimes, other settings have been proposed as belonging with the seven, but this always involves accepting some other, different characteristic. The fughettas surely belong to Bach's maturity, having a single purpose (Advent–Christmas) and single genre (fughettas). In short, another unique compilation. Though brief, they are significant for a deft counterpoint that would not be out of place in the Art of Fugue, as when the hymn-tune's four lines combine at the close of 'Vom Himmel hoch'. Reminiscent of Pachelbel's better Magnificat versets, the fughettas might be another instance of Bach's sustained admiration for Frescobaldi, decades after he acquired his copy of *Fiori musicali*.

The third compilation of organ-chorales, *Sechs Choraele* (usually called the 'Schübler Chorales' after the name of the publisher, J. G. Schübler), poses different questions. Five are known to be transcriptions of earlier cantata arias, as the sixth (BWV 646) might also have been. But the main questions are who made the transcriptions and whether 'transcription' is the correct word. The three-stave layout looks less like an idiomatic transcription for organ than a straightforward transfer from the original cantata scores: more

[15] Here, in the BWV order 696, 697, 698, 699, 701, 703, 704, which rather suggests the or an original grouping was mangled in sources it used.

literal than Bach's genuine transcriptions elsewhere. According to the print's title-page the *Sechs Choraele* could be purchased from the composer in Leipzig and his sons in Halle (Friedemann) and Berlin (Emanuel). Bach's involvement in the publication is clear from his markings on an extant copy, but whether this means he made, initiated, approved, acquiesced in or merely belatedly learnt about the compilation, is an open question. Nor is it clear when any of this happened: somewhere between 1746 and 1749, possibly to match (since the texts relate to Advent) the Canonic Variations' settings of the hymn for Christmas Day. Emanuel might not have known them: the Obituary refers to 'six three-part preludes', but two are in four parts. There is nothing to connect any of them with Bach's testing of the modest organ in Zschortau in August 1746, or the grand organ in Naumburg a few weeks later, but such opportunities certainly did arise.

So arranged, the five cantata arias, all from between 1724 and 1731, are sometimes awkward for the player but do produce a new kind of organ music, more like arias than chorales and potentially more popular and fashionable. (Only potentially, being harder to play than other composers' products of the time.) The first setting, 'Wachet auf!', transmits a melody so well known today that few players are struck by how dissonant it all is, especially because the harmony is not filled in by the continuo as it is in the original cantata. The Magnificat setting BWV 648 is unusual in a different way, being far more succinct than most line-by-line settings of a melody, in fact a miniature ritornello movement. Whoever was responsible for the collection and however competent the transference from vocal score to organ score, the selection itself was well made: a challenge to the player and aiming at an up-to-date market. Since there are curiously few other examples in Bach's cantatas open to this organ treatment, as one can soon discover, the arranger must have had a very intimate acquaintance with them to be able to select five or six. Or he was pointed in the right direction by Bach himself?

The fourth of the late sets of organ-chorales, the Canonic Variations, also poses questions of a yet different kind. What does it say about the composer's procedures that there are two equally authentic versions, one published (1746 or 1747, again in Nuremberg), one remaining in manuscript and different in more than detail? How many other versions or drafts there were is unknown. 'Some canonic Variations on the Christmas-hymn Vom Himmel hoch [etc.]' is the print's title, and *Vom Himmel hoch … per Canones* the manuscript's. If, as is likely, this fair-copy manuscript was finalized after the print, which therefore was prepared from another copy, the change of terminology might be significant. Each movement in the print was called *variatio* but in the manuscript

Canon(e), which rather looks like one title for players, one for connoisseurs. This print is also *sui generis*: four folded sheets, so laid out as to require no page-turns, and the first three pieces incompletely written out.

As with all Bach's publications, the history neither of the whole nor of each movement is clear from extant sources. Musically, the two versions differ not only in substance but, also significantly, in the order of the five movements. This is as follows (taking the print's order for reference):

Print (BWV 769)	i	ii	iii	iv	v
MS (BWV 769a)	i	ii	v	iii	iv

The biggest movement thus comes last in the print but is central in the manuscript, giving a cumulative shape in the first and a symmetrical in the second. (There is a comparable ambiguity in the 'Goldberg Variations'.) The manuscript itself happens to have, surely not by accident, a richly harmonized B A C H motif in its closing bars, thus visually conspicuous as well as aurally. The print leaves no hint that there could be a different order, though this might be for practical reasons (i.e. leaving it open to choice) while the manuscript gives the original or preferred order. In not giving the first three canons complete, the print is so laid out as to be very economical of paper and engraving plates while also appealing to *cognoscenti* by leaving them abbreviated. In this way they serve as puzzles of the kind much valued by some musicians but which, like other canons at the time, would need to be completed on paper by most buyer-performers.

A manuscript copy, almost certainly not the extant one, is referred to by Lorenz Mizler at the end of the Obituary when he speaks of the Corresponding Society he had founded: the *Societät der musikalischen Wissenschaften* ('Society for Musical Sciences'), which numbered Handel amongst its correspondents. In 1747, Bach, as fourteenth member,

> contributed to the Society the chorale Vom Himmel hoch da komm' ich her, completely worked out [*vollständig ausgearbeitet*], which was engraved on copper plates afterwards

– though not by Mizler. Whether all five Canonic Variations were presented to Mizler and in what form, is not certain from this reference: the format of the print (four sheets, six pages of music) might be following the rule for contributions to his Society. However, 'completely worked out' is vague and could refer to Variation v alone, a compendious variation called *L'ultra sorte del canone* in the print. In 1747 Mizler himself had published a resolution of another Bach canon, BWV 1074, and in September that year

implied that at least a part of the Musical Offering was circulated amongst members of his society in one of his twice-yearly 'packets' (Dok. II, pp. 437–8). Haussmann's 1746 portrait of Bach, showing the composer holding the canon BWV 1076, may well have had some connection with Mizler and his Society.

A technical challenge is that since the hymn-tune does not obviously work in ordinary unison canon with itself, Bach needed to handle it another way: with upside-down answers, multiple stretti, a canon at the seventh and various newer canonic lines around it. Whether the equal length of the hymn's four lines and frequent return to the home key made it particularly suitable for an augmentation canon around it (BJ 2014, p. 43) is a guess, but a comparison between Variation iv and Variation v suggests much about the composer's technique. It is not fanciful to imagine him thinking note by note in both movements and working to produce convincing harmonies. In Variation iv, the chorale is a cantus firmus between the canonic voices the upper of which, when freed from its imitation halfway and supported by a new fourth part, weaves a mysterious and beautiful arabesque. In Variation v, the chorale itself supplies separate phrases for a series of brusque canonic treatments, and a busy counter-melody less purely melodious than in Variation iv, running across the voices and harmonized (unnecessarily?) with a further voice.

For many decades, even centuries, Christmas hymns had been particularly open to such treatment. In a much earlier setting of this same chorale-melody Bach had already combined sections of it in a web of allusion difficult to unravel (BWV 700) and now he makes canons both from the subject and from the accompanying parts. Clearly, canon was no merely marginal interest of J. S. Bach but an aspect of the attention he gave to the *ars musica*. In *Vom Himmel hoch* there are altogether some nine canons within the five movements, part of a grand total of some fifty canonic workings in the keyboard or chamber works of Bach's last ten years.

But the Canonic Variations are far more than a demonstration, and once again have an aura like that of no other music. Especially in Variation iv, there is a free-ranging melody of great beauty soaring above a complex canon in the other voices and from which it can be shown, in minute detail, to derive. The first two variations have a playfulness and a slow harmonic rhythm typical of Christmas music, and the final build-up (another quodlibet) of Variation v can be easily supposed to picture an angel chorus. Combining all the hymn-lines at the end of Variation v might be another direct imitation of the way Frescobaldi ends several

pieces with four themes by combining all four but generally modifying them even more than Bach does. C major itself, especially when drawn out and affirmed at the end of Variation v, gives a character to the work categorically different from the Art of Fugue in D minor and the Musical Offering in C minor.

The 'Mass in B minor': origins

The quotation marks acknowledge that the 'Mass in B minor' (*H-moll-Messe*), so called since the early nineteenth century, was not (or not likely to be) Bach's title, nor was the work as a whole ever given a title or title-page, or presented as a single, finalized work. The Obituary makes no specific mention of it.

To recapitulate the background to this, one of two major 'culminations' of Bach's final years: some six months after the Elector of Saxony died in February 1733, Bach had presented a complete set of parts for a Lutheran *Missa* of Kyrie and Gloria to the newly enthroned elector, presumably in homage and to bring his own name to the notice of the new ruler, for whatever purpose. Various details of the notation, such as certain articulation signs found less often in full scores, testify to the composer's intention of making it performable, in more than one context. For the two sections were as apt for Protestant congregations (in both Dresden and Leipzig) as for the Roman Catholic royal family, as were Bach's other short *Missae* of the 1730s. Even without the lengthy spoken and sung sections of an actual liturgy, the 1733 two-section *Missa* is a substantial musical item, distinct in many details and showing signs of some reworking. Nothing suggests that Bach had thoughts of eventually adding to it to produce a more complete setting of the Roman Mass Ordinary. When in his final years he did come to do this with the other movements (Creed, Sanctus, Osanna, Benedictus, Agnus dei) to produce the 'Mass in B minor', nothing appears there to connect it to Dresden or to the king, despite some later assumptions. One possibility is that in the composer's mind its twenty-seven movements were in some sense a complement to the twenty-seven movements of *Clavierübung III* published some years earlier, the two works relevant both to Dresden and to the preoccupations of its 'court composer'.

Both the 1733 *Missa* and the final Mass set out to uphold the standards of 'serious and profound music', in the Obituary's phrase, selecting and re-using earlier works mostly very different from the new, simpler *galant* styles fashionable in many a contemporary royal court. In re-using earlier

works, the completed Mass keeps up the methods applied to the 1733 *Missa*, so in this alone there is a clear continuity. One can suppose that in making new efforts to extend the original work, the composer was both satisfying his creative urge and widening his horizons beyond Leipzig. Perhaps he had doubts about the current effectiveness, even relevance, of his cantatas, involving Lutheran texts that looked increasingly regressive, and from the 1730s on was able to find an outlet in other musical interests, not only in exceptional keyboard music but in a variety of contrapuntal essays. What a substantial Mass could offer to the Dresden court – *if* that was one of its purposes – was a rich survey of choral writing (some 70 per cent of its music is for chorus), plus appropriate opportunities to use liturgical chant and a large *instrumentarium* fit for a king.

Although many interpretations of Bach's intentions have been made over the centuries, it seems clear enough that his musical priority of applying given techniques towards as many different ends as possible seldom if ever took second place. The shapes as well as the *Affekt* of the Mass's arias and duets are carefully varied, less, one might think, for elucidating a ceremonial text than for displaying 'what can be done with the notes of music'. His treatment of the old chant (cantus) is itself diverse: paraphrased in the Kyrie, straightforward in the Credo, both straightforward and canonic in the Confiteor. However aware Bach was, if at all, that the text for the Roman Mass had itself slowly evolved over time and was in effect an agglomeration of different sources, it is curiously matched by the way he sets it.

The long, large-scale masses by the Dresden court's composer Zelenka gave a precedent for full-scale settings of the Mass Ordinary, though not quite to the same extent: his Missa gratias agimus tibi of 1730 divides the Mass Ordinary into seventeen movements, all relatively modest, while the Missa circumcissionis of 1724 has a dozen or so, less than half Bach's total. Gottlob Harrer, Bach's successor at St Thomas, Leipzig, was also to complete such a so-called 'Number Mass' of eighteen movements with instruments, also probably in Dresden. As already suggested, Bach's final total of twenty-seven may have had specific associations in Saxony: there were twenty-seven sections in Zelenka's *Responsories* of 1732 which also explored different ways of using the old chant. A temptation has been to see twenty-seven as alluding to the number of books in Luther's translation of the New Testament, but this can hardly have been Zelenka's intention.

Among the many purposes that Bach could have had in mind for the completed Mass was either publication (presumably in parts) or performance by one of several potential Roman Catholic patrons elsewhere,

especially for some special occasion such as St Cecilia's Day on 22 November. If for him the Mass was a 'grand final personal testament', it was also something more practical, for in early 1750 there are signs of an intention to copy out the vocal and instrumental parts for a performance (BJ 2009, pp. 138, 146). Another distinct possibility, necessarily undemonstrable, is that this form of 'grand personal testament' was literally that: a work to bequeath to the Old-Bach Archive (*Alt-Bachisches Archiv*, see p. 6), re-setting music originally with German texts to a more universal Latin, giving it a *raison d'être* beyond any liturgy, and representing the life's work of a Bach-family member. There is in his oeuvre as a whole a simple but consistent tendency to write longer integrated movements than was usual at the time, something displayed across all of the genres and producing a new monumentality worthy of an archive. Obvious examples are the Mass as completed, the two Passions, various other works rewritten and enlarged, and even many of Leipzig's Sunday cantatas.

The parts for the Kyrie and Gloria of 1733 were held in the composer's wrapper and called *Missa*, as were the first two movements of the completed Mass, whose sections are separate, each a complete item and separately titled. (The Christmas Oratorio too had no title-page for the complete work.) Parts for a complete performance were not (yet) prepared, and nor at the later stage did Bach have available to him in Leipzig the Dresden parts of 1733, in which he had made various refinements, though he must have kept a score of the work for himself. He now numbered the complete movements separately, with a title:

No. 1 *Missa* (Kyrie and Gloria);
No. 2 *Symbolum Nicenum* (the Creed);
No. 3 *Sanctus*;
No. 4 *Osanna, Benedictus, Agnus Dei et Dona nobis pacem.*

This division, familiar at Dresden, presumably arose because in the actual liturgy the movements are largely quite separate.

The now familiar completion belongs to Bach's final year or so, the Creed and Sanctus some time in late 1749, the rest by then or shortly after, and showing signs of minor assistance from one son still at home, Johann Christian Friedrich. To the original twelve movements of the 1733 *Missa* the composer added another fourteen and repeated one of the original twelve at the end. It seems that twenty-five of the twenty-seven movements were parodies or re-arrangements of earlier works, even including Et incarnatus, which is only the second return in the Mass to the key of B minor. The division into twenty-seven is a direct consequence of

rethinking the Creed, separating off Et incarnatus and somewhat reworking the previous movement and adding introductory bars. This gives the Crucifixus a rather central position in the Creed, but it is probably not correct to see this (as some have seen it) as the heart of Lutheran Christian belief: this would be rather Et resurrexit that follows, resurrection not crucifixion. The loss of hypothetical originals for two arias ('Laudamus te' and 'Quoniam') could be explained by their probable origins, i.e. in serenades or wedding cantatas, which would not survive as well as the regular church cantatas. Four movements from the Latin Gloria had already been used in Cantata No. 191, probably in 1742 for a university ceremony (BJ 2013, p. 326), which could suggest either that Bach had decided by then to complete the Mass or that so far he had not begun to do so. The re-used movement at the end, Gratias agimus/Dona nobis pacem, was itself originally from Cantata No. 29 of 1731, last revived in August 1749. The Parts 3 and 4 are based entirely on earlier material.

To summarize the matter of re-using older movements: although supposedly earlier versions have not been found for all suspected borrowings, only the opening four bars (paraphrasing the Kyrie melody from Luther's *Deutsche Messe*, 1526), the Credo's first movement (affirming the first article of faith) and the Confiteor are likely to have had no precedent. Significantly, all three of the 'unborrowed' examples use or allude to plainchant phrases, and the last, one of the most complex pieces of five-part counterpoint, seems more than a passing allusion to some of Palestrina's settings, such as his Missa ad coenam agni. One surmises from less than convincing settings of certain phrases such as 'qui sedes ad dextram patris' or 'quoniam tu solus sanctus', each much repeated, that they are rewordings of earlier arias. Other rewordings such as 'agnus dei qui tollis' fit as if they were the original, with repetitions typical of musical settings but not of the liturgical chant.

Opinion is divided on whether re-using and adapting so much older material saved the composer time and trouble or conversely, cost him as much or more of both. His advancing age could justify either interpretation, though I think it could be shown to have saved time and trouble in re-using and adapting pieces for the Mass, whatever its purpose. There could have been more than one purpose: for the current Roman Catholic chapel in Dresden or elsewhere; to anticipate the new Court Church (the *Hofkirche*) being completed or dedicated; as a separate work of homage for the elector; an *Oratorium*-like composite similar to the Christmas Oratorio (i.e. not for single performance); a contribution towards a growing personal archive, taking the shape of a big compendium; and an act of

personal piety, even of reconciliation. On the last point: the long quarrels of the time about where in Dresden the Roman Catholic courtiers insisted on having their own cemetery may speak for tensions between the two Christian congregations in the city. So might that abortive competition with Marchand in 1717.

A further stimulus for Bach, assuming he knew about it, was Zelenka's large-scale but never-completed plan in the early 1740s to produce six Masses for Dresden, his Missae ultimae. Many other such stimulating works by other composers have been proposed, also for the Kyrie and Gloria. Thus both the Kyrie intonation and the brief opening choral introduction recall the opening Kyrie of a Mass in G minor by J. H. von Wilderer, a work copied a few years earlier by Bach and his assistant C. G. Meissner. Wilderer was court composer to the Elector Palatine, also Roman Catholic. If the source for Bach's copy of Wilderer came from Dresden, it would help explain how the chromatic Kyrie theme comes to resemble one of Zelenka's. The same goes for the chromatic bass ostinato for the Crucifixus, an old idea of Bach's (see Cantata No. 12, 1714) but also similar to that in F. B. Conti's Mass in C major, a work also performed by Zelenka. In their scoring, length, counterpoint, harmony and melody, Wilderer's and Zelenka's four-part Kyries are of course simpler, but it does seem that Bach, as on other occasions when he was conceiving music for royalty, took trouble to become acquainted with local tastes. The Gloria in excelsis on the other hand is closest to Bach's own music elsewhere, chiefly the trumpet-and-drums choruses (for Bach, a distinct musical genre) in the so-called secular cantatas of the earlier 1730s. The very variety of styles being scanned recalls the work of one composer admired by Zelenka and, to some degree, Bach himself: Pergolesi. Clearly, so grand and compendious a work inevitably drew on a lifetime's knowledge.

While documents do not explain why the Mass was completed, nor record any performance of it during the composer's lifetime, its remaining sections (Credo, Sanctus, Benedictus, Agnus dei), composed or arranged over his last three years or so, speak for a tireless urge to complete. The greater was Bach's disappointment with Leipzig, the likelier that he had an eye to Dresden and its royal *cappella*. But even if a connection were established between the Mass and the new Catholic Court Church then under construction, or with the Elector of Saxony himself, or with any music performed later when the church was eventually dedicated – and so far, there is no such evidence – it is quite unlikely the 'Mass in B minor' was commissioned. A court's capellmeister was the one responsible for

dedicatory Masses. On the other hand, despite the elector's frequent absence from Dresden in his Polish kingdom, nothing need have prevented a non-executive 'court composer' like Bach from soliciting, with this or any other completed work, a royal pension of a kind matching Handel's in London. Handel's annual pension of £200 had been granted by Queen Anne already in 1713, shortly after the Utrecht Te deum was performed in St Paul's Cathedral (HHB 4, p. 64); but nothing suggests the Elector of Saxony felt equally obliged to Bach for the music regularly presented in his honour in Leipzig.

Bach was more than casually acquainted with other important and musically active Roman Catholics such as *Reichsgraf* von Questenberg, who apparently was corresponding with him over the period in question (1749: Dok. V, pp. 171f.) and who might have found an occasion to perform (sections of) the Mass. Whether any patron could find the required resources for any of the choruses is another question, however. Grand-scale performances of a Mass on St Cecilia's Day are documented here and there in Catholic countries at the time, but there is no reliable link between Bach's Mass and any patron, in Dresden, Prague, Vienna or anywhere else, although copies of the score were made and preserved in various places, as other repertories were. It is not always clear who made them or at whose instigation, nor whether the few alterations in the main autograph score were made later by Emanuel at somebody's request. Surely not a Roman Catholic patron? There is a further point: although the name 'great Catholic Mass' that appears in Emanuel's estate inventory in 1790 (Dok. III, p. 495) probably did indicate a quasi-exclusive *Roman Catholic Mass* as distinct from *Lutheran Missa*, this may not say much. *Catholic* as originally denoting 'a Church acknowledging the Trinity' is central to both the Nicene and Athanasian creeds.

Alas, it is the case that neither of two of the greatest musical monuments of late-baroque Saxony, Bach's 'Mass in B minor' and Silbermann's organ in the Court Church (contracted for in the month Bach died), was heard by its creator. There is an important parallel between them: just as Silbermann kept traditional organ-sounds but added a few colourful stops required by the day's tastes, so Bach kept to traditional counterpoint (Dona nobis pacem) but reflected more modern tastes with arias that were tuneful (Et in spiritum sanctum) or full of *Affekt* (Benedictus). It does seem that neither builder nor composer was able or willing quite to suspend his traditional working-methods, to follow mere fashion and discard his own craftsman-like way of doing things.

The 'Mass in B minor': music

The music of the 'Mass in B minor', having no narrative to follow like the Passion and Nativity and therefore no recitatives, sets the text of the Mass Ordinary in twenty-seven substantial movements that have something of the character of *tableaux*, each strongly and unmistakably marked in its music as it is textually. While in itself the text can be said to have no overt emotional content, as in those 'neutral' Renaissance Masses also familiar to Bach, he is clearly adopting baroque musical rhetoric to increase its impact on listeners of the day.

Various problems in the surviving autograph score mean that in detail, no musical text of the work is 100 per cent J. S. Bach's; in a few instances, one has to rely on the manuscript as it was by the mid-1760s, after work on it by Emanuel or his copyist. Nevertheless, considering the many styles and different origins of so much of it, the completed work has the appearance of a complex and seamless monument, literally integrated insofar as a movement from the 1733 *Missa* (Gratias agimus) was re-used for the final movement in 1749 (Dona nobis pacem). As a whole, the Mass preserves what has been held to be distinctly Lutheran (Saxon) elements, such as the division into separate movements of the Sanctus, Osanna and Benedictus, but the scale of the work is beyond any normal liturgy, Lutheran or Roman Catholic.

Although when it was more or less finished some time had elapsed and much ink spent since J. A. Scheibe published his criticisms of Bach (see p. 533), there is little sign that the composer had cared to appease such critics by simplifying his musical style, rather the opposite. Critics would have found even the lovely, wandering solo Benedictus melody more obscure than a Handel aria of the same period. In this respect, the Italian flavour of the duet Et in unum dominum is notable, being faintly reminiscent of Handel or Zelenka in its melody, thinner scoring, unison oboes/violins in G major, and moments of simple imitation. This movement could be seen in either of two ways: a conciliatory gesture to simpler fashion or (better) another sign of a compendious survey.

That the complete work is a carefully calculated survey, as was customary with Bach, shows itself in many ways (*survey*, a 'casting of mind over something', *Oxford English Dictionary*). Examples are the modern chromaticism of B minor in the first Kyrie on one hand and the modern *galant* scoring of Domine deus (muted strings, pizzicato bass) on the other. Another is the *conscious antiquity* of the Sanctus, whose six *choirs* (brass, woodwind, upper strings, chorus I, chorus II, continuo group) are

reminiscent of the layout of the much earlier Cantata No. 71 (Wolff 2009, p. 106). Only very loosely, however: in the Sanctus, they now represent nothing less than the massed angels of Revelation, and do so even more effectively than the opening of the Ascension Oratorio does. Another example is the *classic Renaissance* vocal texture *à 5*, made by adding a fifth voice (Soprano II) to an early version of the first Kyrie. Yet another is the *conscious lightness* of such themes as that for the words 'et in terra pax'. (For a remark on its syncopation, see p. 477.) A good example of *traditional musical allusion* is the Gregorian melody at the two key moments for a believer, 'I believe in one God' and 'I confess one baptism': chant standing for firm faith. The opening Credo movement itself looks like a survey, as it integrates into a whole three distinct musical ideas: a chant (medieval), a fugue (*in stile antico*), and a walking bass (baroque).

Examples *of adopting other genres* include the Et resurrexit, which in key, scoring, metre, complex upbeat, rhythms, reiterated quavers and *Affekt* has much in common with the *réjouissance* (festive dance) of an orchestral suite. (In the *Ouverture* in D major, BWV 1069, it was already allusive, and less conventional in its twelve-bar phrases than the Mass's Et resurrexit). The rejoicing is palpable, complete with breath-saving orchestral episodes, as if this were a writ-large version of such movements found in some earlier ceremonial cantatas or even in suites by Telemann and others. Good examples of *reworked music* include the quite consciously affecting bars added before and after the old Crucifixus, and the many new details in the Agnus dei. These include a newly created canon at the fifth, but the aria is much more than this, becoming a prime example of *consciously affecting* music. Its opening note, short, isolated, in a totally new key (G minor), immediately announces a private world far from the Osanna, in the inevitably hushed tones of a solo aria after the scriptural clamour of Revelation. One easily imagines the Agnus dei to have been close to the heart and memory of the composer himself, chosen now to wring out the emotional plea of 'have mercy'. The music had already appeared in other forms in earlier cantatas, one a lost wedding serenata of 1725, where texts conspicuously mentioned pain (*Schmerz*). Judging by the A minor version in Cantata No. 11 (Ascension Oratorio, 1735), the aria was now shortened by some thirty bars for its new text in the Mass.

Or one might better say 'distilled', for the aria is now more succinct, while both voice and unison violins actually expand their melody towards ever-intensive *Affekte*. Although this is done by time-honoured devices, such as melismas, chromatic intervals, a slow beat, melodic imitation, a dropping pause (at 'sins') and a final soaring line, it is certainly possible to

imagine for once that some personal emotion is behind the astute handling of such devices. The Lamb of God is given an especially personal *Affekt*, the last before the formal, tight, *antico* counterpoint of the finale. Since Bach's revision of a movement so often resulted in something longer (more often than is now known from sources?), the shortening here is itself a conspicuous gesture. It contributes to the Mass's most personal moment, with the flattest key of the work, a flagging melody, detached bass (with little silences, slow, *uncanny*), and an uncanonical repetition of 'have mercy' (three statements beyond the Roman Mass's two). The aura of beautiful supplication is heightened, unexpectedly, by the violins' final note, a bottom open g.

Against such subtleties there is, for a Bach work, an unusual and perhaps unwished-for similarity between two adjacent sections, Pleni sunt coeli and Osanna (this, a parody from the congratulatory Cantata No. 215). The similarity is enough for it to be rather unsettling. There was a need to make a quick decision, with no obvious alternative? The Osanna's music can and does do both things: celebrate the blessings of the Electorate of Saxony (as in the cantata) and follow on from the Sanctus (as in the Mass). In the Domine deus there is another example of non-sacred music now given sacred meaning. Here, a kind of ecstatic love-duet familiar in the court's operas or homage-cantatas is elevated, one might say 'purified', to express the partnership of God the Father and God the Son. It does this, as already noted, in a most delicate, exquisite scoring, and with a consciously beautiful *Affekt* (two voices, muted strings, flute, pizzicato bass). Perhaps this aria, along with the polonaise-like Quoniam, really did originate in a lost wedding cantata, as some have proposed.

In the Et resurrexit the very repetition of the word *resurrexit* in the opening phrase hints that this too is not the original text but a replacement, but with the repetition put to good use: 'he arose' is crucial enough for affirming, the real centre of Christian faith, in this and every other Mass, Orthodox, Roman, Arian or Lutheran. Even when a movement appears to have been specially written to complete the Mass, such as that other striking affirmation at the beginning of the Credo, it still has its own historic allusions. Here in the Creed, a long-note Gregorian theme against running crotchets not only recalls momentarily the kind of species counterpoint (qv) in Fux's *Gradus ad Parnassum* of 1725 (German translation, Leipzig 1742) but also the psalm-settings by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi in the early 1730s. Pergolesi's was modern music of the kind justifiably sought out by Dresden composers, including the relatively conservative Zelenka.

Bach's opening Credo is known to have existed also in an earlier version in G major. Re-using and revising so much older material result from the composer's systematic search for the sake of a work that becomes nothing less than a compendium of music ancient and modern, delicate and massive, from the Crucifixus of 1714 or earlier through to the Et incarnatus est of 1749. The scope is so wide that whether a certain bright *Affekt* and natural melodiousness in the two A major arias, Laudamus te and Et in spiritum sanctum, are as mature and specially composed as they seem is not certain: they might be older. Nor is it only musical styles that are surveyed. The scoring itself suggests careful calculation, as when each of the five soloists is given a turn during the Gloria, or when an instrument from each group is given its own obbligato solo in an aria. The nine divisions themselves of the Gloria, when five were more usual (as in Bach's earlier *Missae*), gave further opportunity for bringing in so many different colourful 'tableaux'.

One wonders how easy it was to search a musical output of thirty-five years in order to find a movement that suits a new text as well as the Crucifixus etiam pro nobis does. Its quite antique musical language (chromatic ostinato, *leaning* discords) is not only uncannily suitable but easily adaptable. Modulating into another key as it does is what some older passacaglias have also done, but to do so here in hushed tones moving towards a major key ready for the explosive Resurrexit (music of more recent origin) is nothing short of astonishing. In the interests of *surveying*, it is eminently appropriate that an antique *ostinato* for 'crucified' should be followed immediately by a modern *réjouissance* for 'and he arose'. The approach to parodying is by now more systematically conceived than it was in previous years when cantata movements were re-used in a further sacred work (St Mark Passion, 1731).

All this suggests a startling sharpness of mind, with a memory and an invention as active as ever. In the case of the final chorus, Dona nobis pacem, there may have been practical reasons, not merely slackening endeavour, for repeating an already re-used movement. Even to write out the score more fully the second time than the first, as Bach does, and probably in the last year of his life, implies a pressing commitment to the whole enterprise. Some listeners are disappointed at the repeated movement, and yet such returning movements were known in other Dresden Masses. For a believer, after all, the movement's three texts ('We thank you, O Lord' in the German cantata, the same in Latin in the Mass, and then the final 'Give us peace') are entirely compatible, even if Bach had originally intended a different finale. This, however, is a distinct

possibility suggested by the original paper being ruled unusually with more staves than turned out to be necessary, perhaps in expectation of a double chorus. A suggestion that the blank staves were to have contained yet a further or extra movement is unnecessary.

Since the Mass's liturgy itself is so disparate and disjunctive, to repeat a movement at the end of a musical setting helps give a sense of organization otherwise missing. This is one of several symmetries operating in the work, which also include the following:

- the periodic, *rondeau*-like appearances of D major choruses, these complete with trumpets and drums;
- the Credo's nine movements arranged chorus-chorus-solo-chorus-chorus-chorus-solo-chorus-chorus;
- the Credo's central and connected group of three ('Et incarnatus', 'Crucifixus', 'Et resurrexit');
- the most original scoring of all in the central aria ('Quoniam', polonaise-like, with a characteristic Dresden horn solo, unique in the Bach oeuvre).

Since the Sanctus shows signs of having originally had a different layout, it is always possible that the composer had first intended to set its text with other music. (This is one of several such Sanctus settings for high feast-days originating in early Leipzig years, and of one section only.)

Both in the Sanctus and in the Osanna, and not only there, the tumultuous D major choruses suggest another thought: that they are the work of a composer who had studied the Book of Revelation and brought his own visions of the tumultuous seraphim and cherubim into this Sanctus. (For Bach's Calov Bible see Cox 1985, facsimiles 274, 275.) Next to this kind of inspiration, any musical influences such as Palestrina's Missa sine nomine could well be secondary. With the five- and eight-part choruses alone the listener immediately enters a sound-world entirely different from that of the Passions, indeed more in the style of the Book of Revelation than the Four Gospels. Whether one understands the completed work as Bach's final offering to his Maker or an unsolicited salute to his monarch, a work to bequeath to posterity or a compilation that had to be completed, it is not difficult to sense in it something exceptional from the first bar onwards, a something by no means dependent on the heavy, awe-filled performances customarily given it today. To hear in it now the final, generous offering of a creative lifetime experienced in so many kinds of music is more than simple hindsight. But the questions remain: what is it? A compilation, and if so for what? A liturgy, if so for where?

Blindness

Having reported the Potsdam visit of 1747, the Obituary then jumps three years to the composer's final months. Although it would be unlikely to speak of professional work meanwhile (on the 'Mass in B minor') or family events (birth of two grandsons called Johann Sebastian) or non-involvement in Leipzig (a new theatre opened, a prospective cantor auditioned), it did say much about the final months:

> His sight, rather poor by nature and weakened even more by the unheard-of ardour in his studying (whereby especially in his youth he sat whole nights through), brought him, in his last years, in the way of an eye disease [*Augenkrankheit*]. Partly from the desire further to serve God and his neighbour [*Gott und seinem Nächsten*] with his remaining and still very lively powers of mind and body, partly on the recommendation of his friends, who put much trust in an eye-surgeon recently arrived in Leipzig, he was willing to have this [disease] relieved by an operation. But despite having to be done one more time, this turned out very badly. (*Obituary*)

In the drama of the subsequent and not entirely reliable account of blindness, treatment, infection, decline, stroke and death, one could easily miss an important claim being made here: that the composer submitted to surgery partly in order to continue work 'for God and his neighbour'.

This formula, going back to Luther's translation of Exodus 20 and Romans 13, represents the dual focus of the Ten Commandments: behaviour to one's Maker, behaviour to other people. The phrase 'God and one's neighbour' had appeared on publications (title-page of J. P. Bendeler's book on organs, *Organopoeia*, *c.* 1690) and elsewhere (the couplet on the *Orgelbüchlein*'s title-page), and outlines the organist's two duties as a musician, to the Gospel and to the community. It continues to appear in various connections, such as the testimonial Bach wrote in 1743 praising a student for endeavouring to give service to 'God and the *res publica*' (Dok. I, p. 146) and at about the same time, Bach himself was praised for 'love of his neighbour' (by G. A. Sorge: see below, p. 544). Though on a higher level, the pairing of 'God and one's neighbour' parallels Bach's pairing 'connoisseur and amateur' found elsewhere, for both phrases have pious allusion. They appear to express something deeper than the simple desire of the much-admired Frescobaldi in his *Fiori musicali* when he spoke of using his talent 'to assist those studying to be musicians'.

Something deeper seems also to be implied with the term *Gemüths-Ergötzung* ('soul's delight') on the title-page of the 'Goldberg Variations', signifying a re-creation of the spirit, preparation to continue the believer's

work in the God-given pleasure of music. The idea of 'musical delight' of this sort was well established, as on the title-page of Jacob Kremberg's set of songs (Dresden, 1689) that promised to include Italian and French styles (Kremberg says *Manier*) for a similar reason. Instrumental music could also contribute to the Protestant notion of 'musical delight', as the title of Pachelbel's chamber trios *Musicalische Ergötzung* (1691/5) acknowledges. Thus it was in a familiar tradition of Lutheran piety that someone – the composer or Emanuel? – seems to have felt it necessary to give reasons for Bach attempting to cure an eye-condition: so that he could continue working with his God-given talent.

Normally, cataracts, as the 'eye disease' is assumed to be, give little actual pain or discomfort and are not in themselves life-threatening, though probably brought on by untreated diabetes. (This diagnosis is conjectural.) Very probably there was also a popular belief, which modern ophthalmology generally shares, that loss of vision in itself can shorten life and, conversely, that restored sight can prolong it. 'Rather poor by nature' might refer to a gradual deterioration of Bach's eyesight over the preceding period due to age, a deterioration discerned between the manuscripts of the Peasant Cantata (1742) and the Canonic Variations (*c.* 1747). But it is also something one can sense in the familiar Haussmann portrait of 1746. Any deteriorating handwriting could have come as much from some neurological problem as poor eyesight (BJ 2009, p. 138). In fact, cataracts have little to do with either near-sightedness or working in poor light, although at that time, 'unheard-of ardour' for work must have seemed a probable cause. Bach wanted to be of further service as a composer, and eyesight problems were yet another vexation, another hindrance to that work. But the surgery was dangerous, as events proved, and in the end everyone, neighbour, widow, children, his Maker, was left deprived.

It was probably in the last days of March 1750, just before the Easter Fair, that the cantor along with several other Leipzigers was operated on for cataracts (in Bach's case, twice) by the English eye-surgeon John Taylor, who travelled across Europe performing such operations as far as Rostock, and whose treatment of the blind Handel eight years later was also less than successful (HHB 4, p. 520). It seems that Emanuel was present in Leipzig at the time (BJ 2011, 46), in which case he could be reporting the composer's own wishes to undergo surgery and the reasons for it. A second operation so soon, between 5 and 8 April, whether on the same or the other eye, was particularly liable to lead to infection, blood poisoning or even meningitis. But since post-cataract infection is usually immediate, and

Bach did not die for another four months, infection may not have been the cause of death. Depression can follow any surgery, especially if the cataract had resulted in a loss of colour-vision (as can happen) which was not then recovered. On the other hand, if Bach did fight infections for four months, then one can easily believe that indeed he had 'lively powers of the body'.

A recent conclusion is that despite deterioration his writing had remained 'more or less constant' until the first surgery at the end of March 1750, when he had been participating in preparing parts for Emanuel's Magnificat, to be performed either in February or late March. This, with some page-numbers in the Art of Fugue manuscript (see above, p. 417), is probably his last known music-writing (BJ 2011, p. 43), work he undertook for one of his sons.

Whether like Handel, Bach used amanuenses as distinct from copyists at any point during his last six months or so, is not known for certain, although the anecdote of a chorale supposedly dictated in his blindness implies something of the kind, unreliable in detail though the anecdote itself might be (see next section). In the month following surgery he took in his last residential student, J. G. Müthel, presumably hoping to remain active with his help, having still a strong constitution and perhaps some minimal sight. The music he had written down himself, in late 1749 or early 1750, seems to have included sections of the 'B minor Mass' and, perhaps, revisions to the Six Sonatas for Violin and Harpsichord. (A note on these sonatas attributed to Christoph Friedrich Bach gives cause for thinking that such older music was indeed something his father was still working on: Dok. III, p. 3.) One near-final act seems to have been monitoring instrumental parts for the motet 'Lieber Herr Gott, wecke uns auf' by J. C. Bach of Eisenach (d. 1703). This, effectively a funeral motet, might now seem particularly apt for Bach himself, but if so, only with hindsight. Rather, all the different works being copied suggest that he still had an active interest over a range of music, as well as in making little additions to three church works of his own, the Election Cantata No. 69, the Wedding Cantata No. 195 and the St John Passion (BJ 2010, p. 60).

No doubt various pupils and children on occasion could have served in the last months as amanuenses, including Elisabeth née Bach, who had married J. C. Altnickol in January 1749, and her younger brother Johann Christoph Friedrich. According to the latest known signed letter of 11 December 1749, Bach had also had one of his students, J. N. Bammler, direct the entire church music for him 'in his absence' (Dok. V, p. 88). By now, the phrase 'in his absence' is more likely to indicate indisposition than professional absences, and it was also Bammler who wrote those parts

of J. C. Bach's putative funeral motet. A later deputy was J. A. Franck, a twenty-year-old student and Bammler's successor as prefect of the main choir and who, documents suggest, ran the music in Thomaskirche from Whit Sunday 1750 until Gottlob Harrer took over at Michaelmas, and even possibly directed the music for Bach's funeral (BJ 2008, p. 194). For Bach to have appointed a deputy was important in view of an event six months earlier when, on 8 June 1749, representatives of the town council had auditioned Harrer as next cantor, a 'replacement, should the decease of Mr Bach come about at some point', in the words of the Minister President of Saxony (Dok. II, p. 456). This was a reasonable precaution and need not imply anything about the composer's health. Though there was (and still is) nothing unusual in a prefect taking over from an ageing, indisposed or reluctant director, a question about several such prefects in the late 1740s was whether they were chosen by Bach himself or by the school rector.

Apparently the Minister President, Count Brühl, had recently visited Leipzig from Dresden and was taking steps to have his own capellmeister primed for a key position, one that was necessarily close to the interests of the Dresden court. How tactless, precipitate or merely sensible the town council's action was is not now clear, but it was certainly not against tradition, for Bach's predecessor Kuhnau had been treated similarly during a period of illness nearly half a century earlier. (Kuhnau, having learnt that Telemann had been approached to succeed him, lived on until 1722: Schering 1941, p. 194.) Moreover, since only a day after Bach's eventual death six applicants for his job were being discussed, they must have put their names forward beforehand, in customary anticipation. That Harrer's audition took place not in church but in the concert-room of the *An den Drei Schwanen*, 'At the Three Swans', could be seen as either underhand or discreet – or simply as deferring to Bach's authority over music in the town's churches, as per contract.[16]

There is another possible explanation for Harrer's audition: that Bach was by now less than helpful to the authorities of church, school and municipality, hence the complaint received by the town council in late 1749 that for a certain visiting musician 'no usable treble in the school' could be found (Dok. V, p. 174), probably as soloist in the first choir. This suggests a serious problem, and the council requested the rector to look into it. If, as is possible, a cantata of Friedemann was performed on Advent Sunday 1749, two other significant questions are whether by now his father

[16] It was also in the Three Swans that a Thomaskirche student later reported hearing Friedemann play in the 'Grosse Concert' series (Dok. III, p. 148).

had found (or was now making available) good trebles for it, and whether he had encouraged Friedemann to seek to succeed him. Emanuel too may have performed a major work in late 1749 (BJ 2006, pp. 231f.) and was to apply officially for the cantorate in August 1750. Later still, a student's report of a performance of Emanuel's Magnificat could also refer to an event shortly after rather than before his father died (Dok. III, p. 148).

Although, therefore, the actual order of events during the final year or so is sketchy, it is certain that work had been continuing on the Art of Fugue (preparing the engraving) as also on the 'B minor Mass' (composing or arranging). It is not difficult to imagine the motives prompting an ageing composer to work on the wide-ranging compilations of musical technique that these two unique collections represent, in effect complementary: keyboard and choral, one mostly containing new creations, the other mostly revisions. Also, work on the 'Leipzig Chorales' might not have entirely ceased. Such huge, time-consuming compilations, none of which was part of a cantor's duties or, as far as is known, heard by the public during his lifetime, need not mean a turning-away from the Thomaskirche and its music. For Bach had long had his own private reasons for making collections of music and was, it is clear, not easily deterred.

Deathbed and death

The Obituary reported that Bach could not see again after the surgery, and remained 'almost always ill' for a full half year, but this is vague about the actual distress he was in, whether physical or psychological. It is easier to believe that

> his otherwise generally fit constitution was completely overthrown by the supplementary harmful medication and secondary treatments [*Nebendinge*]

especially if the last term means that he was being bled. The report continues:

> Ten days before his death it seemed suddenly to go better with his eyes, so that one morning he could see quite well again and could once more tolerate the light. But a few hours later, he was seized by a stroke; there followed a high fever, at which, despite all possible care by two of Leipzig's most skilled doctors, on July 28, 1750, after a quarter past eight in the evening, in the sixty-sixth year of his life, gently and peacefully, through the merit of his Redeemer, he passed away. (*Obituary*)

Just as his own father had done three weeks before his death at a much younger age in 1695 (BJ 1995, p. 181), so Bach took communion at home on 22 July 1750, and on the day of his death presumably Anna Magdalena and the younger of his nine living children were present.

Emanuel speaks as if an eye-witness to Bach's tribulations during 'half a year', but there is no certain evidence about this, and the final period of discomfort was probably much shorter. As already noted, signs of deterioration in the handwriting from autumn 1748 on, and certainly by December 1749, have been interpreted as indicating eyesight and other problems due to advanced diabetes (BJ 1990, pp. 53–64), chronic rather than acute; also, a problem 'not ophthalmological but gerontological', such as a brain haemorrhage, slow at first to affect writing but then gathering speed, could be involved (BJ 2010, p. 55). And finally, any condition would be exacerbated by age, no doubt eventually worsened by the surgery and subsequent debility or 'bouts of infection' – as one source earlier than the Obituary claims (Dok. II, p. 470). There is and will remain room for doubt on each of these points.

The anecdote of the so-called deathbed chorale – the blind composer dictating the chorale *Wenn wir in hoechsten Noeten sein* ('Whenever we are in deepest distress') – is a puzzle, especially for the modern reader who wants neither to dismiss any such heart-warming anecdote nor to be misled by it if it is unreliable. The story of the chorale was told in a note to the posthumous Art of Fugue engraving of *c.* 1751:

den der selige Mann in seiner Blindheit einem seiner Freunde aus dem Stegereif in die Feder dictiret hat

which the deceased in his blindness dictated extempore to one of his friends to write down.

At that period, 'friends' usually included relations. The publication project for the Art of Fugue was probably sustained and pressed for by the main legatees, one of whom (Anna Magdalena or Altnickol?) was the source for the dictation story, true or not. For the buyers of the volume, it doubtless added a valuable personal touch. Any such (lost) dictation could have been taken down by the second-youngest son, Christoph Friedrich, for he seems to have become 'the most important assistant' to the ailing Bach after Altnickol had departed two years earlier (BJ 2009, p. 141), as in checking the score of the 'Mass in B minor' for his father. But note: the Obituary does not say that the piece was dictated 'on his deathbed' but 'in his blindness'. It is possible that for the Art of Fugue editors and their readers any such dictation had no more significance than Handel's use of an amanuensis when his sight failed.

Neither of the extant versions of the organ-chorale in question, either the print ('Wenn wir in höchsten Nöthen sein') or a manuscript copy ('Vor deinen Thron tret ich'), looks like a dictated copy. The second was copied by someone (daughter Elisabeth?) on the last page of the autograph manuscript of the Canonic Variations, with a title surely chosen as appropriate to a deathbed: 'Before your throne I stand'. Forkel said that the person taking down the dictation was son-in-law Altnickol (1802, p. 530), but who told him this, whether it is true, and what any dictation copy has to do with the two known versions, is quite unknown. So are who it was that authorized the version that was printed, who gave the versions these titles, and why they are not the same. Since the chorale was in part more than thirty years old, included in the *Orgelbüchlein* in a highly embellished but much shorter (and slower?) version, it can hardly have been dictated entirely from scratch. The counterpoint itself looks like Weimar work.

Of course, if the anecdote is true, the composer's priorities in his decline become clearer, for the music is void of extravagant invention and in no way interferes with the text, which is a prayer. A simple prayer, especially *in extremis*, is no place for originality. Even deriving the counterpoint from the hymn melody (as it does) is not to display cleverness but to reiterate its words of prayer, 'Before your throne, Before your throne'. On the other hand, if the anecdote is untrue, then there is no total certainty even that J. S. Bach composed the piece except in its *Orgelbüchlein* version. A very competent student could have remodelled it on a certain chorale published in *Clavierübung III*, 'Out of the deep', BWV 687. This too has a text clearly not out of place on a deathbed. Or: the composer himself did indeed rework and extend it, and even planned to include it in the late set of 'Leipzig Chorales' (see pp. 438f.). Hence the puzzle.

As here, death notices and other reports at that period frequently gave the time of death ('about 8 o'clock': Dok. II, pp. 472–3). A London newspaper was to report Handel's death as 'a little before eight o'clock' on Easter (Holy) Saturday 14 April 1759, but his doctor claimed that it was the night before, Good Friday (HHB 4, p. 529), a more significant day. Bach's death was also reported in a Berlin newspaper of 6 August 1750, which added that the loss of this uncommonly gifted man would be much regretted by all true connoisseurs of music. That may be so, but in Leipzig, Gottsched, voluble on other occasions and not anti-music, apparently wrote nothing, nor as far as is known did another well-known poet active in the city by then, C. F. Gellert, whose *Geistliche Oden* (1757) Emanuel was to set to music. The university, used to publishing eulogies for its deceased distinguished professors, was equally silent. However, six months

later in a Dresden news-journal (why not Leipzig?) Telemann published an appreciative sonnet, acknowledging the deceased's abilities as a virtuoso organist, the artistry (*Kunst*) of his compositions, and the training he gave to pupils which they would then pass on. Apparently, to Telemann what makes Sebastian 'so especially worthy' is the work of his Berlin son, Emanuel, who happened to be the author's godson (*insonderheit schätzbar*: Dok. III, p. 7). Telemann had been in contact with the Dresden violinist Pisendel, who may well have instigated this salute to the Leipzig cantor from the kingdom's capital city, having expressed admiration for him.

On 30 or 31 July, Bach was buried in an oak coffin in the Johanniskirche churchyard, located outside the city walls, out through the Grimma Gate. He had probably participated in the examination of the new organ in this church half a dozen years earlier, and was now to be buried outside on its south side, apparently without a gravestone of the kind customary for Leipzig's merchant classes. (An oak coffin signalled some status, however.) No fewer than seven of his children had already been buried there, and his wife followed nearly ten years later, all their graves so located as not to be identified long afterwards, although Anna Magdalena may have been buried in her husband's. (All Bach's daughters including Elisabeth Altnickol but excepting the Weimar twin Maria Sophia, died in Leipzig.) Emanuel does not mention the church by name, or show any sign of this being of interest to readers unfamiliar with Leipzig, perhaps because at the time and until 1846 its churchyard was the only outside cemetery in the city.

It is certainly the case that Johann Christoph Bach's old motet, 'Lieber Herr Gott, wecke uns auf' ('Lord God, awaken us') was appropriate for the event, both through its text and in the early close connection between the two composers. But from neither the Obituary nor any other source is anything known for certain of any funeral or committal service, nor of what music was sung and when, though colleagues and the choir were present as the body was taken to the cemetery church, in a procession with sung chorales (Dok. II, p. 474) and a hearse draped in black and white (Dok. V, p. 177). By contrast, Handel some time before his death had requested permission to be buried in Westminster Abbey and left money for a monument, though desiring the actual burial service to be 'in a private manner' (HHB 4, p. 528). News of Bach's death may not have travelled either soon or far, only here and there *en passant* (see e.g. Dok. II, p. 486).

Already by 1800, the Leipzig journal *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* complained that the grave was not to be found (Dok. III, p. 594). But a coffin of oak supposed to be Bach's was located and opened in 1894, placed

inside the rebuilt Johanniskirche in 1900, moved from its ruins to the Thomaskirche in 1949 and, in the course of further work to this church in 1962–4, re-interred in its present central position near the crossing. There can be no absolute certainty that the remains are his, for although the well-known bust made in the 1890s from a skull-impression accords with the authentic Haussmann portraits of 1746 and 1748, these were known to the sculptor and somewhat idealized in the bust he made. (A similarly imaginative reconstruction of Schiller's skull, disinterred in Weimar, had been made earlier in the nineteenth century.)

Handel left £17,500 in annuities plus £48 in chattels (HHB 4, pp. 533ff.), at a time when a new two-manual harpsichord cost about £70; Bach left some 1,122 thaler in chattels, books and instruments, including a two-manual harpsichord worth 80 (Dok. II, p. 496). By the time he died, Handel, like other composers who worked in Rome, had also amassed a collection of paintings, some eighty including several 'very good ones'. This meant something more than the portraits of musicians and eminent men that had been collected by Philipp Emanuel and other Leipzigers, probably including Sebastian himself (see BJ 2007, pp. 105ff.). While there seems little comparison, therefore, between Handel's and Bach's financial positions, this may be misleading. The inventory of Bach's estate is far less comprehensive than his contemporary Gottfried Silbermann's who, like Handel, was not a family man and would not assume, as Bach would, that family members arranged the funeral and regarded many household items as common property. The long and detailed list of Silbermann's possessions, including miscellaneous business paperwork and major books (among them Praetorius's classic *Organographia* of 1619), leaves the impression that in comparison, Bach's had already been picked over before the inventory was made in November 1750. (For Silbermann, see Müller 1982, pp. 397–408. There too, the reasons given for death are vague and unconvincing.)

In both Handel's and Bach's cases the composers' manuscripts and musical scores were bequeathed separately and previously. This was done by Handel formally ('my Music Books' to J. C. Smith: HHB 4, p. 441), by Bach only reputedly (chiefly between the widow and two eldest sons: BJ 1994, pp. 41ff.). A month after he died, Anna Magdalena was requested to hand over to the school the parts for *Kirchen-Lieder*, assumed to be the 'Chorale Cantatas' (Dok. II, p. 486). Whether Harrer, the new cantor, requested them for possible performances, or they were the school's property and had been copied at their cost, is not known. Other manuscripts were collected and preserved by Philipp Emanuel reasonably well,

better than Wilhelm Friedemann, whose materials are mostly lost or scattered, despite the reverence in which his father was held in the later eighteenth century. That reverence, expressed so often with respect to Bach's skill in writing counterpoint and playing the organ, seems to have been less warm for the many varied vocal works and even for the chamber sonatas and instrumental concertos all of which, in common perception, were superseded by the italianate operas, symphonies, quartets and concertos of the next generation of composers.

PART II

Observations on the life and works

8 | What was said, what can be inferred

'Hidden secrets of harmony'

The evaluatory part of the Obituary opens with the following sentences:

> If ever any composer [*Componist*] demonstrated full-voiced harmony at its strongest, it was certainly our late Bach. If ever an artist in sound [*Tonkünstler*] put into the most artful practice the most hidden secrets of harmony, it was certainly our late Bach. No one ever brought so many highly inventive and unfamiliar ideas to what seem otherwise dry works of artifice [*trocken scheinenden Kunststücken*] as he did. He had only to hear any main theme [*Hauptsatz*] to have in mind, as if instantaneously, almost everything artful that could be done with it. His melodies were truly singular [*zwar sonderbar*], but always diverse, rich in invention, and like those of no other composer. (*Obituary*)

Within its limits, this is a remarkably fair critical summary of why J. S. Bach was and is admired, and many of its phrases deserve attention. It is possible that the very idea of attempting to be specific about a composer's creative skills, evaluating them in some detail, is one that Bach himself personally inspired, the author here (Agricola) being a former pupil. The attempt is not matched by what is said in the two other obituaries published with Bach's.

'Full-voiced harmony' could be referring to the choruses of the big vocal works, though too little is known of what music the writer heard as a student in 1738–41, or got to know through Emanuel, for one to be sure quite what he had in mind. Perhaps he was reacting to the scoring of instrumental concertos he had copied out himself and admired as he did so. 'Otherwise dry works of artifice' probably refers to Bach's fugues and canons which needed some kind of justification by 1750, a period used to the more easy-going works of younger composers. The phrase 'any main theme' could refer to several things: fugue subjects, chorale-melodies used in a cantata-movement, ritornello themes of a long concerto movement or all of these. The phrases 'highly inventive and unfamiliar ideas' and 'singular melodies' are appropriate to countless cantata movements and, one might think, to the WTC, for like the arias, both the preludes and

fugues do call on themes which are indeed 'always diverse' and 'like those of no other composer'. The familiarity of the WTC to so many musicians ever since can hide how extraordinarily original it is, in almost every bar, and in every one of its ninety-six pieces.

It is significant that in these comments Agricola refers four times to *art*: artist, artful and artifice, key words of the Enlightenment period. His general aim seems to be to still any criticisms there may then have been of the late cantor's style of composition, which many would consider out of date or over-serious, as the Obituary's following sentence also implies (see below, next section). Either because he did not recognize it or because he knew no other, Agricola does not further remark on what the composer achieved in shaping movements as he constantly rethought movements of all kinds. A restless search to rethink is clear in every type of music in every genre, including (or especially) in cantata arias which, after all, were on the more ephemeral side of Bach's output. Though he did produce arias in the standard form, for example, his approach is very often to modify it, so that just as some instrumental movements combine or mix genres (ritornello and fugue), so do many arias in their own way.[1] In some cantata arias, the result is to move action forward like a recitative, but even when the words have a heightened effect, the inspiration is (I feel) 'purely musical'. The returning theme rounding off a movement is a simple musical idea familiar also in the instrumental music: 'rounding off' in this way is a musical idea not likely to benefit directly the words in a vocal piece.

What Agricola's remarks do signal is an interesting and, for the period, a highly unusual attempt to pin down what was special about a composer's work, especially difficult when discussing technicalities is inappropriate. The ideas behind these few sentences systematically refer to three main strands that could form the basis for evaluating any composer's musical language: sense of melody, sense of harmony and sense of texture. From personal experience Agricola could well have been aware of the importance the deceased placed on having students learn full-voiced harmony, including how to work in five parts. For other elements in a composer's make-up – his sense of rhythm and movement – there are two references elsewhere in the Obituary, one to his tempi ('very lively', *sehr lebhaft*), the other to his ability as a conductor (it was very 'precise', *accurat*). No particular music or repertory is specified, but the author or authors

[1] They may do this by filling the first A section with snippets of the theme (as in a ritornello); or shortening the second A section; or modifying it in the subdominant as if approaching the final tonic 'from the south side'; or omitting it.

must have had in mind the big vocal works and the concertos, many of which they had taken part in as students and assistants.

Agricola's phrases, the *hidden secrets* of harmony, the *highly inventive* counterpoint and the *truly singular* melody, do more than merely praise Bach and imply how his students were taught and what priorities were emphasized in their studies. They must have been puzzled at times by some moments of unexpected dissonance, justified by harmonic theory but surprising nevertheless, as with many a passage of cantata recitative in which the resolution of the discord is held back. Effective setting of words may well produce unusual harmonies when despair or pleading or death is involved, or even merely implied. More striking, perhaps, especially for students, would be those moments when the rules of harmony are stretched for 'purely musical' reasons, as when a series of stretti logically but arrestingly produces those unfamiliar sevenths and ninths in the D minor Organ Fugue, BWV 538.ii.

As well as to the new and imaginative directions taken by tonal harmony, and new and imaginative ways to create invertible counterpoint, Agricola turns to the qualities of the melodies. That they are 'like those of no other composer' is a particularly interesting observation, being if not 100 per cent true, near enough for the reader to grasp the point being made. While some melodies will not be so different from those of composers around Bach at different periods – the northern organists, the local cantors, the Italian Dresdners, etc. – there seem to be two general characteristics: each genre for Bach tends to have its own melodic language, though often allusive (so an *adagio* aria might be like a concerto *adagio*, but usually is not); and the melodies of some genres seem to be more consciously individual. An example of 'an individual melodic conception' is the mature fugue-subject, particularly of the WTC. Any occasional similarity some subjects might have to those by J. K. F. Fischer or Buttstedt or vocal composers only underlines how distinctive they are as a whole, despite their vast variety. Agricola was probably right not to try to describe in what way they are 'like those of no other composer'.

The three elements (harmony, counterpoint, melody) come together especially in the way chorale-melodies are treated, embellished or thoroughly paraphrased, in both vocal music (cantata choruses) and keyboard music (organ-chorales). The latter can afford to be freer than the former, as in the organ-chorale 'Nun komm der heiden Heiland', BWV 659, where the new melody is derived from the hymn, clever as well as beautiful in the way it preserves the original hymn-tune intact while breaking it up in the accompaniment below. In its details, this decorated melody is

surprisingly similar to a quite different one – the Largo of the F minor Harpsichord Concerto, BWV 1056, known in two other versions including a cantata (No. 156), none of which has anything to do with any hymn-tune. The melody at the opening of another cantata, No. 3, creates a partnership with rich harmony around another given theme (a conventional descending chromatic line, as noted) and creates a distinctive timbre unique to Bach cantatas. The dancing chorus that opens Cantata No. 201 ('Quickly, quickly') avoids harmonic complexity – and so elegantly!

Bare octaves for the singers are worked at least a dozen times in the cantatas and Passions, and to ends not easy to summarize, except that they are an obvious gesture, a form of *Nota bene*! Near the opening of the *dramma* BWV 201 the Four Winds are packed off back to their cave, together and (as one might say) in octave consort. But in Cantata No. 26 empty octaves mark the nothingness of life. And neither example has the function of the startling bare octaves at 'I am God's Son' in the St Matthew Passion. Nor in turn do these carry the same *Affekt* as octaves at the Osanna of the Mass. Different again are those opening the Christmas Oratorio ('Rejoice!') and which have replaced other words ('Sound, you drums!') in the original *dramma* BWV 214. Such is the composer's command of harmony that at special moments complex counterpoint is unnecessary, and such is the non-specificity, the adaptability, of music.
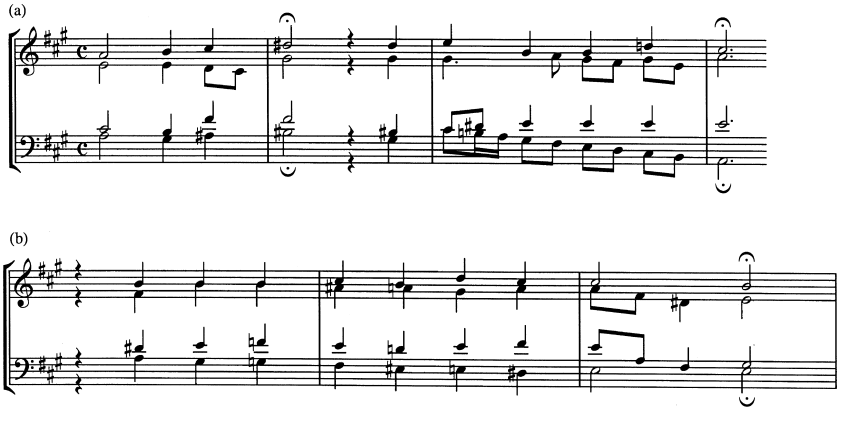
Even recitative, a negligible musical means in the hands of poorer composers, is also 'truly singular', blending harmony and melody towards an uncanny expressiveness in the Passions, the Christmas Oratorio and elsewhere. A ruling factor in this must be a harmony that is not only logical but novel, taking pleasure in new turns of phrase, instinct with melody whether for a story of death or of birth. Again, the arresting entry of the Evangelist in the St Matthew Passion, where the words beginning Chapter 26 of the Gospel are in fact now modified and made more urgent, is a classic example. For here, after the relentless minor key of the opening chorus, suddenly the tenor narrator enters, lyrical over a few simple major chords, short, separate and sparse. One knows immediately that with the opening words, 'When Jesus had finished these sayings' (but what sayings?) we are plunged into an urgent, unfolding and dreadfully familiar story.

The attraction of Bach's counterpoint for musicians over many generations, and of his rhythms for modern instrumentalists, could overshadow his achievements in thinking harmonically. This is so sure-footed that the solo works for violin and cello follow, often by hints alone, the logic of good harmony, while surprising and even momentarily puzzling the listener (through unexpected harmonic enjambments) as to where they

are going. An influence here might have been certain changes of direction in earlier music Bach admired (Froberger, Frescobaldi). Works of clever counterpoint allow one to miss how naturally contrapuntal are the textures in works even as tuneful as the late Cantatas Nos. 195 and 209. Many themes are so complete in themselves that it comes as something of a shock when they turn out to be accompaniments to another theme, as in the Finale of the Musical Offering Sonata or the dazzling Contrapunctus 9 of the Art of Fugue. In simpler music, such as the four-part chorales, there is a total, one might say revolutionary, development in harmonic thinking beyond the basic triads of traditional German music.

It seems that Bach was alerted to unconventional moments in the chorales of some earlier composers such as J. R. Ahle of Mühlhausen when he gives the celebrated chorale closing Cantata No. 60 accented passing notes (alto b. 1, bass b. 3 in Example 24(a)) and consecutive sevenths (Example 24(b)). These arise from a deliberate reworking of less traditional harmony, producing an incomparable masterstroke in the alto's dissonant and quite 'unnecessary' passing note. Other examples are heard in the Christmas Oratorio's chorales. In Example 24(b) the plain rhythm of the sevenths is calculated to leave them undisguised, while the alto and tenor quavers (a uniquely decorated suspension) have, briefly, a sweet consonance marking the words and leaving misery behind. One can never over-scrutinize such passages.

Although comparable harmonies might be found in Scarlatti (Sonata Kk 144), it is difficult to explain why the startling alto f sharp of Example 24 is perfectly consonant in its dissonance. Something similar could be said of thousands of other pleasing and surprising chords. Higher flights of



Example 24 Cantata No. 60.v. Text: 'It is enough; Lord, when it pleases you ...' and 'my great misery is left behind'

fancy in the chromatic lines, both those embellishing simple progressions and those moving the music in new directions, are totally under control. The C major Prelude opening the WTC is, in its various forms, a good example of a compelling harmonic progression, and one sees why in its final form the piece attracted so many later arrangers. From what seems to be the result of second or third thoughts, its twenty-four bars were expanded to thirty-five, with further logical steps in the progressions (see Example 29(b) on p. 630). Very beautiful preludes produced by some earlier composers (Frescobaldi, Louis Couperin, Froberger) proceed by unexpected changes of direction, but a quality of Bach preludes, very striking in those of the Cello Suites, is how inevitable their slowly shifting harmonies seem to the ear.

It is possible that in recognizing some of Bach's special melodic qualities, Agricola was aware of Mattheson's remark about Handel: that he 'knew little about melody before visiting the Hamburg opera' (1740, p. 93), a reference to the secular *belcanto* (qv) style. For several reasons, this could not be said of Bach, though there would be no point in a melody being singular (*sonderbar*) if it was odd or unsettling or gauche. Its very singularity is responsible for a beauty which naturally inclines towards the sad. This is so often people's experience of beautiful music that a lively or exciting opening melody can be quite startling, in a concerto Allegro (Third Brandenburg) or a cantata chorus ('Zerreisset, zersprenget', BWV 205). In the St Matthew Passion's aria 'Erbarme dich', the special pathos in the Gospel at this point calls on a certain timbre (solo violin as if protagonist on our behalf), a violin melody not entirely singable by the alto, a certain tempo, key, harmonic rhythm, scoring and manner of performance (soft strings, throbbing pizzicato bass, etc.), all of which accord with certain conventions of the time but are rethought in a singular way. Rethought conventions are also characteristic of the slow movements of the violin concertos. If music is necessarily transient, and its natural gesture is towards yearning, then the result could be labelled 'sad', and the better it is done with pleasing melody and masterly harmony, the sadder it will be. But a performer needs to make only minor changes to create a different *Affekt*, and in many cases what the composer's intention was is less certain than is generally assumed today.

'Serious and profound music'

Following on its point above about 'dry works of artifice', the Obituary continues:

His serious temperament drew him predominantly to hard-working, serious and profound music [*arbeitsamen, ernsthaften, und tiefsinnigen Musik*]; but he could also, if it seemed necessary, particularly when playing, make himself comfortable with a light and playful way of thinking [*leichten und schertzhaften Denkart*].

This can be seen in a similar light to the previous remark: Agricola (and Emanuel with him) are responding to actual or anticipated criticisms of Bach. Their key observations lie in these two remarks, each of which can be considered separately, though together they were clearly meant to draw a rounded picture.

The first part suggests that in his Leipzig years Bach was already attracting an image of the (over-)serious, which is something not difficult to believe, given the kind of music he was writing over a period in which Italian symphonies, oratorios and concertos were coming to dominate the new music heard in the wider world of public concerts. At that period any comparison a musician made between, say, the settings of 'Glory to God and peace on earth' in Bach's Christmas Oratorio and in Handel's *Messiah*, was likely to find the latter more immediate, more obviously rhetorical, more likely to be ringing in the ears afterwards and demanding less connoisseurship of the listener. Even the extant portraits of Bach have a serious aura, becoming images that remain to this day in the memory of modern listeners unfamiliar with the conventions in formal portraits of the time.[2]

In general, seriousness of purpose would be exactly what German authors found missing in so much modern Italian and French music, and not without justification. But what Agricola meant by 'hard-working music' is not quite clear: since the Obituary is respectful and celebratory, it is more likely to mean industrious rather than laborious. The composer was industrious: he worked hard in creating a 'Brandenburg Concerto' bar by bar; his counterpoint works hard in making efforts to maintain its integrity; and hard-working demands are made on his performers. There is nothing unique to Bach in the last, but especially in cantatas, his solo singers will have to make an all-too-obvious effort. Many an unexpected emphasis in the word-setting, especially in the Passions – stressing or drawing out this word rather than that – indicates an effort to bring out an important detail even as the singer is keeping close to the instruments' own melody. And yet seldom does any of this lead to something gloomy, studious, remote, though it might approach the pedantic from time to time.

[2] There is a 'serious aura' in other portraits by the painter E. G. Haussmann, a Leipziger, appointed court portrait-artist in 1723.

Seriousness of purpose was a natural product of the kind of piety with which a Lutheran child was inculcated: the grateful reverence that could lead Bach in both youth and maturity to write *J. J.* (*Jesu juva*, 'Jesus help') on a manuscript. This he would do on any sort of music: on various 'secular' cantatas in Leipzig, on an early church cantata (No. 71), on a manuscript of harpsichord concertos for the concert-room thirty years later, and later still on a set of chorale-preludes. When in the autograph manuscripts of the set of concertos and the set of chorales the first work of each is inscribed *J. J.,* there is no reason to think it an empty incantation. Nor is the *I N I* in Friedemann's *Clavierbüchlein* a meaningless invocation (*in nomine Jesu*, 'in the name of Jesus'), rather a salutation of the kind Bach had already made on a tablature copy of Reinken when he was (apparently) fifteen years old. Either out of idle emulation or something deeper, some student-copyists such as J. L. Krebs and C. F. Penzel also occasionally wrote *J. J.* in their manuscripts.

The Gospel's teaching that one's gifts were to be returned with interest to the Maker meant a commitment to offer the fruits of one's labour, whether simple or complex music, beautiful melody or rich harmony, exciting rhythms or calm counterpoint, appropriate word-setting sacred or secular, dance-music or biblical settings, fugues or songs, exercises for himself or others – everything. The believer would repay his talents with a higher interest the farther he developed them. That was his duty; and it was also his duty to do it joyfully (with 'delight in thy statutes', Psalm 119), hence, perhaps one of the jolliest fugues is a prelude on the Ten Commandments (BWV 679). Reasoning in this way, one can see Bach at his most devout not when his sacred music moved or delighted his neighbour but when it was so intricate that only he and his Maker understood it.

But musical obscurity or complexity would not be a virtue in itself, for the result could become turgid, over-rhetorical, even tiresome, in one way or another the consequence of vainglory. Handel was in no danger of over-complexity when in 1735 he wrote *SDG* ('to God alone the glory') on the score of an organ concerto, HWV 292.[3] For God-given talent to be stretched as far as its owner could stretch it, he would need to explore a more intricate counterpoint and organization than there is in Handel's concerto. From what was likely to have been his first illustrated hymnbook when a child in Eisenach (BJ 1985, p. 31), Bach will have associated pious

[3] This was unusual and during a difficult oratorio season, leading one to wonder whether it was at or after similar problematic moments, illness, overwork, etc. that Bach too was inclined to write *J. J.* or *SDG*.

devotion with music. All is devotional for the devout man, and 'with a music that is devotional, God is always present in his grace', as he wrote in the margin of a house Bible at 2 Chronicles 5:13 (Cox 1985, facs. 112). Those verses in Chronicles are describing how voices and instruments are used to praise the Lord, and the margin-note, written in a Bible edition apparently acquired in 1733, is the classic response by a Lutheran (or an Anglican) of the time, who found nothing but poor theology in the Calvinist (or Presbyterian) argument against music, including that in church. The verses would have suited very well as the text for a sermon preached when a cantor was installed or when an organ was inaugurated.

Such devout Lutheranism could alone explain why at first in Leipzig Bach made a point of supplying a major cantata each week, i.e. samples of new modern music with instruments. Although court composers might please their employers in this way, a cantor was not actually contracted to write so much and nor did it have to be of a certain kind, and at other moments in the service there was indeed much older music without instruments being heard: quasi-plainsong intonations, old motets, Protestant chorales already two centuries old. Of the chorales Bach must have had a seriously encyclopedic knowledge, sometimes finding for cantatas a different chorale-version at the beginning and end (e.g. BWV 126), each appropriate, sometimes with the same melody (BWV 58). In drawing at first on works written at Weimar, if not as persistently as Handel drew on previous music in his anthems and canticles, Bach's Leipzig cantatas were maintaining a high, one might say aristocratic, tone. Adapting it somewhat to the new conditions meant raising a regular parish congregation's sensibilities to the Word made sound, flattering them, even. If the previous repertory (Kuhnau's) was discarded, with one possible exception, it cannot be assumed that this was simply to bring things up to date or because Bach rejected music he found uninteresting, if he did. Rather, a motive was to create a new, distinct, independent and consistent body of sacred music: the musician's duty *SDG*.

The supererogatory complexity of Bach's audition cantatas of 1723 already foretold a unique repertory, unmatched at the time but scarcely modern in any superficial or popular sense. If the wish had been simply to be modern, an easier solution would have been to take (or imitate) Telemann's complete cycles of cantatas about to be published, simple, tuneful and practical works, at their best up to date and approachable. Bach's known acquaintance with certain Passions originating in Hamburg, even occasionally using them instead of his own, makes it clear enough that he by no means ignored other conceptions of sacred music.

On the other hand it is striking how little he imitated such music, in effect always improving on their harmonic flaccidity when he does. This alone would convey more imaginatively than they the *Affekt* of the various texts being set. Seldom if ever would one mistake a Leipzig cantata movement for the work of a Telemann or Graupner, though one might occasionally for the work of another member of the Bach clan.

It looks as if especially in his last fifteen years or so, Bach had in mind a carefully made list of the ways in which he could reveal the scope of God's gift of music, ways that were appropriate to the genre he had in hand, whatever that was. Hence, in part, the frequent mixing of styles. In the reworked Cantata No. 80 a contrapuntal motet for voices is developed against a cantus firmus in canon for instruments, now on a monumental scale. Twice in *Clavierübung III*'s chorales, a modern trio sonata (as for flute, violin and continuo) is set against an old Lutheran chorale-melody sounding out in an ingeniously planned canon. The result is that both pieces speak a remote musical dialect for fundamental church texts, respectively for the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. A series of canons in the 'Goldberg Variations' is set within the almost intolerably narrow confines of a few common-property harmonies and hovers in a world of unfamiliar and unrepeatable sound. So does many a stretto passage, like the middle section of the wordless Duetto BWV 803, with strange harmony (augmented triads) and strange phraseology (three-bar). The idea of 'survey' itself takes many forms, from a Gregorian intonation to one of the period's biggest music-scores in the 'B minor Mass', from a single theme to a unique set of fugues and canons in the Art of Fugue.

The late fugues and canons not only supply serious and hard-working examples but create a practical world of beautiful, unknown and sometimes unsettling sound. In the complexity of their conception, and sometimes their bar-by-bar intricacy, the late works imply that beyond the three styles recognized by poets and composers in Germany at the time (high, middle and low), it is as if Bach was aiming at a fourth category: the transcendental, beyond ordinary sense-experience and correct grammar. Much in the Art of Fugue may be rooted in previous Bach fugues, but it transcends keyboard music in being unlike any other of the time and in being adaptable to other instruments; and it transcends mere grammatical complexity with a theme that focuses on the two simplest and most basic key relationships (tonic-to-dominant and tonic-to-relative). As a whole, the work transcends (is more than) simple instruction and transcends the conventional range of musical effects of the day. What it is expressing is so

elusive that many have thought of it as 'abstract music', but this phrase only indicates the difficulty in finding words for sensory experience of so unusual a kind.

It may well have been the Art of Fugue that the Obituary authors had in mind when writing of 'hard-working, serious and profound music'. F. W. Marpurg, about to publish the first part of his treatise *Abhandlung von der Fuge* (1753), wrote a laudatory preface to the Art of Fugue's second edition of 1752, making one wonder whether the visit he said he had paid Bach a few years earlier had acquainted him with this work in progress and inspired him to want to write a theory book to match it, the first of several. Marpurg was not deaf to the work's 'most hidden beauties' (*verborgensten Schönheiten*) and thought such music far from the world of 'dry and wooden' or 'pedantic' fugues that he claimed the composer himself criticized (Dok. III, pp. 14, 144–5). On the other hand, while the Canon at the Tenth creates a sound quite new and unworldly, the result is barely more than a pedagogical demonstration, though a clever one. When, as D. F. Tovey observed, a 'very fine' effect could be achieved if from a certain point on this canon's voices were doubled in thirds (1931, p. 39), is one to suppose that Bach did not see this or that he found it irrelevant? Running a subject in thirds was already found not only in another movement of the Art of Fugue but in exercises written out by the composer over much the same period (see BJ 2003, p. 92), this in studies apparently with W. F. Bach.

Respectful admiration for the counterpoint can easily divert attention away from the quality of the fugue-themes Bach is so often working with. The early Albinoni fugues, the big G minor Organ Fugue, the Musical Offering theme, the 'Chromatic Fantasia's' fugue, the Kyrie and 'Cum sancto spiritu' from the 'B minor Mass', and especially the Art of Fugue: all outstanding fugue-subjects, singable, full of wonderful potential and inspired detail! What a marvellous subject, the 'Chromatic Fugue's'! – long, original, inwardly melodious as no theme by one of Bach's contemporaries is likely to be. A particularly happy gesture is that the last note of its last statement (the theory-book's 'Final Entry') is there in the work's very last chord, despite the twists and turns before it. And how inspired it was to begin the theme of 'et in terra pax' in the 'B minor Mass' with a syncopation! This is striking in two ways: in the text, where it emphasizes the 'and' ('*and* peace on earth to men of goodwill'), not for the only time in the Creed; and in the music, where it is far removed from the racy, secular swing of the syncopations in the Sixth Brandenburg's finale.

'A light and playful manner of thinking'

This, the second part of the Obituary's comment quoted in the section above, sounds yet again like a defence against accusations: nobody would have accused Telemann of undue seriousness. It needed saying, however, to those who had heard Bach playing only majestic organ works, or to those for whom he was the hero of difficult counterpoint and who knew little of his dance-music and tuneful miniatures. The very difficulties in the keyboard music, printed or manuscript, must be at least partly responsible for its being no better known or admired than it was, this at the time when swathes of German-speaking regions, including the northern Hanseatic cities, have left such meagre evidence that they were ever aware of his compositions.

Although the Obituary's anecdotes give a varied picture of a virtuoso performer and respected figure, its picture is so very incomplete. When it refers to 'some comic vocal pieces' (*einige komische Singstücke*) it is giving a poor idea of Bach as the composer of such deft masterpieces as the 'Peasant Cantata' (1742), which Emanuel certainly, and Agricola possibly, knew. If Bach slighted such pieces himself, in his own mind or in speaking about them, there is no sign of this in the music itself and, on the contrary, the 'Peasant Cantata', and to a lesser extent the Coffee and 'Phoebus and Pan' Cantatas, give one some idea of the success he could have had with comic operas or intermezzi, had the opportunity arisen. As it is, the comedy and ambiguities in these three cantatas are not so far from those in J. A. Hasse's various Dresden intermezzi, or even Pergolesi's *La Serva padrona*, which was performed in Dresden in February 1740. Music of Bach such as this suits picaresque dramas whose very nature exudes the racy and the suggestive, giving any responsive composer some good opportunities. Were it ever established that Bach knew *La Serva padrona* one could guess what musical ideas he soon picked up there for his 'Peasant Cantata' when he came to write its overture-medley in three sections (thin scoring, no counterpoint!), its 2/4 arias (one with unusual phrase-lengths), arias with changing beat and tempi, a final perky duet, and many other incidental details.

The world these various works inhabit is not far even from Pepusch's *Beggar's Opera* (1729), and it is not impossible that Bach had become as familiar with folk or popular music in popular shows as Pepusch (a Berliner) had in London when selecting the songs for the play. Various kinds of ballad operas and plays with music, often picaresque, could be met with in the bigger cities of Europe including those of Protestant Germany.

In 1743, a year between two of Bach's visits to Potsdam, one English ballad opera was brought there to the King of Prussia, and in 1752 another, translated and adapted, came to Leipzig, surely not the first. There are no signs of Bach's interest in any of this beyond a few indirect hints, but these are significant, as when he introduces three popular tunes in the last of the 'Goldberg Variations'. All three tunes do what is required of them: they fit the harmony and combine ingeniously, but they also have a suggestive element in their words, as was common in quodlibets. They are sublimated in fluent four-part harmony and are handled so that the Aria's bass-line is intact, but whatever they do, they were chosen by someone with an ear for a good popular tune.
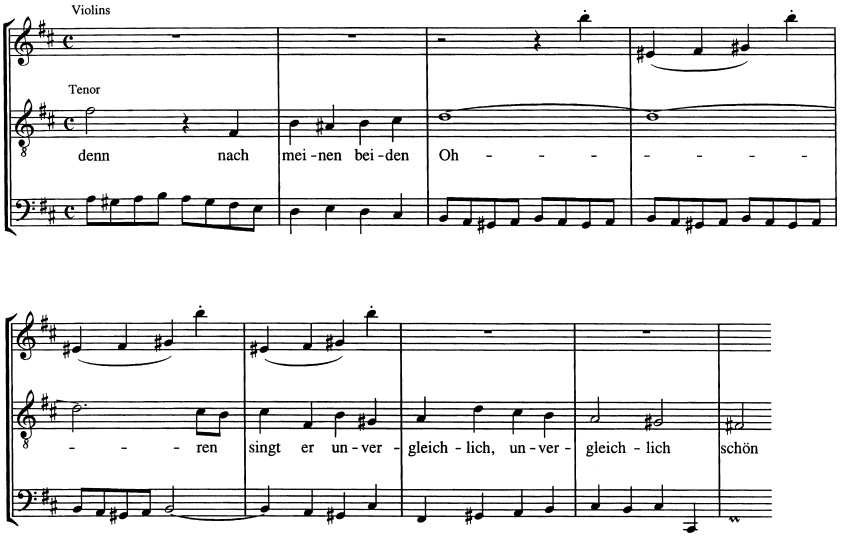
It is certainly possible, however, that Bach avoided, and even expressed distaste for, actual theatre music and staged presentations. There is no clear evidence either way. For both him and Picander (librettist of the 'Peasant' and Coffee Cantatas as well as St Matthew Passion) there can have been no puritan need to evade the racy in either music or text if the occasion or location was suitable. Picander, in calling his volume of texts 'serious, playful and satirical verses' (*Ernst-Schertzhaffte und Satyrischer Gedichte*), was naming three literary categories familiar at the time, using terms actually repeated by the Obituary authors (*ernst*, *schertzhaft*). The point was that higher, middle and lower styles each had a place and were each worthy of professional attention. Yet only an astonishingly versatile composer could have been writing the 'Peasant Cantata' and movements in the Art of Fugue over the same period, apparently, and neither of these very long after the 'Goldberg Variations'. A breathtaking trio of masterworks, and none of them for church!

Style varies according to context, and for a skilful poet or composer there is no problem in having a character in the 'Peasant Cantata' sing 'how nice it is to cuddle a bit' (*wie schön ein bisschen Dahlen schmeckt*) and following it with a saucy snatch of familiar melody, one of the tunes used in the last of the 'Goldberg Variations'. There must have been some tittering at that point in the work, since according to the recitative the new landlord knew as much *and probably more* about such things as the village girls and boys. Significant, perhaps, is that in the score Bach mentions by name the chamberlain's representative, someone for whom Picander gives only initials, being tactful for a text that was to be printed. But the jokes are always to be heard in the music itself: when the characters finally go off to the tavern, trailing after the dudelsack like a pied piper, they sing a bourrée that apes a church cantata's final chorale, or would if sung at half the speed and harmonized appropriately.

Part of the point of the 'Peasant Cantata', from its astonishing potpourri overture (scored for a barn-dance trio) onwards, is to contrast the courtly with the peasantly, much as the 'Phoebus and Pan' cantata contrasts the merely literate man with the truly imaginative artist. Such characterization in music would serve an opera-composer well. The court chamberlain himself for whom the 'Peasant Cantata' was written in 1742, Carl Heinrich von Dieskau, was evidently a man of culture, becoming *Directeur des Plaisirs* (including musical administration) at the royal court in Dresden a few years later. As a dedicatee of some published lute-music by a Bach pupil (Rudolph Straube), von Dieskau might have been a more significant figure in the life of the composer than is now known about, though presumably not in connection with church music.

How tactful the 'Peasant Cantata's' street-songs were is still uncertain since not all have yet been identified. That is also the case with the three tunes brought in at the end of the 'Goldberg Variations', again raising a smile if one recognizes what is going on. (The tune known traditionally as the Bergamasca was said by Bach's pupil Kittel to be about cabbage and turnips: BJ 1994, p. 175.) The 'Peasant Cantata' contrasts two elegant, extended, courtly ABA arias with its rather roguish songs, including polonaises in the overture and an aria, a hunting song (with horn in G), a minuet published in an old dance-manual (Nuremberg, 1716), and a famous 'international' theme, *Les Folies d'Espagne*. The quoting of *Les Folies*, an old eight-bar theme, is particularly interesting, since it is in B minor like Couperin's in the *Troisième Livre* (1722) and not in D minor as in the usual treatments of the theme, from Corelli to C. P. E. Bach. Did the composer know Couperin's book and if so, was he alluding slyly to Couperin's title, 'La Virginité'?

In all these instances, one has rather to search out the humour, as when being directed to 'search and you shall find' in one of the Musical Offering's canons (see p. 433). The Coffee Cantata, another genuinely secular work showing every sign of great care, relies on purely musical subtleties such as three-bar phrases to suggest the *wayward* girl's first aria, and more three-bar phrases plus a mixolydian flavour (qv) in the *rondeau*-finale. It is not easy to believe that the only time this work left Leipzig to be performed elsewhere was at Frankfurt in 1739 (see Dok. V, p. 161); surely it circulated? Both these jolly cantatas, in the way they contrast current types of music, are Bach's version of the running jokes found in other German writings, some of which involve music and musicians, such as Printz's and Kuhnau's tales about 'beer-fiddlers' (*Musicus curiosus*, 1691) and incompetents pretending to be Italian virtuosi (*Der musicalische Quack-Salber*,



Example 25 Cantata No. 201.xi, b. 135: 'For according to both of my ears he is singing incomparably, incomparably beautifully'

1700). F. E. Niedt had fun mocking German organists incapable of playing figured bass (*Musicalische Handleitung I*, 1700), and pictured in the music of the 'Phoebus and Pan' Cantata, BWV 201, are the ass's ears of the pedant Midas (Example 25). It is difficult to say what is the funniest thing about this: the braying violin, the repetitive bass, the text (why *both* ears?) and what seems anyway to be a non sequitur. Whatever later admirers have claimed about Bach, this is not the work of a composer thinking only of duty, death, Luther, money and invertible counterpoint.

The tone of the 'Peasant Cantata' is clearly of a piece with the many, barely veiled sexual *double entendres* in the Wedding Quodlibet, BWV 524 (copied, perhaps composed, by young Bach in his early twenties). Anna Magdalena Bach's wedding verses in her album of 1725 are milder but still with *double entendres* as well as *amour tendre*. Similarly, it would not be out of character for Bach to have been responsible for producing a particularly banal song in Sperontes's Songbook of 1736 that made some fun of two Leipzig women poets, Mariane von Ziegler and Luise Gottsched, and then replacing it – if he did – in the revised edition, having had second thoughts (see NBA III/3, KB, pp. 106ff.). Not that one has to be prurient to tease or joke, as can be seen in the teasingly formal phraseology in a letter of 1741 when Bach acknowledges the gift of some venison from a family friend at the court of Weissenfels, proof of 'Your Honour's invaluable

favour' of which 'I never entertained the faintest doubt', and which has been meanwhile 'eaten by us to the health of Your Honour' (Dok. I, p. 110). There is also something witty in quoting one of Luther's sayings – 'its key will be seen at the end' – in connection with a certain canon (Dok. I, p. 222),[4] for the *end* Luther had in mind was eschatological and not the final cadence of a clever canon.

In inappropriately using formal language music can soon be funny, as in the aria in the 'Coffee Cantata', 'Mädchen, die von harten Sinnen' ('Obstinate girls are not to be won over easily'). This uses a chromatic bass familiar from church cantatas whose texts suggest something far more fearful or shaming than a young girl's passion for coffee: acts contrary to the will of the Heavenly Father not of her earthly father. Coffee-houses, already criticized by Bach's predecessor in 1709 (see Schering 1941, p. 196), always had the potential to be disreputable in any country at that period, at least if young women somehow come into the picture. The extant autograph of the cantata (1734), on its cover called by Emanuel himself 'a comic cantata', dates from a few months after a certain A. W. Plaz (Platz), professor of botany in the university, had discussed the dangers of too much coffee-drinking in one of his public disputations, *De potus cofe abusu noxio*, 1733. By then the cantata's poet Picander had already published his text, making a link between a girl's disobedience to her father and her search for a husband. Bach's Coffee Cantata leaves us to suspect – or rather, to be quite sure – that in her elegant melody, the soprano is sighing over the sweetness not of coffee but something else. What, we are not quite sure, but comparable euphemisms were familiar at the time.[5]

The Obituary said that it was 'particularly when playing' that Bach was 'comfortable with a light and jocular manner of thinking' (*zu einer leichten und schertzhaften Denkart bequemen*). Is this its warning against taking his late learned publications as representing the whole man? Was Agricola, as an eye-witness, reporting what and how Bach played in less formal settings, such as brilliant harpsichord music in the Collegium or at home? Does
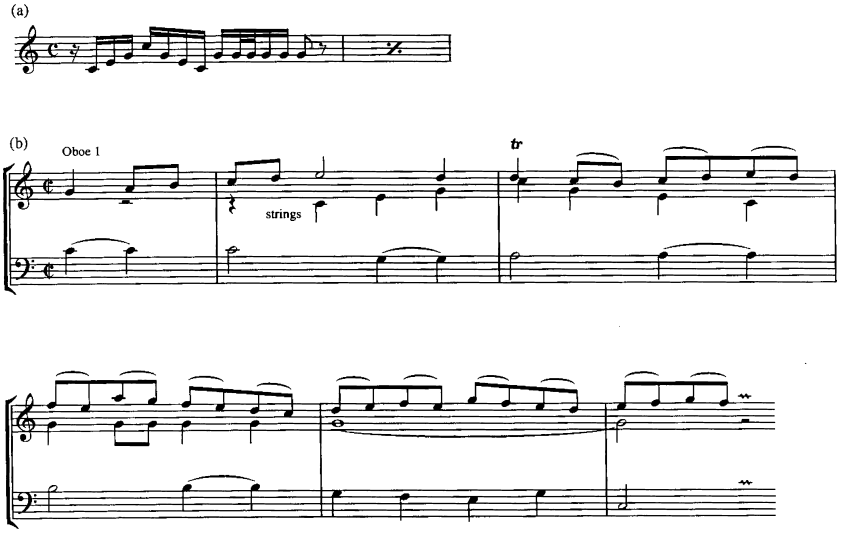
[4] Quoting this was not unique: G. F. Kauffmann does in his *Harmonische Seelenlust*, 1733–7 when a certain chorale ends on an imperfect cadence (qv).

[5] Platz in Zedler's *Lexicon* (1741), vol. 28, cols. 785–6. At much the same period, in correspondence between Jonathan Swift and his friend Vanessa, coffee served as a code for their encounters, in a 'special sexually-charged sense of intimacy' (D. Nokes, *Jonathan Swift: A Hypocrite Reversed*, London, 1985, p. 258). A song in Sperontes's *Singende Muse* (1736) also involves coffee.

That Bach was a great coffee-drinker is suggested by the household goods listed on his death, which included five coffee pots of different sizes, the large silver one retained by his widow (along with the large silver teapot: Dok. II, pp. 492f., 502).

'playing' (*Spielen*) mean only keyboard music, and this only around the years 1740, the period with which Agricola was familiar? *Schertzhaft* ('jocular') could be a synonym for *allegro* ('light, cheerful, bright') and imply that Bach's playing was effortless, bright, uplifting, the opposite of stodgy. The final variations of the 'Goldberg' are easy to understand as light and jocular, while at other moments in this work (such as the three variations in the minor), and also here and there in WTC2 (the preludes in F sharp minor and G minor), a performance in the spirit of the music surely results in something not at all jocular but closer to a meditative organ-chorale.

In Agricola's original remark, 'serious' need not mean 'grave', nor 'jocular' mean 'frivolous'. When familiar everyday sounds are incorporated in various pieces, such as the posthorn in the early Capriccio in B flat, the hunting horn in Cantata No. 208, or the trumpet-signals in Cantatas Nos. 214 (birthday music) and 127 (Day of Judgment), the result is neither grave nor frivolous, more a matter of exploring the old formulae. The various horn and trumpet calls associated with the military, watchmen, hunts, proclamations, royalty and so forth appear more cleverly and subtly in various works of Bach than one would think possible with so basic a musical topic. Example 26 has two totally different ways to use one such everyday motif: the first is a trumpet call to prepare for Advent (a motif



Example 26 (a) Cantata No. 70.i, trumpet bb. 1–2, text: 'Wake! Pray! Be always prepared!'; (b) Overture, BWV 1066, Gavotte II.

heard fourteen times in the cantata movement concerned), the second is counterpoint to a gavotte for wind-trio (heard four times).

Two points about the dozen or so different times this motif occurs in the Bach worklist are first, that it is rethought each time and in a spirit the opposite of grave; and secondly, if today the composer's allusion is sometimes puzzling (why is it there in Example 26(b)?), it may not have been so to citizens of the time. They must have had associations with the regular trumpet-calls heard in the city of Leipzig, night and day, in the streets and elsewhere, along with other ambient sounds even including, very likely, the noises off when they were trying to rehearse.[6]

The Obituary's remark was made to counter any reputation Bach's serious music had among everyday musicians, especially those engaged in the musical confections being marketed in the 1740s and 1750s. But it brings us very little nearer envisaging his own approaches to performance, above all in the mature works where the intended *Affekt* is by no means always obvious or exclusive. Playful, even frivolous, elements in Bach's personality have been discerned by many an admirer, but playful elements in the music itself tend to become lost in the later world of respectful awe.

Opera

The Obituary, in making no mention of opera in any connection with Bach, encourages the reader (and most subsequent readers) to see him as focused on other, very different kinds of music. Spitta's dominant biography describes him as 'striving after his pure ideal in quiet, concentrated activity' in church cantatas and the like, while outside was the troubled world in which opera attracted all attention, a competitive world for the striving artists of the time, both native and foreign (I, 1873, p. 461). However justifiable this view, in fact neither subsequent generalization about Bach and operas – that, given the chance, he would have written them *or* that he would not – is easy to justify. If neither can be undisputedly true, the ambiguity of the evidence, such as it is, could reflect actual ambivalence on the part of the composer or even of the town of Leipzig.

Whether Bach had been indifferent to opera when in Hamburg as a teenager, and what interest he showed in the plans for Dresden opera when

[6] An eye-witness in 1728 speaks of a trumpet-chorale played three times a day in Leipzig (Schering 1941, p. 27). Triadic fanfares not unlike those in Example 26, and familiar to Wagner from his early years in Leipzig, herald the processions in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

first visiting in 1717, are questions already asked, and there is no sure answer. Later, in Cöthen, what various staged musical performances or ballets there had been during his years there is also not yet clear and may never be so, though some there doubtless were, and in some he would participate as capellmeister. In Leipzig, Gottsched, influential university professor and poet, was openly critical of opera as a literary stagework, and is said to have collected some 661 libretti, surely not merely to illustrate what he found contemptible. During Bach's Leipzig years, a different culture from the south of Saxony, in Bohemia and Moravia, led to various attempts at creating opera companies by rich landowners, including two of Bach's acquaintances, the Counts Questenberg (from 1724) and Sporck (1724–32). Von Questenberg's theatre staged intermezzi of a kind also to be known in Dresden, while Sporck's opera existed (not without problems) over the very period in which he received a version of the Sanctus revised later in the 'Mass in B minor'. All these vague links at least suggest that Bach brushed up against opera in several connections, but to what end is quite obscure.

The emphasis given the composer's life and work in Leipzig by respectful nineteenth-century scholarship and by much of today's popular tourism (though not by the Obituary itself) implies that Bach had no interest in producing theatre music, or at least no opportunity. Leipzig was by then without an opera season of the kind familiar in a few much larger cities and more generally in wealthy courts. It would be obvious that the Leipzig municipality itself was not going to imitate the Dresden court, where the setting up of an Italian opera company in 1717 resulted in (among other necessary costs) an exceptionally, perhaps uniquely, high salary for the composer Antonio Lotti and his *diva* wife. But it cannot have been only a matter of costs: the splendours and exoticisms of an Italian opera troupe in the Roman Catholic court of the kingdom's capital city was all very well but cannot have meant much outside it except to visitors. A reputation for somewhat operatic church music, heard during Kuhnau's time in the Leipzig New Church under one J. G. Vogler, clearly had nothing to do with actual opera except, perhaps, in confirming a certain distaste for it in the city and its churches.

Nevertheless, for a period before, Leipzig had had opera, not entirely surprising for a city with a university, a comfortable mercantile class and regular fairs attracting many visitors at New Year, Easter and Michaelmas. G. H. Stölzel's obituary accompanying Bach's and presumably read by the same people speaks of his hearing 'many operas of the best masters' when he entered the city's university in 1707 (Mizler 1754, p. 144). But three

years before Bach came to the city, opera in the municipality had come to an end for reasons that reflected, as usual, money problems – including the cost of repairing the modest opera-house of 1693, by then fallen into disrepair. At the other end of Bach's years as cantor there is no record of his showing any interest in the intermezzi, burlesques, pasticcios and Turkish ballets of the touring Italian companies then visiting Leipzig from time to time, but this does not prove he had no interest. The stagework with music by Pergolesi performed in 1745 about the time Bach re-arranged the *Stabat mater* leaves open the question what connection there was, if any, between the two composers. Although Bach's last decade is conventionally associated with such formal music as fugues, canons, chorales and the Roman Mass (his own and several imported examples), later assumptions that such music totally monopolized his interests might be quite baseless.

There are different questions about opera to be asked at different points in Bach's life. Again, was he really 'often' in Hamburg as a young man, as the Obituary reports (presumably from something he said himself), without visiting the town's renowned opera? Or in his thirties in Dresden in 1717 without seeing something of the brand-new opera company? In Weimar, was his curiosity not raised by his personal connections with Pisendel, Heinichen and others who had all known the Leipzig opera? In Cöthen, there were opportunities for opera extracts in the concerts arranged for a prince who had seen and liked opera as a teenage tourist. In Leipzig, Kuhnau had supplied a so-called 'Pastorelle', *Die Galathea*, for the New Year Fair in 1702, quite possibly one of several such events. By the 1720s a major revival of the Elector's opera company in Dresden had been achieved, and it seems unlikely that an inquisitive musician would play a recital in Friedemann's Sophienkirche in September 1725 without visiting the opera as its season began. Or again in September 1731, without seeing Hasse's *Cleofide* premiered the evening before in the Zwinger Palace, just across the road from the same church. In his sixties, when Emanuel took him to see the new opera-house in Berlin, what was he doing there? Did he check out its acoustic but not get to see any of the stageworks? To some of these questions one answer seems more likely than others. What can be said with certainty is that if Bach took no advantage of any of those opportunities, or if he did at first but then turned away from operas, or if he eventually came round to them, much would be revealed about him.

Although there was no official opera during Bach's Leipzig years before a visiting company or two appeared in the mid-1740s, it would have been in the nature of the Collegium concerts to include operatic extracts, bringing at least some of the recent Italian pieces under his direction.

During Kuhnau's time the Collegium musicians included university students who are assumed to have made up the orchestra for opera performances, and there seems no reason why either their regular concerts or those of their successors would reject all stagework music. Kuhnau came to disapprove of various activities of the opera musicians, and it was in character for church and university people to have some kind of quasi-moral objection to opera, at least officially. When Forkel reported, presumably from what Friedemann told him, that Bach often went to Dresden to hear the opera and spoke of the 'nice little Dresden songs' (*die schönen Dresdener Liederchen*, 1802, p. 48), one can sense in the words something less than total admiration. Forkel also implies, when he describes Friedemann as aware of what in art was great and what 'merely beautiful and pleasant' (*bloss schön und angenehm*), that it was a sign of uprightness to be anti-Italian opera. But if nowadays *Liederchen* is usually translated as 'ditties', it is hinting at a degree of disdain not necessarily intended.

Although over the whole period from the 1720s to 1740s some kind of musical comedies (the *Comoedien*) were still being played during the city's fairs, Leipzig's enemies of formal opera were represented in J. C. Gottsched's book *Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst* of 1730, in which the poet, by no means an enemy of music itself, rejoices in the gradual failure of opera companies in Hamburg, Brunswick, Halle, Weissenfels and elsewhere. Other literary critics in Europe at the time expressed strong views not only about the language but also the 'unnaturalness' of opera, and yet some of the criticisms Gottsched and others made – that operas were long, the arias incomprehensible, the *da capo* unnatural and the instruments too noisy – could also have been made by some people about Bach's settings of the Passions. Perhaps by 1740 they were.

What appears to be a general turn in mid-century Leipzig and so many other cities towards the styles of modern Italian music may have encouraged Bach to pursue his rather different activities during the 1740s, i.e. preparing scores of more serious Italian works old and new. When citizens were pleased at the appointment of his successor, Gottlob Harrer, as 'a friend and connoisseur of Italian music' (Schering 1941, p. 336), they were thinking of new Italian works not Renaissance counterpoint, which had given Bach no taste for Italian theatre music. It is true that he could have been composing the Art of Fugue and writing theatre intermezzi at the same time, but evidently he did not. It appears also that in the 1730s he had taken very little or even no part in the series of popular songbooks published in Leipzig, the volumes of *Sperontes Singende Muse*, 1736–45. This silence rather confirms Bach's indifference either to their musical

styles or to their texts, more the former than the latter, perhaps. Another conjecture is that for some reason he did not relish a connection with Sperontes himself (Johann Sigismund Scholze) who from time to time was known to collaborate with young composers in staging operettas and Singspiele. If this was so, it would again be very revealing.

That composers of the time could admire opera in principle while holding views against certain music they saw as frivolous is suggested by Mattheson who, reporting that operas are 'regarded as indisputably the greatest musical works', was able to reject a certain comic setting of *Don Quixote* as showing skill but not judgement (1722, pp. 106, 98). Bach's critic, the Leipziger J. A. Scheibe, made comparable points in *Der critische Musikus*, implying some important distinctions between *opera seria* and *opera buffa*. The irony of this is that the 'Peasant Cantata' recalls in some ways the very opera-types of a less elevated kind, and if one is unable easily to imagine Bach working in tragic opera or *opera seria*, one certainly can in *opera buffa* and similar. It takes very little to stage the 'Peasant' and Coffee cantatas, even if neither actually requires it. Similarly, the step from the original form of a cantata such as No. 173a (a birthday serenata) to *opera buffa* is not huge, perhaps because the author of such texts, C. F. Hunold alias 'Menantes', had written libretti for operas in other cities, Brunswick and Hamburg.

As the much earlier Cantata No. 208 suggests, when there is an extensive series of arias and recitatives, more than is usual, the result is something very like the Act of an opera. It wants only staging and a clearer story-line, set out in Acts. The 'Phoebus and Pan' Cantata, No. 201, has a story-line of sorts, as do other 'secular' cantatas or *dramme per musica*, such as 'Hercules at the cross-roads', BWV 213. In its opening chorus, BWV 201 has many of the makings of an opera or operetta finale. These are: a solo ensemble of the lead-characters, a bright scoring for strings and winds, a *vivace* swinging rhythm, simple harmonies, slow harmonic rhythm, and certain dramatic details such as those empty octaves for the chorus.

The very title of the three homage cantatas BWV 213–15 (*dramma per musica*) encourages one to see them as the unstaged Act of a short chamber opera – unstaged as far as is known, though with a definite potential for staging. The characters themselves might well come from Greek antiquity, retelling classical myths or uttering mythical dialogues in 'operatic' fashion, as between the winds (BWV 205) or between true art and pedantry (BWV 201). Throughout one *dramma* for the king's birthday, No. 206, the melodies' aura suggests to me a coffee-house (where it was performed) on its best behaviour, rather than a church on its worst. It would not be difficult to create *tableaux vivantes* around the various arias, rich with

images. From some points of view, a certain 'chamber opera' idiom of the 1720s and 1730s still persists in those celebratory *dramme per musica* BWV 213, Nos. 214 and 215 when they were converted into the Christmas Oratorio. Nevertheless, parallels with opera seldom go far. The full and grand scoring of the opening to No. 201 might suggest a sound more at home in the theatre, but the careful, time-consuming part-writing and harmonic detail of the work's final chorus will not be found in any *opera seria*, of Hasse or Handel or anyone else.

A document important in a different way from these various considerations is the petition of July 1733 to the Elector in Dresden which, not unlike the dedication of the *Six Concerts* to the Margrave of Brandenburg, closed with an offer to supply the Elector with other music in return for the title. This time, the offer speaks of 'music for the church and also for the orchestra' (*Kirchen Musique sowohl als zum Orchestre*). The last word probably refers not (or not only) to instrumental or 'orchestral' music, but to the place in the theatre where the instrumentalists sit, in front of the stage. (*Orchestra* as defined in Walther's *Lexicon*, 1732. The Greek *choros* was also both location and ensemble.) Perhaps he was aware that in Dresden the term *orchestra* denoted the whole musical-theatre company nearly a hundred strong and including dancers, so that what he was offering to compose was various occasional music, opera, intermezzi, ballet, ceremonial overtures for the theatre and its company.

In Leipzig itself, the demise of opera had meant there was little to tempt Bach in this direction. It is not known (as it would be?) whether he did ever attempt to revive it. The cosmopolitanism of the Italian troupes eventually visiting Leipzig and appearing in Hamburg, Prague, Dresden and Leipzig, according to Lorenz Mizler (1752, p. 603), might have appealed, however. The very month the cantor died, a new venture with comedies, Italian intermezzi and plays derived from the French, all with some kind of music (songs, dances, entr'actes), was started in one of the town gardens. Too late? If Bach was not drawn to *opera seria*, he certainly could have been to *opera buffa*.

Choir-size at the Thomaskirche

His hearing was so fine that in the fullest-voiced cantatas [? *Musiken*], he was able to discern the smallest error. But it is a pity that he seldom had the luck of finding such performers of his work as would have spared him these vexed remarks. (*Obituary*)

The remarks of Agricola follow immediately on his praise for Bach's full scores (see below). 'These vexed remarks' (*diese verdriesslichen Bemerkungen*) were presumably those made by the composer, in rehearsals or performances experienced by Agricola himself as a student from 1738 to 1741, witnessing a composer aware of the 'smallest error' (*geringsten Fehler*) in the ensemble and impatient over it. 'Such performers of his work' would also be those in Leipzig.

There might be another hint here that conditions at Leipzig had deteriorated or that from the beginning Bach's expectations had been too high. As many a successful candidate for all kinds of jobs has later discovered, an appointment committee and its procedures can give a misleading impression of the level usually achieved by the institution concerned. However, although the authors are unlikely to have known it, already in the first set of cantatas on his promotion at Weimar in 1714, Bach seems to make heavier musical demands than in those that followed: had he come to find in both Weimar and Leipzig not quite what he wanted, or had he simply learnt from experience? One particular question is, how good and big were his choirs in Leipzig?

In recent times, one interpretation of a range of evidence has been that for cantatas and the Passions, the two alternating main churches could draw on sixteen or seventeen school-members (*alumni*) plus some eighteen instrument-players, with a total number in each place seldom if ever above forty performers even on special occasions, but generally a good deal fewer. Eight singers had traditionally formed a *Cantorei* as a kind of basis for the Sunday and Feastday services (BJ 2013, p. 63), presumably taking the solos and joined by others (younger or weaker voices) in the chorus, and the whole school in the final chorale (BJ 2012, p. 163). The soloists are the key singers in the cantatas, the others being in effect supplementary. For certain special performances, such as the Passions must have been, each time sung in one church only (so with an augmented choir?), one assumes maximum forces. Even then, in numbers the singers would often be surpassed by the instrumentalists. A few duplicate parts for some early Leipzig cantatas (Nos. 75, 76, 21, 24) might mean that it was only later, in the course of twenty-seven years, that choir-levels went down, and that by the late 1740s at least, there was sometimes a shortage of good trebles. However satisfactorily they continued to perform as sopranos or *falsetti*, the cantor, for solos, must have drawn from time to time on extras from the student-body. Counting those school-members who were required for lesser duties in the two other churches, a total of fifty-four singers of varying abilities, from age ten to twenty-four, is confirmed at certain times

by recorded lists, with trebles aged thirteen to eighteen and altos aged sixteen to twenty (Glöckner 2006).

In consisting chiefly of young voices from a choir-school and a university, Bach's choir was not unlike certain present-day college choirs in England, able to master more demanding works than even some cathedral choirs. But how many voices were there? The various pieces of evidence are more than a little contradictory. According to sources, music-desks in the west gallery of St Thomas were long enough to accommodate several boys reading the manuscript parts, and had been for Bach's predecessor, while the School Regulations direct the boys not to get in the way of others reading the part (Schulze 1985, p. 73). This sounds as if the whole school was in the gallery, potentially interfering with those in the choir. Although the voice-parts do not generally distinguish between what is to be sung tutti and what solo, this need not mean that there was only one voice singing the part: a chorus-singer can soon learn (on pain of correction if he is a boy) when he is not to sing. Conversely, aria-soloists (boys and men only) sang in the choruses, musically and physically part of the ensemble, in no sense 'taking the stage' as commonly today. No special significance belonged either to the arias or to those that sang them.

In recent years, miscellaneous references, source-criticism, theory books and personnel lists have sometimes been taken to be firm 'evidence' for small (even one-to-a-part) choirs – not only in exceptional circumstances but more generally. For this view, the nature, purpose and agenda of the 'evidence' have not always been critically assessed. For it cannot be proved that cantata parts were not shared, that reinforced choir-numbers were exceptional, and that there were no duplicates of the single manuscript part (an 'archive copy' kept for re-use). Nor can it even be certain that the extant vocal parts were those used in actual performance (always, regularly, often, seldom?) and were not merely reference copies. Did Bach expect no further copying of the parts he sent to Dresden in 1733 for the two Mass movements? What are we to suppose when surviving parts have uncorrected errors, especially in the case of the later cantatas or the 1736 version of the St Matthew Passion? That not they but other parts were the ones actually used?

What the ideal performance was for Bach, whether he had such a thing in mind, whether he was happy with forces more modest than Handel's: such questions lead to many conjectures and claims. Telemann's string ensemble of about a dozen players for major works in Hamburg might be relevant, although any comparison between Leipzig's practices and those elsewhere will always need to describe the different circumstances and

traditions. In the Leipzig cantatas generally, both those for performance in church and out of it, one might sense a more 'choral feel' than generally in Bach's earlier music. Conversely, a choir of soloists is certainly appropriate for cantatas before Leipzig, not only in Weimar but earlier, such as Cantata No. 71 in Mühlhausen. Elsewhere, in the case of music for string instruments, a classical quartet is distinguishable from string orchestra often enough for one to believe that vocal music is likely to be similar.

Some details in the Leipzig arrangements are reasonably clear. A fund of three to four trebles for each of the two main choirs is documented for at least the 1730s and 1740s (Glöckner 2006), though this leaves open the question whether they were all used all of the time in each performance of a given cantata. Particularly after appointment to the Collegium in 1729 Bach may well have had extra performers at his disposal, paid or unpaid. Hence perhaps a reference by ex-Rector Gesner in 1738 to 'thirty or forty' performers (Dok. II, p. 332) – an enthusiastic but unfortunately vague reference, forty being a biblical number and claimed by Telemann for the size of his Leipzig Collegium (Mattheson 1731, p. 173). Sickness and even death must have led to moments in which either the ensemble was reduced or had to be supplemented by outsiders.

Although nothing is satisfactory about these various speculations, the several attempts in the later part of the twentieth century to strip away overloaded nineteenth- and earlier twentieth-century practice are useful in leading to a much better understanding of 'how this music sounded'. When, as was the case, the final *coro* or chorus in an Italian opera is sung not by a crowd but a group of soloists including women, to assemble for church cantatas any bigger chorus of boys and men must have been a conscious gesture, something specific to a specific genre. And choruses varied. Modern generalized conceptions of what constitutes a chorus can blur useful distinctions between one kind and another as known at the time in different settings, and add to the countless anachronisms in so many modern performances.

For further remarks on practicalities in Leipzig, see below, 'The ensemble-director and score-reader'.

The memorandum of 23 August 1730

Some picture of the Leipzig performances in general and the cantor's life in particular is provided by two documents he wrote in 1730, a long memorandum to the town council expressing grievances over present conditions

(dated 23 August, the so-called *Entwurff*: Dok. I, pp. 60–4), and a letter to his childhood friend Georg Erdmann in Danzig (dated 28 October: Dok. I, pp. 67–70) expressing interest in a job elsewhere. No response to either is known.

The first is as much about the abilities of the current performers as about their number and does not support firm conclusions about choir-size; but one interpretation of it is that there should be at least two and better three singers reinforcing the parts in a chorus that were already being sung by whoever takes the solo part in the arias and recitatives. However, there has been a serious shortfall, the memorandum says: the choristers leave a lot to be desired, untalented boys are admitted to the school and the cantor can find only seventeen usable singers and seven or eight instrumentalists, including an apprentice. Among instrumentalists (eight of whom were on the town council's books), some are retired (*emeriti*) while others are not in practice (*in exercitio*) as they should be. Following custom, university students have been willing to help in the orchestra and choir but, reasonably enough, not if they are not paid, as is now the case. The Council's support for the string- and wind-players continued to be unreliable for the rest of Bach's tenure (BJ 2013, pp. 344f.), no doubt adding to any general sense of disappointment.

The basic argument was for greater resources for the four church choirs for which Bach was responsible, five if one includes the Johanniskirche and its less regular commitments. In effect Bach was countering any criticism of him there was (or about to be) for neglecting teaching duties, and was probably putting as bad a face on the situation as he could. He might also be complaining here that his influence was limited on which boys were admitted to what was an over-subscribed school: he had recently learnt that only half the boarders he had recommended had been accepted (Glöckner 2006, p. 18). So he is reflecting a disagreement with school policy or with the school hierarchy, having no doubt found some boys not up to standard, or his standards.

A significant factor behind the grumbles was that since the time of Kuhnau, 'the art has risen a great deal' (*die Kunst um sehr viel gestiegen*), so musicians must now be appointed who will ensure, or rather insure, 'the current musical taste' (*den itzigen musicalischen gustum assequiren*: Dok. I, p. 63) and are able to handle the modern range of styles. Although this last point bears on the increased demands of both singers and instrumentalists in the full-scale cantatas and Passions, with their demanding choral counterpoint – a reason for claims today that most choruses were sung by solo voices – as well as their taxing arias for singers and instrumentalists, it is

also the case that twenty years earlier Kuhnau had made a similar complaint (Spitta II 1880, p. 855). Bach's challenge was not new but was very like one he had given Mühlhausen, a further decade earlier: that, as he then said, church music is 'growing in almost all [church] communities' and is elsewhere 'often better than here' (Dok. I, p. 19).

A reference made in the memorandum to the need for German musicians to be competent in the music of Italy, France, England and Poland is only marginally relevant to the Thomaskirche's repertory, though the point is valid, even if one has no idea exactly what English or Polish music he had in mind, if any. (Perhaps 'English' meant Handel, some of whose anthems might have been circulating by 1730. 'Polish' probably meant music heard in the Dresden Masses for the elector, 'King of Poland'.) He notes that musicians in Leipzig are not treated as well as those in Dresden, where under his Royal Majesty they are paid well, are free from chagrin, and need master only one instrument. This last was almost certainly not literally the case, however. Nor could the Dresden musicians be free of chagrin: on the death of the king in 1733, those musicians (including the court organist) found themselves automatically dismissed, uncertain of their future under the next king and having no fixed contract, as a municipal organist would have.

Nevertheless, Bach, despite his own experiences under an autocrat in Weimar, adds that the musical result of conditions in His Majesty's city 'must be something admirable and excellent to hear' (*muss was trefliches und excellentes zu hören seyn*). In these references to Dresden several things can be read, in particular a wish to goad the Leipzig Council, much as Kuhnau has also attempted to do in 1717 (Spitta II 1880, p. 863). But there may also be a sign here that in the early 1730s Bach had an increasing interest – a real interest of the true musician – in the capital city and its music. The remark about its 'admirable and excellent' music looks not only wistful but real, something a musician would genuinely respect and envy.

For some years Bach had been getting to know the musical establishments in Dresden, and even his critic Scheibe commented on the close contact he and other Leipzig musicians had come to have with the court virtuosi there (Dok. III, p. 241). When or how often by 1730 Bach had visited Dresden since the Marchand affair of 1717 is not clear from the record, but such visits are possible. At some point he had heard male sopranos in Dresden, and recognized the advantages given by their maturity; see p. 490 for a note on sopranos. Less speculative than this is that since in Leipzig the standard and number of the choristers were the responsibility of the cantor and would therefore reflect on him personally, as they

would on the organist of an English cathedral today, Bach's complaint arose either because he was being thwarted or because he was diverting blame for the situation.

Whichever of these it was (that he was thwarted is the usual interpretation), some exasperation and, one suspects, exaggeration can be read into this memorandum. It is noticeable that nothing is said there about the boys who lived not in the St Thomas School (the usual meaning of *alumnus*) but at home, some of whom would participate in at least the second and third choirs. Even the best singers are described merely as 'usable' (*brauchbar*). This is a business-like word that need not be pejorative, it is true, but any boys able to deal with their parts in Bach cantatas had to be more than merely 'usable'. Ever since Arnstadt, Bach is on record as finding performers he worked with *imperfectis* (Dok. II, p. 17), and whether anything in particular at the Thomaskirche prompted his latest grievances is unclear. That he was receiving less paid help for students to participate in the choir or string sections than in previous years seems to have been a serious difficulty by 1730, and in this respect things did get worse (BJ 1984, p. 48). Who will work for nothing, he asked? Perhaps problems had already been building up for some time, especially for the Good Friday Passion and for the performances at Whitsuntide in 1729, which could only have been put on with extra instrumentalists.

A request forwarded to him for music for the Council Election in August 1730, though not unexpected, could have been the last straw, for the very next day he wrote his complaining memorandum. How great an interest he personally had in the burgomasters' elections can only be guessed. When in August 1741 his secretary Johann Elias had to remind him of that year's Election cantata, he (Johann Elias) did so in such very deferential terms as to imply that he knew the reminder would not be well received. Perhaps in June 1730 Bach had heard that when the new school-rector Gesner was being elected, one of the councillors remarked that he hoped 'it would go better than with the cantor' previously (Dok. II, p. 203). This was either an intended slight or only meant 'without having so many candidates decline before the present cantor was appointed in 1723'. Some quarter of a century later, another councillor was still referring to 'many disorders' there had been in Bach's school-duties, giving some idea of the kind of criticism a cantor could meet with when his own focus was more on the musical side of things (Dok. III, p. 104).

Circumstances in many other cities were hardly better and in many cases worse: had Bach gone to the Jakobikirche, Hamburg, in 1720, he may have had no more than half a dozen adult singers and fifteen or so

instrumentalists, plus trumpeters on occasion. It could also be that with respect to the auditions of 1722–3, the Leipzig authorities themselves had made special efforts in order to give the best possible impression to competitors. Hence, perhaps, the demanding nature of Bach's first cantata-cycle, as if he were striving to match and satisfy the church's pretensions. To what extent the major renovations to the house and school building from May 1731 were one positive consequence of the grievances a year before is not known, but at least relations with Rector Gesner appear to have been good. His praise of Bach as organist and ensemble-director, published in Latin in 1738 after he had left Leipzig, is not only the most extravagant then in print but suggests the genuine admiration of someone witnessing how the cantor performed, both as player and conductor.

Altogether, it is likely that Bach had simply overrated the potential of the Leipzig situation. Not only was he not going to achieve the authority a court's capellmeister might have, but as his predecessor had also implied during his tenure, the city's instrumentalists and the church's choristers were never going to be able to give him what he wanted for his complex music. In the later 1730s, J. A. Scheibe's criticism was that Bach composed without due caution (*nicht mit gehöriger Behütsamkeit*) and did not bear in mind that he was unlikely ever to find sheer virtuoso performers (*lauter Virtuosen*) in a choir. It was also pointed out, however, that indeed while that was true, he had endeavoured either to accustom the singers to difficult pieces (*schwere Stücke*) or to match his work to their abilities (Dok. II, p. 357). The cantatas alone range from the very difficult to the very much simpler, making it easy to suppose that he did bear in mind current circumstances, which changed from time to time.

The letter to Georg Erdmann of 28 October 1730

Two months later, a letter to a long-established friend then living in Danzig, the one with whom he had left for Lüneburg as a teenager in 1700, expresses more personal grievances: his income is not as high as he was led to believe, Leipzig is twice as expensive as elsewhere he has lived, the authorities are 'whimsical and little devoted to music' (*wunderliche und der Music wenig ergebene*) and altogether he is subjected to endless 'annoyance, envy and persecution' (*Verdruß, Neid und Verfolgung*: Dok. I, p. 67). He had left Cöthen to become Leipzig cantor only because, he implies, the prince had become less enthusiastic about music after his marriage. So he had submitted to the audition in Leipzig when the cantorate was described

favourably (*favorable*) – a remark which suggests that to a former schoolfriend like Erdmann, who had gone on to distinction as diplomat in a major city, he felt it necessary to justify publicly competing for such a post. Perhaps Erdmann would speak for him if there were a suitable position in Danzig?

This request is puzzling, for although Danzig had once had a fine musical institution, the Baltic cities seem by now to have been in musical decline, and Bach working in Danzig would be as Wagner working in Riga a century later, i.e. in the absence of a better offer. (Curiously, Bach alone among composers was briefly praised in an article in a Danzig journal of December 1736: see Dok. V, p. 157.) One attraction might have been the apparently splendid organs in Danzig, were it certain that Bach had read Mattheson's brief description of them published a decade earlier in a book he does seem to have known (Niedt 1721, pp. 165–9). It gives details of six Danzig organs, a number exceeded only by the ten listed for Hamburg where, presumably because of Telemann's municipal directorship, Bach would have no interest.

Perhaps he had learnt somehow that the Marienkirche in Danzig was likely to be appointing a new capellmeister soon, as indeed it was (eventually doing so in 1732), and he had been accustomed to solicit in this way. If so, the surviving letter to Erdmann gives a glimpse of what might have been his normal practice when an important position was to be vacant, as has been the case at Halle and Hamburg and perhaps yet earlier. Had he written similar letters to friends there too, hearing of the vacancies? One need not construe the one to Erdmann as a desire for a court position (as distinct from church) to which Erdmann's contacts in eastern Europe might have led; and nor need one suppose that a visit he made to Dresden a year later was with a similar purpose in mind. But both are possible.

The letter to Erdmann is one of the very few surviving personal letters of Bach and is difficult to weigh precisely. That Leipzig was expensive is likely, particularly as it grew over the years 1700–50 from a population of 20,000 to 32,000. As elsewhere in the Bach documents, an awareness of money matters and a resistance (possibly aggressive) to certain pressures can be sensed in this letter. There is also the bigger question of which was more advantageous to a musician, to work for a court or for a church. Telemann's view, in his autobiographical notes (in Mattheson 1731 and 1740), seems to fluctuate over this, as well it might, since the question is hardly answerable without knowing the circumstances. Telemann too had given some thought to working for a municipality before he took on his supervisory job in Hamburg, thinking a 'republic' (so described) preferable to a court or a church. Bach, after the Hamburg 'audition' in 1720 and perhaps as a consequence of this, has left no sign of thinking likewise.

The 'annoyance' (*Verdruß*) Bach reports in his letter is credible, something he often experienced (or felt he experienced) in various connections with church and school, or at least with certain of their personnel. But 'envy' and 'persecution'? Neither is clear from given records and could indicate how Bach took resistance or discouragement from colleagues, employers and miscellaneous philistines: they were envious, and consequently he was persecuted. Immediate colleagues in Leipzig could well succumb to envy if he flaunted the title of Weissenfels capellmeister, which he had been assuming since 1729. On the other hand, a feeling of persecution could be his personal reaction when, around the time of the August 1730 memorandum, the burgomaster (why he?) was reprimanding him for absence without leave and showing 'poor desire for work' (*schlechte lust zur arbeit*: Dok. II, p. 206), by which was meant his responsibilities in the school. Just as hard to evaluate as the 'envy and persecution' are his seemingly tactless reference in the Erdmann letter to the falling number of funerals when the weather was good (fees fell accordingly) and the description of his children as 'born musicians', able already to form a vocal and instrumental consort in the family (*gebohrne Musici . . . Concert Vocaliter u. Instrumentaliter*). Was the first a matter often discussed between organists, or a sign of petty disgruntlement? Does the second show genuine fatherly pride or a job-seeker's desire to market his assets?

The appearance of gracelessness might also be misleading in another personal but less important letter, this time to a relative, concerning not music but a barrel of wine sent by his former secretary Johann Elias in late 1748. In disproportionate length, Bach takes the trouble to describe how it had been damaged, that he cannot yet make an adequate return for it (a gift? a payment?), and that all the taxes and costs he has to pay on such imported alcohol make it too expensive a gift (Dok. I, p. 119). Perhaps the letter was an elaborate joke. This was to a cousin from whom he had recently asked a thaler for a copy of the Musical Offering, or part of it, having just told him that he had given away gratis to good friends most of the 100 copies he had had engraved (Dok. I, p. 117). One hopes the thaler was for postage and that 'good friends' meant potential patrons.

The Leipzig Collegium obsolescent?

Just as it ignores the production and performance of cantatas, the Obituary says nothing about actual concert-life in Leipzig, not even in connection with the Collegium musicum. Yet Agricola himself had participated in it

(Dok. III, p. 76) not so very long before. The Obituary's list of unpublished Bach works includes 'Various concertos for one, two, three and four harpsichords' and 'a crowd of other instrumental pieces of all sorts and for all kinds of instruments', any of which could have served the regular concert-series and, in fact, had little purpose outside social or domestic music-making. None was published.

Emanuel too was surely familiar with the Collegium, even involved in it when it purchased a new harpsichord in June 1733, at a time when Friedemann was job-searching in Dresden and just before he, Emanuel, was doing similarly in Naumburg. If their father took little part in the concerts after about 1740, a decade or so before the Obituary was written, its silence is understandable, though late copies of some suitable works suggest that they appeared in concerts somewhere after May 1741, when Zimmermann, in whose coffee-house the concerts were held, died. Such copies include the A major Harpsichord Concerto and the B minor Flute Overture, typical 'concert music' that could and did take various forms. Perhaps these and similar pieces were heard well into the 1740s, in the coffee-house concerts through Zimmermann's successor.

Very likely, the Obituary's silence also reflects the fact that despite Bach's Collegium being 'famous above all others [of the kind] in Leipzig' according to Zedler's *Lexicon* (1739), the year 1743 had seen a new, more formally run weekly concert-series in the city (fortnightly in summer), for an upper-class clientele. This, the so-called *Grosses Concert*, was similar to patron-supported series elsewhere in Europe at the time. Sixteen persons, soon rising to thirty, paid a yearly sum of 20 Reichsthaler each to support sixteen performers, and a point was made of attracting only an elite audience. (Performers' pay must have been low.) C. G. Gerlach, organist of the New Church who had previously directed the Collegium for some time, took over again in 1746 until its demise a few years later, and also became concertmaster of the *Grosses Concert* as it developed with a complement of some two dozen performers. Other students of Bach and/or the St Thomas School were also involved, including in 1743 its director J. F. Doles, former university student and next-but-one successor to Bach as cantor. Whether the *Grosses Concert*'s performers numbered more than the Collegium's is not clearly documented but very likely (hence the name?), and this would be reflected in the kinds of music performed, larger works such as non-Gospel settings of the Passion story in Lent, as well as the ever-popular concertos for flute or violin.

Bach is not documented as participating in the *Grosses Concert* in any capacity, and nor was his opinion recorded of the new Italian symphonies

creeping into programmes as the older concert society became eclipsed by the new. (From 1744 there was also a further venue, 'Richter's Garden'.) It was typical of the deference with which the nineteenth and twentieth centuries treated Bach that historians guessed, as Arnold Schering did, that he had been 'too high' in public estimation for involvement with the *Grosses Concert*. Its elitism, however, might equally imply the opposite: he was not 'high' enough, getting old in church service. If he personally did not fit in with the newer musical tastes of the 'dilettanti and young artists' (Schering 1941, p. 263), some of his concertos might have done so. But they too were a long way from the popular intermezzi becoming increasingly familiar by then in Leipzig theatres.

Nor is there a record that Bach was involved in any of the Passion performances put on in the modest-sized room at the Three Swans, although in principle such local works as Hasse's *I Pellegrini* (performed in March 1750, the month of Bach's cataract surgery) had much in common with Handel's Lenten oratorios in London theatres and were potentially popular with listeners in any major city. The labelling of the (or a) keyboard continuo part *cembalo* and not *organo* or *basso* for the Keiser/Handel St Mark Passion copied by J. C. F. Bach in the 1740s might just mean that it was performed in some such location as the Three Swans, although by then the officials with whom Bach had been associated in the 1720s were themselves gradually leaving the scene. He too, after all, was in or nearing his sixties. For the newer *Grosses Concert* sponsors, his title *director chori musici lipsiensis* cannot have meant much, and it rather looks as if he gradually became (as we might now say) out of the loop.

Private or family music-making over both early and later periods has also left no detailed picture, even when Forkel asked Emanuel later for information about his father's activities. Quite why Emanuel does not say more in reply to Forkel is puzzling, but he was sixty years old himself by then, far from the world of 1720s Leipzig, and seemingly without any urge to create a more complete biography. Yet from a few details he gives in passing, such as that their Dresden visitors at home included the flautist P.-G. Buffardin (who reported teaching Emanuel's late uncle Jacob), or that he knew how to arrange a large orchestra in the open air and did so often (Dok. III, pp. 287–8), glimpses are given of the varied musical life Bach must have led beyond the confines of church and school. The Obituary's virtual silence on activities beyond what is implied by the worklist and the general remarks means no clue is given as to how important concert life was to him. But enough concertos and chamber sonatas exist in practical sources from his private library – apparently less

well organized or systematically conserved than for the church music – as to suggest that concerts were for him far more than an occasional solace.

The different versions of the 'instrumental pieces of all sorts' listed by the Obituary indicate something of a fluid repertory, works not exclusive in their instrumentation, made for adaptation, versatile in purpose and potential. In their carefully conceived structures, contrapuntal harmony, very distinctive melodies and scoring, the sonatas and concertos of J. S. Bach remain an isolated group of works in the history of music as a whole. However highly regarded they are now and indispensable to the modern concert-repertory, the various forms of the concertos and sonatas survive in sources that do not suggest them to have been so regarded in the 1730s or 1740s, except, one supposes, among a few local admirers. The only chamber sonata to be published was the one in the Musical Offering. But the scant evidence could be misleading, this for the old reason: that in general, concert and chamber music-scores were far more casually preserved than the regular service-music in a well-ordered church library. Nevertheless, the instrumental music of a composer like J. F. Fasch was probably far better known to the Dresden band of players than were any works of Bach.

Organs

The Obituary begins by identifying Bach as the 'world-famous organist' and goes on to give more attention to his activities in this branch of music than in any other. Agricola, as part of his concluding remarks, claims that

> despite all his knowledge of organs, it never could come about for him, as he often maintained with regret, that he had a really large and really fine organ available for his constant use. This still robs us of many fine and never-to-be-heard inventions [*Erfindungen*] in organ-playing [*Orgelspielen*], which he would otherwise have brought to paper and displayed just as he had them in his head. (*Obituary*)

This, much repeated ever since by admirers of Bach and of certain types of organ, has some puzzling implications. One is that though cantor, he did expect to have 'constant use' of the organ somewhere in Leipzig, in the Thomaskirche or as occasional composer to the university, in the Paulinerkirche. Another is that only if he had such 'constant use' would he, or could he, have 'invented' further great organ works. Another, that he 'brought to paper' only works he already had in his head. And yet another, that (even in his maturity?) his organ works were necessarily dependent on

opportunities for performing them, rather than on, say, a desire to study and to teach future organists. Nothing of this rings straightforwardly true for a composer for whom producing works for performance was only one part of endless engagement with *ars musica*.

Agricola's remarks could have a more down-to-earth origin, i.e. he was aware that Bach had been pressing for a new organ for St Thomas's, which is not likely to have been a secret. Here, then, was another criticism of Leipzig. It is documented that shortly after the Obituary was published, and of course too late for Bach, radical work was undertaken on the organ, considerably changing it. Slighter repairs, approved by the cantor and organist, had been made in 1747 by the builder Johann Scheibe for 200 thaler (Dok. II, p. 439), a sum only *one hundredth* the cost of the new Silbermann organ in Dresden planned for the king's Hofkirche. If Bach had been agitating in the 1740s for a new organ, and especially if he had come to learn the price of the Hofkirche organ, his 'regret' is understandable. Had he ever taken a job in Halle or Hamburg or Dresden or Danzig, he would indeed have had a 'really large and fine organ' to work with.

Intentionally or not, the Obituary's remark also looks back to the limited instruments at Bach's disposal when he was working on his much-admired organ music in the Weimar chapel. This had two manuals and about twenty-four stops, St Thomas's three manuals and about thirty-five stops. Neither organ can have been of the first rank, and strange to say, it is probable that the latter, combining the work of at least three earlier periods, had little directly to do with the important organ music of the Leipzig years. It is not even clear how much use the cantor made of this instrument on any regular basis; it is a reasonable guess that he played in public during the Leipzig fairs, but not much more. That both the Weimar and Leipzig organs needed a thorough rebuilding while he was employed there was nothing out of the ordinary, though his contemporaries in Dresden or Freiberg had no such need. The University Church, the Paulinerkirche, had a large three-manual organ of forty-eight stops by Johann Scheibe (the organ tested by Bach in 1717), on which it is possible that he occasionally taught pupils, although there is no clear evidence of this either, despite his being consulted at least once on repairs to this instrument (BJ 2008, p. 156). Whether with the phrase 'constant use' Agricola was obliquely referring to this organ, which is unlikely to have been at the cantor's daily disposal, is likewise unknown.

One can read from Bach's examination report of 1717 either that the university church's organ was a very good instrument or that it was not, and the latter is likelier, considering the various times later when work on it was necessary. Its cramped location would certainly not have been

tolerated by Gottfried Silbermann had he been the organ's builder, as he had originally proposed. At the time, however, the Leipzig organist Daniel Vetter reported that Bach (not then living in Leipzig) had been 'unable to praise it enough',[7] though this praise may have arisen in order to support Scheibe in his various problems with the university, including payment. One can imagine that by profession, both Vetter and Bach were more on the side of a craftsman than of a university or its officials. It was Scheibe who in 1739 made a new two-octave pedalboard (without C sharp) for St Thomas's, and Hildebrandt who tuned the gallery harpsichord – two craftsmen closely associated with the composer.

Like most organists, Bach can be supposed to have had more interest in playing organs in the vicinity of towns in which he lived than ever got reported or recorded. At least half a dozen important new organs in the surrounding villages of Leipzig were opened while he lived there, and there were quite as many older instruments still in action, some played by organists claiming to have been taught by him. It is more than likely too that he was acquainted with some of the published organ-monographs circulating in Germany; see below, p. 531. Two exceptionally fine Silbermann instruments a few miles away at Rötha, one of which had been dedicated in 1721 with music directed by Kuhnau, would have been an attraction for any organist, and the impression given by books published from Praetorius (1619) and Mattheson (1721, see under Niedt) to Adlung (1768) is that organists then as now studied stoplists enthusiastically.

The charming little instrument of *c.* 1600 in nearby Pomssen, where some memorial music by Bach was performed in February 1727 (Cantata No. 157), still sounds in part probably much like the second organ in the Thomaskirche, an older and smaller instrument associated, some have conjectured, with the 1736 version of the St Matthew Passion (Dok. II, p. 141). Worked on during Bach's earlier Leipzig years,[8] the little organ was taken down in 1740, probably because its gallery above the crossing arch was unsafe, and with or without the cantor's approval. There is no evidence

[7] Dok. I, pp. 166–7. The recent organ in the liturgical north gallery of St Thomas (2000) is partially based on Scheibe's university organ, with which in March 1741 a visiting organ-builder, Johann Andreas Silbermann, found much fault (Dok. V, pp. 162–3). So he also did with parts of Bach's report on this organ, which he evidently read. (If contact was made between them it is not recorded. Perhaps Bach was absent during Lent.)

[8] The organ-builder Zacharias Hildebrandt, who put eight stops of this little organ into playing order in 1727/8 (Dähnert 1962, p. 56), was well known to Bach since the Störmthal organ's inauguration, if not earlier. Was this work done for the sake of the Passion and the Christmas/New Year performances?

that J. S. Bach cared much about preserving old instruments, and if he was responsible for the upkeep of the little organ as he was for the big, its demolition does rather reflect on him. Or, on the contrary, he was responsible for some of its pipework being saved (taken) by Scheibe for the new organ in the Johanniskirche, which he may have examined in 1743.

Twice in poems published on the inauguration of Silbermann organs Bach was praised along with other composers, in 1730 at Reichenbach (along with the Weimar capellmeister Drese and the Thomaskirche organist Görner) and in 1736 at the Dresden Frauenkirche (with Handel and Telemann: see Ahrens and Langrock 2003, pp. 54, 119). But it rather looks as if Bach and Silbermann, though apparently on good terms at the Naumburg organ-examination of 1746, would have had a personality clash: Silbermann, prone to litigation, had a notion of what an organ was and did not care to change it significantly for anybody; Bach had different but equally strong and strongly held views. The poems published in celebration of several of Silbermann's new organs included one by Friedemann Bach for the Dresden Frauenkirche in 1736, but evidently there were never any poems by his father – either because Silbermann did not care to ask or Bach declined to write one? Silbermann's title from 1723 as court and state organ-builder was an important craftsman's *privilegium* (qv), and both he and Bach, colleagues with respect to their court-titles, always used them in official documents.

In view of his declared dissatisfaction with instruments he worked with, and his reported praise for organ-reeds of the Hamburg type – reported by Agricola later (Dok. III, p. 191) – one would expect Bach to have dropped any personal antagonism he had towards Gottfried Silbermann and pressed for a new organ of his for the Thomaskirche. Perhaps he did. At Zwickau in 1737, his pupil J. L. Krebs had apparently done exactly that soon after taking up his appointment. It is true that Silbermann's tuning was such that it would not have suited several pieces in *Clavierübung III*, nor did he have the same taste as Bach for big, deep bass pipes or bright mixture-stops of the older type. (Hildebrandt was probably more compliant on both counts.) On the other hand, any long-lasting taste Bach may have had for classical French music would have been admirably served by a larger Silbermann organ, or even one by Joachim Wagner, two of whose organs, perhaps more, he came to know in Potsdam.

A question of great concern to performers today – what is the 'right Bach organ'? – has been coloured by the relatively easy accessibility after 1945 of north-west German organs compared to those of Saxony. There has been a postwar concerted effort to publicize the type of baroque

instrument common in and around Hamburg, resulting in playing down the foreign, more southerly, music that was of lasting importance to J. S. Bach. This 'playing-down' tendency had been noticeable ever since the Obituary. But while the young Bach surely admired these northern organs, it is significant that he did not continue to produce the kinds of music for which they were made – long sectional chorale-fantasias, hymn-variations, sectional praeludia, passacaglias and so on. Maturer works such as the *Orgelbüchlein*, the lengthy unified ritornello preludes and chorales, the long single-span fugues: these may not actually forbid the older northern organs but they surely suit the 'warmer' styles of instruments in Saxony and Thuringia better. One other instrument-type has been strangely neglected in the literature: the organ of Hapsburg Bohemia. Did Bach, on his two visits to Carlsbad, really show no interest in these elegant instruments in the spa town or its neighbourhood, colourful, 'warm' and ideal for the various contributions the organist made to the liturgy?

Finally, this might be the point at which to express doubts about a frequently expressed view that the organ was joined by a harpsichord during the cantatas in Leipzig, and previously in Weimar. From various documentation throughout the century it is clear that a harpsichord of some kind was kept in church galleries, tuned, repaired when required, even spoken of as 'extremely necessary' in 1756 by the cantor of St Thomas, J. F. Doles (BJ 2013, p. 342), whose list of the instrument's woes, however, suggests that it cannot have been used much. The question is whether harpsichords (or spinets as they are sometimes called) were used for more than rehearsals, or giving the pitch quietly, tuning-up before the cantatas, or when there was no available bellows-blower. Documentation is ambiguous, and practical experience today inconclusive. Doles's remark in speaking of the harpsichord's necessary support for singers need have no bearing on actual performance of cantatas, not even in recitatives.

For their Leipzig auditions, both Graupner's and Bach's cantatas had two figured parts apparently for organ and for harpsichord, even perhaps a sign that in the latter case, Bach was out to 'make an impression' with his cantata, BWV 23 (BJ 1978, p. 85). But again, the existence of two figured-bass parts need not mean they were both used in the service. In the Weimar court chapel, a harpsichord might have been less inappropriate for recitatives, but then the question is whether in any case a harpsichord could be heard down below the galleries, in Weimar any better than in Leipzig. There is no better evidence that a harpsichord played in the Sunday cantatas than there is that the equally useful piano standing in an Anglican cathedral plays in the anthems.

Other keyboards

About other keyboard instruments and Bach's interest in them the Obituary says nothing beyond a reference to his practical skill in tuning, for they and their music were much less in the public eye. Only from incidental references can one build a (faint) picture of his involvement with the day's stringed keyboards. These include the small harpsichord of his youth, the larger single-manual, the two-manual harpsichord from *c.* 1720, experimental harpsichords with sub-octave strings, the clavichord, the double clavichord and/or harpsichord with independent pedals, the *Lautenwerk* (qv) or *Lautenclavicymbel* (qv) (a small deep spinet, with two sets of gut strings to imitate a lute), the *Gambenwerk* (probably with a wheel 'bowing' the strings) and eventually the fortepiano.[9] This was a period of intensive work in many parts of Germany on clever mechanisms and ingenious apparatus of all kinds, from complex clocks to complex automata. Not a few courts in central Germany had a large inventory of keyboard instruments and a *cabinet* or showroom to please distinguished visitors.

At Gotha by the 1740s, an inventory lists half a dozen different kinds of harpsichord, including one each from Antwerp, Hamburg and Dresden, plus nine other unusual or experimental types including a *Lautenwerk* and a *Gambenwerk*, a harpsichord with flute stop, a large clavichord, and a travelling (foldable?) harpsichord belonging to Count Keyserlingk.[10] A pedal-harpsichord by Hildebrandt, with sub-octave strings (one row for the manual, two rows for a pedal of compass AA–d') was advertised for sale in 1770, when it was described as being used 'in Richter's garden' in Leipzig (BJ 2010, p. 288), tavern premises in which some Collegium concerts had taken place. (The point made in note 9 could suggest that this advertised instrument had replaced the earlier *Clavicymbel* announced for Bach's Collegium concerts in 1733.)

Very likely is that Bach had a keener interest in instrument technology than most cantors of a major church. This would explain Agricola's later report that in about 1740 he had seen, presumably in Leipzig, a three-string *Lautenclavicymbel* made by Hildebrandt but 'suggested' by Bach

[9] The type of small harpsichord of his youth had four octaves only, with bottom octave incomplete ('short'). A guess that Hildebrandt's new harpsichord for the Collegium had sub-octave strings is unconvincing: its cost of 120 reichsthaler (Dähnert 1962, p. 231) was not much above average for a standard one-manual.

[10] Christian Ahrens, 'The Inventory of the Gotha Court Orchestra in 1750', *Galpin Society Journal*, 60 (2007), pp. 37–44, where, however, several interpretations of the inventory-clerk's terms are questionable.

(*angegebenes*: Dok. III, p. 195), its maker more than a casual acquaintance. Agricola clearly respected technical expertise, being himself occupied in various aspects of organology and aware of his readers' professional interests. But that a different kind of reader, one of Bach's critics, mocked him for these very interests in instruments (see below, p. 538) is sign of a certain disdain in higher circles at the time for a practical musician's practical interests and practical skills, for which Bach had been praised.

On the wider relation between instruments and their music, the years 1700–50 saw many changes of approach. Early keyboard works such as the Sonata in D, BWV 963, and the *Aria variata*, BWV 989, seem to allow options. If a pedal is available, of whatever type on whatever instrument, it can take certain bass notes; if not, the player adapts as well as he can. Scores continued to offer alternatives not only in tempo, dynamics and touch but in the number of manuals and even the number of notes required. As well as organs, most Thuringian harpsichords of *c.* 1700 had one manual and four octaves only, so one cannot date musical works on grounds of compass, as some writers in the past have tried to do. Both composers and builders looked increasingly beyond this narrow compass, probably builders earlier than composers who, especially if intending to publish, would not deter buyers by requiring anything exceptional. More importantly, during the composer's lifetime and over the eighteenth century generally, one could view music written for the keyboard as gradually requiring one or other type of instrument exclusively: music *either* for organ *or* piano.

While interchangeability could not entirely disappear between 1700 and 1750, instruments were increasingly specified to do things not possible earlier. So in the four successive *Clavierübung* volumes, the first requires a one-manual harpsichord, the second a two-manual, the third an organ with two (and optionally three) manuals, the fourth a grand concert-harpsichord. No music of Bach is labelled 'for fortepiano', since such labelling would be more restrictive than was customary at the time; nor is any work labelled 'for one-manual organ', which would be unnecessary. There are two unique rubrics in the 'Goldberg Variations': *à 1 Clav.* and *à 1 ô vero 2 Clav*, apparently invented by Bach for two rather different purposes. First, to distinguish them from the more familiar *à 2 Clav* (when two manuals are indispensable). Second, and more obscurely, in order for the print to be consistent: it seems that for the 'full-dress formality' and 'neat consistency' of an engraved volume, it was now felt desirable by Bach that every movement should have a rubric, even rubrics not seen before and not strictly necessary.

Some keyboard instruments of the time must have been 'work-horses', substitutes for grand instruments. Hence the clavichord, which, despite enthusiastic claims now made for it, could best be likened to the upright piano in Victorian homes or today's school studios. (While clavichord or fortepiano or even organ serves several pieces in the WTC very well – individual movements, not pairs – only harpsichord seems to me to suit fully all ninety-six movements.) When a Leipzig city clerk in November 1750, doing his best to take an inventory of the late capellmeister Bach's possessions, called one of the items *3.* ***Clavire*** *nebst* ***Pedal*** ('three keyboard besides pedal': Dok. II, p. 504), he probably meant a double clavichord, i.e. two separate instruments, one placed above the other, plus (*nebst*) a third bass clavichord for the pedals. This was an instrument for the youngest son, Johann Christian, a fifteen-year-old who needed a practice instrument. Evidently the children from the first marriage (Friedemann, Emanuel and Catharina Dorothea) and the trustee of the other young children objected to this gift to Christian, which was said to have been witnessed by Anna Magdalena (his mother), her son-in-law Altnickol and a representative of her daughter Elisabeth. Though apparently resolved, the situation does rather hint that all was not well between Anna Magdalena and her adult stepchildren.

How Friedemann came to inherit, if he did, a two-manual Thuringian harpsichord of *c.* 1710 and called the 'Bach harpsichord' after it was deposited in the Royal Museum, Berlin in 1890, is not known, nor whether the instrument was actually associated with his father. 'Bach and the two-manual harpsichord' is still not a straightforward question. Given the fact that even in *Clavierübung II* two manuals are not wholly necessary, it is odd that when they are specified there, they tend to be used either unnecessarily (*Echo* of the *Ouverture*) or for simple contrast (Finale of the Italian Concerto). As for the rare *Geigenwerk*, the possibility that there was an example in both Cöthen and Weimar while Bach was there (see Dok. III, p. 195) suggests how a duke or prince might buy special musical instruments along with other unusual and technologically ingenious *objets d'art*. (To this day, the Grüne Gewölbe museum in Dresden is witness to the incomprehensible interest in ingenious and labour-intensive artefacts shown by successive Electors of Saxony.) No doubt the fortepianos had a similar significance for Frederick the Great, as examples of German technology. The new harpsichords for the Cöthen court and the Leipzig Collegium would have been acquired by Bach for public music, grand instruments fitting the rôle better than the modest instruments kept in the choir-galleries of the major Leipzig churches.

Another probability in this under-documented topic is that Bach was involved in the buying of yet another kind of keyboard instrument at Weimar in 1715, the gut-strung keyboard *Lautenwerk* (qv) built by his cousin Johann Nicolaus Bach of Jena. The so-called 'Lute Suite' in E minor, BWV 996, copied at Weimar by J. G. Walther, was assumed by J. T. Krebs, a pupil at that period, to be for *Lautenwerk* (NBA V/10, KB, p. 115). There are reports that Bach also had a *Lautenwerk* made in Cöthen and again in Leipzig, the last by Hildebrandt: this would mean there was such an instrument in each of his three locations. Among the deceased's own possessions two *Lautenwerke* were listed, plus a veneered harpsichord, three other harpsichords ('Clavesins'), a smaller one, eleven string instruments and a spinet of some kind (Dok. II, pp. 492–3). This was not quite the array of keyboard instruments listed for most musicians at the time. Perhaps the little 'Clavesin' was a simple clavichord, while Johann Christian's *3. Clavire* had been the family's practice instrument for organ music.

Although the inventory on Bach's death might seem rich, it is noticeable that no house-organ is listed, nor fortepiano. There had been such but they had been removed, being more valuable? The remainder broadly reflects what was customary among German organists, who showed less interest in or knowledge of fine harpsichords than their English and French colleagues of the time. (In London Handel possessed as well as a house-organ two fine seventeenth-century Flemish harpsichords, though no other keyboard-types are mentioned: HHB 4, 441). As for the *Lautenwerk*: quite what the attraction was other than its pretty sound and an ability to range from soft to very soft, is unclear. Agricola described the sound as more like a theorbo's than a lute's (Dok. III, p. 195), which would be expected from its size. Several thin-textured two-stave works from the late 1730s, such as the F minor Suite, BWV 823, and even the E flat prelude from WTC2, look like music at least optionally for *Lautenwerk*. Similarly, the apparently genuine lute works of the late 1730s (BWV 997, 998) look rather like keyboard music that needs to be adapted if the lute is to play it. A lute version of the E major Violin Partia made and copied by the composer in *c.* 1736 kept the *forte/piano* signs of the violin version.

Also unrecorded is whether Bach showed any interest in some of the day's other developments, such as Silbermann's *cembalo d'amour* (1730), with its double-length strings; or the dulcimer stop imitating Hebenstreit's pantaleon, a large hammered dulcimer admired in Dresden when played by its inventor; or experimental composite instruments like the three-manual harpsichord-plus-fortepiano advertised in a Leipzig newspaper in

1742–3 (BJ 1991, p. 170). Yet both Silbermann and Hebenstreit were in Bach's circle of acquaintance. Emanuel owned a Silbermann clavichord (see the Rondo Wq 66), and Friedemann's appointment at the Dresden Sophienkirche in 1733 was supported by the same Hebenstreit, who was responsible for the Protestant music of the Saxon court. It is not at all unlikely that the Bach sons became far more interested than their father in the piano. Nevertheless, to imagine that the composer's concertos for one, two, three or four harpsichords were thought at the time to suit the fortepiano better than harpsichord would be to overestimate the piano's volume-level (more *piano* than *forte*) and to underestimate the contemporary harpsichord's, especially when accompanied by only four or five string instruments.

Among the Dresden musicians with whom Bach and other musicians in Leipzig had connections was the lutenist Silvius Weiss, perhaps for whom and under whose advice the three-movement work in E flat for lute, BWV 998, was composed. Its idiom is appropriate to the large baroque lute, with a fugue-subject that harks back to WTC1, but with textures easier to play on the keyboard-lute than the lute proper. Various other pieces are known from sources not reliable enough to indicate how well Bach himself played lute, but recorded activities by students in his circle suggest it was not a negligible item in domestic music-making. The value of the lute mentioned in his Will implies an old instrument, perhaps enlarged in the 1730s and regularly played by him. J. W. Koch, who remained in contact with him long after serving as a treble in Weimar, was reputedly a fine player, while the testimonial Bach wrote for his student in Leipzig, J. L. Krebs, refers to his lute-playing (Dok. I, p. 139).

Another Bach pupil, J. C. Weyrauch, who became notary public in the city, made lute-tablature versions of several of his teacher's works, and it could have been at the request of a city bookseller that Bach made his arrangement BWV 995 of the C minor Cello Suite in the late 1720s, maybe for sale. Corrections in the autograph manuscript suggest that Bach was making the transcription as he was writing it down (Schulze 1984, p. 101). Presumably all this activity was for domestic music-making, though as with the five lutes, theorbo and three other bass lutes that had been inventoried previously at Weimar (BJ 2008, p. 333), such instruments were part of many a ducal court's instrumental inventory.

About other string instruments the Obituary says nothing, but various documents testify to Bach's warm relationship with J. C. Hoffmann, member of an old family of makers of viol, violin, viola and lute in Leipzig, and holder of a royal title as instrument-maker to the court of Saxony,

conferred on him four years after Bach's. In some connection between both Hoffmann and the composer, the renowned violinist Franz Benda 'had the pleasure of meeting Bach and his sons' in Leipzig in 1734 (Dok. III, p. 186). Apart from the Stainer violin in Bach's inventory, the other string instruments, including violino piccolo, *bassettgen* ('little bass', a violoncello piccolo?), gamba and lute, are not attributed, but they probably included several Hoffmanns. In his own will this maker left instruments to Bach, with whom he was godparent to a son of the lute-playing lawyer Weyrauch. This too suggests a circle among Leipzigers with an active interest in lutes, all the instrument-makers in Leipzig doubtless being known to each other.

It is a sad reflection on the forms taken by Bach reception over the following century or so, and to which so much attention has been paid in recent years, that there proved to be such little interest in preserving the instruments he knew or owned or had in mind. The preserving of documents, copying of manuscripts and publishing of editions were never matched by an urge to preserve the physical circumstances in which so much of the music was conceived.

The ensemble-director and score-reader

Immediately after remarking on Bach's 'light and playful way of thinking' (above, p. 478), Agricola continues:

> Constant practice in elaborating full-voiced musical works had brought him in the way of such a quick visual grasp that in the most detailed full scores [*Partituren*] he could, at a glance, take in all the voices sounding together. His hearing was so fine that in the fullest-voiced cantatas [*Musiken*], he was able to discern the smallest error. (*Obituary*)

Walther's explanation of the word *Partitura* in his *Lexicon* had already said that scores existed 'in order to avoid errors and correct the performers, should they make mistakes'– presumably either errors in their singing and playing or errors in a faulty part. Surely Agricola was not merely embroidering what Walther had written? He does seem to be implying that these skills, both the visual and the aural, were not universal among composers.

By the 'voices sounding together', Agricola means vocal plus instrumental lines in a big score: a full mixed ensemble in something like the seventeen-stave score of the Sanctus of the 'B minor Mass' (five voice parts, twelve instrumental) or the twenty-four-stave opening of

the St Matthew Passion (eight vocal, sixteen instrumental). *Musiken* must refer to actual performance of ensemble works, and it was following this remark that the Obituary mentions the limitations of Bach's performers. Commenting on a composer's skill in preparing a big score was not unknown: Agricola could almost be anticipating Mainwaring's remark concerning Handel in London, that 'no man ever introduced such a number of instruments' in a score as he, a number among which 'not one is found idle or insignificant' (1760, p. 202). Emanuel had long been familiar with extracting a part from his father's scores and had worked on the 'B minor Mass'.

There are several implications in the Obituary's remarks, none of which is easily supported by other evidence. Three are: (i) that Bach had more practice than many other musicians in composing big scores; (ii) that he somehow made use of the full score in performance; and (iii) that his ability to recognize the smallest mistakes in the performance was unusual. The two sentences taken together seem at first glance to be saying that he directed, conducted, played from or at least followed the music from the full score, and that he could see from it if anyone went wrong. That might have been the case but is unlikely, and it would be strange if he could identify a mistake only when directing from the score. A fully figured bass part would have done almost as well, whether Agricola is speaking of performances or of rehearsals. The reference is ambiguous, but the remarks are clearly meant to contribute to the picture of a musician with practical as well as creative skills, something eminently plausible – but unlikely to be said in the biography of earlier composers.

A reader now might be projecting back from later practices to suppose that Agricola is describing Johann Sebastian Bach standing formally before a big ensemble and directing it from a full score, turning the pages every few seconds with one hand and conducting with the other. The School Regulations do speak of the precentor being expected to stand at or near the gallery-front or balustrade. But whether he is facing the choir and players, what he is reading from (a figured bass?), and in what way he is 'conducting', are less clear than commonly supposed. In the Dresden Court Church the capellmeister stood at the front of the choir-gallery facing not west but east, down the nave. In Leipzig the boys stood behind two (possibly four) music-desks about 7 feet long to the left and right of centre, just behind the balustrade and therefore in front of the string- and wind-players (BJ 2013, pp. 338–9). The cantor, tenors and basses remained standing during the sermon, or were supposed to.

Since the organ stood in (and fronted) its own narrower gallery above the singers in theirs, how the instrumentalists grouped around it would see a director below is hard to envisage. Various practical solutions are conceivable, however, including keeping a small positive organ or a (large) spinet in the singers' gallery. If a section of the big organ played the solo melodies in certain cantata arias, which is not certain, the organist must have had contact with the singers standing nearby and, in the case of the Sinfonia of Cantata No. 29, with a full complement of players in the gallery. For Cantata No. 80.i, it is possible that the pedal Posaune was revoiced in 1730 in time to play the chorale-melody, as specified in a later copy. Enlargement of the gallery space was somehow made in 1739 for the instrumentalists, suggesting there had been practical problems previously, and at that point, opportunity was also taken for Johann Scheibe to make a new pedalboard for the organ.

When in 1738 the former rector J. M. Gesner described Bach giving the beat, with a nod to one performer, a foot-tap to another and a warning finger to a third, singing and playing his own part (Dok. II, p. 332), all this 'while he is performing the most difficult parts [*partibus*]', the picture that presents itself is of a conductor standing in front of choir and players. *Partibus* is rather ambiguous, and Gesner does not make it clear whether Bach was helping out during rehearsals, singing and reinforcing the bass-line, playing a second continuo part, sitting or standing, marking the beat, correcting some performers, all with a full score in his hand. During the service itself? In any case, presumably, the rector's words concern only the full choruses, and it might be that neither he nor Agricola had witnessed large ensembles elsewhere being so directed. Gesner, not a musician, mentions the possibility that there may be others as skilful as Bach, and yet he was not alone in drawing the picture of something exceptional. Other writers were soon doing so. When Gesner speaks of Bach 'taking in all these harmonies with his sharp ear' (*harmonias unum omnes arguta aure metientem*), he seems to be anticipating points made in the Obituary, whose authors, despite having themselves witnessed Bach many a time, could again be making use of something already in print and available to them.

Since big scores are only now and then to be found in the works of Telemann or Graupner or Handel (twelve staves for the *Fireworks* autograph, 1749), a key phrase in Agricola's remarks is 'constant practice': his teacher had learnt by experience and frequent self-application, having to find for himself a way to lay out a full score. This is plausible. The surviving fair-copy autograph of the St Matthew Passion opens with a vertical layout

of twenty-four staves for the opening movement, growing to twenty-six when two further are added for the Agnus dei melody (one in each 'choir'), with the singers' staves placed between the viola and the basso continuo (a placing that became conventional). The imposing appearance of this, plus the tight economy in the script overall, make it quite unlikely for such a score to be used in a performance.

There is some variety in the layout for big ensembles, and in general, orchestral scores were not yet fully standardized or indeed often published at all. In its vertical order of staves, the 'Brandenburg Concerto' No. 1's score is not too different from the early Viennese symphonies of a later period, and reading up from the lowest stave:

continuo, strings, solo violin, woodwind, horns.

But the early Cantata No. 71 score is laid out as:

continuo, chorus (BTAS), Vc, Recorder 2, Recorder 1, Bn, Ob2, Ob1, Violone, three 'Violae' (= Vla, Vn2, Vn1), 'Tamburo', Tr3, Tr2, Tr1;

and seventeen years later, the Birthday Cantata No. 205 has:

continuo, BTAS, Vla, Hn2, Hn1, Timp, Tr3, Tr2, Tr1, Fl2, Fl1, Ob2, Ob1, Vn2, Vnl.

This last, an unfamiliar layout, was misunderstood by a later copyist, either because it had originally been made *ad hoc* or conventions had become different by then. Also with an *ad hoc* appearance are the wind and ripieno (qv) parts added to the score of the first movement of the Third 'Brandenburg' when it was used as the splendid prelude to Cantata No. 174, a score written mostly by a copyist probably from a manuscript not yet complete with the new parts. Partly because of the different layouts and partly because of the page's general appearance – densely written equidistant staves without collective brackets, and confusing to the eye (How many actual lines of music? Is there one choir or two?) – pupils and assistants might well have been amazed at the composer's grasp of big scores.

The clear fair-copy score of newly compiled works such as the 'Brandenburg Concertos' is exceptional, this being a presentation copy. Perhaps the margrave's capellmeister would have performed the concertos had Bach sent the instrumental parts instead. (That the 'Brandenburgs' were never performed, as supposed, hangs on whether performing parts had ever been made in-house.) Generally, neat copies were made for performers reading directly from parts, while cantata full-scores, as in the earlier Leipzig period, are less neat, used as the source for the students copying

parts, hence the likelihood that the cantor did not direct from them. Shortage of time often meant hastily written scores, as in the case of Cantata No. 105, and fair copies that do exist, such as the St Matthew Passion, can only be the product of time carefully laid aside for the necessary labour. Such fair copies could reflect various things: Bach's own sense of the music's significance, his respect for the Gospel, a certainty that he would have to re-use the work, or his intention to add it one day to the Old-Bach Archive.

Corrections in scores of re-used works are generally sparse. Various manuscripts suggest that Bach sometimes revised the opening of a movement quite heavily but far less so as it proceeded. Hand-ruling the staves could lead to a congested appearance or to other problems (as in the Art of Fugue's 'unfinished fugue'), and so could drawing in the bar-lines before the notes were written (as in the full score of the 'Brandenburg Concertos'). One question to strike anyone viewing the first page of the 'Brandenburgs' is whether it is making fun of the horns, with their scrappy and out-of-phase contributions looking like second thoughts, optional extras, something odd going on literally above everybody else. A very different notational detail might have been noticed by buyers of *Clavierübung III*: the older chorale-melodies were so notated in the organ-score as to keep their modal *Ur-form* – 'modal' implying without accidentals.

One curiosity in the scores of both Handel and Bach is that so little is ever abbreviated: repeated figuration and shared lines are generally written out complete, presumably to avoid misleading copyists. In an individual part, however, a pattern once spelt out may well be abbreviated by the composer if it continues further with only changed harmony (C major Prelude in the *Clavierbüchlein*, solo part in the Violin Concerto in A minor). Continuing the pattern is sometimes indicated by the word *arpeggio* (the D minor Chaconne, the gamba recitative in St Matthew Passion). That Bach did not regularly write the name of the soloists in to his scores when Handel did presumably results from the several circumstantial differences: in genre (Handel followed operatic custom?), in circumstances (his copyists supplied the named soloists with their parts?), or in social context (his London soloists were theatre celebrities?). Presumably, if Bach's choir was small, and only two *bassi* were reading from a part, they would not need any cues to know that the recitative and aria were sung by one of them, the chorus and chorale by both.

The scoring of some of Bach's published pieces is, by tradition, quite incomplete, especially for complex canons. 'Improvising' a canonic answer is already difficult, risky and frankly impossible most of the time; even in

straightforward pieces, such as the first two of the Canonic Variations, without warning the answer might need an accidental. The Art of Fugue's and Musical Offering's augmentation canons have to be written out. When in the latter the rubric says 'seek and ye shall find' (*quaerendo invenietis*) for the answer to one or two of the canons, buyers are being challenged and instructed, even amused on a level appreciated by connoisseurs. Nor is there in any of these three volumes a clearly intended order for performance, and each could no doubt have led to further movements if opportunity arose.

It would not be surprising if, like many a composer, Bach also had an interest in musical notation itself. Very striking in the early copy he made of de Grigny's *Livre d'orgue* (1699/1700) is its fidelity to the idiosyncratic three-stave keyboard score, with French clefs, intricate and voluminous ornamentation, and a wandering pedal part in the French manner. The fidelity is not affected by minor differences between Bach's and the known prints, though the question remains whether they result from his editing or from using another source. Bach's known exemplars of volumes by Frescobaldi (1635) and Ammerbach (1571) also provided samples of keyboard notations conspicuously different from those he habitually used himself: in Frescobaldi, four staves in open score with various C clefs; in Ammerbach, an early version of letter tablature for the organist to 'score up' as he liked. In his publications, Bach came to display a most unusual variety of scores or layouts:

two-stave with or without cantus firmus;
three-stave for organ with cantus firmus (*Clavierübung III*);
four-stave for organ (Canonic Variations);
parts only and no score (Sonata in the Musical Offering);
old-fashioned open score (Ricercar *à 6*, fugues in Art of Fugue);
a miscellany of scores, parts and even single-stave (Musical Offering).

For the usual composers of sonatas, concertos and oratorios in the mid-eighteenth century, such a varied way of notating was archaic and singular, a further hint of the relative isolation in which Bach worked.

Assuming he knew enough Italian, Bach will also have seen that Frescobaldi commends his open score on the grounds that it gives organists practice in score-reading, especially those wishing to compose four-part counterpoint (*à 4*), which was something to distinguish *virtuose* from *ignoranti*, to cite Frescobaldi. Bach is also using the same open-score clefs as Frescobaldi, though he cannot avoid ledger lines as easily, having a bigger compass. Unlike the *Fiori musicali*, which is printed in movable type, the Art of Fugue is engraved, something more appropriate for a

keyboard score of two staves. Engraving an open score implies a deliberate gesture on Bach's part towards old contrapuntal traditions, as was also the case with the engraved Ricercar *à 6* of the Musical Offering.

Another result of careful consideration, and thus another typical gesture, must be the comprehensive range of time-signatures in the *Clavierübung* publications. Those in the 'Goldberg Variations' have already been remarked upon, but similar points could be made about *Clavierübung I*, where the five gigues have five different metres; and *Clavierübung III*, where there are ten different time-signatures, duplicates of which have different tempi. It is difficult to see this as accidental, rather another sign of the wish to be 'thorough' and didactic, perhaps even playful.

How frequently in his youth Bach used keyboard tablatures is not certain, for in the nature of things, copies in tablature would be superseded. But it can be safely assumed to have been more common than now known. In Weimar, copies made of earlier, often very fine north German organ works, made by his associates Walther and J. T. Krebs and prepared for their current use, always used regular keyboard scores for music that had no doubt originated in tablature, some of it even perhaps in copies made by the young Bach and lent for the purpose. His earliest extant keyboard scores (BWV 739, 764, 1128) could have been made from tablature originals to bring them up to date, as could the north German pieces in the two early albums, the Möller manuscript and Andreas Bach Book; and this could be the reason they were preserved and survived. The fair tablature-copy Bach made of the little Fantasia in C minor, BWV 1121, shows complete familiarity with organ tablature of Buxtehude's time. Certain 'south German' elements now recognized in it imply that it was via his brother Christoph, and thus indirectly Christoph's teacher Pachelbel, that he became familiar with this notation. Since BWV 1121 might be only an exercise, a better indication of familiarity with tablature is his turning naturally to it in the margin of the first page of the *Orgelbüchlein*, and not rarely elsewhere when he runs out of space in stave-score.

Certain notational details suggest an awareness of modern trends. One example is the treble clef for the Partitas (No. 1, 1726), as in Handel's suites of 1720. This contrasts with the soprano C-clef used throughout for works known only in manuscript – WTC1 (*c.* 1722), the Inventions, both Anna Magdalena books, and even WTC2 (all but two), as well as in other contemporary prints such as Graupner's Suites of 1722. Couperin's *Premier Livre* of 1713 used four different clefs for the right hand, the *Second Livre* of 1717 used the soprano clef but the *Troisième Livre* of 1722 the treble: perhaps another sign that Bach

was acquainted with more than one of Couperin's books and recognized their 'modern trends'. Of the four *Clavierübung* prints, only the organ volume uses soprano clef, signifying something about persistent traditions in the organist's world. More puzzling are the duplicate copies of certain keyboard pieces, equally authentic but respectively with soprano and treble clefs (two of the Six Partitas, the 'Goldberg' aria, the C minor Fantasia, BWV 906). The copies with soprano clef were for instruction in the family?

Clefs, of course, are not the only details significant in some way for Bach's notational habits. The increase in articulation signs and the precisely marked rhythmic differences in music of a *galant* turn probably owe something to knowledge of French publications. There are slurs, *détaché* dots, snapped or plain rhythms and triplets, here and there, in manuscripts of vocal works (and some instrumental parts of the 'B minor Mass') but more systematically in a few engraved publications (the Lord's Prayer setting). Slurring the note-pattern called *tierce coulée* is consistent in, for instance, the E major 'French Suite', probably for the sake of Anna Magdalena's playing.

A further example of modernity is the regular use now made of full key-signatures for minor keys. While Friedemann's *Clavierbüchlein* still has one flat for G minor, two flats are soon normal. Couperin was still using one or two old key-signatures in his *Quatrième Livre* of 1730, but in the *Clavierübung* of 1739 they are more consciously re-introduced in recognition of, or as a salute to, the old chorales, causing one pupil to exaggerate and speak of modes rather than keys (Kirnberger, in Dok. III, p. 301). In WTC1 all twenty-four keys have their modern key-signatures, except that each space and line in the stave has its accidental, logically enough. Full key-signatures were rare in 1722, although in that year the fantasia of F. Suppig that passes through all the keys also had them, suggesting another sign of common interest at the time.

In organ music, Bach followed tradition in keeping to two staves unless the two hands and the feet played three differently registered lines at the same time, for which he used three staves, as did French organ music. The anonymous essay of 1788 comparing Handel and Bach reports with some pride that the latter had important pedal parts and used three staves 'always for music with two manuals and pedal', with which Handel's organ music could not compare (Dok. III, pp. 441–2).[11]

[11] But Handel used three staves for a section in the manuscript of Organ Concerto Op. 7, No. 1, and gave it the traditional German rubric (found often in Bach), *à 2 clav et ped.*

The keyboard-player

As long as one can oppose us with nothing more than the mere possibility that there are better organists and keyboardists, we cannot be thought ill of if we are bold enough to continue maintaining that our Bach was the greatest [*stärkste*] organist and keyboard-player there has ever been. . . How unusual [*fremd*], how new, how expressive, how beautiful were the ideas that occurred to him when improvising [*im Phantasiren*]! How consummately he brought them out! With him, all fingers were equally exercised; all had equal aptitude for the finest cleanliness [*Reinigkeit*] in performance. He had worked out for himself such a comfortable fingering that it was not hard for him to perform the greatest difficulties with the most fluent ease. Before him the best-known keyboard-players in Germany and other countries had made little use of the thumb. (*Obituary*)

As with the remarks on harmony and melody, Agricola gives the appearance of working to find new, appropriate terms for describing his hero's gifts, the practical results of which he must have witnessed. Again the emphasis is on him as a player, as the first sentence suggests, and the claim that Bach was uniquely gifted was being worded with great care, not to say clumsiness. An indication that by *c.* 1750 others were being compared more favourably?

Had Agricola worked over the years 1738–41 with the composer on the WTC2 or the 'Goldberg' or the chorales and especially the Four Duets in *Clavierübung III*, as is possible, he would have had to learn a versatile fingering, working out how to divide the parts between the hands smoothly, changing fingers on a note, and using thumbs more often on sharps than had been customary. These are exceptionally demanding works for the keyboard-player and indeed do require clean playing and 'fingers equally exercised'. In the Art of Fugue, perhaps even more than in those works, the thumb needs to be very versatile, and in a particular way: for playing consecutive notes in inner parts from time to time and in unusual textures produced by complicated thematic combinations. This was practice serving theory. Agricola does not mention organ-pedals at this point, but if his impressions had come from watching his teacher, then playing would have included improvising on the organ, where and how one does not know.

In constantly emphasizing Bach's abilities as an organist, keyboardist and composer of keyboard music, rather than a master of choral and instrumental music, the younger generation was not necessarily regarding his creative work as outmoded. To want to call him the 'greatest' performer was necessary, especially to establish his standing should he write a

recommendation for a student or an organ-builder. A certain young musician might come all the way from Silesia to Leipzig, thanks to a patron, in order to hear the famous Bach play, become enchanted with his 'rare dexterity' and find himself received amiably, never later regretting the effort (*ungemeine Fertigkeit*: Dok. II, p. 380). There are many instances of a composer's practical abilities being important to biographers, as when Mattheson described Handel as 'strong on the organ, stronger than Kuhnau in fugues and counterpoint, especially ex tempore' (1740, p. 93). It might have been this praise of Handel, still in print, that encouraged Agricola to make a point about Bach's improvising. To mention Kuhnau rather than Handel's teacher Zachow could have been a slip on Mattheson's part, prompting the Obituary to praise Kuhnau's successor for similar gifts.

Scheibe, a critic discussed below, had already praised Bach for his almost incomprehensible accuracy with hands and feet, and implied that his only rival 'as an extraordinary artist on harpsichord and organ' was Handel (Dok. II, pp. 286, 300), about whom he could have known only by hearsay, probably through Mattheson. Such claims made it necessary for Bach-devotees to make their own after his death. During the Leipzig years there had already been several kinds of praise for Bach in print, as a player, as director of the Collegium, and as a clever composer admired as such in Italy itself. The last, which has not so far been substantiated, was claimed by Padre Martini (Dok. II, p. 469), an influential authority in north Italy and one acquainted with a few of the engraved works. How he knew them could have been through an acquaintance visiting the Leipzig fairs or through the steady flow of Italian musicians to and from Dresden and other rich German courts. They certainly did not circulate as Handel's did.

In London, Handel is not documented as having known any works of Bach, though he continued to express admiration of Telemann as late as 1750 (HHB 4, pp. 444f.). As for the non-contact between Bach and Handel despite the former's reported wish: there are too many factors for this to be easily explained. Neither composer would have had much opportunity to use each other's sacred music; the circulation of their instrumental works, certainly Bach's, was limited; one knows too little about the Leipzig Collegium concerts and what might have been performed there; or the genres, styles and aims of the two composers' music were simply too different. Yet despite their omnifarious differences, it is conceivable that Handel's music had a certain stimulating influence on Bach now and then at the practical level, as in his suites of 1720 *vis-à-vis* Bach's partitas, or his keyboard concertos *vis-à-vis* Bach's compilation of 1738. Emanuel's early

participation in copying one of Handel's Italian cantatas in 1731 (Beisswenger 1992, pp. 293–4) might well have been for purposes of instruction.

Contemporaries speaking of Bach's skill as a player refer to both organ and harpsichord. Of his organ-playing, in 1727 G. H. L. Schwanberger said 'I have never heard anything like it' and was eager to learn Bach's playing-style (*Spielart*: Dok. II, p. 179), neither of which remarks is very informative. Of his harpsichord-playing, in 1758 Jacob Adlung praises his playing of Marchand suites, alluding probably to the rubato, *sostenuto* (qv) and sensitive touch characteristic of the French manner (see below, p. 525). This is a very important observation, even if based on hearsay. For if Adlung is quoting Agricola as an eye-witness, it must refer to the period around 1740 and shows, therefore, that Bach was still playing 'some good old French music'. Similarly, when E. L. Gerber spoke of the composer's organ-playing as *gebunden* ('bound', a literal German translation of *legato*) and contrasted it with another organist's *staccato* manner (Dok. III, p. 473), he must be quoting the remarks of his father, a Bach pupil. Though also hearsay, this is probably reliable, assuming father and son meant the same thing by *legato*.

The Obituary contributes to the overall picture of Bach the performer with its stories of his involvement with the keyboard music of Marchand, Reinken and Buxtehude and the appreciative listeners of Hamburg and Dresden, but it says nothing about his ability with other instruments or even other keyboards except in praising him as a *Clavierist*. Such versatility was one of the things for which Bach praised his own students in testimonials, however, and it was in reply to Forkel, probably asking about such things, that Emanuel later spoke of him liking most to play viola but also playing the violin in his youth 'until the somewhat imminent old age' (*bis zum ziemlich herannahenden Alter*: Dok. III, p. 285).

For the Obituary's final sentences above, there is a context. Already in his vastly informative and widely selling book of 1752 on playing the flute, J. J. Quantz, Emanuel's colleague in Berlin, had spoken of Bach's keyboard-technique in general and of the 'perfection' to which he had brought organ-playing – presumably he had heard him play, at Potsdam in 1747 or at Dresden in 1731 (Dok. III, p. 441), if not earlier. In playing, according to Quantz, each of Bach's fingers was curled and its tip drawn in to glide off the keys, producing running passages at their clearest, especially in scales (*stufenweis*: 1752, pp. 232, 329). How far such touch and articulation (insofar as they are can be understood from this) were characteristic of Bach's earlier playing, especially before the partitas of the late 1720s, is quite uncertain. For some of his remarks Quantz might just as well have

had in mind points he could have seen in François Couperin's *L'Art de toucher* and other French instruction books.

For Bach's own method of fingering, a particular question arises with the remoter keys in WTC1: were these a stimulus for working out fully a flexible fingering-system or were they left for a pupil to cope with as best he could? It is hard to imagine the C sharp major Fugue having the same kind of fingering, or even requiring the same hand shape, as the C major Fugue. (A similar point could be made about the so-called early version in C major of the other C sharp major Fugue, in WTC2.) Another question is to what extent the two-part and perhaps three-part inventions of the early 1720s were in fact fingering *études*. Each of them (certainly the majority of them) supplies the player with an exercise in a certain fingering, such as learning to change on a note, just as it does in playing accurately, in articulating differently from piece to piece (*legato* and *détaché*), and in handling the fifteen most used keys. It was music largely in two parts that trained the buyer of Scarlatti's *Essercizi* of 1738 in finger dexterity.

Without doubt, counterpoint as it had developed in the WTC1 and the Inventions does require a special, literally coherent fingering. Hence it is that the Inventions' title-page of 1723 speaks of players learning from them how, above all, 'to achieve a singing style in the playing' (*am allermeisten aber eine* ***cantable*** *Art im Spielen zu erlangen*), and uses a French word: *cantable*. Scarlatti uses the Italian *cantabile* for those sonatas with an *affettuoso* right-hand solo melody played above chords in the left hand. Nearer to home J. H. Buttstedt had spoken in his treatise *Ut, re, mi* (1716) of learning from his teacher Pachelbel how to compose *cantabel*, a point very probably known to Friedemann's teacher. (This book of Buttstedt, a copy of which was owned by Emanuel, may also have influenced at least the title-page of WTC1: see p. 571.) Bach's *cantable* is not Chopin's *cantabile* but something closer to Couperin's, indicating the smooth harpsichord line already implied in *L'Art de toucher*, something characteristic of older French preludes and vital for the new fugal counterpoint.

It seems quite possible that in WTC1 Bach was extending the principle of *cantable* and so completing the programme of instruction given by the inventions. Variety of touch had to be learnt, and Bach's playing-style must have differed in his early years from his later. In these respects as in so many others, the early variations BWV 989 *Aria variata* are quite unlike the 'Goldberg Variations' of thirty-five years later. The instrument's sound-production and the very keyboard itself had by then evolved towards making greater smoothness and suavity possible, and its playing technique must have evolved correspondingly. Performers interested today in the

'historically informed performance' of J. S. Bach's music do not always seem aware of how many changes in playing-style he must have made in the course of at least fifty years.

In his own book of 1753, Emanuel implied that his father had gradually developed a way of making the thumb and all fingers versatile, having heard in his youth great men who used the thumb only for wide stretches (Dok. III, p. 23), i.e. not for running scales or for the remoter keys. 'Great men' brings Reinken and Buxtehude to mind, which in turn recalls Quantz's contemporary reference to 'the Netherlanders' of former times. Both he and Emanuel are referring to composers whose fingering was doubtless less versatile and did not need to be otherwise, since their harmony had fewer modulations, their organ-tuning allowed fewer keys and (not least) their keyboards' sharps and naturals were shorter. Quantz may also have had in mind Mattheson's recent praise for the long dead but still admired Amsterdam organist Sweelinck, and his 'pleasant and decorous' way of playing the keyboard (*angenehm und ehrbar*: 1740, under 'Jacob Praetorius'). Certainly by *c.* 1750, anyone could see that versatile fingers were necessary for playing in all twenty-four keys. And not only the remoter keys: D minor requires very versatile fingering in the counterpoint of the Art of Fugue, including, as noted, thumb on successive notes.

In his treatise, Emanuel claims to be using a 'new fingering' conceived for players of a music very different from his father's. But a much earlier book, very likely known to Emanuel, had already advised that

pour continuer un roulement . . . il n'y a qu'à s'accoutumer à passer le I. par-dessous tel autre doigt que l'on veut, & à passer l'un de ces autres doigts par-dessus le I.

to produce a fast run . . . it is only a matter of becoming accustomed to pass the thumb under whatever finger one wishes, and to pass one of the other fingers over the thumb.

One might guess that this book, Rameau's *Pièces de clavecin avec une méthode sur la mécanique des doigts*, was known to the Bachs in one or other edition (1724, 1731). In its subtlety and modernity the music of the earlier edition could well have had a crucial influence on the harpsichord partitas that were soon to come, in fact more so than had Handel's suites of 1720. Rameau required flexible fingers and hands, including left hand over right.

Was this the inspiration for the extraordinary Gigue of Bach's B flat Partita (1726), one oddity of which is that its notation as engraved implies right hand over left? Bach's skill in hand-crossing and wide leaps, without much bodily movement, was praised by his critic Johann Scheibe who had

certainly witnessed it (Dok. II, p. 286), possibly when the composer was playing Partitas Nos. 1 and 5 or the C minor Fantasia in the 1720s. Hand-crossing was certainly a skill of great interest in the period, again as seen in Scarlatti's *Essercizi* of 1738, and was so important in the 'Goldberg Variations'. Perhaps the B flat Gigue is notated misleadingly, and it should be played left hand over right, something for which neither composer nor engraver had experience for making clear? In the two (later) autograph copies of the C minor Fantasia there is no ambiguity of this kind.

While Emanuel's and Rameau's treatments of fingering do not entirely coincide, to read especially some paragraphs in the first chapter of Emanuel's book (7, 11, 18, 22, 25–27, 33 and 61) alongside Rameau's publication of 1731 is to be struck by certain similarities. It looks very much as if, in inheriting a love of system from his father, Emanuel is aiming for the coherence and comprehensiveness lacking in Rameau's book, an author whom Emanuel's *Versuch* mentions only once, and then only to criticize. In his preface Rameau had promised to treat matters at greater length but failed to make good the promise, and in effect this is what Emanuel seems to be doing, intentionally but without acknowledgement. If there really was this connection to Rameau, the Obituary's phrase 'keyboard-players [*Clavieristen*] of other countries' could be an attempt to demote French publications by claiming precedence. This is possible: Emanuel is on record saying that he and his father were *antirameauisch* (Dok. III, p. 236), which almost certainly concerns Rameau's theories of harmony rather than his keyboard music. But it also implies at least three things: that they had become aware of Rameau's *Traité de l'harmonie* (1722) or *Nouveau système* (1726), that they had a different theory of diatonic harmony, and that not for the only time was Emanuel hostile to French composers.

As for fingerings surviving in manuscript: when Bach's pupil J. C. Vogler fingered a version of the C major Prelude from WTC2, he actually made more use of the thumb than one would today. Because he had a small hand? Because that was a way to phrase counterpoint? Because he did not have or record second thoughts, as most players today would? Such unanswered questions, which can be asked of all extant examples of written-in fingering before Mozart's period, mean that any uncritical use of them today (no matter the repertory) is potentially misleading. Positivistic reading of a few written sources can never be generally helpful, but the music itself implies a great deal: using the thumbs on any sharp and changing fingers on any note are both important for the integrity of fugal counterpoint, and Bach would not need to read Couperin's *L'Art de toucher* to learn about finger-changing. It is difficult to believe that the

scales in the 'Chromatic Fantasia', BWV 903, and the arpeggios in the (later) C minor Fantasia, BWV 906, were fingered in anything but a modern way. Their composer has obviously moved well beyond the old-fashioned keyboardist's hand-shifting, which did well enough for earlier repertories.

In general, with respect to his father's playing, one can take Emanuel's remarks as relevant chiefly to the Leipzig period, specifically the mature keyboard works. Doubtless in his mind was the instruction he had received, such as how important hand-shifting is and how both hands need an efficient fourth finger for smooth counterpoint – two things already vital to the Two-part Inventions. By the time of the 'Goldberg Variations', the many changes that had come about for keyboards include longer keys and longer compass, a generally lower pitch, temperament less unequal, counterpoint generally well wrought and sound-production of instruments less immediate but fuller.[12] As repertory had changed so had playing, including ornamentation, with the result that the ornament-table in Friedemann's *Clavierbüchlein* of 1720 can say little for the Musical Offering of 1747. Nevertheless, it is striking that the manner of Bach's playing as summarized in Chapter 3 of Forkel's book of 1802 – his body remained immobile, hands were close to the keys, fingers seemed hardly to move – had been central to the French style of playing for many years, being recommended by Saint-Lambert (1702), Couperin (1716) and Rameau (1724), all of them probably known to Forkel and affecting what he wrote about Bach.

A note on string instruments and continuo

In a letter, Emanuel described Bach's violin-playing as 'clean and driving' (*rein u. durchdringend*: Dok. III, p. 285). The latter looks less than totally complimentary, unless it meant he could hold an orchestra together better with violin than with keyboard, which is not difficult to believe. *Durchdringend* is ambiguous: lit. 'driving through', which could imply a 'penetrating' tone, but also the kind of string tone that 'prevails' over an ensemble, 'getting the mastery' of it. Penetrating was also how Emanuel described his father's singing voice, with a wide compass and good

[12] This, a noticeable but hard-to-quantify development, could be illustrated by comparing a violin or organ of *c.* 1650 with one of *c.* 1775; or a harpsichord with a fortepiano, a baroque oboe with a clarinet, etc.

technique (*gute Singart*: Dok. III, p. 285), qualities which it was clearly found reasonable to require of his singers.

Demands on Bach's time must alone have prevented him from becoming a virtuoso violinist as well as keyboardist. Quite apart from the solo violin works, his intimate grasp of violin-playing is clear from the *violino piccolo* part in 'Brandenburg Concerto' No. 1, especially its third movement, difficult but practical and full of fine fiddle gestures. There is always the possibility that he did possess exceptional skill on the violin but would not have found exhibiting it later in public quite *cantorisch*. In his intimate handling of a pair of violins there can be sensed something well above an ordinary grasp of violin technique: in the constantly interchanging/interweaving lines of the Double Concerto in D minor, or in the Legrenzi-like brilliance of the Finale of Cantata No. 51 and the D minor aria in the Christmas Oratorio, for example. That he may have made use of his own skill as solo violinist in the (probably) inaugural Weimar Cantata No. 182 has already been suggested.

Unfortunately for later admirers, in none of the parts or scores of these works (what might be called the 'master copies') is there any more technical guidance for the performer than there is in the fair copies of keyboard works, though in both a few slurs are very informative. Nevertheless, in the counterpoint of the Art of Fugue itself one can surely hear an experienced string-player at work: the music's lines, though expertly fitted for the keyboard-player's hands, are those of a musician with a feel for string-playing, even in a tenor line that is outside the reach of a viola.

Emanuel also said that his father, as 'the greatest connoisseur of harmony', had a particular preference for playing viola, confirming the picture of Bach as a composer who aimed at interesting inner parts (and judged those of other composers?). He played viola 'with appropriate louds and softs', thus musically more interesting than what the humble viola-player was used to, sawing away at tedious and expressionless inner parts – except in a few Italian concertos, including some of Vivaldi's. Was Emanuel half-remembering notable viola parts from performances of 'Brandenburg Concerto' No. 6 or certain movements in the orchestral suites (the Forlane of the C major *Ouverture*)? Or he knew of chamber trios that survive now only in other versions minus viola? If his father really did prefer viola, perhaps this can be stretched to include the violoncello piccolo (see p. 542), required in some Weimar and Leipzig cantatas and much better known in mid-century Saxony than now often recognized. The *Bassettgen* among the late cantor's possessions was probably one such instrument, listed after the

three violas and making, with them, a bigger group than the violins (Dok. II, p. 493). To possess three violas could alone indicate a keen player.

Of his imaginative realizations as a continuo-player various accounts were given by pupils, who like students today were without doubt impressed by a brilliant, powerful teacher. One of them, Mizler in 1738, reported that Bach was able as a continuo-player to 'accompany every solo so that one thinks it an ensemble piece', with a new melody as if pre-composed (Dok. II, p. 321); and Emanuel said he could improvise a fourth part to a trio if (adding as if in exoneration) its composer did not take it amiss (Dok. III, p. 285). Quite likely Mizler and Emanuel were so used to uninteresting continuo-playing that neither of them asked whether this picture they give is entirely to Bach's credit, but I doubt that it is – any more than was his egregious figuring of a bass by Antonio Biffi many years before (see BJ 1997, pp. 11–12), unless it was just a means of analyzing the harmony on paper. One could suppose this was the case were it certain (as it is not) that German continuo-players did generally see a difference between theoretical and practical realization.

If Bach really did insist that his pupils' continuo harmony be as complete, as thoughtful in its part-writing and as detailed as any piece of written-out harmony such as a chorale, one soon sees how they would produce the literal, unidiomatic and otiose realization published later by J. P. Kirnberger for the Musical Offering (in Dok. III, pp. 347–8). This is no true part for a keyboardist to play, and a teacher's emphasis on careful harmonization could lead young continuo-players less gifted than himself to a pedantic kind of accompaniment, as here. Were they aware, for instance, that if they figured the bass part of a cantata by running their eyes down the full score, some of the figures need only be cautionary? (So a 4 under the bass-line means 'don't play a 3 here'.) How far the four-part realizations attributed to Bach in the manuscript *Vorschriften* of 1738 (see Poulin 1994) represent the way people were actually expected to play continuo is a big and unsolved question, even more than whether this manuscript is authentic.

When the teenage Emanuel extracted a bass part from a score, a part which he or his father then figured, did he play the harmonies as sensitively as his own book of 1753/62 constantly recommends? The answer to that probably depends on the kind of music concerned, for with whatever finesse *basso continuo* was being played in chamber music by the mid-century, it had surely come about as a court musician's reaction to the literal, boring realizations of bass-lines he had long heard from church organists.

The organ expert

The Obituary takes uncommon space to comment on a matter of particular interest to its readers, presumably, but also to underline the subject's practical expertise:

> He understood not only the art of playing organs, of uniting together their stops in the most skilful way and of letting each stop be heard according to its true character, all to the greatest perfection; but he also had thorough knowledge of how organs were constructed. [One organ he examined was at the Johanniskirche, Leipzig] near to where his bones now rest. The maker of this organ was a man in the final years of his old age, and the examination was perhaps one of the severest that had ever taken place. Consequently, the full approval that our Bach publicly conferred on the organ directed no little honour as much to the organ-builder as also, on account of certain circumstances, to Bach himself. No one was better able than he to specify the stoplist for new organs and to judge them [*beurtheilen*]. (*Obituary*)

Neither builder nor church is named by the Obituary, although as it says, Bach was buried within the premises of the same church. Perhaps Agricola, who wrote these sentences, was uncertain, not having been there himself at the time and hearing about it only from someone else, such as the organ-builder's son. Nevertheless, though misleading in another respect (Scheibe lived for nearly a further five years after the examination in December 1743), the reference contains several important details. Considering the number of organs Bach was involved in, including another of Scheibe's projects nearby at Stötteritz in 1748, the 'certain circumstances' were one reason why the Obituary tells of this particular incident at length. See further on this below.

When the Obituary speaks of 'the art of organ-playing' in which Bach excelled, it is likely to be speaking not of his manual dexterity and general keyboard adroitness, which cannot be doubted, but of a masterly 'handling' of the organ and its stops, manuals and pedals. It is an oddity of the period that the differences between playing an organ keyboard and that of any other instrument are seldom made clear in books, certainly when compared to the distinction drawn by teachers in the nineteenth-century conservatoire between organ-playing and piano-playing. In his *Pièces* of 1724 Rameau writes that what he has said concerning the harpsichord is to be equally observed of the organ, which may be fair enough for French organ music but seems a little brusque for Bach's. If one judges from notation, Bach appears to have had an increasing interest in subtle details of touch, but that may only reflect a general tendency towards making notation more explicit.

As to the claims that Bach had a deep technical knowledge of organs, both as to how they were constructed and how they could be made to sound well: neither is difficult to believe in general terms, but how much farther one can take such claims is another question. They are of a piece with Emanuel's image of his father as a practical musician who understood the physical layout not only of organs but of orchestras indoor and outdoor. By some natural gift of perception, it seems, he also recognized how a certain building (the banqueting hall of the new Berlin opera-house) could produce an unintended and so far unnoticed whispering-gallery effect. All such grasp of practicalities he achieved from experience and 'natural' knowledge, not from a 'systematic study of acoustics' (Dok. III, pp. 285, 288) and nor, one infers, from any other conventionally taught theory. Hard though it is to believe that a whispering-gallery effect would have gone unnoticed in a building by then several years old, Emanuel found it important to claim that nature and practice, not theory or system, were behind an observation his father had made in his presence. A comparable point was made later about another Bach, Johann Nicolaus, the 'Jena Bach', when it was said that an organ-stop he tuned by ear was superior to one tuned by the monochord (Adlung 1768, II, pp. 54ff.).

As to organ-registration (the choice of organ-stops): this point may be significant, for some organists reading the Obituary must have been familiar with the full registrations given in books of chorales published in Leipzig by G. F. Kauffmann (1733–6), and were therefore puzzled why here were none in Bach's more recent publications. *Clavierübung III*, the Canonic Variations and the 'Schübler Chorales', all appearing between 1739 and *c.* 1748, indicate nothing in the music beyond the manuals and octave-pitch, and then quite incompletely. The late manuscript compilation 'Leipzig Chorales' did not go even that far except when indicating trios with two manuals. Kauffmann was not alone in indicating the stops, and indeed, not to do so at all was somewhat old-fashioned, more typical of previous periods when music had circulated in manuscript and when each region's organs varied from one to another only in size.

Of course, to publish complex music without indicating how it might best be played does draw attention to the counterpoint *per se*, and this could well have been intended. But since any organist who had known those published works and was reading the Obituary might wonder about the absence of performing directions, Agricola covered the registration issue by claiming that Bach had an unrivalled mastery of it. Quite where the mastery could lie is not obvious, for even if it were something Agricola had seen for himself, is one to think that other organists did not understand organ-stops and their

combinations? Or was it that by then Bach alone understood French registrations and was able create many of them on quite a few organs in Saxony?

For other remarks on Bach's reportedly intimate understanding of organ-building, see above, p. 97. The reports written by his predecessor Johann Kuhnau at Halle in 1716 and Freiberg in 1714 (Müller 1982, 420–3) imply that he was quite as much an expert as Bach. So were some other organists of the time, in fact rather more so in the case of Johann Christoph Bach at Eisenach Georgenkirche (BJ 2008, pp. 258–66) and J. G. Walther at Buttstädt (see Williams 2007). No known writing of J. S. Bach supplies anywhere near the detail found in these two reports, being – to put this in a more positive light – not the kind of thing all cantors felt obliged to specify, although evidently Kuhnau did. Did the Obituary authors make their claim because by 1750 to be any kind of technical expert was exceptional? Or they knew other reports Bach had made, perhaps orally? There certainly seems to have been early and long-standing recognition of his authority, at Arnstadt (1703), Mühlhausen (1708), then Halle, Leipzig, Gera, Naumburg and elsewhere. One hopes that when a certain builder, Silbermann's nephew Johann Andreas, visited the Leipzig University organ in 1741 *incognito* and found that neither its tone nor workmanship conformed to Bach's report of 1717 (Dok. V, p. 163), it had simply deteriorated over the years.

At Mühlhausen nearly fifty years before the Obituary, one notes that not only does the report appear to draw on details given in Werckmeister's book *Orgelprobe* but so did J. C. Bach's scheme for Eisenach. This had been the first of the region's large organs to be modernized, and was doubtless known to the young J. S. Bach. At the examination of Halle in 1716, Werckmeister again featured implicitly in the report written out by Kuhnau.[13] Presumably Bach concurred with the report when he signed it, and took note of the way it was presented, as well as its reference to a wind-gauge. (In this, Kuhnau the Leipziger was showing himself aware of a tool said to have been first described in Leipzig in a book of 1684, now unknown, by Christian Förner.) The anecdote about the whispering-gallery effect in Berlin reminds one that evidence is seldom straightforward, for this report bears a curious resemblance to a story circulating about an 'echo tower' many years earlier in Weimar (see Wolff 2000, p. 506), a story which one of the Bachs – father? son? – could have known.

[13] Noted above, p. 184. For Kuhnau's authorship, see also Dok. V, p. 282. At the report's request, the builder Christoph Cuncius (Contius) promised to give the organ *Cammer Thon* (Dok. II, p. 61), i.e. a lower pitch. But how could he do that except by a shifting keyboard and going without a bottom C?

Although the examination of new organs that Bach is known to have made, with other musicians in the case of large instruments, does support the Obituary's last point above, one might expect him to have been called upon as examiner or adviser more often than he is known to have been. By chance, one late attempt to get Bach to advise on a scheme by another builder is on record (see Dok. V, pp. 173f.), but it could be that once a capellmeister or cantor had ceased to be a titular organist such jobs were considered less appropriate. Claims for his expertise could also lead to his name being associated with an organ-project which one of his ex-pupils, J. C. Vogler, was seeing through, at Bad Berka in 1740–1 (BJ 2006, pp. 291ff.). But especially puzzling is that Bach seems never to have been involved officially in the organs of Dresden or in planning or testing or inaugurating any Silbermann organ, although Kuhnau had tested and inaugurated one at Rötha, near Leipzig, in 1721. This is a mystery.

If Saxony's privileged organ-builder since 1723 had some personal or professional reason against inviting Bach to participate, perhaps it was because the latter had tactlessly criticized some aspect of one or other Silbermann organ, such as Dresden Sophienkirche on his visit in September 1725. It could certainly be that Bach's more collegial relations with Zacharias Hildebrandt, Silbermann's 'pupil' though sued by him in the 1720s, were a consequence or cause of disagreement. Whatever the case, Bach, though evidently not an influential adviser in the Kingdom of Saxony, knew enough to draw up specifications for the organs he did examine or inaugurate. Only at Mühlhausen is this fully documented, however, where he was employed at the time. It was after making its claims for his technical expertise that the Obituary remarks on the composer never having a large and fine instrument of his own, 'despite all this knowledge of organs'.

There is a further aspect to the topic 'Bach and the organ', one largely so far neglected in the literature. In Germany, not only but especially in the Protestant parts, various published accounts of particular organs were available during Bach's lifetime: specialized 'organ-monographs' describing a certain instrument and its character. There were far more of these booklets on organs published than books of actual organ music, and it can be reasonably supposed that an eminent cantor would know at least a number of them. Some monographs concern organs associated in some way with Bach (Weissenfels, Görlitz, Rötha, Dresden, Berlin Garnisonkirche) or potentially so (Grüningen near Halberstadt). From them useful technical or other details could be learnt by any reader, just as they could be from the rich treatises of Werckmeister (Halberstadt) or J. G. Schröter

(Erfurt) or even Praetorius (*Organographia* 1619). In Leipzig itself, by 1727 at least one scientific publication was referring to the ratios of organ pipe-lengths and pipe-widths,[14] but there is nothing to say whether Bach concerned himself in such things.

Whether Capellmeister Bach knew any of these organ-monographs is an open question worth further study, but one point made (and developed by Emanuel in later remarks to Forkel) was that he was generous to craftsmen. This may have been partly to counteract a harsh point made by one organ-builder's son and already published by Mattheson, accusing a certain unnamed 'great man', meaning J. S. Bach, of contributing to his father's failures (see below, p. 533). On the other hand, the same builder's university organ of 1717, examined by Bach perhaps because Kuhnau declined, had a subsequent history of troublesome repairs, and it could be that everyone had felt it advisable to give his latest organ in Zschortau a stringent test. The town council itself recognized that the builder, Johann Scheibe, was 'a poor man' (Dok. II, p. 408) and it had probably been willing to come to his aid.

The strictness of this particular examination of the Johanniskirche organ by Bach was mentioned again later by Agricola (Dok. III, p. 192), presumably drawing on the same information. But considering how relatively modest an instrument it was, a long and rigorous examination probably indicates problems with it. According to a later account, it had some device to make (a sudden) *piano* and *forte*, which was probably a new and troublesome mechanism for coupling the manuals or adding/subtracting stops (Henkel 1986, p. 47). But if Emanuel, Agricola or Forkel thought it was unusual for an examiner to ask for supplementary payments to an organ-builder, as their account suggests, they cannot have read Werckmeister's *Orgelprobe* very carefully, for there he recommends it.

At least local readers of the Obituary realized that in the coy little phrase 'on account of certain circumstances', the authors were likely to be referring to remarks about Bach made in print by none other than the organ-builder's son, J. A. Scheibe, who had earlier deferred to his father by dedicating the first instalment of his periodical *Der critische Musikus* to

[14] See Wallmann 2011, for a list of publications in Central Germany at the time. *Treatises*: Werckmeister 1681 and 1698, Schröter (organ-builder) 1723. *Individual monographs*: Grüningen, many editions between 1641 and 1711, Weissenfels 1677, Görlitz 1704, Dresden Sophienkirche 1720, Rötha 1721, Berlin Garnisonkirche 1727, Dresden Frauenkirche 1736, Fraureuth 1741. Emanuel's complete copy of Praetorius 1619 (BJ 1991, p. 121) may have come from his father. On pipe-lengths: Jacob Leupold, *Theatrum arithmetico-geometricum* (Leipzig, 1727), p. 95.

him. The remarks amounted to a notorious criticism of Bach published in 1737 and again in 1745, latterly in Leipzig. Scheibe Senior was sixty-five when the examination at the Johanniskirche was made in 1746, and his son's critical essay was probably still fresh in many a memory. So if Bach was fair to the father, despite his son's criticism, does this suggest that experience had taught the Obituary's authors to expect otherwise? A striking point about the reference is that it is the only one in the whole Obituary that even hints at Bach's various vexations, and some attention can now be given to the most widely publicized of them.

Scheibe's criticism, 1

It was in Hamburg in May 1737, in the music journal *Der critische Musikus*, that Johann Adolph Scheibe, a former student of Leipzig University and a quite prominent musician there in the later 1720s, published critical views of certain musicians in central Germany, including one said to be 'the most prominent' among them (*der Vornehmste*: Dok. II, p. 286). This was soon taken to be J. S. Bach (BJ 2010, p. 155), who had actually written a testimonial for Scheibe six years earlier. The subsequent accumulation of attacks and defence amounted to over a dozen items in print over the following decade, for this was a major affair and involved theories of aesthetics and the nature of music, propounded elsewhere not by Bach but by Mattheson (who even made an issue of the title 'Court Composer': 1739, p. 99).

In Scheibe's critique, a certain 'great man' is seriously accused of:

- having insufficient 'agreeableness' (*Annehmlichkeit)* in his 'pieces' (*Stücken*, i.e. cantatas);
- discarding nature (*das Natürliche entzöge*) by means of a turgid and confused manner (*schwülstiges*, *verworrenes Wesen*);
- obscuring beauty by too much art (*allzu grosse Kunst*);
- requiring singers and instrumentalists to do what he alone can do on the keyboard;
- writing out every little embellishment, depriving his pieces of the beauty of harmony and leaving the melody indistinct;
- making the voice parts equally difficult (i.e. contrapuntal, none of them a soloist or 'chief voice' accompanied by the others);
- achieving all of this through heavy labour (*beschwerliche Arbeit*).

Though he had not been named, Bach was defended in print a few months later by J. A. Birnbaum, a Leipzig teacher of rhetoric who in turn soon

found himself being argued with by Scheibe, again in print. In some respects, all this was a typical instance of the common contention between the *littérateurs* of Leipzig. Though evidence is missing, one can assume that Bach himself discussed with Birnbaum some or many of the points made in his defence. One of its implications was that, to put it in modern terms, music is not merely something pleasing or easy to perform but can reflect deep thinking and demand intellectual grasp.

Scheibe claims to have been influenced by the recent critical work on poetry by the celebrated J. C. Gottsched of Leipzig, and wished to attempt some comparable practical criticism of music of the day, which he did anonymously over three years, in seventy-eight widely ranging reviews. The idea of applying literary-critical or litcrit approaches to music was most interesting. Scheibe felt, it seems, that his travels allowed him to evaluate several composers, four of them well-appointed musicians in Leipzig where, alas, he himself had been professionally less successful. The criticisms are, or appear to be, more musically informed than was the sheer enmity that Handel met with sometimes in London at much the same period, both personal and political (e.g. HHB 4, p. 251). Scheibe's are more like the brief critiques Charles Burney allowed himself during his travels across Europe some decades later, inspired by Dr Johnson's literary criticisms much as Scheibe was by Gottsched's. Scheibe's first accusation of Bach (that he did not have enough 'agreeableness') could sound personal but was taken by Birnbaum to refer only to the music; not the person but the music would alone would be the concern of 'whole nations'. What Scheibe meant by 'agreeable' looks close to the 'easy and graceful' to which Bach never stooped, according to Burney half a century after Scheibe (Dok. III, p. 456).

Scheibe's journal also included correspondence and discussion, and it is possible that like Mattheson in his journals, he was trying to provoke some response from Bach himself. If so, he did not understand the cantor. Scheibe had been one of six unsuccessful candidates at the Nikolaikirche in 1729 when Bach had been an examiner for the position vacated by J. G. Görner, one of the musicians Scheibe criticized and who was to join Bach at the Thomaskirche. Johann Schneider who got the Nikolaikirche job was another Bach student and was also criticized by Scheibe. In April 1731, Bach had written for Scheibe a warm enough but careful testimonial for the vacancy at Freiberg Cathedral, where again he was unsuccessful.

That the Nikolaikirche episode left Scheibe with resentments is clear from other references both to this (in Dok. II, p. 365) and to Bach's allegedly treacherous treatment of Scheibe's father, builder of the organ

in his son's university church (Mattheson 1740, under 'Scheibe').[15] In the index to his book of 1745, Scheibe described Görner as 'a wretched composer' (*ein elender Componist*), and it is more than likely that the very public critique of Bach was occasioned by similar personal disagreements. Yet in December 1739 Scheibe was to praise Bach's Italian Concerto in F major, perhaps becoming reconciled with him after a meeting that year in connection with the new organ at Altenburg (Dok. II, pp. 372f.). Or there was some other personal-political element at play. On Good Friday in the same year, one of Scheibe's own Passion cantatas was performed in the New Church, Leipzig. This was a minor church but had its music directed by C. G. Gerlach, the Collegium director and probably a rival with the two musicians Scheibe had been abusing. He was also to be abusive about this Gerlach who, he said, thought himself a composer, as his job required, but had to have someone else act for him (BJ 2010, p. 189; in fact, Gerlach's problem was health-related).

In the less spiteful, more general tenor of his criticism of Bach, Scheibe was revealing not only Gottsched's approach to literary criticism, which was one inviting full and frank discussion, but also current musical tastes in Hamburg. It was in Hamburg already in 1731 that Mattheson remarked on everyone's being aware that Bach's music was artful but unmelodic (*künstlich*, *unmelodisch:* Dok. V, p. 150). Current tastes in the city in which Scheibe had only recently settled would also be partly behind various other criticisms he made publicly in the late 1730s, including one of G. H. Stölzel whose musical ideas were sometimes 'too commonplace and coarse' (*zu gemein und platt*: BJ 2010, p. 187). Stölzel was the well-travelled and esteemed capellmeister at Gotha, where in a previous year Scheibe had, again, failed to obtain a post.

Despite all this, what Scheibe had to say in 1737 amounts to the most significant critique of J. S. Bach and the most carefully reasoned evaluation of his music that appeared in print during his lifetime. It seems to have been badly received, perhaps more badly than it deserved and more than Scheibe expected. For presumably it was Bach himself who got Birnbaum to defend him several times against his absent critic, at length and in detail, and indeed he who got Birnbaum to refer to Scheibe's unsuccessful application at the Leipzig Nikolaikirche as a motive behind the criticism (Dok. II, p. 344). (Scheibe is also likely to have fallen out with Birnbaum, who no doubt had his own disagreements with the admired Gottsched.)

[15] Scheibe Senior was a less distinguished builder than Hildebrandt, whose association with Bach and relocation to Leipzig may have been resented.

One imagines that what would arouse any aggressive response from Bach was not so much remarks on the difficulties experienced by his singers as Scheibe's impertinent critique of his musical style. Like most composers of the time, he would not have been as familiar with attacks of this sort as many others became in the later periods of opinion-riddled journalism.

Having someone else to reply on his behalf when he had been challenged may have been habitual for Bach: it seems to be the case also at Naumburg in 1746, when the organist questioned his and Silbermann's positive report on the new organ. Only the latter is known to have responded. In 1749, when the rector of Freiberg published a somewhat anti-music document, Bach asked C. G. Schröter, a much-respected organist and one of his defenders against Scheibe, to respond. On this occasion Bach's opinion, probably prompted by experiences with his own school rector, was more intolerantly and rudely expressed than Schröter wished to be associated with, and it gave Mattheson, who got to know about it, a chance to poke his nose in and offer gratuitous comment after Bach's death (Dok. II, p. 462).

Bach, who does not come out of the incident with Schröter well, must have supplied some of the published arguments against Scheibe, valuing Birnbaum as an experienced author and moreover a scholar in the university. It was Bach's secretary Elias Bach who sought more than once for a printer for Birnbaum's essay, and requested 200 copies of it in time for the Easter Fair 1739, presumably for distribution. (He claimed the Leipzig printers to be 'too busy', which is possible at a time so near to the book fair: see Dok. II, p. 337.) Birnbaum's arguments published on behalf of Bach, made rather long-windedly, include the following, here paraphrased (Dok. II, pp. 296ff.):

Bach deserves to be called more than *Musicant* or *Künstler* (musician, artist), since these words imply mere practitioners or craftsmen.

If Handel is the 'great master in a foreign country' being referred to, one able to dispute the palm with Bach, others think him no equal.

Scheibe misunderstands *Annehmlichkeit*: music is more than merely 'agreeable' sounds, as pointed out in an essay in the London *Spectator* (a nine-volume translation of Joseph Addison's *Spectator* essays was made in Leipzig by Gottsched's wife Luise and published in 1739–43).

'Turgid' (*Schwülstiges*) is an indiscriminate charge: Bach's decorations could be deemed appropriate to the genre in hand.

'Confused' (*Verworrenes*) is precisely what his counterpoint is not, though Scheibe might have heard confused performances of Leipzig cantatas.

'Too much art' (*Allzu grosse Kunst*) does not destroy nature or obscure beauty. By definition, any difficulty for performers is surmountable. As the Dresden orchestra shows, accuracy of ensemble is perfectly possible. (A further hint that Bach compared Dresden and Leipzig to the latter's disadvantage?)

Much other music prescribes ornamentation: see the organ works of de Grigny and du Mage. To specify them is to convey sensibly the composer's intentions. To have no 'solo line' is not a fault: nor did Palestrina or Lotti. Aware that he was not able always to call on virtuoso performers, Bach was able to adapt his music accordingly.

These points led to a few more replies and counter-replies, and one would like especially to know more about the last point. Does it mean merely that some cantatas are less difficult to sing than others, as is the case, or that when appropriate Bach revised vocal/instrumental parts or discarded what he had written?

Several of Scheibe's original criticisms, it could be said, were not very well answered. To invoke Palestrina or de Grigny in Bach's favour does not really bear on Scheibe's points, which were less against either counterpoint or ornament signs as such than against any complexity that disguised the melody. An admirer of Telemann and Handel, Scheibe was taking aim at music that lacks the simple melodiousness of these composers, and at melodies so cluttered with busy figuration that soloists were deprived of their freedoms and expressive *belcanto*. Although he does not make it clear, the focus of his criticisms is the church music, specifically the cantatas, and in implying that tastes were changing or had changed, he simply belonged to the period in which he was writing, the later 1730s.

There is already more than a hint that the Thomaskirche choir and musicians found the music too difficult, which Scheibe would know from personal experience in the 1720s. In fact, several of his points suggest that he was aware of practical and aesthetic problems with the cantatas. This could be more important than any deep philosophical differences between critic and composer, the kind that have preoccupied later musicologists scrutinizing Scheibe's rhetoric. He would know, as would anyone present especially at rehearsals, that an alto soloist singing Cantata Nos. 170 or 35 is going to find little chance to rest, or even to breathe, in his instrument-like lines. It was only recently, in 1736, that Bach had admitted that he was to be perfectly aware of the 'incomparably difficult and intricate' nature of his sacred music (*ohngleich schwerer und intricater*: Dok. I, p. 88).

In this connection, it is interesting that when another student, Mizler, defended Bach by pointing to his grasp of 'modern taste' (Dok. II, p. 336), it is a non-church cantata he has in mind, a work of homage to the Elector at the Easter Fair, 1738. In the homage cantata No. 30a performed a few months after Scheibe's review appeared, one might imagine that Bach is responding to the criticisms: it is full of up-to-date, 'approachable' music (see Example 23 on p. 387) of a kind one imagines meeting the approval of Gottsched, with whom Scheibe presumably shared views on musical taste. Ten years after Bach had died, a more approving author, F. W. Marpurg, had nothing but praise for the word-setting in a certain complicated choral fugue, the first movement of Cantata No. 144. He noted that its delightful effect on 'musically inexperienced listeners' (*ganz unkundigen Zuhörer*) was owed to its 'superb declamation' (*vortreflichen Deklamation*), rather than to its 'contrapuntal arts' (*contrapunktischen Künsten*: Dok. III, p. 146).

A final point about Scheibe's 1737 criticism is that if, as it seems, he is referring to the Leipzig cantatas, even only to them, it remains one of the very few known reactions to these numerous works during the composer's lifetime.

Scheibe's criticism, 2

In 1739, again in Hamburg, Scheibe took the matter further by publishing a satirical pseudonymous letter purporting to come from Bach himself to the 'Music Critic' (i.e. Scheibe). In it, Scheibe shows himself familiar enough with the composer's idiosyncrasies of expression to be able to imitate them (Dok. II, pp. 360–2). Though very cutting, it does carry conviction in reporting a certain cantor who:

- does not concern himself with learned matters and has read no writings on music;
- believes a musician has enough to do with his art (*Kunst*);
- is better engaged in devising some musical instrument or a new composition;
- has never had time to learn to write rambling (*weitläuftig*) letters, and leaves it to a friend on his behalf;
- but can certainly write great quantities of musical notes and produce artful (*künstlich*) scores;
- is convinced he is the greatest artist (*Künstler*), and is most happy when introducing contrapuntal artifices (*Kunstwerke*) into his music;

questions whether mere songs (*die kahlen Lieder*, 'bald songs') that are immediately intelligible and memorable are any good;
warns that if the Music Critic [Scheibe] continues to be so critical, he and all his followers will be most severely persecuted (*auf das heftigste verfolgen*).

Only an acquaintance, and one with a grudge, would be able to list such points – which are not worthless even if they were not Scheibe's own but somebody else's, as one Bach-defender suspected of Scheibe generally (Dok. II, p. 433). Emanuel too noted that his father had no time for 'rambling' correspondence (using the same word *weitläuftig*: Dok. III, p. 290), but Scheibe would have behaved more graciously if he had acknowledged that Bach had once written a testimonial for him. The points he makes are those of a Hamburg musician not only more at home with music of Telemann and Handel but who had, he thought, good reason for believing he had been *persecuted* by the cantor. The whole is very revealing and credible in several respects – for instance, disdain for mere songs matches the reference to the *Liederchen* of Dresden (see p. 487).

Indeed, much of what Scheibe says in the main texts rings true. The most ardent of Bach-devotees can have occasionally suspected that there was 'too much art': the teeth-gritting dogma of the Four Duets of *Clavierübung III* and the Augmentation Canon in the Art of Fugue, the earnest calculation of words and music in early Leipzig cantata choruses and arias, the hard work behind collections whose very comprehensiveness is distancing. Even the Well-tempered Clavier could not be free of potential criticism: the books are now so entrenched in the repertory that one does not easily recognize the sheer thoroughness of collecting preludes and fugues in every major and minor key. And to do it twice! All too understandably Scheibe found Bach's music often the product of heavy labour, less 'natural' than Handel's, whose keyboard music he praised as 'incomparable' (*unvergleichlich*: HHB 4, p. 397).

It is at least reasonably clear what Scheibe's remarks were aiming at. But what is to be made of Johann Mattheson's comment, published in the same year 1737, about an especially ingenious piece: the nearly three hundred bars and manifold inversions in the fugue of the Violin Sonata in A minor, BWV 1003:

Wer sollte wol dencken, dass diese acht kurtze Noten . . . so fruchtbar wären, einen Contrapunct von mehr, als einem ganzen Bogen, ohne sonderbarer Ausdehnung, gantz natürlich hervorzubringen? (Dok. II, p. 294)

> Who would believe that these eight [actually nine] short notes were so fruitful as to produce quite naturally a piece of counterpoint more than a whole sheet long [i.e. four sides of folded paper, single stave], without stretching it out in a singular way?

Respectful, neutral or sarcastic? Since Mattheson goes on to list Krieger, Kuhnau, Telemann and Walther among 'well-known great masters of fugue', his understanding of what was involved in a long fugue cannot have been very profound. And since he named the composer in this case, which Scheibe in 1737 and a certain critic of 'theatrical' Passion settings (NBR, p. 229) did not, it is possible that he admired the piece. Yet would not a violinist blanch at the length of this fugue (three and a half sides in the autograph fair copy)? And even more so at the 354 bars of the C major Sonata's fugue? Are not *tours de force* potentially alienating to player and listener? Mattheson's following remark, that the A minor subject is sometimes put upside down, sounds purely descriptive, not critical. He was not the person to renounce pedantry, as is clear when he went on to illustrate what would be an exactly inverted form of the subject, something not in fact made use of by Bach (Dok. II, p. 375).

For the Obituary authors, spoken and unspoken rivalry with Handel was in their minds, something reaching its apogee later in the long *Comparison of Bach and Handel* published in 1788, now attributed to C. P. E. Bach (Dok. III, pp. 437–45) and combining critical sharpness with a kind of anonymous politeness. Its agenda includes referring to Bach's abortive attempts to meet Handel in person, whose supposed departure from Halle before meetings with him could take place would doubtless remind readers of Marchand's departure from Dresden. (Perhaps Emanuel was responding in some way to Telemann's 'frequent meetings' with Handel as reported in Mattheson 1740, pp. 358ff.) But for Scheibe, appreciation of Handel had not meant demeaning the whole of Bach. Two anonymous writings of the 1740s actually in favour of Bach are probably Scheibe's work (see Köpp 2003) and show him to have a discriminating taste, insofar as the anti-Italian points he makes are against the modern, frothier *galant* music coming out of Italy, not against the earlier, classical Italian composers made use of by Bach.

In the same way, Scheibe's warm praise elsewhere for the Italian Concerto in F major (Dok. II, pp. 373–4) recognizes it as the perfect model of a well-organized concerto for one player, as indeed it is, in its intimate awareness of what such pieces could be. Scheibe was right, even if his motive was in fact to defend German music against Italian. The concerto has many if not all of the light touches typical of Venetian concertos, being

much more carefully thought-out than its possible models. Its plan to give the three movements a common pulse (see p. 565) is a calculation unlikely to have endeared itself to Scheibe had he been aware of it, which one doubts. But the concerto has an affecting slow movement full of written-out ornamentation of the kind Scheibe had criticized; it is technically demanding, as if the composer expected other players to be able 'to do what he alone can do'; and it is throughout far less 'natural' in its melodies than most concertos of the time. And yet, nevertheless, Scheibe still found it agreeable.

It is possible that the original criticisms not only expressed fashionable allusions to 'nature' – a buzzword of the Enlightenment Period – but also reflected Gottsched's displeasure some years previously at finding his academic notions mocked, or so it has since been thought, in Bach's marvellously inspired cantata 'Phoebus and Pan', 1729.[16] (See p. 488 for some remarks on this work.) By its very effectiveness this opera-like *dramma* could have been found offensive by some, especially if one suspects oneself to be defamed among those 'who judge carelessly'. The phrase occurs in its text, one printed in hundreds, and must have rung a bell amongst Leipzig *littérateurs*. Gottsched, a poet and critic evidently admired by Scheibe despite being anti-opera, was in turn fiercely judged as a hidebound classicist by no less a writer than Lessing.

On the whole, however, there is little need to invoke a high-falutin' philosophy of *The Natural in Music* when considering Scheibe's criticisms. If one compares Handel's 'My heart is inditing' on the coronation of the British king in October 1727 with Bach's Cantata No. 198 on the death of the Saxon electress in the same month, one can see what Scheibe meant and how he would feel his opinion of the two composers to be totally justified. For however richly beautiful to the connoisseur much of Cantata No. 198 is, Handel's anthem (likewise composed for a queen consort) is more immediately winsome and, to most people, more natural. When it came to writing an Obituary for Bach, its authors were well aware of how often Scheibe and Mizler had praised Handel during the 1730s and 1740s.

[16] In 1738 Bach was to use one of Gottsched's libretti for a Collegium performance (Cantata BWV Anh. I 13) and had already used one of his odes in 1727 for the Electress's Cantata No. 198. Picander had been implicated in Gottsched's criticisms of cantata-text poets (BJ 1991, p. 21), but quarrels and quasi-reconciliations are not unknown in university communities.

It was partly Gottsched's attempts to purify German as a literary language and defer to French rules of drama that led Goethe, a later Leipzig student, to mock the city's pretensions, in the Auerbach's Cellar scene of *Faust*: 'it is a little Paris, and educates its people' (*es ist ein klein Paris, und bildet seine Leute*).

Though finding fault with Bach's music rather goes against the grain of the last two and a half centuries, a rounded picture of it emerges only from taking into account its less appealing moments. Had Scheibe as a student ever worked on the early Prelude and Fugue in A minor, BWV 894, he could well have considered its 250 bars a sign of misspent energy. The Prelude and its unrelenting Fugue might have had an educative purpose in the composer's workroom, for not every work of a composer is intended or fit for public listening. But a problem is that when, as can happen, there is little interest in the melody or harmony of such a work, then there is also no compensating whimsy or charm such as redeems a French ballet or an Italian concerto. The persistent motifs in the A minor Prelude are clever but not ingratiating; similarly, the equally clever modulations in the Fugue do not relieve its obsessive beat. Length being of such interest to him, Bach's conscious efforts to create sustained movements usually took some form of ritornello. But clearly, the longer a dull, motoric piece, the less likely it will please a listener.

One of Scheibe's remarks in the letter purporting to come from Bach might be a specific jab. That the cantor thinks himself better employed in 'devising an instrument' sounds like a reference to his documented interest in such fringe instruments as lute-harpsichords or the *viola da spalla* ('shoulder viola') and *viola pomposa* kinds. The *viola pomposa* was said in 1766 to have been invented by Emanuel's father (*erfunden*: Dok. III, p. 186), although it is not a term he is known to have used for an instrument-type which existed, in any case, before he was born. The cello piccolo solos were notated in the first violin's part of the 1724–5 cantatas – is this a hint that Bach himself played them and directed from this desk, with his 'penetrating' tone? Since 1725 was also the year Scheibe entered the university, he could have been an eye-witness to Bach's easily imagined enthusiasms. But a self-appointed aesthetician and university-educated critic might well look down on a cantor-musician 'devising instruments', though early on in the Obituary, Emanuel, also university-educated, was to refer openly to instrument-makers among the greater Bach family.

Broadly considered, the quarrels with Scheibe and Ernesti (see below) could reflect in their different ways a general lowering of expectation for church music and its purposes, in Leipzig and elsewhere. It is significant, for example, that after 1739 fewer payments than previously seem to have been made for special soloists to be brought in for the New Year music (Dok. II, pp. 135–6). Congregation numbers too were not what they had been earlier in the century. Consequently, that there were apparently no

complaints against Bach in his last decade could mean simply that he and the authorities had settled on a *modus vivendi* of lower expectations generally, and that he was free to use music from elsewhere and escape into his own interests. These he certainly had. Scheibe may not have known much of Bach's later music, either when it was moving in new creative directions (concertos, sonatas, burlescas) or when it became fundamental to higher music-study (counterpoint, fugue, four-part chorales). He certainly could not guess that such contrapuntal studies would bring Bach to the forefront of international musical studies over the next two and a half centuries.

From the 1730s, the reduced significance of sacred music generally in Protestant countries reflected or was affected by the cultural changes now variously labelled rationalism, secularism or the Enlightenment, leaving music to blossom gradually more in other realms. Even Telemann had the intention in the 1740s of giving up composing and of devoting his energies to writing treatises on music-theory, according to his autobiography printed in Mattheson 1740. (A copy of one of Telemann's theoretical treatises was politely acknowledged by Handel in 1752: see HHB 4, p. 445.) Bach's intense work in counterpoint was reflecting a view of music as a technical study. It was his version of a treatise on music-theory, and for all anyone knows was expressing his dislike both of newer musical styles and of changes in the church's priorities. Much of his music was a typical sign of a mature composer's tendency towards the abstract, the transcendental and the economical, whereby what is merely entertaining is stripped away.

Character, quarrels

> Of his moral character [*moralischen Character*] those might speak who have enjoyed dealings and friendship with him and are witnesses to his integrity [*Redlichkeit*] towards God and his neighbour. (*Obituary*)

Once again, this sentence, originally the very last one in the Obituary and using two key non-German words, ends by referring to 'God and one's neighbour'. From the annotations in his copy of the Calov Bible that Bach made to the law book of the Old Testament, *Leviticus* (Dok. III, p. 637), it is clear that he had more than a passing interest in Scripture's rules and regulations, that is to say, towards furthering authorized religious practice and custom.

While neither his twice-yearly taking of communion as recorded in communicants' lists from 1723 to 1749 (Dok. II, pp. 124–6) nor the regular confession before that sacrament says anything certain about his personal piety, it would still suggest that he observed customs and fulfilled expectations, especially, one might suppose, with advancing age. As well as the annotations in the Calov Bible, belonging probably to the early 1740s, is a remark of admiration for Luther's writings (Dok. I, p. 199) and the possession of another Luther Bible, the Merian of 1704 (BJ 2011, p. 36). All this would suggest something beyond the formalities of a Lutheran family known, as it is, to have passed on pious texts to the children (to Friedemann in 1733, Christoph Friedrich in 1749) or those of a Lutheran paterfamilias collecting theological books partially listed in his estate (Dok. II, pp. 494ff.).

That the formula 'to God and one's neighbour', mentioned already in this book, was no empty phrase is illustrated more fully in G. A. Sorge's dedication to Bach of his simple *Sonatinen* issued in Nuremberg in the early 1740s by the recent publisher of the 'Goldberg Variations' (Dok. II, p. 413). Like other references, this dedication praises Bach's musical skill (*Virtu*) and pairs it with another *Virtu*, that of 'affability and unfeigned love of the neighbour' (*Leutseligkeit und ungeheuchelten Liebe des Nechsten*). This is unusually warm for such a testimonial. Sorge speaks of benefiting from Bach's support (*versichert*), finding him in this respect so different from other famous virtuosi who have no regard for the love of their neighbour, though it is a love commanded from on high. A realistic touch is the further remark that Sorge's easy pieces, these *Sonatinen*, may cause His Honour to be 'moved to a friendly chuckle' (*zum freundlichen Schmunzel-Lachen bewegen*), as indeed they might, being so very unsophisticated. This sounds like the familiar picture of a teacher smiling at something that does not quite come off in a student's composition exercise, and being critical but sympathetic.

Sorge's point that Bach was different from other virtuosi matches the Obituary's remark that it was to continue being useful to God and his neighbour that he undertook cataract surgery. This, one recalls, was on the recommendation of 'his friends'. There is some kind of modesty here, of a piece with the brevity of his entry in Walther's *Lexicon.* If, as is now thought likely, some of Walther's other *Lexicon* entries benefited from information supplied by Bach (Dok. II, p. 191), all the more striking is what little he gave Walther for his own entry. And why is he absent from J. H. Zedler's compendious *Universal-Lexicon* begun in 1731, appearing in it only later, posthumously? Both were well-circulating books published in Leipzig and could have been expected to celebrate the current music

director, especially as they included entries on some of his close relatives. (Zedler's *Lexicon* includes Johann Christoph of Eisenach and Johann Michael of Gehren, as well as Sebastian's cantata-librettist Picander and, several times, his 'student' Lorenz Mizler.) Zedler's 1739 edition does mention *Bach* as a family name for musicians and refers to the *Bachische Collegium Musicum* in Leipzig, where one of its forty-one 'famous musicians' is a certain 'Bach' (Dok. III, p. 655). Not until the 1751 edition is there a fuller but still short reference, drawing on Walther 1732 (see BJ 1991, p. 188), eschewing anecdotes and omitting a key detail: that Bach was a Leipziger. All this is hardly gushing with praise.

Much could be inferred about Bach's understanding of music as a God-given art shared 'with his neighbour', if the significance of a jotting he made on the title-page to the first Anna Magdalena Book in 1722 was clear. There, in listing for some reason the titles of three books by a late Leipzig theologian – 'Against Calvinism', 'School for Christians' and 'Against Melancholy' (*Ante [anti] Calvinismus und Christen Schule item Anti Melancholicum*: Dok. I, p. 268) – he is doing more than listing titles but citing three phrases that had particular resonance in the Reformation's debate about music. To accept music as a God-given art, as in the psalm-singing authorized in both Testaments, is Lutheran and not Calvinist; music is an art that contributes to teaching Christian belief and practice; and music has a more general use as 'cure for melancholy'. If this is the significance of the triple jotting in his young wife's book, the many pieces it contains become more than a means of idle music-making: they were to be a means of instruction, to have a confessional legitimacy, and to offer an appropriate consolation.

Like the *Clavierbüchlein* for Friedemann, Anna Magdalena's albums of 1722 and 1725 give the picture of a fond paterfamilias caring for his family in areas beyond the day to day, namely in the furthering of their musical abilities, surely not excluding from this one or two daughters. In addition, some extant letters, though they are very few, also hint in various ways at a man with some long-lasting friendships and loyalties. When Johann Elias Bach was tutor to the younger children in the period around 1740, their father required him to give three months' notice of leaving: sound business practice, no doubt, but also a sign of solicitude for the children. The two extant letters Bach wrote to Georg Erdmann, his schoolboy friend and apparently a visitor to the family in Weimar (Dok. I, p. 68), are those of someone keeping up long friendships. The *Menuet fait par Mons. Böhm* in the Anna Magdalena Book of 1725 might, one would like to think, be another sign of his sustained friendship with an old Thuringian colleague. In a similar way, he seems to have been loyal to certain organ-builders, to

other instrument-makers and to several relations with whom he must have corresponded.

On the other hand, it is unlikely that Bach remained close to his brothers and sister or step-relations. There are a few hints, including missing evidence where one would expect it, that he was not promiscuous in his friendships. What negative feelings, if any, he had to other professionals such as Mattheson or Silbermann or various clergy cannot be retrieved, though one is left with strong suspicions. Not writing for Mizler's journal or participating in important musical publications originating in Leipzig might just imply some comparable reserve or protected privacy against certain people. At the same time, various details of life in the last decade, such as relying on past compositions for church obligations or turning more to complex music for connoisseurs or revising and planning major projects that were never completed, imply if not a falling-off in creative urges, at least a directing of them to certain ends.

For a teacher there would have been nothing unusual in making use of pupils, in a variety of ways. When a student like Georg Schwanberg stood in at the hasty baptism of Regina Johanna Bach in 1728 with two of her mother's sisters, and also wrote the title-page to Anna Magdalena's copy of the solo Violin and Cello Suites, one might guess that he was a live-in pupil. (It is also possible that Schwanberg commissioned and paid for the copy.) Other relations of Anna Magdalena who were visiting, playing or studying in Leipzig, including her nephew, brother-in-law, father's half-sister and uncle's grandson, were no doubt some of those flitting in and out of the family 'dovecot'. Although godparenting did not in itself indicate close friendship as much as it often did later, nevertheless Bach's taking on of this office for several children of the Leipzig bourgeois class, Anna Magdalena's frequent standing for various other children (including her first 'step-granddaughter' in 1747) and the diligence in finding godparents for her own children, suggest they had a good circle of acquaintance, both close and more formal. For godparents in February 1742, her last child, Regina Susanna, had two daughters of a neighbour (a wealthy merchant) and a Leipzig barrister betrothed to one of them (Dok. V, p. 98). Earlier, Maria Barbara's standing in for a daughter of J. C. Vogler in 1718 can be read as a sign of continuing good relations between Bach and a student (Dok. II, pp. 69f.).

In the case of Bach's own family, no one can have much idea how he took the deaths of so many children, including his first child with Anna Magdalena, who at the time was twenty-four. Other children died very soon, at the ages of a few days, or at one, three, and four years, but how unexpectedly this was is also unknown. To one relation Bach refers to two grandsons and to the

marriage of his daughter (Dok. I, pp. 118–19) – strangely, the only wedding of a child ever celebrated from his home. Three months after Sebastian's own death, Anna Magdalena petitioned on behalf of five of her children as requiring a guardian, changing this a few days later to four children, evidently because Gottfried, then twenty-six years old, was put under the temporary care of one of the university students 'on account of his imbecile understanding' (*seines blöden Verstandes halber*: Dok. V, p. 178). Anna Magdalena herself was to die aged fifty-eight, Maria Barbara had died at thirty-five.

Personal contacts from Ohrdruf, Mülhausen, Weimar, Weissenfels, Cöthen, Dresden and elsewhere were to some extent kept up in Leipzig. Sometimes a document shows him to have had an acquaintance with a fellow organist about which nothing further is known, as with H. F. Quehl in 1723 (Dok. V, p. 131). Even if colleagues acting as agent for two of the printed harpsichord partitas in other cities[17] were doing it for a commission, the arrangement could only have been made with their approval, through personal contact (they had been visitors to the Leipzig Fair?) or correspondence. No doubt Bach wrote or dictated more letters than Emanuel knew about. Contact was similarly maintained with J. G. Walther who, apparently seeking support from Bach for his *Lexicon* and for a publication of chorales in 1737, also continued to copy his organ music well after the years they were closely acquainted in Weimar. Naturally as he got older, Bach was outliving his relations and acquaintances, including professional associates who died in his last half decade (Duke Ernst August, Walther, Ziegler a pupil, Schmid the publisher, Trebs the organ-builder, Scheibe the organ-builder, Birnbaum his 'defender'); but there are no known reactions to this.

Contact with certain instrument-makers, such as the organ-builders J. F. Wender and G. C. Stertzing from the early years, is recorded only intermittently but the connection could have been personal as well as professional, as with other Leipzig makers of string instruments (J. C. Hoffmann) and keyboards (Z. Hildebrandt). Definite friendships between him and them look very likely. How warm Bach's relations were with individual colleagues in the St Thomas School at Leipzig is unknown, but he did set a text by one of them, J. H. Winckler, when the renovated building was dedicated on 5 June 1732. What evidence there is of relations with clergy suggests territorial contention of a familiar kind, as when in 1728 a subdeacon tried to bring in his own ideas on hymns (see below, p. 550). As usual, one can only speculate how far extant documents carry negative implications. If

[17] C. Petzold, J. G. Ziegler, Georg Böhm, Georg Schwanenberger, Gabriel Fischer and J. M. Roth.

Bach played no part in his pupil J. F. Doles's successful application at Freiberg in 1744, having written warmly before on his behalf for another position he now declined, does that suggest some irritation on Bach's part, especially since Doles was now being backed by somebody else in Leipzig, an aristocratic patroness (BJ 2007, p. 27)?

If Bach's un-docile responses to criticism and to the machinations of those around him now appear aggressive, truculent or at the very least self-protective, a positive interpretation would be that however naturally irascible or simply impatient he was, any problem he perceived was something that got in the way of his musical priorities. Whatever hindered his composing would not be tolerated. Any apparent territoriality and any questionable behaviour around job-applications or money matters were not at all outside conventional practice, though no doubt they are revealing, especially about one who was a former orphan of such limited means and prospects. For a young musician of clear ambition, leaving Mühlhausen after only a year, and with the organ-project incomplete, was not unreasonable.

Nor is it a sign of conspicuous vanity that he should have his ascending titles carefully recorded in appropriate documents, from 'organist' as when visiting Gotha in 1711 to 'concertmaster' (qv) after promotion in 1717, to 'capellmeister' later and so on. Perhaps, therefore, to counter the usual adulation of J. S. Bach today by accusing him of an 'unmistakable harsh edge ... famously confrontational ... a pervasive sense of persecution and an attitude of spiteful defiance' (Marshall 2000, 502) is an exaggeration in the other direction. Rather, he could simply have found that his church and school superiors in Leipzig, unlike his employers in Weimar and Cöthen, stood in the way of his work as a creative musician. Hence Emanuel describing (having heard him say in Leipzig?) how well his art had been appreciated in different ways in both previous appointments.

A different uncertainty arising from his various contacts with the nobility is to what extent Bach, in titles, letters and fulsome acknowledgements, meant to flatter, grovel before, woo or merely conventionally defer to dukes, princes and kings? Simple deference is the likeliest, for his flowery politeness was conventional and entirely unexceptional. Only anachronistically can it now be described as 'fawning'.[18] Dedications to men of power – the

[18] As in the superficial reading by one politically committed reader, E. Said in *Musical Elaborations* (New York, 1991), p. 64. Even the flattering acrostic written for Frederick the Great (see p. 108) was not exceptional.

The poem set to music in the Duke of Weimar's birthday aria over thirty years earlier (BWV 1127) had picked out in bold the separate letters of the duke's name, like a flattering conventional chronogram.

Margarve of Brandenburg, the Elector of Saxony, the King of Prussia – led neither to great financial return, as far as is known, nor to grand commissions afterwards. He had greater luck with lower ranks, the prince at Cöthen, the dukes at Weimar and Weissenfels, various counts in Slav kingdoms. Though other acquaintances who were acknowledged in one or two late canons were apparently freemasons, there is no clear indication that Bach was a mason any more than he was a Slav. It clearly rankled that he was not given any reward for the Dresden competition in 1717, and neither the King of Prussia nor of Saxony is known to have allowed him a pension.

As for Bach's traditional family duties: standing godfather to his daughter Elisabeth's first-born in October 1749 is only one instance. However, it might have seemed as odd to him as to us that he had so few grandchildren when he died: only the three children of Emanuel, in Berlin. (Elisabeth's son Johann Sebastian had died at two weeks.) Among the many personal unknowns are how Bach would take the suicide of the school's assistant principal (*conrector*) in January 1742, or how the Prussian invasion of Leipzig and the major destruction at Dresden in 1745 affected him, as at least the first of these seems to have done (Dok. I, p. 118). How his daily life was with respect to so many children is another huge area tempting any parent's speculations. Capellmeister G. H. Stölzel, speaking in 1739 of his own family of ten children, said that it was easy to imagine how much time their upbringing and general care cost him (1740, pp. 346–7). In general, the Romantic picture of Bach as a hard-working, demanding, solicitous but urbane family man who enjoyed his family, boisterous gatherings with musicians, tomfoolery and drink, and who did not suffer fools gladly, might not be far from the truth.

Moments of contention

Seven particular moments of contention during the Leipzig years, known from documents which quite possibly speak for others, deserve attention. Some of them were more serious than others:

September 1723 (again in 1725): Bach already claims from the university the right, as Thomascantor, to direct music at a certain number of traditional university services each year, for a fee. On being allowed only a reduced fee (because after Kuhnau died the university instituted newer services and appointed its own director), Bach appealed to the elector or king in Dresden three

times in late 1725, the third time on 31 December in the longest letter he is known ever to have written. Only in January 1726 did he have a ruling partly in his favour, though giving him no actual authority over the university's newer services. Nevertheless, through the Leipzig years he maintained the university duty: four cantatas a year plus motets at the quarterly *orationes* (speech days).

Good Friday 1724: seeming (disingenuously?) to be unaware that it was the turn of the Nikolaikirche this year to hold the great Passion performance (St John), his first in Leipzig, Bach had a notice printed beforehand advertising the Thomaskirche. On being compelled to re-advertise, insisted that the gallery and harpsichord of the Nikolaikirche be improved. Revived the work in the Thomaskirche the following year.

October 1727: against the objections of the then university organist, a paid commission to Bach went ahead for supplying and performing the Funeral Ode for the late Electress Christiane Eberhardine, text by the university's Professor Gottsched (Cantata No. 198). The composer directed the performance from the harpsichord, in the university church on 17 October. (In the Roman Catholic Court of Saxony, the late Electress had remained Lutheran.)

September 1728: complained that (i) the Nikolaikirche subdeacon chose hymns for vespers (this was a right of the cantor), and that (ii) the hymns were not according to traditional practice but a novelty (*Neuerung*: Dok. I, p. 55) and too long. Outcome unclear; probably against the subdeacon ultimately.

August 1730: reproached by the main town council (under its two consuls and burgomaster) for dismissing a chorister, for being absent without leave, for failing to teach (in some or all of the seven hours of musical instruction per week) and to supervise his substitute, all without offering an explanation. Also for failing to take a singing class, showing little pleasure in work (i.e. in the school), and generally being *incorrigibel* (Dok. II, pp. 205–6). Some payment to be withheld. A few weeks later, but before the letter he wrote to his friend Erdmann (as a reaction to this criticism?), he was denied additional payment for temporary extra duties but applied again the following year or so, despite having had no known extra duties (Dok. II, pp. 207, 222).

November 1734: criticized again for not teaching.

August 1736: a long, bitter quarrel began with the new rector, J. A. Ernesti, over who had the right to appoint the choir-prefect. Documents show Bach appealing in turn to the rector, the council, the consistory and the elector, none with clear success; it is also hinted that since his authority had been questioned in this way, he had found difficulty with discipline in the school and the choir. The elector may have ruled in his favour: he named him Court Composer three months later and was greeted with a cantata on a visit to Leipzig in April 1738 (the lost BWV Anh. I 13, for which, as customary, Bach was paid handsomely).

The very length of the letter of 31 December 1725 is a sign that Bach felt strongly and was willing, even felt compelled, to divert his creative drive into preparing such an appeal. The points are detailed, especially concerning small amounts of money that were surely of marginal interest to the king's counsellors. But note: although all these arguments were largely about territory affecting both the cantor's status and his income, and although they do say nothing good about his personal relationships in church and school, none of them was about avoiding work as a composer – on the contrary.

Just as there may have been inter-clergy quarrels in Mühlhausen that would affect him as a young organist, so the seasoned cantor in Leipzig would not be helped in his work by the various tense relations between superintendent, rector and town council over authority in the school and church. Any resistance to or also support for him among the various men in authority was as much due to pre-existing tensions in their respective spheres of influence (and who expected what of the municipal *director musices*) as to any action of his own. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that Bach, the son of a town musician and evidently sensitive about status, was one to suffer patiently anything that seemed to question this status. This treatment by the university seems to have left him particularly aggrieved. So it did Kuhnau in 1710 in a similar situation, though Bach at least did not have to go cap in hand to the municipality for equipment (musical instruments) as Kuhnau had done in 1704 and 1709. Presumably players were largely using their own by now.

Several details in the first of the arguments above do seem to say something about Bach as cantor and his energy in pursuing something he regarded as unjust. First, he approached (or had someone approach) the surviving widows of his two predecessors, Schelle and Kuhnau, and obtained from them statements in support of his claim that the university service was something traditionally within the cantor's purview. (Anna

Magdalena invoked the same predecessors in 1750 when asking for the widow's allowance of six months' salary. It was for this she was asked to hand over certain cantata performance parts she still held.) Perhaps Bach knew that Kuhnau, one of the university's graduates, had had his own persistent problems with its authorities who, one suspects, took the opportunity to do what they had long intended to do when Kuhnau died: find their own music director.

On his third approach to the elector Bach used the widows' testimony, which gave more detail in support of the claim. His letter, or at least the extant document now in the Leipzig University Archive, was copied out by someone else above his signature (Dok. I, pp. 34–41). He also visited Dresden in September 1725 a few days after writing one of his letters to the elector, and played a recital on the new Silbermann organ in the Sophienkirche, the performance reported in the newspapers. This came to the notice of the elector? Both the recital and the laudatory report of his being 'well-received by the court and town virtuosi' (Dok. II, p. 150) were surely part of seeking royal attention and favour. But in any case he needed to be on good terms with the university of Leipzig, not least for the job of recommending former choristers of St Thomas's for university scholarships, which he is known to have done (BJ 2008, pp. 189ff.).

That Bach's fee-claim was not directed personally against the university's organist J. G. Görner, whose payment might have been reduced accordingly, is clear from continuing good relations between the two of them over the whole Leipzig period, both professionally (Görner became Thomaskirche organist in 1729) and personally, even closely (he became 'trustee of the paternal estate' for the four youngest Bach children in 1750: Dok. II, p. 497). If the new cantor's income was lower than he had been led to believe, it was not because of Görner's appointment as *director musices* to the university shortly before Bach took up office. The dating was hardly accidental, and the situation is easy to understand. On the one hand, the university had a history of moving its church music away from the domain of the municipal cantor, who had traditionally appointed its precentor, and of turning to clever young people in the town (to J. F. Fasch in Kuhnau's time). On the other, since the university, the largest in Germany, had every right to provide more church services for its community when called for, and was in any case not always in agreement with the town councils, it was reasonable that it should look for someone with fewer commitments than the Thomascantor.

Future research may show how far this series of quarrels, so well documented, exceeds others of the time involving senior cantors. Such

known criticism as there is of Telemann in Hamburg concerns his neglect not only of teaching in the Johanneum school but of the choral music at Saturday vespers (Kremer 1995, p. 296). At least the latter complaint is not one found in Leipzig, so far as is known. In Bach's case, some exceptionally beautiful music resulted: the university cantata of 1727 for the late queen (No. 198), already mentioned several times, is a work for an especially grand occasion, approved by the elector, and one in which, for once, the cantor and all the authorities of town, university and church participated. (In another respect too this memorial music is notable: it is the only cantata whose dates of composition are known more or less exactly, from about 2 to 15 October: Dok. II, p. 170.) In view of the two celebratory *dramme per musica* for two university professors, BWV 205 (August 1725) and 207 (December 1726), there does seem to have been an attempt over this period to provide quite splendid music for events involving university people. All three cantatas Nos. 198, 205 and 207 gave listeners new musical experiences of very high quality, including No. 205's rattling opening and No. 207's movements based on 'Brandenburg Concerto' No. 1. No one had heard anything like the opening chorus of No. 207 before.

The contention in 1728 over choosing hymns is significant. Although the subdeacon's reasons are not given, organists today trying to maintain artistic standards against obstreperous or trendy clergy can guess what was involved, given Bach's obvious devotion all his life to Luther's texts and the classical hymn-repertory of the pristine Reformation. The very orthodoxy of the texts of chorales in so many cantatas and selected for organ-preludes in *Clavierübung III* begins to look like a deliberate gesture, for the composer surely knew that the Thomaskirche was originally a church of the Augustinian order to which Luther had belonged and where he had famously preached. Augustine and Luther: these as Fathers of the early and the reformed Church respectively were not to be discarded by changing fashions in the Nikolaikirche.

With respect to the school-board's complaint, quarrels between a school-rector and the cantor must have been so common or predictable at the time that one particular cantor published a book in 1706 dealing with the lines of demarcation and the potential problems. This is the *Directorium musicum* of J. P. Bendeler in Quedlinburg, author also of a book on organs. In Leipzig, Bach had had sufficiently collegial relations with the previous rector to join with him in 1733 in appealing to the consistory court about a parishioner obliged to pay both of them fees for his recent marriage outside Leipzig (Dok. I, pp. 75–6). The new rector, Ernesti, had served Bach's family before the quarrel, as a godfather in 1733.

But he was well over twenty years younger than Bach, so a question is whether the quarrel of 1736 arose because of a young man standing on his dignity and authority or because an older was resistant to change in his habits. Both, perhaps. Bach had already been criticized for lapses in school duties during the process in 1734 to promote Ernesti rector, who was soon complaining that Bach did not rehearse the boys enough (Dok. II, pp. 252, 265), a quarrel eventually involving the royal consistory (Dok. II, p. 282). The complaint might suggest two further things: that Bach was expected to rehearse the treble parts of the forthcoming cantatas during school singing-classes, and that the school rector monitored standards maintained in the service.

The situation with Ernesti was especially bad, carried on through the ruling town council, dragging on for months and still being reported on forty years later (Dok. III, p. 314). Both contestants made clear that there was a total breakdown of personal relations, especially the young rector, who devoted a great deal of (school) time, energy and rhetorical training to put his case that:

Bach failed to defer to him over appointing prefects, as regulations say he must;
he twice caused commotion in church by chasing away the prefect he had not wanted;
he is insubordinate;
he thinks it beneath his dignity to direct wedding-music if this consists only of hymns.

Bach answers the various points succinctly and straightforwardly:

the cantor has always chosen the prefects, since they must be competent in their musical duties;
despite the cantor's 'amicable representation' (*gütliche Vorstellung)* of his case, the rector refuses to back down;
a resolution is needed for the sake of future cantors and for peace in the school.

The unembellished directness of Bach's answer could alone have irritated the young university-educated rector, for again he indulged in lengthy, eloquent, quasi-objective prose to complain that:

Bach's account is neither complete nor truthful (*wahrhaftig*: Dok. II, pp. 274ff.);
he had intended and wished (*intention gehabt und gewünschet*) the replacement prefect to make a mistake.

So Bach is stubborn, insubordinate, devious, untruthful, vindictive and malicious. His defence, in the course of four letters that must have occupied much of his time during August 1736, is to ask the consistory court for protection so that he can get on with his duties.

Whether it was for royal support that Bach was drawn to Dresden in the autumn of 1736, or for a superior job at court itself, or because he admired Dresden's immeasurably higher musical and cultural importance, is an open question. So is the degree to which Ernesti's complaints were prompted by petty resentment of a subordinate who had friends in high places and was insufficiently deferential to a young, recently promoted superior, one who had been a student not long before and was still not yet thirty. If the quarrel gradually subsided, we can be sure it was not forgotten. How soon their relations had deteriorated after 1734 when Ernesti had replaced Rector Gesner – the Gesner who had published such praises of Bach – is not clear: neither the performance of a cantata to welcome the new appointee in 1734 nor his standing godfather to sons of Bach in 1733 and 1735 need indicate more than formality. Ernesti had his own views of the duties expected of the school, the choristers and the cantor, no doubt (see Dok. II, pp. 264–5). But who the prefect was to be, and how musically able he was, mattered to a cantor who had to use him in the lesser churches, and who during the 1720s had enjoyed a series of gifted young musicians to call on.

The situation is not difficult to imagine. School, church and town authorities could not act as despotically as a prince but could take other steps to make life hard for an insufficiently humble composer who wanted to be left alone to do his job. (One advantage of schools and municipalities, however, is that they produced good written records.) Besides, the various authorities had their own little sibling tensions over spheres of influence in such things as the formal installation of school officers. For Bach, one reaction would be to tend to neglect official duties, and there are hints of this even after the Ernesti quarrel, as indeed rather earlier too. Today, a master of cathedral music, sooner or later vexed by the clergy or the choir-school's head, might well respond by becoming even more devoted to his art and its higher calling. Although one can easily believe that in Leipzig the fault was not all on one side, it may say something about Bach that no details of a major quarrel between any assistant organist and himself as cantor have emerged, i.e. a quarrel of the kind that did sometimes occur between musicians in the bigger churches (example in Edler 1982, pp. 98ff.).

It must have been an aggravation for Bach that during the late 1730s he was also criticized as a composer (the Scheibe review) and met with objections against his proud creations, the big Passion performances. His clear irritation at the latter could alone account for any declining productivity in his last decade as cantor, just as the temporary giving up of the Collegium concerts in the spring or summer of 1737 may have been in the aftermath of the Ernesti quarrel. Dismay, depression, tension, strain? Was there some movement against him, personal or professional, in the town council, such that in 1739, the year his Passion performance was questioned, it also led to review his income (Dok. II, p. 335)? Working on major collections of complex, virtuoso keyboard music in the years around 1740, and through them concentrating his thoughts on the works and their possible publication, none of which had much to do with church duties, does look like a deliberate turn in other directions. This matched the respect in which he was held over the years by professional musicians, including those 'of the first rank' who, when travelling through Leipzig, called on him to 'let themselves be heard' as performers, according to something Emanuel later said (Dok. III, p. 255).

Any occasional use in the Thomaskirche of music by Handel and Frederick the Great's capellmeister C. H. Graun could be seen as another way to give people what they wanted. How deeply Bach actually admired their music is impossible to say. It is true that twenty-five years after his death, Emanuel told Forkel of his father's admiration for composers of his own generation, Fux, Caldara, Handel, Keiser, Hasse, J. G. and C. H. Graun, Telemann, Zelenka, Benda 'and generally everything that was especially valued in Berlin and Dresden' (Dok. III, p. 289). But all these names were commonly mentioned in German writings of the time. There are many other composers not mentioned by Emanuel whose music was copied by Bach or his assistants during the 1730s and 1740s, such as Stölzel, who sometimes subjected his work to as much rewriting as Handel did in his self-borrowings (BJ 2008, p. 131). Though today Emanuel's list of admired composers is often repeated, it looks like a roll-call of the (mostly German) names that Forkel, a historian, would think prominent and therefore worthy of being admired by the discerning J. S. Bach. The Obituary itself prefers to say more about Buxtehude and Reinken, the classics of his youth as an organist, and only much later does Emanuel propose his more up-to-date list, in effect pointedly referring to what were by then two German centres of musical fashion, Berlin and Dresden.

In saying so little about Leipzig, the Obituary does give the impression of a falling-off in the composer's commitment to the job, and of the

likelihood, gradually becoming clearer nowadays, that other composers' cantatas were being used there more often. If there are fewer quarrels documented in his later years there, so there are fewer signs of new church music. Little is known of any new cantatas over the last fifteen years or so, and copyists such as Altnickol and Christoph Friedrich Bach were also working on Palestrina, Pergolesi, Keiser, Handel and others. The copies of such music are in effect recognizing the kind of music people wanted, and this in all kinds of connections. It is interesting, for example, that Bach's copy of a trio by J. G. Graun (BJ 1988, p. 48) might have been made for the same occasion as the 'Peasant Cantata' in 1742, i.e. an occasion requiring light, bright music. As when performances of both Passions were also probably being prepared in his final years, one easily imagines that a creative energy towards the Greater Glory of God was irrepressible, despite the many vexations with which Bach was incapable of dealing supinely.

In general, how warm his professional contacts were cannot be established from hard evidence. The marked similarity between his musical handwriting and that of almost all the copyists who worked for him (including Anna Magdalena) must indicate strength of personality, but of what kind? Inspiring anxious respect or warm loyalty? There was certainly a sense of extended family around him, so that when he died, wife, son-in-law, four sons and possibly student-helpers rallied round to preserve the fund of cantatas. As for any friendly acquaintances the Bachs had: only from occasional documents can it be guessed who these were, as when a book-inscription of *c.* 1742 implies that Anna Magdalena was close to the daughter of well-to-do neighbours (BJ 1997, p. 152), a friend who was godmother to two of her children. Class distinctions being what they were, it is unsurprising that there is little record of any of the Bachs being closely acquainted with the many amateur musicians in the university's professorial circles. But one cannot be sure. Only an occasional reference gives a domestic detail, as when Anna Magdalena's aunt stayed with them in 1742 (BJ 1987, p. 171).

In the letter Johann Elias Bach, a young relation from Schweinfurt, wrote to Sebastian in 1742 when he eventually left the Leipzig household and took up a teaching position elsewhere, one can read considerable warmth. He promises not to forget 'the many blessings' he had enjoyed while being a member of the household and in-house teacher for the youngest children (Dok. II, p. 403). J. P. Kirnberger was later quoted as witnessing Bach's great encouragement of gifted students (Dok. III, p. 524), some of whom certainly stayed in contact with

him. J. G. Ziegler, who came to Bach in Weimar already after studying elsewhere, not only had some of his teacher's later Six Partitas for sale but was himself probably the inexperienced engraver of Nos. 3–6. Other ex-pupils of the St Thomas School seem to have continued to work as copyists for Bach, such as S. G. Heder for the 1736 revival of the St Matthew Passion. That the loyalty of students can also be inspired by a teacher's exceptional talents is clear from various reports of his playing (including the description of his skill in improvising continuo) published as late as 1808 by J. C. Kittel, who must have been speaking of the late 1740s.

Loyalty can also be inspired by sheer, boisterous personality, and there are hints that Sebastian was not above earthy and even coarse behaviour throughout his life. Perhaps that is why Emanuel did not care for anecdotes of the *Zippelfagottist* kind at Arnstadt, for example, or for what he is supposed to have said about Emanuel's own music: 'it's Prussian blue, it fades' (*verschiesst*: Dok. III, p. 518). Hardly to his credit is the outrageous pun *Dreckohr* ('shit ear') for *Rector*, made with respect to the anti-musical clergyman in Freiberg in late 1749; nor is the denial of his involvement in this only two months before his death (Dok. I, pp. 122, 124). These events had also involved two or three other reputable people. Not rare in the few surviving writings is a sharp little phrase that conveys something of Bach, 'the plain-speaking man', as when in 1748 he recommended a certain organ-builder so that churches may not be 'any longer deceived by bunglers' (*nicht mehr durch Stümper betrogen*: Dok. V, p. 88). In what is almost certainly a reference to him in 1749 as a learned musician insisting on pupils being well read in the sciences and humanities, there is a remark about his very old-fashioned demeanour (*recht altfränkische Mine*: Dok. V, p. 266).

Bach's calling the big organ in Görlitz a 'horse-organ, because it needs the effort of a steed to play it', according to the organ-builder J. A. Silbermann in *c.* 1741 (*PferdsOrgel*, *rossmässige Arbeit*: Dok. II, p. 389) was probably less brash than it seems, for 'horse-work' was not a rare term and was used by Mattheson for the job of playing the big string bass during a long opera (1713, p. 286). Whether Bach had actually travelled to Görlitz and played the unique organ there is not known, but whatever opinions about this organ were current (see also Flade 1926, p. 10), they would have gained authority by being attributed to the Leipzig cantor. Besides, he could have surmised it had heavy action just by reading the published monograph (see note 14 on p. 532). On the other hand the Görlitz organist, D. Nikolai, was another former student, and if

Bach did visit the town, which is some distance from Leipzig, so one might speculate that he did travel around Saxony and Thuringia playing more organs than is now recorded.

Given how much detail of his father's activities Emanuel could have supplied to fill out the picture of a self-dependent composer, his silences may have another reason: Bach had in his later years become a 'lone master' inhabiting a discrete world of musical thought. Special musical challenges, such as making the intricate counterpoint of the Art of Fugue playable, must have cost even Johann Sebastian Bach a great deal of time, bar by bar, piece by piece, without short cuts. A late detail like the key-changes in the Confiteor of the 'B minor Mass' required some effort. In principle, the gestation of the big collections and works of the final decade took time not least because there were no previous models for the composer to draw on – one possible reason why so many projects were not completed or finalized. The seclusion necessary for such work was not only physical but spiritual, for this musical world had not been penetrated before. (By contrast Handel's forty-two operas are based on a more or less regurgitated idiom.) The recherché nature of much of what Bach wrote in his later years is easy to imagine as the work of a recluse, actual or, at the very least, potential.

'Theoretical speculations'

It is true that our late Bach did not involve himself in deep, theoretical speculations of music [*Betrachtungen*] but was all the stronger in the exercise of it [*in der Ausübung*]. (*Obituary*)

Although Emanuel later said that this remark had been added by the Obituary's publisher and alleged Bach-student Lorenz Mizler, and is 'not worth much', he later observed elsewhere – probably knowing Mattheson's implied doubts about Mizler (1740, p. 231) – that his father was 'no lover of dry, mathematical paraphernalia' or *Zeuge*, 'trash'. Unsurprisingly, Mizler, who promulgated notions of how to compose on mathematical principles, gave Mattheson two substantial biographical entries about himself.

Generally speaking, such remarks by Emanuel (Dok. III, p. 288) rather go with other signs of reticence on his father's part, as in apparently supplying no biography when asked, or publishing collections of music without the kind of preface found in some contemporary volumes like

Kauffmann's chorales (1733) or Maichelbeck's sonatas (1736). Such reticence could be a form of pride, although his extant letters, more than faintly macaronic and less oily than Rector Ernesti's, seem to betray something else, such as diffidence, a limited practice in writing, a lack of fluency or even advanced education. There could be some such reason why a major and potentially useful publication like *Clavierübung III* in 1739 had no dedication, no preface, no chorale-harmonizations and no useful organ-registrations: it was a volume less 'practical' than 'monumental', and its composer was standing back from the usual habits and requirements of the day.

Mizler's Corresponding Society of Musical Sciences (*Societät der musikalischen Wissenschaften*, 1738) was a scattered group of musicians corresponding or exchanging published letters on matters of theory or 'musical science', a society which Bach eventually joined in 1747 as fourteenth member, presenting to it, so Mizler said, his Canonic Variations (see p. 442). The phrase 'deep theoretical speculations' referred to music as part of philosophical learning, the subject of Mizler's own graduate dissertation first published in Leipzig in 1734, predictably dedicated to Mattheson as well as to Bach, and apparently not faultless in its Latin. Mizler knew that Bach's predecessor Kuhnau had written unpublished Latin treatises on the difference between ancient and modern music, and he made a point of praising other members of his Society, some of them busy church musicians like Bach, for their contributions of this kind. The remark at the end of the 'Memorial' or Obituary reads like an apology to the Society's other members for Bach's not having contributed learned essays for their perusal. Yet Mizler's notion of 'philosophy' and his preoccupation with the 'mathematical grounds for composition' had aroused scepticism, and it is highly unlikely that other invited members of his Society, such as Handel and C. H. Graun, spent any more time on Pythagoras and Ptolemy than J. S. Bach did.

On the other hand, open letters on musical arcana apparently written by Handel, Krieger and many others had been regularly published by Mattheson in his earlier *Critica musica*, a music journal of sorts which likewise had never numbered J. S. Bach among its contributors. Emanuel's description of his father as being 'too busy for barely the most necessary correspondence' (*Correspondenz*: Dok. III, p. 290) could be an oblique reference not only to ordinary letters but specifically to this kind of learned *Correspondenz* in the day's musical periodicals. As Emanuel goes on to say, if he could not attend to 'wide-ranging written conversations' (*weitläuftige schriftlich Unterhaltungen*), he had opportunity 'all the more' for talking

in person 'with worthy people' (*desto mehr . . . mit braven Leuten*) at home in Leipzig.

Even so, many a 'necessary' business letter must have got written as well as dictated, and many an event in his life and many a personal contact could have been arranged only by mail. The simplest of arrangements, as when the teenage Friedemann had violin lessons with J. G. Graun of Merseburg in 1726, were likely to have entailed previous correspondence. Some extant letters show that in some circumstances Bach was not at all stinting when writing on something he presumably cared about, as when in 1743 and again 1744 he was consulted by the 'director of the Senate' at Salzwedel, a modest town searching for a cantor. Similarly forthcoming were replies when his professional recommendation is sought for a former student, when he needs to smooth things between employer and applicant, when he is asked to advise on financial matters, or is piqued to think his advice undervalued (Dok. V, pp. 269–72).

Mizler had mentioned in print that Handel declined an honorary doctorate at Oxford (HHB 4, pp. 397, 376), honour of a kind unknown in Germany, mentioning it when naming Handel an honorary member of his corresponding society in 1745. Perhaps this was an incentive for Bach to join when his former pupil Mizler approached him (or re-approached him) in 1747? In general, he composed as if he had a quite different idea of what sort of 'deep theoretical speculation' was useful to a musician. For clearly, a certain deep contemplation is necessary for the fugues, canons, complex harmonies and meticulous style-allusions in his music, from his first works to his last. He could well have openly shunned textbook calculations of interval ratios and the like while at the same time contemplating for himself the notes of music and how they can be made to behave. The Art of Fugue and the 'Goldberg Variations' are a 'theoretical speculation' quite as much as they are a practical 'exercise of it', to use Mizler's terms, and served to inspire admirers such as Marpurg, Kirnberger and Kittel to write their own theory books later, as well as countless teachers ever since. Hence in part, perhaps, Emanuel's criticism of Mizler's remark, for he would know better than Mizler what his father's interests were.

It is also possible that Bach consciously gave an impression of being unlearned before a certain kind of pedant. This is something that crops up elsewhere in the history of music, as when in 1638 the philologist G. B. Doni remarked that Frescobaldi did not know a major from a minor semitone (Gallico 1986, pp. 187–8) or that Monteverdi showed 'little understanding' when he, Doni, tried to arouse his interest in micro-tunings (Palisca 1994, p. 487). A century and more later, Mizler seems to have been

one of those not ungifted people, still to be met with, who dabble in several disciplines – in his case, music performance, music theory, theology, philosophy, medicine, law, rhetoric, physics, mathematics, even translation and publishing – but somehow never quite achieve a genuine, mainline musicianship. When Bach did join Mizler's society, apparently his contribution, part of the annual offering each member was supposed to make, was not learned essays but music of a flatteringly scientific character: the Canonic Variations, also probably the shorter six-part Canon, BWV 1076 (one of the fourteen added by the composer in his copy of the 'Goldberg Variations'). Perhaps the canons of the Art of Fugue would also have been submitted in the yearly instalments had he been an active member for longer. Nevertheless, for Monteverdi, Frescobaldi and J. S. Bach all to be judged guilty, there must be something wrong with the judges.

So if Bach was aware of the writings of his university-graduate predecessor published earlier by Mattheson, any reluctance he had to participate could be explained in various ways, including indifference to such things, or a reluctance to follow in his predecessor's footsteps. Certain learned music was also of limited interest, it seems: Emanuel claimed that his father found no more than 'a dry kind of counterpoint' in such books as Fux's *Gradus ad Parnassum* (Dok. III, p. 289), of which he owned a copy and may even have had it bound in order to conserve it (Dok. I, p. 270). Presumably it was 'dry' in its step-by-step textbook demonstration of how to combine notes and treat intervals (the 'species'), all in the language of a much earlier generation but much less inspirational than Frescobaldi's practical publications. If Bach did express this view openly it would explain why Mizler did not dedicate his translation of Fux's celebrated book to him when he published it in Leipzig in 1742. Otherwise, such a dedication would have been expected, considering not only Bach's position in the town as *director musices lipsiensis* but his interest over that period in the old-style counterpoint, some of it published, the very *stile antico* that Fux was laying down.

That Bach was not acknowledged by name in three important and relevant musical publications produced in Leipzig (organ-chorales by Kauffmann, songs by Sperontes and theory books by Mizler) does rather make one wonder why. He could learn little from them and therefore kept aloof? It cannot be merely that outside the world of book-publishing, Leipzig was becoming a backwater, although it might be significant that the one dedication to him, Sorge's *Sonatinen* of 1742, appeared elsewhere, in Nuremberg. There is also the question why it was that he made no use of Fux's book when working with his own students (if that is what Emanuel

means) although later on Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven certainly did. Was it that in view of the fashionable musical language of 1740, Fuxian counterpoint then seemed more restrictive and prescriptive than it actually did to composers half a century later, when it could serve merely as first-step teaching material?

The period 1738 to 1742 was both when Mizler gave lectures on Fux's treatise in the university and when Bach, whom one does not easily imagine attending lectures, took on two other students who were to become productive writers, J. F. Agricola and J. P. Kirnberger. All three younger men became noted for writing books, mostly after 1750, and all three might just be relaying what they had been taught by the cantor. Two books, Agricola's copy of Fux's treatise and Kirnberger's treatise *Die Kunst des reinen Satzes* (1771), include some identical realizations of chord-progressions in five parts, realizations of the kind that Kirnberger attributed to Bach (see NBA VIII/3, KB) and which was to become so important an aspect of the 'B minor Mass'. Five parts are particularly instructive for the learner, for he must learn how to avoid doubled dissonances when there are more than four. The result is a classic texture, whether SSATB or SATTB, and one demonstrated already in the *Pièce d'orgue*, BWV 572, and later expanded to produce the six parts of the otherwise similar Ricercar *à 6* in the Musical Offering.

The likelier that former students like Kirnberger were taking further what it was Bach had taught in the early 1740s, which seems probable (BJ 2004, p. 87), the clearer it appears that he was concerned with practical problems of everyday composition and harmonization. (Or, as suggested by Emanuel's own book, with practical details of keyboard-playing.) Although fashion in teaching and learning would change, for some decades after his death priority was still being given by many organist-teachers to a traditional learning of harmony and counterpoint. This in turn melted imperceptibly into the academy's and music-school's teaching in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Kirnberger's methods for harmonizing chorales, creating settings for organ (including canons) and composing chromatic fugues could have come straight from his own experiences as a student in Leipzig. Even Beethoven sought out copies of Kirnberger's treatises. For Bach and his pupils the training was towards creating lively, literate music. If he did also at some point make a copy of Angelo Berardi's three-part treatise *Documenti armonici*, Bologna 1687, as later claimed (see Beisswenger 1992, p. 341), its purist treatment of the rules must have seemed by comparison to produce only the old 'dry kind of counterpoint'.

With respect to 'theoretical speculation' there is a related area for consideration: the possible significance in certain music of simple

numbers. The many instances that can be found of certain numbers (14 = Bach, 41 = J. S. Bach and 158 = Johann Sebastian Bach) in the number of bars in a section or a piece, or the number of notes it contains, or even its number of movements, have suggested to some that Bach had more than a passing interest in such things. This is possible, as he would have come across number-significances in writings by Werckmeister, Kuhnau and others, and was certainly familiar as a young man with the German speciality of chronograms and acrostics. In the preface to his 'Biblical Stories' of 1700 (*Musicalische Vorstellung*), Kuhnau referred to 'a certain author' not by name but by an 'algebraic problem', i.e. a simple code in which the letter A in his name was 1, B was 2, and so on. By extension, the 'Fourteen Canons' attached to the 'Goldberg Variations' could be a self-reference (= Bach), one not inappropriate to an arcane genre like mono-thematic canons, even part of the reason to make so many. But what will never be free from doubt is whether any such instance is significant and what exactly the significance might be.

There certainly seem to be number-references that have a truly musical purpose, as in the many threes in *Clavierübung III*. So there might be for the ten melodic phrases from the Ten Commandments chorale quoted in Cantata No. 77.i, subtle references to a text that is not actually being sung at the time. For the number-allusions in an aria on the Duke of Weimar's fifty-second birthday, see p. 628. At the same time, the enthusiasm sometimes found both among performers and musicologists today for tracing simple numbers, such as the threes supposedly running through the Third 'Brandenburg' (its position as No. 3, a persistent three-note motif, three groups of three instruments, etc.) might be no more than an enthusiasm for the work itself expressed by discovering an objective correlative. The 'evidence' used also needs to be selective: one could not argue that the triads of the Third 'Brandenburg' are exclusive to it or that its two-and-a-bit movements are somehow three. On the other hand, appearances of the notes B A C H in the final moments of the late Canonic Variations and Art of Fugue are certainly deliberate, tempting conjecture as to why they are there. Note that the reference is primarily musical: B A C H is after all not a far-fetched sequence of notes in certain keys (F major, C major, D minor) and is in itself a kind of *Ur*-melody, or potentially so. Transposed versions have also been found, though a 'transposition of B A C H' does seem rather a contradiction in terms.

Supposed examples of Divine Proportion or Golden Section (qv) in cantata movements are matched by supposed *gematria* (qv) in the works for solo violin, and much else. Just occasionally there appears an

incontrovertible Divine Proportion, as in the three sections of the E flat Fugue for organ; there, the bar-numbers 36:45:36 can reveal various arithmetical schemes, including the ratio 72:45 (all multiples of three times three), which corresponds to the ratio 1.61:1, the Golden Section. But if these are meant to have a significance beyond a simple practical symmetry, so also would another kind of symmetry and one that can be heard more easily: the same beat for the Italian Concerto's three movements (2/4 crotchet = 3/4 quaver = 2/2 minim). This too is a musical matter, a neat and practical organization that has no need to be imbued with symbolic significance. As for any interest in the interval-proportions familiar to the Greeks (the fifth 3/2, the fourth 4/3, etc.), Mattheson had already said that Bach no more imparted the 'supposed mathematical grounds of composition' than he, Mattheson, did, or so he assured his readers (*die vermeinten mathematischen Compositions-Gründe*: Dok. II, p. 380).

In general, several points need to be borne in mind when speculating on symbols and allusions in Bach. First, the desire to prove that they are not imaginary or accidental will lead inevitably to further conjecture about their supposed purpose, a conjecture by nature personal, even fantastic. The problem then is that there is no verifiable limit to such conjecture, only common sense. In the E flat Fugue of *Clavierübung III*, a volume that has inspired much talk of the Trinity, the second theme (lively, engaging, young) could be interpreted as the *Son* to the first theme. The *Father*'s theme is majestic, powerful, the Ancient of Days; the Son's is 'born of the father' (*ex patre natum*). But only unfettered conjecture could explain the third theme as, somehow, the Holy Ghost 'who proceeds from the father and the son' (*qui ex patre filioque procedit*). It is a dancing counterpoint to the first theme, altering it and not combining with the second. An interesting hemiola (qv) links the second and third sections at bar 81: but what significance is there in 9×9? And why are the three themes not unified?

Secondly, hypotheses need also to account for two things. First, the negatives, as in, are Golden Sections discernible in other music of Bach? Why there? Or, why not? Secondly, the comparatives, as in, what music by other composers and what other numbers can be interpreted in the same way? What kind of *symbol* could lie behind the 185 bars of the Musical Offering's Ricercar *à 3* (185, the product of prime numbers 37 and 5) is anyone's guess. Without comparisons or verifiable motivations, any hypothesis stands on a single shaky leg. Thirdly, most numbers involve simple musical events and are merely reminders of words or images already present, not always evident to the listener but important to the

composer. At most, any *ten* appearances of the chorale-melody in the trumpet part of Cantata No. 77.i is a simple allusion to ten commandments, not subtle tokens of theology, and not even 'word-painting', since none of the entries pictures the corresponding commandment. Its irregular *canon à 2* might just be an allusion to the two main commandments (*canones*) on which 'hang all the law and the prophets'.

The three trio settings of the Trinity hymn in *Clavierübung III* illustrate the idea of the Three-in-One (three trio lines for one sound), but their rising keys (F, G, A major) are at most a simple musical allusion, even a pun (*terza*) but hardly a profound symbol. Whether or not such details are a sign of 'deep, theoretical speculation', they are certainly the work of a composer 'all the stronger in the making of music itself'. While for a group of Leipzig cantatas there must have been some practical reason for using the violoncello piccolo – it was different and novel, and a particular player was available, etc. – there is nothing to link it concretely with some significance in the text. Why would there be? And while it is possible that some kind of 'deep speculation' was behind the forty-one movements of *Clavierübung I*, the fourteen of *Clavierübung II*, the twenty-seven of *Clavierübung III* (median of fourteen and forty-one) or the several thirty-twos (2^5) of '*Clavierübung IV*', there is something more obvious and demonstrable about these volumes: they have an *ouverture* at a central point.

Solutions to Bach's canon BWV 1074 were published in 1747 by Mizler and in 1749 by Mattheson and so add a shade of irony here, insofar as Bach's contrapuntal ingenuities were receiving more publicity than was his more practical work as a composer. Somewhat of a parallel is the case of G. H. Stölzel, an acquaintance (possibly close) and member of Mizler's Society, whose only published work was a treatise on the writing of modest four-part canons at the fourth, fifth and octave, the *Praktischer Beweis* of 1725 mentioned in Walther's *Lexicon*. But there is a yet greater irony in Mizler's gratuitous remark heading this section: without Bach's membership of Mizler's Corresponding Society there might not have been an Obituary.

Tuning and temperament

He knew how to give harpsichords in their tuning so pure and correct a temperament [*rein und richtig zu temperiren*] that all keys sounded beautiful and pleasing. He knew of no keys which one would have had to avoid because of impure tuning [*unreiner*]. (*Obituary*)

This remark of Agricola, of a kind not usually found in composers' biographies, is less surprising than it may at first seem, since it is relevant to the Obituary's focus on Bach the keyboard-player and one having to deal with a persistent interest of thinking musicians in that time and place: how to tune the twelve notes of the octave.

Agricola makes no claim here that Bach had engaged in 'theoretical speculation' about temperament, as there surely would have been if, like many a German organist of his generation, he had. The Obituary of G. H. Bümler accompanying Bach's makes a point of saying that he had contributed a paper on equal temperament to Mizler's Corresponding Society (*gleichschwebende*: Mizler 1754, p. 140). There is no evidence that it was a burning issue for Bach, who had been used for so long to organs locally that were tuned to be more versatile and modern than those of north Germany. Although there is some evidence that tunings might differ between music for the court and music for the church, there is no certainty what it was that Bach preferred for his harpsichords, any more than there is for what Emanuel preferred for his fortepianos beyond wanting all twenty-four keys to be available (1753, pp. 10, 17).

The Obituary's claim that Bach tuned harpsichords to sound pleasing could imply two things: that organs, not needing to make all the keys sweet, kept older, narrower tunings; and that Bach clearly required his own harpsichords to be more versatile. Unfortunately, despite many opinions confidently expressed about this over the following centuries, there remains nothing quite certain about exactly what temperament the Obituary was referring to, if it was. Nor, more importantly, is it clear for how long Bach had desired or practised any particular form of it. It had surely changed during his lifetime. What is likely is that a dominant, possibly misleading, influence on both the Obituary and later authors was the great manual of instruction, the Well-tempered Clavier. Questions about the twenty-four keys remain. Who required them to be equal? If not equal, what was acceptable? Did WTC1 and WTC2 assume the same temperament? If Bach did expect the same tuning for organ and harpsichord, why are fewer keys found in music for organ than for harpsichord? Evidence that the composer called the Well-tempered Clavier 'the art of temperament', as was claimed in 1776 (Dok. III, p. 304), does not exist.

Since the WTC is so exceptional, the situation is especially unclear. Roughly contemporary with the original Book 1 had been the two sets of inventions that still did not use all twenty-four keys, only fifteen. Composers after 1750, despite what was on the whole their far more limited

harmonic range, wanted to be able to play in any key at any time, especially on the new pianos, whose tone-production, being less immediate than the harpsichord's and less sustained than the organ's, made equal temperament less and less objectionable to people used to earlier tunings. G. A. Sorge's report that Bach did not like the 'four bad triads' of earlier temperaments (major triads of F sharp, A flat, B and C sharp: Dok. II, p. 450) dates from 1748 and says nothing about his practice over the decades, though it does suggest that he and Bach had discussed it. Sorge is an early example of the tuning enthusiast who likes to involve Bach in his own theories.

With the word *Clavicymbale* ('harpsichords'), the Obituary seems to be visualizing the composer tuning the instruments in everyday use, for practising, composing, teaching, playing. The big church organs, more the concern of professional builders, were much less often tuned. When playing continuo with only a soft stop or two, organists must long have tolerated awkward keys or learnt to cope with them by avoiding the well-known unpleasant intervals they would otherwise have found in accompanying the early Cantatas Nos. 106 and 71. It is striking how many moments in the newer keys of E flat, A flat, F minor, C minor and B minor are to be found in these early works, at least in the versions of them now known from later copies. The F major version of Cantata No. 106 clearly leads to fewer problems than a known version in E flat, which must lead to questions about its original key and also in general the reliability of the late sources for early cantatas.

Even in 1739, a sign of the modern aspirations of the organ-volume *Clavierübung III* was that it began and ended in E flat major. When Mattheson described this as a 'beautiful, majestic key' but not in the 'head and fingers' of most organists, he was presumably speaking of organists in Hamburg (1731, p. 244) and unaware that Bach – coincidentally? – was also using it at just about then for the first of the Six Sonatas for Organ. By coincidence, the first piece in a third volume of organ music, the six 'Schübler Chorales' based on older cantatas, is also in E flat major, whether or not Bach was responsible for this publication. (The key was unchanged from the original cantata, No. 140.) *Clavierübung III* also contained chorale-settings in F sharp minor and F minor, but they do not require organ and their close writing suits the harpsichord well. Hence using these keys – because they are chorales for harpsichordists?

There is also a related question about the pitch to which keyboards were tuned. At least since Kuhnau's time, to make up for its high pitch the organ part for cantatas had had to be written out a tone lower than the other

parts. Accompanying a movement in E flat down a tone meant either basic triads in D flat major had to be avoided (or handled discreetly) or a tuning had to be devised to allow them. It is not out of the question that for the sake of such remote keys, a rank or two of pipes in the Thomaskirche organ were tuned close to equal temperament. Large organs of the time often included a stop or two at lower pitch,[19] and to include instead a stop or two in different temperament (equal or near-equal) was just as feasible, in fact more so. It was also feasible on any small organ (*Positif*) used in the gallery. There is no evidence that any of this was done at St Thomas's, but neither tuners' contracts nor printed descriptions would need to mention it.

The unequal temperament of most organs, impossible to miss because of the sustained tone, was not necessarily a disadvantage. Rather the opposite: it gave piquancy to an early chorale in F minor in the *Orgelbüchlein*, *c.* 1714 – 'Ich ruf zu dir' has the thinnest texture in the album, hardly a coincidence – as it also brought a sense of tension when the bigger preludes modulated temporarily to remoter keys. Nor should it be forgotten that the traditional associations of a key, as reflected in the usual old tunings, gave even the Art of Fugue an important antique allusion: its D minor recalls the pure 'first key' of so many earlier collections of keyboard pieces (*tonus primus*, *le premier ton*) and should have a relaxed character. D minor would be quite distinct from the keys either side of it, those used for very different music in C minor ('pathetic, tragic') or E minor ('elegiac, wistful').

If one assumes that the tunings of the day allowed keys to keep some characteristics, certain other distinctions become clearer too. The difference between G major and G mixolydian is one instance. The modern key of G major with its strong dominants (D major) is found in the harpsichord toccatas, the suites, the 'Goldberg Variations' and many cantata choruses. But the older key of G mixolydian, in having fewer F sharps and tending towards the subdominant (C major), is more characteristic of organ-chorales and old melodies. When appropriate, these tonal distinctions between different musical genres were observed, and it was quite in the nature of Bach's lifelong interest in making contrasts that he should distinguish between these two keys in *Clavierübung III*: one for the Trinity chorale-trio, where the key is a clear diatonic G major; and one for both

[19] This may have been what Kuhnau and the other examiners had requested at Halle (see note 13 on p. 530). Or was the lower pitch to be available only on a stop or two, enough for playing *basso continuo*? The Leipzig Neue Kirche organ of 1703 had such a stop 'for [ensemble] music' (Dähnert 1980, p. 179). At Eisenach Georgenkirche, a fifth manual to the side was connected to the lowest main keyboard, and may have been shifted a note or two for a lower pitch.

Ten Commandment chorales, where the melody's G mixolydian is first heard in a canon and then in a fugue. Some may see this distinction as responding to the New and Old Testament respectively. Cantatas, as music for public communication, were less appropriate for such subtleties except in final chorales which, though mostly in major or minor keys, preserve a modal flavour when the melody is old, as in the G mixolydian 'Gelobet seist du' closing Cantata No. 91.

Other keys have certain characteristics that appear to preserve old modal details. Thus E minor often gives the impression of avoiding or being discreet about its dominant of B major, which has sharp thirds and flat fifths. Movements in A minor moving to the dominant at some point do so by dropping from F to E (modally) rather than rising from B major (diatonically). Movements in E minor always end with a major chord even as the taste for picardy thirds (qv) was declining.[20] F major tends towards E flats especially at the beginning of a piece. The composer seems to have become especially fond of B minor for *affektvoll* arias. In full ensemble music, the instruments and therefore the voices will naturally observe sufficient differences between keys as to impart a distinct character to each. The St Matthew Passion trawls carefully through a series of keys, major/minor, sharp/flat, from G sharp minor (Jesus's betrayal) to B flat major (final aria), from the opening E minor to B flat major and finally C minor (both as far from E minor as possible). It surely does not do this only to have them sound all exactly the same only a little higher or lower.

Several questions are raised by the Well-tempered Clavier, in particular Book 1. Three common views are, or have been, that Bach intended equal temperament; that he did not intend it; and that whichever it was, he wrote the WTC as a vindication of it. None of this is demonstrable. Although by definition 'well-tempered' was not identical to 'equal tempered', by the 1720s it could be so implied by context, i.e. for a set of pieces running through all the keys. Of course, how far 100 per cent equality is practical is another question. On the other hand, well-tempered could mean a tuning system in which keys are all tolerable, but different and distinctive. Many writers since have reproduced such systems, some arguing that the WTC allows for one particular version of unequal temperament by tactfully minimizing awkward harmonies on the one hand and, on the other, sustaining them where the tuning is sweet. But since (i) some pieces were transposed for the WTC

[20] If E minor is the original key of Cantata No. 4, keyboardists today playing a minor final tonic for the continuo-only movement (BWV 4.vi) are contradicting tradition.

compilations, and (ii) notation does not necessarily show how sustained the harmonies are, this particular line of reasoning is not reliable.

Behind arguments about the WTC are often three other common views: that a single tuning was intended for it; that each book is a set or cycle of pieces to be played as such in the given order; and that its very title is evidence for this. Again, none of this is demonstrable. Recognizing the oddity of rising by semitones, one might find a more reasoned order in proceeding by dominants, C to G, G to D, D to A, etc. Today's habit of playing 'complete works' in concerts is not relevant to a group of pieces assembled for reasons best known to a habitual, systematic collector like Bach – reasons which included giving young players and composers a 'repository' useful for learning the keys. For all one knows to the contrary, the player tuned the notes for each key as needed, separately and in any order of pieces, a task not requiring great skill. That no individual piece in WTC1 modulates very far means that a key needs to be tuned only for the piece concerned, even if no theorist speaks of retuning in this way. (No theorist would have thought to play all twenty-four keys in sequence.) The very order from C minor straight into C sharp major, etc. is not musically logical, nor is it reliable evidence of a true cycle. Rather, WTC1 completes or fills in the partial key-sequences that were already familiar in earlier assemblages of keyboard pieces, which too were collections not cycles.

There is also some difficulty in believing that temperament was of vital importance to J. S. Bach. Surely it was far less so than the differences between major and minor? The title-page of 'Book 1' carefully specifies twice, in different ways, that all the major and minor keys are present, i.e. all the keys

so wohl ***tertiam majorem*** *oder* ***Ut Re Mi*** *anlangend, als auch* ***tertiam minorem*** *oder* ***Re Mi Fa*** *betreffend . . .*

both with respect to the major third or C–D–E and as concerns the minor third or D–E–F . . .

Thus what it says twice, once in words, once in note-names, is that all the majors and all minors are to be found in the book, not that the semitones are equal or unequal. (These traditional note-names were already familiar from title-pages by Kuhnau, 1692 and Buttstedt, 1716; see above, p. 522.) One has only to think of the totally different effect and *Affekt* of the two opening preludes – a C major arpeggio with double thirds (two E's), bright and open in the treble, then C minor, lower, darker, sombre, agitated – to suppose that it was the promise of major/minor contrast that was

important to the composer, not whether C sharp major was as acceptable as C major only up a semitone.

Of fanciful conjectures about Bach's WTC in recent decades, one theory can be taken as typical: that the size of the hand-written curlicues in a decorative line at the top of the autograph title-page (Lehman 2005) expresses the size of the tempered fifths. The line is unique on a Bach title-page, and since instrument-makers used lines and yardsticks, why not a composer? But the line would have to be viewed upside down, which the user is not told, nor was an early copyist of Bach's autograph, B. C. Kayser, alerted to any significance. Both the line and a lower flourish are decorative, like motifs found also on the title-page of the Anna Magdalena Book of the same year (1722), probably in her hand. (Perhaps it was she who decorated the WTC1 title-page, and continued to make similar embellishments into the 1740s; see BJ 1997, p. 153.) Furthermore, a line of similar curlicues appears on each title-page of F. Suppig's treatises *Labyrinthus musicus* and *Calculus musicus*, again in 1722 (see Rasch 1990). Whether they express the circularity of the twenty-four keys is anyone's guess; but if there is a connection to WTC1, what is it and how did it come about?

Note that the Obituary authors, in the excerpt quoted above, do not mention equal temperament and nor, with their words 'pure and correct', do they betray any expert grasp of the niceties of tuning, nor of how ambiguous such words are. (In post-Renaissance music most 'pure' intervals would not be musically 'correct'.) *Rein* was also Emanuel's description of his father's violin-playing but is equally vague and relates only to a 'clean' tone; presumably his violin fifths were purer than his harpsichord fifths. Kirnberger, another pupil, is also less than fully reliable when he wrote in 1769 that no work of Bach can be put into another key without 'deforming' it (*verunstalten*: Dok. III, p. 201). Did he not know that the composer did exactly that with many pieces, both in WTC and elsewhere, and occasionally more than once? More plausible is Emanuel's down-to-earth remark on another practical issue: that his father did his own tuning (and quilling) on the harpsichord, and did not thank others for doing it. Maybe 'others' included Emanuel himself (Dok. III, p. 285).

Clearly, all the Obituary's remarks of a practical kind aimed to fill out the picture of a composer capable and knowledgeable in practical matters. It is the picture drawn by a younger generation of composers, few of whom, I imagine, could re-leather a piano hammer or would expect to be called upon to do so.

The teacher

In the multiplicity of his song [*seinem mannigfaltigem Gesang*], he delighted, taught and moved [*rührte*] young people, women, men, princes, kings and all true connoisseurs. (*Obituary*)

These words are from the cantata-text supplied at the end of the Obituary by Georg Venzky, school rector in far-away Prenzlau, member and contributor of Mizler's Society, but not a Leipziger or a professional musician. (The two other original obituaries in Mizler's journal also closed with a cantata-text, written by Mizler himself.) They give the Obituary's only reference to Bach's teaching, except for the mention of 'not a few fine organists' at Weimar and for Mizler's final claim, probably self-serving, to have been his pupil in keyboard-playing and composition.

When in April 1750 the Bolognese theorist Padre Martini remarked that Bach was 'known and admired' not only in Germany but throughout Italy, it was specifically as *un Professore*, almost certainly meaning 'one who instructs' through his compositions (Dok. II, p. 469). How many actual pupils outside school Bach had, including his sons and especially in Leipzig, can only be guessed: over seventy have been briefly documented, probably no more than half of a grand total, and not all necessarily taught privately. A dozen or so gifted university students are also documented as assisting in St Thomas's services, and again, a realistic guess would be that there was at least double this number. Such 'assistance' was required and, one can imagine, became a learning experience for the young men. A former student supported his application for a job in 1747 (BJ 2013, p. 18) by claiming he had given satisfaction to Herr Capellmeister Bach.

Students' warm praise for their teacher when they applied for a job does not give a reliable picture of their studies and abilities, any more than it would today. Nevertheless, there are many hints of clear respect for Bach, and using a teacher's name to support one's bona fides is revealing on several counts. J. G. Ziegler's reference in 1746 to being taught by Bach to play chorales according to their *Affekt* or sentiment, though in itself plausible, was surely calculated to interest his prospective employers in Pietist Halle, who liked sentiment in their music (Dok. II, p. 423) and, doubtless, would have been happy with the expressive *Orgelbüchlein*. In 1728 and 1732, the fathers of two students, the latter remarking that his son's lessons with Bach in Leipzig had cost him 'not a little' (Dok. II, p. 228), saw them as a main qualification for their sons' professional career.

So did another pupil, J. G. Voigt, who spoke of three years' study with Bach in Leipzig and at great cost to his father (Dok. III, p. 10).

Some students, probably more than is known, came to him as musicians already advanced in their studies. His future son-in-law Altnickol had already performed a cantata in his home town of Breslau before settling in Leipzig (BJ 2009, p. 15). J. G. Ziegler had already studied in Dresden and in Halle (with Handel's teacher F. W. Zachow) before he came to Weimar; so too another pupil, Lorenz Bach, had studied with Sebastian's elder brother in Ohrdruf before coming to him in 1713 or so. Another significant example is H. N. Gerber, who had had lessons with Pachelbel's pupil J. V. Eckelt before studying with Bach in Leipzig in the 1720s. Such examples suggest clearly that to *move on* to Bach meant pursuing more advanced study with a teacher of prestige, much as a pianist of today would rise from a local teacher to an international. Two decades later, the composer J. C. Simon of Nördlingen, who published some competent preludes and fugues, spoke of having been helped by three musicians: the first encouraged him, the second (Johann Nicolaus Bach in Jena) poured oil on the fire, but the third, the 'incomparable capellmeister Bach in Leipzig' (Dok. V, p. 164), brought it into full flame. A remarkable endorsement! – nothing better could be said of any teacher.

Quite what Venzky knew about either Bach's composing or teaching, however, and where he had got to know of either, have not been established, though he might have heard Bach at Halle or Leipzig in the 1720s on some unrecorded occasion. It may be that by 'the multiplicity of his song' Venzky was referring specifically to the big ensemble works rather than to the wide-ranging scope of the oeuvre as a whole. But this scope must have been remarkable to anyone who knew him, and was something that could have been said about very few other composers. 'Delighted, taught and moved' are thoughtful words: by being delightful and moving, his music instructed listeners in the truths of Scripture and was not meant merely to please, something Venzky, doctor of divinity, would value. He was unlikely to be referring to the teaching of counterpoint or even the playing of organs. Such laudatory cantata-texts in obituaries, like those attached to the others in Mizler's journal, were by nature vague on the details of their subject's life and work. More to the point, perhaps, was the generous eulogy sonnet written and published by an eminent and admired musician, Telemann, speaking even of his student's students (Dok. III, p. 6), as if the credit for them ultimately belonged to Bach.

Some Bach pupils over the years were probably live-in apprentices, formal or informal, while others came as students in various capacities,

especially in a university town known for music-making among its students, in whatever faculty they had matriculated. Especially in the later years, there may have been more aristocrats taking private lessons than an occasional receipt for fees paid suggests, such as the one in 1747 not long after the king's Musical Offering was published (Dok. V, p. 108). Actual details of the learning arrangements are rarely clear, though for a student who was a prospective cantor, and present in Leipzig as a theology student in the university, music in some form would be relevant to his studies. Earlier, Kuhnau had remarked on how much keyboard- and organ-playing there was among the professors themselves (Schering 1941, p. 330).

It is clear from Bach's many extant testimonials for individual students, the first only six months after becoming cantor, that he warmly supported their studies and helped conscientiously in their job applications, rather more than many a teacher does today. No doubt more testimonials were written than survive, either in the composer's own hand or merely signed by him, including recommendations for scholarships (*stipendia*) in the university for ex-choristers. Especially significant for later understanding of the oeuvre is the likelihood that much of the earlier keyboard music that survives in copies does so by coming directly or indirectly from his teaching of future professionals. Hence in some cases there is no single, fixed or final version of the piece concerned, though it is not possible to give more than a general view of this situation.

Bach's thirty-plus extant testimonials and letters of recommendation are by no means unthinkingly repetitive but have been tailor-made for the candidate, in this way giving a glimpse not only of the teacher and his expectations but of his trustworthiness and honesty as a referee. They are succinct and very adroit. So he listed carefully a chorister's qualities, such as that he had been 'pious, industrious and dutiful' (*frommer*, *fleissiger u. treügehorsamer*), or he praised his curiosity in learning music and keyboard in private lessons (Dok. V, p. 86). He tells of a student not missing a single lesson (Dok. I, 146), and speaks of several students having the potential to 'serve God and the public' as musicians. He could imply that a student is not yet ready: one of them is promised to become 'a fully qualified musician' (*einen gar habilen Musicum*, Dok. I, p. 138), given his natural talent and if he studied further. For others, he testifies to their several abilities, in J. L. Krebs's case on keyboard, violin and lute and in composition (Dok. I, p. 139), though whether Bach was responsible for teaching or even supervising Krebs in all four of these subjects is not made clear.

The Municipal Archive of Plauen, a town some distance from Leipzig, preserves four careful and time-consuming letters written by Bach in

1726 when he was asked to advise on the vacant cantorate. (A Leipzig predecessor, Johann Schelle, had also been consulted there on a similar occasion many years earlier.) As he pointed out himself, Bach took some trouble to find a candidate experienced in the humanities and especially in music (*in humanioribus*: Dok. I, p. 48), and wrote on behalf of one G. G. Wagner, recommending him as skilled in composition, organ, keyboard, violin, cello 'and other instruments'. Such versatility was desirable for directing the service's cantatas. Wagner had played violin under Bach and, probably, made sure to have a supply of his teacher's music with him in Plauen (BJ 2005, p. 99). After his appointment, however, the superintendent thought Wagner's Latin 'and other things' were such that 'what Mr Bach reported about him *in humanioribus* was by no means borne out' (Dok. I, p. 52). Bach had already warned that Wagner's bass voice was, though agreeable, 'not too strong', and it is possible that he wished to help him because he had recently applied unsuccessfully for a position in Leipzig. In applying for jobs, students often cited *Herrn Capell Meister Bach* as a testimonial-writer. But one might characterize those careful testimonials that commend, as does one of 1734, a student's 'industry and desire to learn' but not much else, or that in another case recommend that his studies continue (Dok. V, pp. 86, 154) as damning by faint praise.

Two letters sent to Dresden in 1733 in connection with the vacant position in the Sophienkirche and signed by Friedemann were written by his father, one formal and one more personal, the latter addressed to the Consistory's Chief Counsel. Finding the most influential person in a given appointment process, on this and similar occasions, cannot always have been easy, and it seems that Bach did go to some trouble at times to do this. In much the same way, he wrote more than one letter for his son Johann Gottfried Bernhard, on his application at Mühlhausen Marienkirche in 1735 and again at Sangerhausen a year later. His last known recommendation was written in December 1749, in support of his son Johann Christoph Friedrich's application, at age seventeen, to the court of Bückeburg. By now the letter was written probably from dictation, though Bach had hand-written one himself the year before for Altnickol's application at Naumburg. At Bückeburg, Christoph Friedrich got the job he wanted, as did Altnickol. (Presumably in connection with his expected departure and for his spiritual well-being, a Luther Bible was presented to Christian Friedrich and signed on Christmas Day 1749 by his mother, 'for her dear son': Dok. I, p. 124.)

Earlier that year, in January 1749, Bach had become father-in-law to Altnickol, his former pupil, whom he previously seems to have encouraged to apply for the organist's position at the Wenzelskirche, Naumburg (Dok. I, pp. 112–17). This was a more important church for Altnickol than his present position, with a new large organ and in a town not too far from Leipzig. Bach wrote at some length to the council there and again personally to the senior burgomaster, listing all the latter's titles (in French); and just as the letter to the local court-ruler in Bückeburg probably drew on past connections, so did the letter to the Naumburg council, referring to his previous work for it as organ-examiner. Altnickol is recommended for the following:

he has already had charge of an organ for a considerable time;
he especially understands how to look after it and maintain perfectly all that belongs to it – qualities absolutely necessary for a good organist (this skill in *conserviren* was passed on by Altnickol to a later pupil: see Dok. III, p. 207);
he has the knowledge to play it well;
he is able to direct (*dirigiren*, i.e. mixed choral and instrumental performances);
he has a special gift in composing, singing and violin-playing.

So he could supply music and lead an ensemble of various kinds. It seems also that Altnickol worked with his teacher on composing organ-chorales (Dok. III, p. 503), though how far this particular skill was valued by church authorities is uncertain. The letter adds that the council will never have cause to regret honouring the candidate with its choice and that he, Bach, will consider it a personal favour if he is appointed, as he was.

Of course, one wonders whether Bach was looking for a particularly good position not too far away for his future son-in-law. Similarly, when Altnickol later had the *Orgelbüchlein* in his possession, as he seems to have done (BJ 2001, p. 67), there is a possibility his then-father-in-law had given or lent it to him. For Naumburg, like nearby Halle, could have had particular use for short, expressive chorale-settings. Or Altnickol was only one of several pupils at the time to use the *Orgelbüchlein* and preserve it or its contents; another would be his brother-in-law Christoph Friedrich. From his earliest days with Bach, Altnickol seems to have been entrusted with important jobs: copying WTC2 for a time soon after coming to Leipzig in 1744 and the vocal parts and new bass-line of Palestrina's Mass *Ecce sacerdos magnus*. (The latter work, incomplete, was probably made from a score that had been in Bach's possession ever since the Weimar years, but now given a lower pitch, just possibly for use in Dresden.) That

Altnickol could be trusted to keep the fine new organ in the town church at Naumburg in good repair would also be important to the authorities.

Bach's shorter testimonials are necessarily more formulaic, but they summarize much the same points as the fuller recommendations, including the necessary testimony to the subject's good behaviour. With a younger student such as a schoolboy chorister, it is frankly noted whether he is only 'moderately proficient' or 'little proficient but with time will be useful, so long as he is industrious in his private practice' (Dok. I, pp. 134–5). For older students, the information is quite specific as to whether they compose and/or accompany, sing and/or play, in the church and/or the Collegium. In at least one case, for a student who had come all the way from Lake Constance, Bach noted that he had neither participated in the Collegium nor applied himself to music studies (Dok. V, p. 275). Often a personal touch is revealed in a report, as in 1737 when testimonials for Bernhard Dietrich Ludewig noted twice that he had been entrusted, probably as a live-in student, with teaching Bach's younger family (*meine kleine Familie*: Dok. I, p. 141). The reference there was presumably to Johann Christian, Gottfried Heinrich and Elisabeth Juliana Friderica, the daughter later to marry Altnickol.

Finally, while Venzky's praise is unsurprising, there remains an oddity about Bach and his teaching: that with some not very significant exceptions, his music, vocal and keyboard, governed less what younger composers around him went on to compose than Handel's did in London, though Handel had far fewer pupils. Bach's students might study the harmonic language of the chorales, but they were not going to be able to imitate the worklist as a whole even if they wished to, though evidently Friedemann continued to play and teach fugues (Dok. V, p. 220).

What was taught (musical grammar, composition)

One does not need the Obituary to learn that the young Bach was industrious in teaching himself and continued to be so. Every type of music, vocal, choral, instrumental, keyboard, and 'educative', appears to have been explored with exceptional energy, and the *craft* of composing studied in all its technicalities.

When (some) pupils studied the WTC1 they were moving on to a new level: having begun with practical harmony (*Generalbass*) and improvisation (*Fantasieren*), ideally they went on to studying counterpoint (*Inventions* as model) and then fully formed fugues. The type of theme for fugues,

both vocal and instrumental, varies widely over the years: there are long sectional fugue subjects popular with Protestant organists, universal formulae such as chromatic themes, distinct genres such as *stile antico*, and the newer Italian *sonata a violino*. Since some subjects of WTC1 resemble those of 'southern' versets for organ, it could be claimed that Bach's fugue-themes alone illustrate his jackdaw mind as clearly as anything in the big ensemble works. In the later and mature themes one recognizes a strong contrast between the strikingly individual theme (the F minor WTC2, Cantata No. 213.vii, Musical Offering) and the strikingly traditional (the Kyrie II, Gratias, the Art of Fugue). Here, in the very themes themselves, a natural striving for variety becomes unusually intense, as if the native tradition for self-instruction were being taken to new heights.

Some conjectures have already been made on what or how Bach taught in the Weimar years, and practices cannot have changed much during his lifetime. But nor does it become much clearer what actually went on in lessons or at moments free of the more mundane requirement of apprenticeships. It is a reasonable guess, though no more, that in Weimar Bach was teaching prospective organists how to introduce and accompany congregations' chorales, and this might still have included the inter-line interludes familiar in hymn-singing in many Protestant areas of Europe. (Inter-line interludes are found in Bach's settings BWV 729, 726, etc.) One Weimar work, the transcription of a concerto by the teenage Prince Johann Ernst, BWV 982, is on a level above organ-teaching: it suggests that if Bach had anything to do with the prince's music studies, which is likely, he worked with him on quite different music: on form (including elementary ritornello), simple imitation, modulations, episodes, and phraseology. A gifted student, evidently – though another of the prince's concertos, transcribed as BWV 987, suggests that he too learnt directly from studying Vivaldi, specifically the shapes and the melodies in 2/4 time.[21]

There is also the matter of what was taught in a more general sense, perhaps by observation more than by instruction, such as learning to direct and run concerts by watching the master. Several *collegia musica* were run in other cities by those who had passed through Bach's hands: at Göttingen (J. F. Schweinitz) and at Memmingen (J. von Stählin), both in the 1730s. Stählin is accredited with an aria of the kind that might have been a result

[21] This was one of the concertos published by Telemann after the prince's death: his *Six concerts*, Op. 1 (Leipzig and Halle, 1718). Copies of other transcriptions were made by Bernhard Bach (1676–1749), successor in Eisenach to Christoph Bach (d. 1703) and evidently in contact with Sebastian during the Weimar period (cf. Dok. II, p. 58).

of his studies in Leipzig (Dok. V, p. 151). Another Leipziger from this period, Lorenz Mizler, was said at the time to have established a footing for himself in composition by means of reading books, listening to good music, inspecting the scores of good masters and 'being around' J. S. Bach (*Umgang mit*: Mattheson 1740, p. 231). The likelihood that Emanuel, barely more than a teenager, had a cantata performed somewhere in Leipzig in 1733/4 could be evidence that advanced pupils studied such composition and were encouraged (or allowed) to present their own in Leipzig itself. Perhaps that is why Bach came to copy out the continuo part of a cantata by J. G. Goldberg in about 1745: for performance in Leipzig. In general, one would expect that more gifted pupils such as J. L. Krebs, praised by his teacher for his study of composition (Dok. I, p. 139), would work on the types of movement needed for cantatas, especially arias, and some hints that he had done so are not difficult to find in his few extant cantatas.

Quite why Bach's students made copies of their teacher's work is not as easy to answer as generally assumed. Their activity during the Leipzig years is documented more fully than in the earlier periods, as one would expect, and it must be that pupils who copied chorales from the *Orgelbüchlein* or other collections, and later became organists (J. L. Krebs, C. G. Meissner, J. P. Kirnberger, J. C. Kittel, etc.), used them both for learning the organ and to compose as best they could, allowing for changing tastes. In a culture with so little printed keyboard music, there was no alternative to making or buying copies, and even a printed book may not have circulated very much better than manuscripts. Making your own copy was essential: the Trio published in parts in the Musical Offering might well have provided a model for J. G. Goldberg's studies, but quite how this was possible if he did not score it up first is hard to see.

Pupils were also copying other music of Bach not necessarily for their own use in or out of lessons but for on-the-spot purposes: vocal and instrumental parts in the cantatas (some for hire), chamber and instrumental music of various kinds (some for sale), keyboard scores even of the music in print (*Clavierübung* extracts). Little in these copies says anything definite about what was taught in lessons, nor what the business arrangements between teacher and pupils were. Nevertheless, at least some copies of the keyboard works made by pupils must have been part of their studies, as exercises in copying, playing and composing, perhaps all three. The sources for the 'French Suites' imply that their content, order of movements, certain note-details and especially ornamentation were worked on by students, though whether this was under the composer's authority cannot be established. The ornamentation in copies made of some suites

is not always convincing, being neither idiomatic in itself nor always placed where one would expect it to be.

In the case of WTC1, there is some evidence that the composer's extant fair-copy manuscript was the one pupils were allowed to copy (see NBA V/6.1, KB, p. 142), surely on the premises only. One possibility is that complete copies of a major collection would be made on commission from a buyer while individual pieces were copied for teaching or learning purposes. When in *c.* 1732 the eighteen-year-old Emanuel made a copy of the C sharp major Prelude WTC1 one might guess that it served primarily as a playing exercise, but it would also have accustomed him to a rare key, to its appearance on the page (something just as unfamiliar), and to the special fingering it required. The piece also gave instruction in the arts of shaping a coherent prelude from broken chords and modulating with them. Perhaps it was even an exercise in learning to find an acceptable tuning in an unusual key, for someone must have taught learners how to make suitable temperaments. For several skills useful to the young professional, therefore, Emanuel's copy of the C sharp major Prelude offers a model for what was taught. It may speak for many a copy.

An old idea that at least some of the less firmly established parts of the Bach oeuvre were remnants of his teaching – the 'early' or dubious or spurious works, pieces incomplete or in mixed styles, those imperfectly transmitted – receives some support from the sources. Chamber trios such as BWV 1021 and 1038 might transmit in part a Bach work and in part a student's working of a given bass. Some such guesswork seems unavoidable for a large amount of chamber and vocal music. Emanuel's Trio in D minor, BWV 1036, for instance, underwent 'improvements' that could have been made with deep knowledge of the Violin Sonatas, BWV 1014–19, just as his Magnificat Wq 215 seems to owe something to moments in the 'Mass in B minor'. Probably such a piece as the trio BWV 1038 does in some way, or to some degree, owe its existence to J. S. Bach, despite the doubts raised as they often are about many a detail in it. He cannot always be expected to have conceived, shaped and finalized only works that were perfected in all respects.

As for how German organists learnt the various arts: if the extant copy of Cantata Anh. III 159 was begun by Bach and given to his pupil Kräuter to complete for a performance in 1713, then we have a plausible picture of one particular procedure. The fugue BWV 914 has an opening exposition (qv) probably based on a fugue of Benedetto Marcello before going its own way, as seems to be the case with a whole group of fugues on Italian subjects (by Albinoni, Bononcini, Corelli). An extant pedal exercise, BWV

598, in breaking off but indicating further harmonies, might be Emanuel's unaided work or an exercise begun, for some such reason, by or for his father. Some very early organ-chorales of the 'Neumeister Collection' type convey signs of their composer's studies as a teenager, instructing himself from someone else's material, much as one might expect. (This would be so even if the author of these chorales was someone other than J. S. Bach.)

Perhaps the much later treatise on figured bass and four-part continuo harmony attributed to Bach by a student, C. A. Thieme (the *Vorschriften* of 1738), does indeed speak for the likelihood that he made use of material by predecessors in his lessons, in this case F. E. Niedt's *Musicalische Handleitung* of 1/1710 and 2/1721. Though this example is not authenticated, in general a teacher can hardly be expected to create all his own materials, and Niedt's figured-bass exercises are exceptionally systematic, clear and therefore useful. In general, lessons in figured bass or *Lection im General-Bass*, as a student in 1740 called them (Dok. V, p. 162), were fundamental steps in learning harmony and composition. It could be that for teaching purposes Bach, surprisingly perhaps, came to use other authorities more as time passed, as seems to have happened when he also took up the contrapuntal treatise by his distant predecessor Calvisius (see below).

To be able to realize figured-bass harmony systematically in four parts, as distinct from the freer style illustrated in Italian treatises of the period, gave the learner a good foundation. According to his student Agricola (Dok. III, p. 280), Bach had his students write out such harmonization, which would have resulted in exercises much like written-out four-part chorales. From the very detailed figured-bass parts made by copyists themselves one envisages a fastidious, demanding teacher, the same who removed any poor grammar arising in his own transcriptions when he spotted it, as in the E minor Organ Sonata, BWV 528.i. Who it was who corrected a similar moment in the printed chorale 'Wachet auf!' (BWV 645, b. 20) is not known, and obviously a culture based on the apprentice–master relationship leaves many blurred lines as to who did what, why and when in a given extant score. As between learner and teacher, so also between performer and composer. Some of the versions of harmonized chorales and Schemelli songs copied by various pupils, and now published in NBA III/3, may well represent the kind of harmony assignment Bach gave to students like J. L. Krebs. It is not difficult to surmise that any contrapuntal skill shown by the Bach sons, above all in trio-writing and invertible counterpoint, was owed to their father's instruction, in person or on paper. From time to time some quite close resemblances between father's and sons' music do emerge, though fewer than one might expect.

The details of any instruction, regular or irregular, that Bach himself received as a child from family members, or what he did in the way of musical odd jobs, performing or preparing works needed in a musically active family, are unknown, though the contents of the *Clavierbüchlein* suggest a programme (see below). How far as a child he even had access to a finely voiced harpsichord is also unknown. In the sense that he had 'studied' with Buxtehude, so pupils continued to study with him from his twenties onwards, more formally than he had been taught himself, according to what Emanuel said later. Other than from anecdotes, Emanuel would have known very little of how the Buxtehudes, Böhms and Bachs of the day had learnt or taught. He himself soon broke away from church music and duties, without, as far as is known, encouragement either way from his father. From the time he entered the university in 1731 as a seventeen-year-old and presumably still living at home, Emanuel concentrated on chamber trios, harpsichord sonatas, concertos, woodwind solos, all tending towards *galant* music very different from what had once been taught to cantors. Emanuel claimed later that he could not play organ pedals (Dok. III, p. 440), which must be either an exaggeration or a sign that his father did not force a child to learn. Or, a versatile concert-musician himself by now, he was distancing himself from organs and the organ-world.

From Bach's early chorale-harmonizations in which the organist ran his fingers over scales and flourishes between the lines of the hymn, it looks as if it was from handling chorales in church that a young musician might learn both the arts of playing in services and of how to start composing more generally. The two rather went together, and this would be so especially when hymnbooks did not contain the melodies boys were trained to sing. A chorister-organist-cantor such as Bach must have sung, played and heard the Gloria hymn 'Allein Gott in der Höh' many hundreds of times in his lifetime, and must have gone over many dozens of ways to harmonize it in his mind. He came to set it more often than any other hymn. Extant settings of chorales suggest that players were taught particular techniques, such as variation, paraphrase, canon and double-pedal parts, by trying them out on suitable hymn-melodies, and these techniques are represented in the various 'spurious works of Bach', composed by no one knows whom.

From various kinds of evidence it is clear that organists needed to be able to play the hymns in various keys, to learn to transpose at sight, and to improvise preludes that begin in one key and end in another, presumably to lead from one chorale to the next. (This last skill evidently became useful in the mid-eighteenth century.) In a publication of 1756, one of Bach's

former students, F. W. Sonnenkalb, insisted that the preludes prefacing chorales and cantatas should prepare listeners for the 'sentiment' (*Empfindung*) of what follows. Nothing very subtle or very expressive in mood-painting need be implied by this, though it suggests something about Sonnenkalb's own training. As for other kinds of music outside church services: musical youths wishing to learn the arts of composing concertos, chamber music and above all opera would not be studying with J. S. Bach in Weimar or Leipzig but would be off to Hamburg or Venice. This was evidently the case for Christoph Nichelmann, who secretly, it seems, left Bach's tutelage in 1733 to study *theatralische* music with the opera-composers in Hamburg (Schulze 1984, p. 136).

It was said that if a young pupil, including Bach's own sons, did not show any gift of 'invention' (*Erfindung*: Dok. III, p. 289), he was not taken on. This is 'invention' as a performer as well as composer, for the two were not separate. Scheibe, the critic, gives some insight into this when with evident bitterness he recalls his unsuccessful application at the Nikolaikirche and implies that Bach gave him no encouragement to continue. He had no 'invention'? Some pupils no doubt had more initiative than others: Agricola when young, it seems, sought advice from the elderly cantor, who pressed on him the need for an 'honest musician' (*rechtschaffener Musicus*) to study at least elementary maths, language and verse, philosophy, 'Physic und Moral' and the fundamentals of theology. This would help maintain music's place among true learning or *Wissenschaften* (Leisinger 2002, p. 163). Generally, however, reports of Bach the Teacher that focus on the more solid sides of learning do not give the whole picture of a musician as intimate as he himself was with such a wide range of music.

As the idea of Bach the Universal Instructor developed, a few disciples spread what they understood of his Gospel in their various appointments across north-central Germany, and sometimes commented in print about his teaching. H. N. Gerber was much later said by his son to have studied the playing of inventions, suites and then fugues, going on eventually to figured-bass work based on good part-writing (what he called 'in the singing of the voices together': Dok. III, p. 476). In 1782 J. P. Kirnberger, writing his own book, claimed to follow his teacher's method in composition by going by step from the easiest to the most difficult, taking fugue-writing in one's stride – a step no bigger than any other (Dok. III, p. 362). By the 1780s many would have regarded this as wishful thinking or old-fashioned and therefore, like its hero, no longer relevant. But Bach himself, judging by Gerber's copy of some of the inventions or J. C. Vogler's copy of WTC2's opening pieces, worked with his students on practical details of the kind found in Couperin's keyboard

tutor, such as how to apply ornaments in a French style (Gerber) and where to use the thumb (Vogler).

Whether a fantasia for organ in the first Anna Magdalena Bach book (see pp. 231f.) was left incomplete to encourage her pedal-playing, composing and improvising – any or all of these three – is not explained. These little volumes raise a further, practical question about the manuscripts now usually seen as 'instruction books'. Any students using the small albums *Orgelbüchlein* and *Clavierbüchlein* (15.5 cm × 19 cm and 16.5 cm × 19 cm) for studying on a table, would have found it more comfortable to make their own copies for a music-desk, certainly on the organ. Even when a batch of pupils and young musicians studied the partitas of *Clavierübung I* (including J. T. Krebs, Kellner, Müthel, and H. N. Gerber), they made their own copies, because the print was not available (sold out, expensive) or was hard to read or, more importantly, because copying was a traditional way of learning.

Two instructional manuscripts dating probably to the early 1740s suggest that Bach trained at least some pupils in strict counterpoint (Werbeck 2003). The first is a two-sided page dealing with suspensions illustrated at a basic level, as an instruction sheet or a plan for a non-professional student. The second is longer, taken from a section in the Latin version of Zarlino's *Istitutioni* of 1558, and copied probably from a work of a former Leipzig cantor, Seth Calvisius's derivative *Melopoeia* (1592 and re-issues). The section includes a short canon *per augmentationem* among an array of other short canons which, though not offering much for so inveterate a composer of canons as Bach, look on the page much like two other sets of his: the 'Fourteen Canons' appended to his copy of the 'Goldberg Variations', and the engraved sheet of canons in the Musical Offering. All were works of the 1740s and useful for the more experienced students, and it is not impossible that the 'Fourteen Canons' were to have been included in a second printing of the 'Goldberg Variations' or, as suggested already, for distribution to private members of Mizler's Corresponding Society.

From extant minuets by Friedemann and Emanuel written in canon or partial canon, it seems likely that they learnt this traditional way of composing minuets – something to survive into Haydn's period and beyond – with their father. Two students from Breslau studying in Leipzig in the mid-1740s had canons dedicated to them by Bach (BWV 1077 and 1078); a third Breslauer was Altnickol, future son-in-law. It is not too much to imagine musical evenings in the Bach home with such young people, having come some distance to study, and featuring songs, canons,

quodlibets and perhaps keyboard pieces. (Useful would have been another but lost album containing works by father and three sons as well as Altnickol, perhaps intended as a *Clavierbüchlein* for the youngest, Johann Christian; see Wiermann 2003.) Much of all this activity must have been typical of musical gatherings common at that time and place, and indeed later, for the Classical Viennese composers' interest in canons and quodlibets reflects similar *gemütlich* music-making. The particular tradition of making and presenting short complex canons to students or young musicians was familiar well before Bach, and to do this he would not have needed to seek examples by Buxtehude.

So far, the number of one-on-one pupils Bach appears to have had is not matched for any other composer of the time. Whether or not they were hoping for professional work as organists or church musicians, they did not neglect the discipline of fugue-writing. Perhaps this is how Johann Christian, the youngest son, came to possess copies not only of the 'English Suites' but also of some major organ works, probably more than is known about. He worked on them as a teenager, including an early Toccata (BWV 566)? Inevitably, new musical tastes would gradually relegate counterpoint to a mere scholastic discipline, and there is little evidence that any pupil, his sons or anyone else, ever approached the true Bach fugue as best manifested in those copied by Christian, including the B minor, BWV 544. This is so even when pupils remained closely associated with Bach, such as Johann Schneider whose few known compositions include some inspired by other mature works (the 'Kassel' Toccata in D minor, BWV 538, the prelude of *Clavierübung III*). Of the other pupils, Johann Ludwig Krebs (studying in Leipzig, 1726–37) was able to imitate certain techniques in chorale-settings, and one of his best pieces shows him familiar with his teacher's organ Toccata in C major and other major organ works. Krebs was an intelligent, gifted learner, though unable to match the harmonic tension of his teacher. Similarly, although the critic J. A. Scheibe studied concerto form and copied out one of the transcriptions, BWV 972, and went promisingly through the motions in an attempt of his own (see Wollny 2002a, pp. 138–9), he fails in a similar way. So does H. N. Gerber in his imitations of the Two-part Inventions.

Significant are the three little volumes of *Clavier-Übung* composed by J. L. Krebs, published after he left Leipzig but apparently still during his teacher's lifetime: volume I, organ chorales, volume II, a twelve-movement suite, and volume III, six *Clavier* sonatinas. In all three, including the *galant* sonatinas, the legacy of his teacher is easily traced, perhaps in the very exercises he had assigned. The 'Bach legacy' shows itself not only in the

many little bar-by-bar details but in Krebs's evident need to master the three styles of keyboard music: German chorales, French suites, Italian sonatas. Much of the detail must have been picked up from copying the teacher's work under instruction. In general, organ works are less likely than harpsichord works to have lost their usefulness for practical musicians, at least until pianists discovered how well some harpsichord music, including the WTC, suited the piano. One cannot know how common it was for an organist to preserve a work he was not able to play (as when the Praeludium in B flat, BWV 545b, was copied by an organist in London) or to simplify and shorten pieces for his own local instrument (as when Leonard Scholz in Nuremberg arranged various Bach works).

It could well be that Bach also used simple Italian concertos as the model for instructing a student in shaping a sustained composition. The two very different transcriptions of a concerto said to be by the young Prince Johann Ernst of Weimar, BWV 595 for organ (first movement) and BWV 984 for harpsichord, lead to an interesting question: is the latter version the prince's original essay and the former the result of Bach's reworking, to demonstrate what can be done with ritornello form? The organ version is not only longer and more varied but includes a very striking modulation and various other 'improvements' to produce something with much more character.

In the case of compositions by a later pupil, Emanuel Bach, a fine opening gesture and some shifting tonalities are unlikely to disguise the following paucity of harmonic or melodic development and the absence of intricate form. The sources of the sonata BWV 1036, once attributed to Sebastian, suggest Emanuel to have tried successfully to imitate the fugal counterpoint he could have found or studied in the D minor Organ Sonata, BWV 527, though without producing much harmonic development. On the other hand, whoever composed a certain group of five chorale-trios for organ attributed to Bach in the early nineteenth century (published in NBA IV/10) was surely acquainted with Bach's organ trios. As a generalization, however, it does seem that pupils did better when they worked in old-fashioned counterpoint and simply followed the rules, as Altnickol seems to have done in an extant fantasia. The moment in Emanuel's Magnificat Wq 215 that is most like his father's music is the four-part counterpoint resembling a passage in the Gratias of the 'B minor Mass'.

No doubt some part of a pupil's apparent shortcomings results from changing tastes or criteria, as for example when Krebs's F minor Praeludium makes use of Bach's B minor Praeludium but dilutes its harmonic intensity, as if aiming to appeal to a more modern taste for pleasant, less

demanding music. Or another possibility: Krebs was never taught how to create harmonic drive, being permitted merely to make copies of work that remained beyond the reach of any neophyte composer. Copying cannot always have led to emulation. The big *Orgelfantasien* must have been difficult to conquer even for gifted players such as J. G. Vogler, who said as much (Dok. III, p. 331), and pupils picked up only the basics they needed, such as improvising or composing preludes, fugues, variations, chorales and continuo (Dok. II, p. 209). Gerber's notebook, however, hints at work in both contrapuntal grammar and dance-forms. Some of Friedemann's frequently unusual, not to say odd, phrasing in his later keyboard works could mean he was striving to be more original than he had been as a child in the *Clavierbüchlein*. A pupil might occasionally emulate not only the master's counterpoint but also his way of organizing a group of pieces, as when Friedemann supplies his Twelve Polonaises, *c.* 1765, with a key-sequence. But this is an idea not developed far, or even at all, in Philipp Emanuel's various sets of sonatas.

It must have been clear to their father that his collections were very different from the popular volumes that took advantage of a much-expanded market in European music-publishing in the 1730s and 1740s. The sheer difficulty in playing or using as models any of Bach's collections is obvious, as therefore is their isolation. The difficulties cannot be ignored. Although one admirer, F. W. Marpurg, was led by WTC2 to write a book on fugue (*Abhandlung von der Fuge*), he must have been aware that very little in either WTC1 or WTC2 was ever going to be matched by anybody, and that many movements were not useful models. With reference to *Clavierübung III*, another admirer, G. A. Sorge, published his own simpler settings the year Bach died, using the same engraver in Nuremberg and pointing out that Bach's were 'almost unusable' by the young and unskilled (*fast unbrauchbar*: preface to *Erster Theil der Vorspielen*). Sorge was making efforts to 'serve the listener's comprehension' with simpler music, much as Telemann had promised in the preface to his anthology, *Der getreue Music-Meister* (Hamburg, 1728–9). It is possible that Sorge was referring not only to the musical complexity of *Clavierübung III* but also to the engraving's notation, much of it difficult to grasp by all but the most accomplished musician.

That at least from time to time Bach encouraged students (including his sons) to compose both classical counterpoint and more modern music such as cantatas is suggested by some recent discoveries: the open score of an anonymous Mass of 1738 in italianate counterpoint, plus Emanuel's Leipzig cantata already mentioned (Wollny 2010). In developing a less

demanding and more modern style, later composers such as Homilius in Dresden generated a lively business as suppliers of church music. But the instruction books published by later musicians in the Bach circle, such as those by Adlung, Agricola, Sonnenkalb, Petri and Kittel, leave the impression of a somewhat low-achieving, moribund profession for which so much in Bach's music lay beyond them.

Did Bach try to teach his understanding of harmonic tension and of organized form to his better students? Works such as Emanuel's Preludio, Wq 70/7 (1756), that might resemble his father's models, have neither. Works of Krebs that suggest he knew very well some of the bigger organ praeludia or even the Fifth 'Brandenburg', imply that he had not quite grasped what can be done with ritornello form. In Friedemann's works, even basics like sequences cannot be taken for granted, and consequently, a big question still remains about what was taught beyond basic musical grammar. When in the 1730s J. F. Schweinitz is said to have been a *discipel* of the famous Bach, whose skill in instrumental and vocal music, composition and 'instruction in other things' (Dok. V, p. 168) is beyond all doubt, one might guess that 'other things' included keyboard-playing.

What was taught (keyboard-playing)

One surprising thing for many a player today is that even multiple copies of so many pieces, such as the four versions (at least) of the 'French Suites' made during Bach's lifetime, contain so very little in the way of 'aids for performance': fingerings, slurs, ornaments, tempo and phrase-marks. Tempo was not much of a problem since it was implied by the dance-type, but there are exceptions. Even in the more fully notated parts or scores of the later decades there are so few aids – so few slurs compared with the Couperin editions probably known to Bach – that one has to consider why. Reasons could be that there was no tradition for such aids; there was more than one acceptable way to realize the piece; Bach himself resisted the explicit (i.e. obligatory) detail he saw in French publications; conventions were so fixed that aids were unnecessary; or on the contrary, conventions were flexible. If much of this is so, then the notational details in the aria of the 'Goldberg Variations', such as they are, are announcing what kind of piece it is and so aiming to be more up to date or useful for a buyer. In some nine movements of his own copy of the work the composer adds further slurs and ornaments (NBA V/2, KB, p. 95), as if for a second edition.

In that the educative keyboard music such as the Inventions or Organ Sonatas seldom indicates anything about performance, not even such basics as how to divide the counterpoint between the hands or pedal-lines between the feet, Bach's own scores actually resemble the 'neutral' editions of later musicology, including the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* itself. He was in effect producing comparable *monumenta*, for whose neutrality there are again various possible reasons. Notation, always a slowly evolving set of conventions, had simply not reached the now-familiar amount of detail; fair copies informed the player of little more than the notes; they were used chiefly as an archive for copying or reference; further indications were unnecessary when it was clear what kind of music was concerned; so to specify tempo and dynamic signs was typical of certain genres only, such as Italian sonatas; and in many areas such as fingering, breathing and phrasing, things were left to chance or custom. Few players can have found the inner parts of the Art of Fugue easy to finger, especially when playing from open score and looking to clarify the lines, even to play them at all. Singers at least knew that many notes to one syllable were slurred unless the score said otherwise. One fancies that Bach's own elegant way of shaping the beamed groups of small notes indicated something expressive, though what exactly is left open.

One can only guess how Bach taught his early pupils in keyboard-playing before he had available the Inventions, 'French Suites' and the WTC1 or, after he had, before the pupils themselves were advanced enough to study them. A copy of the keyboard Toccata in D minor, BWV 913, probably made by a Weimar pupil and 'corrected' by his teacher, suggests an assignment of some kind. Forkel later claimed that to gain a clear and clean touch, pupils practised for several months only single motifs or 'passages' (*Sätze*) in either hand (1802, p. 38). This might be true, based on what Friedemann told him, but it could also describe what was customary for the pianists of Forkel's own generation. Besides, by then Forkel also knew Couperin's starting exercises in *L'Art de toucher*, with its 'single motifs and passages' (two- to eight-note groups), and went on to assume that Bach worked similarly. And perhaps he did.

Either way, there is little sign of any systematic work with scales, arpeggios, octaves or finger-patterns in the manner of the modern piano lesson, except insofar as written-out toccatas required players to master scales and arpeggios in either hand – one of the toccata's functions, no doubt. From various sources it seems likely that part of the study was learning ornaments of the French kind, though not necessarily writing them in to the score. Such sources of information include Bach's careful

copy of de Grigny's ornaments, those illustrated in the *Clavierbüchlein*, the various student copies of the Inventions, Emanuel's careful copy of Couperin's A major duet, and Agricola's complete hand-copy of Rameau's *Nouvelles Suites*. The relative sparseness of ornaments in Bach may indicate no more than that he is only now and then adopting a French *manière*, but one cannot be sure. It could be thought that, by 1700, improvising ornaments was usual when playing or singing, and it was rather the French absolutist wish to standardize ornaments that was exceptional: no more than a spin-off of its absolutist wish to standardize the French language itself, its orthography and diacritical marks.

Players practised by playing. Practical familiarity with the 'French Suites' offers models in different keys requiring different fingering skills: in one a versatile fourth finger, in another, versatile thumbs; in one, finger-changing, in another shifting hand-positions (like a violinist's). One does not know how many pupils were capable of playing the 'French Suites' well, especially the one in E flat, but they would certainly have benefited from the way that the different keys found in the set made different practical demands. If any of the more advanced pupils added ornaments to the Inventions, 'French Suites' and other works, a few surviving examples of which suggest some certainly did, they would have made the fingering more of a challenge, whether intentionally or not.

That is the case with those copies made of Bach's early works in which the copyists' ornaments look like imitations of the French. The second movement of the Capriccio in B flat, BWV 992, for example, looks and sounds like an imitation of a fugal verset in de Grigny's *Livre d'orgue*. The ornaments in extant copies of the early Ouverture in F major, BWV 820, or *Aria variata*, BWV 989 (both in the Andreas Bach Book) already show some understanding of French idioms. They also need a neat finger dexterity rather different from that required later in more taxing works, such as the Inventions and Partitas. In these works, and increasingly so over the years, sharing between the hands is necessary, requiring them to be adaptable to textures more intricate than any before middle-period Beethoven.

Students at various periods – Bernhard Bach and J. T. Krebs *c.* 1715, Friedemann Bach *c.* 1720, J. P. Kellner *c.* 1725, C. G. Gerlach 1720s, J. F. Agricola *c.* 1740 – seem to have been allowed to copy particular repertories, not only organ-chorales and praeludia but in some cases the organ transcriptions of Italian concertos, whether to perform in public or to study at home. Gerlach's copy of the Toccata for Organ in C, perhaps made while he was still a teenager, shows some fingering and details

of hand-distribution in its first part, as if for or in or from a lesson. For work in figured-bass playing, the books of J. D. Heinichen (1711, 1728) and F. E. Niedt (1710, 1721) helped foster continuo skills, though neither can have quite replaced the figured chorale for a good grasp of harmony. It is safe to assume that Bach pressed energetically for a good keyboard-touch, as Forkel reported much later (probably on the authority of Friedemann: see Dok. VII, p. 50). And yet, the different requirements of playing harpsichord, organ and clavichord are hardly explained or made clear even in Emanuel's own book, the *Versuch*, which in this respect follows a tradition hard now to understand.

If in about 1725, as seems to be the case, Bach himself added decorative ornaments to Gerber's copies of the Invention in E flat and the suite BWV 996, he would have done this as instructor, perhaps in actual lessons. He was still adding them to Emanuel's Sonata in F, Wq 6/1, during the 1740s, creating there moments that recall passages in the 'French Suites' and even the aria of the 'Goldberg Variations'. From ornaments in a Pachelbel fugue, copied in tablature by someone who was probably a student, and from his own early Capriccio in E major, it seems that like other teachers Bach habitually showed his pupils which ornaments to add even in fugues, and where to add them. And judging by the final stage of the autograph of the C major Invention, Friedemann was encouraged to decorate contrapuntal lines not with mere ornaments but with totally new note-patterns. To learn to do this, to add more than simple French ornaments, would be the next stage towards creating whole compositions for oneself.

Adding French ornaments and fingerings to 'pure' German keyboard counterpoint is the kind of assignment that could be given to the brighter students, including Wilhelm Friedemann, H. N. Gerber and B. C. Keyser. If the elder Krebs had also been encouraged to add ornaments, he could have done the same with his own students, including one who copied many early and late keyboard works of Bach, J. G. Preller. Gerber's French rubrics in the copy he made of the 'English Suites' could well have come from his lessons, where he surely learnt more about the style than mere words. He certainly understood the French slide ornament, for instance. But there still remains a big question about how well Bach himself understood or taught the French *manière* in general, and how much Gerber learnt from a glimpse at French sources (de Grigny, Dieupart, d'Anglebert) and how much from various personal contacts of Bach, such as Walther. From the consistent ornamentation in the Sarabande of the A minor 'English Suite' (all the voices) one can imagine how a pupil like Emanuel came to recommend something of the same kind in his book, as he did.

If ornaments were picked up from previous Parisian publications, what of *notes inégales* (qv)? Were Bach and his pupils fully aware of them and of where they were appropriate, such as in the courantes of the 'English Suites'? This is possible but without certain evidence. If it is true, as said later by C. F. Penzel who claimed to be a pupil, that Bach gave him as a present two important French works (copies of de Grigny and Dieupart: Dok. III, pp. 183f.) one could guess that Bach was encouraging an interest in the old French *manière*, and apparently doing so as late as 1750 when Penzel was barely thirteen. When Johann Christian Bach added pointed rhythms to the Prelude of the B flat Partita he plagiarized for a publication of his own in 1773 (*Six Sonates*, Op. X, No. 1), does this mean that as a boy in the 1740s he had been taught to play it with *notes inégales*? Even if he were, the question remains whether this was more than optional.

Unfortunately, and not to his credit, Emanuel failed to give due attention to his father's lifelong French interests when in 1775 he replied briefly to Forkel's questions about who influenced him, and how or what his pupils were taught. Nor is Forkel, who was enthusiastically establishing a German tradition for musical instruction, likely to have had much interest in old, forgotten French keyboard music or in an ornamental style more suited to earlier instruments. He would not quickly realize that the subtleties of *cantabile* keyboard touch in Bach's keyboard works were already there in Couperin's, and perhaps even inspired by them. Of greater importance to both Emanuel and Forkel was Bach's emphasis (as they describe it) on four-part harmony, which included realizing figured bass and was more intellectual than sensual.

A pupil: W. F. Bach and the *Clavierbüchlein*

A faint sign that as a teacher Bach might have benefited from François Couperin's *L'Art de toucher le clavecin* is that within three years or so of its publication in 1716 and 1717, he was covering roughly comparable material in the *Clavierbüchlein W. F. Bach* (1720) though much more briefly:

the notes and clefs;
a table of ornaments (called *Explication*);
fingering, with a model piece (called *Application*);
a set of preludes, starting in C major (playing exercises);
two chorales (demonstrations of ornamental paraphrase);
model allemandes (composition exercises, for completion).

In this plan, fuller than Couperin's, the *Clavierbüchlein* anticipates a later influential keyboard-tutor, F. W. Marpurg's *Die Kunst das Clavier zu spielen*, 1750. Marpurg makes a point of not slavishly following *L'Art*, having said, however, that he cannot praise Couperin better than by saying 'the learned Bachs' approved of him (*die gelehrten Bachen*, Dok. III, 4), implying father and son(s). In the 1720s Bach himself recommended Couperin's keyboard music to his pupils, according to the son of one of them (Dok. III, p. 471).

In their programme of instruction, both Bach and Couperin include (i) a model allemande and (ii) a group of varied preludes in different keys, starting in C major and requiring a distinctly different touch for each one. Among the many differences between the books is that the *Clavierbüchlein*, being for a more-than-average pupil, had no need of Couperin's careful left- and right-hand exercises, and is more demanding in its repertory. It contains many more preludes (including eleven that were to appear in WTC1 in another version), almost all of the Two- and Three-part Inventions and at least three extracts from suites not composed by J. S. Bach. In its coverage, *Clavierbüchlein* is doubly instructive and gives both a repertory for the young player and various models for the young composer, which *L'Art de toucher* does not.

In neither respect is the *Clavierbüchlein* organized from simple to difficult, though its earlier pages do suggest that it began with some such plan in mind as the following (*JSB* = copied by Bach, *WFB* by Friedemann, *JSB/WFB* both):

the first scale and G-clef are headed *Violino* (Friedemann was learning violin?) *JSB*;
some rudiments *JSB*;
selected ornaments (*manieren*); perhaps others were to have been added *JSB*;
two pieces in C major *JSB*;
two chorales *JSB*;
an allemande to be completed. Beginning section and end *JSB*, rest *WFB*;
another allemande to be completed. Only the opening upbeat *JSB*;
a set of preludes (later versions in WTC1) *WFB* predominantly;
three minuets (different in mode, figuration, tessitura, etc.) *WFB* 1 and 2, *JSB* 3;
a set of two-part inventions, *JSB* (10), *WFB* (5);
a set of three-part inventions, *JSB* (all).

This is certainly a programme of (self-)instruction. Certain of the preludes which appear later in WTC1 are incomplete and end on the bottom right-hand corner of the page, as if inviting the player to improvise a continuation (e.g. the D major Prelude ends on the pedalpoint (qv) of b. 19). They all offer models of composing with different note-groups. The interweaving of Sebastian's and Friedemann's handwriting in some pieces (Minuet, BWV 842), and the master's completions elsewhere (recapitulation in the first allemande), suggest a scene of actual lessons, certainly a collaborative effort of some kind.

In principle the *Clavierbüchlein*'s ornament-table and fingerings are Parisian, like its terms *application* and *explication*. As was customary, Bach's ornament-table is not exactly the same as any other, though apparently derived from d'Anglebert's and perhaps Dieupart's or, maybe, on an unchecked memory of them, using different terms *trillo* for *tremblement* or *pincé*, *accent* for *port de voix*. Bach wrote out d'Anglebert's table at the end of his copy of de Grigny, though neither he nor de Grigny followed it. In his own music he ignores French signs for broken chords or *harpègement* though these are often amply covered in French books (e.g. in Gaspard Leroux's *Pièces*, 1705), rather suggesting that the finer points of French *manière* were not yet familiar to him. Like d'Anglebert and Leroux, he uses note c" as reference point, possibly, though not certainly, because he was drawing on such tables. Ornaments had begun playing an important part in such albums as Eckelt's tablature book (see p. 25) and a notebook Gerber made as a teenager even before his lessons with Bach (BJ 1978, p. 8). A fundamental difference from Couperin's *L'Art* of 1717 is that Couperin, in expressly holding back on teaching even note-names to children, is aiming less at the prospective professional than Bach was with Friedemann. And naturally Couperin has no chorale-settings such as were crucial in church and home for any keyboard student in Protestant Germany.

The *Clavierbüchlein* suggests that Friedemann's understanding quickly developed, although a nine-year-old must have found that the allemande incipits given for completion did need his teacher's help. The book instructed him in notation, clefs (fewer than *L'Art*'s), fingering, ornamentation, playing and reading different keys (more than *L'Art*'s), composing in certain styles and genres and, up to a point, extemporizing. It (or his teacher) also gave the child some practice in a skill very important to a practising musician: learning to copy accurately, as when the composer writes out the first bar of the C minor Prelude WTC1 and the pupil copies the rest.

A pupil: Anna Magdalena Bach Books of 1722 and 1725

For Anna Magdalena's title-page of her first book (*Clavier-Büchlein*) and the theological book-titles listed there in Bach's handwriting, see pp. 231f. and 545. The first date '1722' is shared with the autograph title-page of WTC1, *perhaps* a further sign that the latter was changed. What remains of Anna Magdalena's 1722 book suggests both instruction and a repertory for playing, the second and most of the first in the composer's hand:

a version of five 'French suites' (BWV 812–16);
the *Fantasia pro Organo* (BWV 573). Breaks off on the mediant with space for continuation (composed or improvised)? Bass marked 'Ped.';
Air (BWV 991): three sketches or 'prompts' in C minor, binary form. For the student to continue?
an ornamented chorale (BWV 728): for harpsichord?
three two-part minuets, minor and major (BWV 813, 814, 841), the second with a 'Menuet-Trio' in three voices. Copied by Anna Magdalena.

There does appear to be a teaching programme of sorts here: a repertory for practice; a study in harmony of four and five parts, the last requiring pedal (BWV 573); four various 'cues' or 'models' for the student to continue; a model domestic chorale-setting, as also in Friedemann's book; and examples of one particular genre, the minuet. Perhaps minuets were the first genre or dance-type a student learnt, though Friedemann's book suggests allemandes. Surely not a female/male distinction?

How far the second Anna Magdalena book, originally marked *A. M. B. 1725* on the outer cover, superseded in some way the first is not clear, nor (assuming 1725 to be the beginning date) how long it continued to receive entries – possibly into the 1740s. Except for the two short *Rules* at the end, it gives the impression of being as much a playing album as a teaching aid:

first, two partitas, BWV 827 and 830, in the composer's hand, in versions regarded as 'early'; each with six movements (not with seven as published);
forty-one miscellaneous keyboard and vocal works by various local-contemporary composers, including several Bach sons (but not Friedemann); five chorales include a decorative 'model' (BWV 691, this also in Friedemann's *Clavierbüchlein*);

'some highly necessary rules for General bass' (in J. C. F. Bach's hand, brief, *c.* 1740?);
'some rules of General bass' (in Anna Magdalena's hand, a fuller section).

The two partitas alone give a range of *études* for practice:

lively two-voice movements (fantasia, two correntes, gavotte);
an old-fashioned toccata in three sections (E minor *Prélude*);
three-voice movements, gentle (allemande) or lively (two gigues);
different textures, tight or loose;
two contrasting types of sarabande and gigue.

Such a curriculum hardly grew accidentally and could well have inspired the yet fuller survey of musical and playing styles presented to the buyers of the Six Partitas.

Even if the book began as a repertory album and family 'commonplace book', with songs for soprano and contributions by several other family copyists, many of the miscellaneous pieces nevertheless aim to be instructive in various ways. One pair of minuets (Nos. 14, 15) would instruct Anna Magdalena in two distinct compositional types, canonic and chromatic. Other pieces give the student practice in text-underlay and indeed in accurate copying (which, however, is not infallible). The two partitas, on the other hand, are a challenge to the experienced performer. The brief first 'rules for General bass' appear to be preliminary, explaining the notes of the major and minor scale, also the major triad (*Accord*). The second rules explain at much greater length the triad and bass figures, with eleven instructions on four-part realization (e.g. do not double the leading note). A final envoy claims that other *precautions* are shown better by spoken instruction – whose it does not say.

A pupil: C. P. E. Bach and his book of 1753/1762

While in the years after Bach's death several of his students produced books reflecting acquaintance with his music or his teaching, no author could claim a greater intimacy with his thinking than Carl Philipp Emanuel. Whatever impetus there was by the mid-century for a Berliner to publish a lengthy book on keyboard-playing – in 1745 Couperin's *L'Art de toucher* had appeared in France in a further edition – and whatever changes in general musical taste had come about, Emanuel's *Versuch* must contain clues to his formative years with his father in Cöthen and Leipzig.

Within the first few pages of Part I Emanuel complains of the malicious prejudice in Germany against French keyboard pieces, although they are a 'good school' for players (1753, p. 3). Since by *c.* 1750, the French virtues he lists, such as clearly played ornaments, an interesting left hand and a sustained playing-style 'coherent and neat' (*eine zusammenhängende und propre Spiel-Art*), were far less typical of new French keyboard music than formerly, he must have had the earlier repertory in mind. Also, the different articulation he requires for different music (1753, p. 20), though clear enough in Couperin's four *livres de clavecin*, is not so in J. S. Bach's notation. As a child Emanuel would have learnt different kinds of articulation from studying the Inventions where, as remarked already, there are obvious contrasts between pairs, such as the D major/D minor, the E major/E minor and the F major/F minor. But the notation barely shows this.

Quoting his father as remarking that 'in his youth' he had seen great performers not using their thumbs except in large stretches (1753, p. 17), suggests that the topic had arisen during lessons. Quantz's remark on Bach's curving fingers (Dok. III, p. 18), on the other hand, sounds like something he had seen for himself. Emanuel's vaunted new fingering concerns especially using the thumb, and like finger-changing on a note, this was outlined much earlier by Rameau – but for simple virtuosity, not for preserving contrapuntal lines. Emanuel's advice that students be not alarmed when the teacher has to try out a fingering before recommending it (1753, p. 20) also suggests a lesson-setting. If he had learnt from his father to finger scales by turning the thumb under, one can only guess when and how often; but it was surely the WTC that led Emanuel to include in his own book, as he does, the scale-fingerings for all twenty-four keys.

A remark that Couperin overdid changing fingers on a note (1753, p. 45) implies that Emanuel had closely studied the examples in *L'Art de toucher*; and a further remark, that the French no longer embellish 'almost every note', implies he knew some of the more up-to-date books from Paris. According to a remark on p. 52, the French had learnt moderation in this respect from Germany's 'greatest masters', but that seems quite unlikely. Neither Sebastian (briefly) nor Emanuel (more fully) covers more than a certain amount of Couperin's material, and this could be read as conscious attempts to rethink *L'Art de toucher* for the more professional student than Couperin had in mind. Similarities can be found between some of Emanuel's many illustrations and Couperin's few, and it is significant that both give some focus to the appoggiatura *Vorschlag*, *port de voix*, which

Emanuel regarded as a crucial harmonic element, as obviously had his father.

Presumably, Emanuel's detailed advice on performance and public appearance was the result of his own experiences, some begun under the auspices of the Leipzig Collegium. Both Couperin and Emanuel Bach complain that continuo-players are insufficiently appreciated. A bigger question is how relevant to his father's music is the latter's advice on particular details: for instance, that in a stepwise chain of trills each begins on the main note (1753, p. 76), or that every trill should be as long as the note on which it is written (1753, p. 78). There are instances of both in J. S. Bach, and not only keyboard music. An impatience with current habits, and a tendency to dogma (e.g. that in some contexts, 'no other ornament' but a turn will serve: 1753, p. 89) are puzzling. Is such pontificating Emanuel's own or something he inherited? One sign that Emanuel had been traditionally taught was his watchful eye against forbidden parallels when one embellishes or plays figured bass, although at other times, as when speaking of decorated cadences or repeats, it seems clear that he is referring more to modern fashion (*gar sehr Mode*, 1753, p. 133).

If the large number of Emanuel's examples illustrating subtleties of accompaniment (1762, pp. 268–89) express personal experience, perhaps one can read into them what he had been taught by his father beyond the basics in Niedt's and Heinichen's books. How audible to the listener are some of these subtleties is questionable. One wonders too whether in his discussion of 'imitation' (1762, p. 291) Emanuel was implying that his father ornamented a theme the same way each time it returns. But did he? Or were certain unplayable ornaments added in the print of the Art of Fugue the result of someone assuming he did? A suggestion that expert accompanists can add new melodies agrees with what J. F. Daube had said about J. S. Bach's continuo-playing (based on hearsay, probably: Dok. III, p. 111), but Emanuel recommends improvising melodies only when the soloist pauses or has some held notes.

A contemporary review of the *Versuch*, whose Part II covers figured bass and continuo, points out that under his father in Leipzig, Emanuel had already distinguished himself in these arts (Dok. III, p. 179). He recommend his father's bass themes as 'perfect models' (1762, p. 332) and reports using his chromatic basses to familiarize students with otherwise rare bass-figures (1762, p.12). When he advises using two instruments for church music – organ for choruses , harpsichord (*Flügel)* for arias and recitative – there is nothing to say whether this was his father's practice in the Leipzig cantatas. More certain is the early training that leads him to stress correct

harmony, part-writing and treatment of discords, as well as correct bass-figures. All this could result from intensive work on four-part chorales, and it contrasts with the freer approach to figured bass in contemporary treatises published elsewhere, such as Geminiani's. Not a few realizations in Emanuel's book sound like extracts from harmonized chorales.

A note on the four-part chorales

From a biographical point of view, there are many questions to be asked about the four-part chorales or harmonized Lutheran hymns, of which some 350-odd associated with Bach have been listed, over half of them not known from surviving cantatas and Passions. How or where many of them originated, whether the composer set out to collect them, and if so why or how often, is not clearly documented. The various projects to collect them by Emanuel alone from 1765 and Emanuel through Kirnberger in 1784–7 (see below) seem to have been primarily didactic in purpose, with the four vocal parts in keyboard (not open) score in order to be more easily playable, as Emanuel said. But playable not so much, or at all, for organists accompanying hymn-singing, more for organists and other musicians to study? As recognized later in the century, they were beyond many of those who as organists served the church 'in singing and playing' (Dok. III, p. 405). They were like fugues and other forms of Bach's counterpoint after his death: instructive and educative, (i) giving delight to connoisseurs and (ii) serving as models for composers.

A striking fact of the four-part Bach chorale considered as a unique type of music is that a melody can be harmonized in many appropriate ways without this uniqueness being lost. Although in the chorales of the St John Passion and elsewhere a sudden chromatic effect will draw attention to a particular word, in general it is by no means possible to anticipate exactly how Bach will harmonize a given example. The details are often surprising. One can only guess why for many of them there are several quite different versions: from different stages of study, for different teaching occasions, for different dramatic contexts, as when chorales return in different versions in the Passions. When the only organ-chorales Bach published were published without the simpler four-part version of the hymn, as Kauffmann's were (Leipzig, 1733–6), was Bach making it clear that these chorale-settings were not music for a Sunday service? Or was it left to an organist to add his own plain hymn? Some copyists did do this at the end of quite

lengthy organ-chorales, either harmonizing it or leaving it in figured-bass form.

Since a line of development in Bach's handling of four-part harmony can be sensed between the early 'Neumeister Chorales' and those in the Christmas Oratorio, it must be assumed that it was through his own efforts that he came to produce the characteristic style. The four-part chorales heading the sets of variations by some other composers such as Pachelbel are already accomplished, with straightforward triadic harmony (qv) and modulation. But their relatively few discords and few surprising turns of direction suggest that for Bach to harmonize in newer ways meant exploring more interesting chords. (These include unaccented and especially accented passing notes, *échappées* (qv) and *appoggiature*, all of which result in something more complex than common chords.) Since the dates and the local circumstances of the chorales are so rarely certain, however, only a more specialized study than is possible here might suggest how his technique did develop up to the Christmas Oratorio and beyond. One conclusion might be that the *Orgelbüchlein* in particular was responsible for the evolving sophistication of Bach's chorale-harmony, that chorales were never quite the same after it, and that in the hundreds of Leipzig cantatas later there is no single approach or line of development.

Emanuel told Forkel that his father first taught composition students to realize a figured bass in four parts, probably meaning this to be done on paper; then to move on to hymn-melodies by writing alto and tenor to their teacher's bass-line; then to learn to create the bass for themselves (Dok. III, p. 289). Harmony teachers know this to be a sound procedure, although many would prefer students to learn by writing the bass themselves, first thing. Either way, in being practical models of four-part harmony, chorales are useful not only in church for trained choirs but in any classroom – for teaching students how to hear harmony, understand cadences and modulations, fill in good inner parts, write good bass-lines, handle discords, and all so as to shape and create coherent statements. Such were basic skills. They not only served the would-be composer of any kind of music and on any scale, but were able to create a genuine music that is pleasing in itself, not least in the form of keyboard music on two staves played and taught by organists, as most teachers were. Surely these virtues were already recognized in Bach's earlier Leipzig years? In the body of chorales, moreover, there are genuinely creative touches of the unexpected, even the whimsical, which students of harmony all too easily carry to excess as they attempt to imitate the Bach style.

Most chorales, particularly those in the two Passions, offer models of self-restraint, generally with a 'decoration' in just one voice at a time (such as a passing note), with less or more chromaticism in response to the text, and with discreet if sometimes surprising modulation. But not only the Passion chorales. Learning four-part chorale-harmonization could produce in students a fundamental musical literacy, as is clear from comparing even minor German choral or organ music with that of other countries, Protestant or Roman Catholic. However conventionalized the counterpoint, there remains a kind of musical common sense to it, one so widespread in the Lutheran world that there is often considerable uncertainty whether or which organ-chorales attributed in doubtful sources to J. S. Bach are in fact his work.
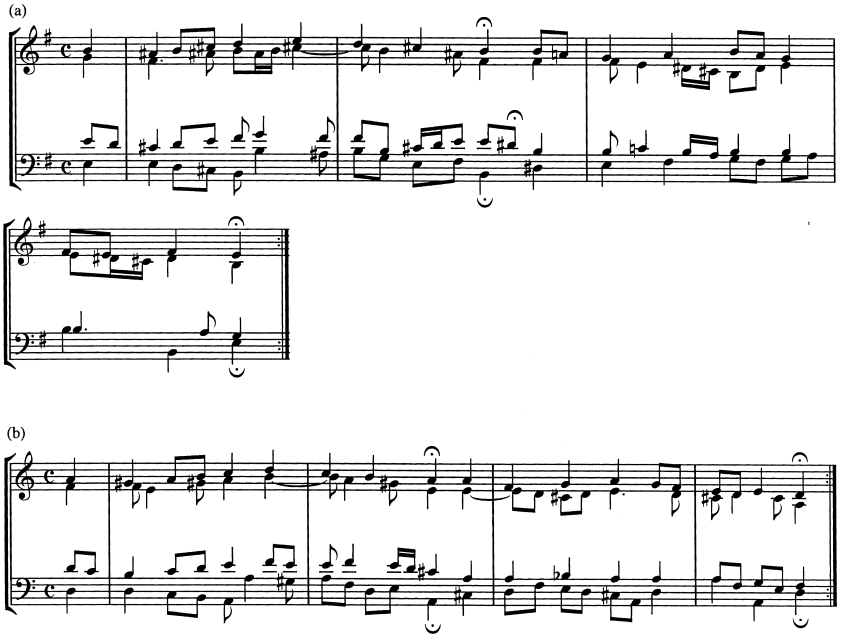
Four-part chorales published during Bach's Leipzig years by other composers such as Telemann and Kauffmann, plus hints in preserved manuscripts of how he taught chorales to younger musicians in Weimar, are signs of how useful they were regarded as being. From Hamburg and other centres a few sources have survived to suggest something of a similar picture. A collection of chorales and devotional songs published not in four parts but only bass-and-treble, like those in Schemelli's *Gesangbuch* of 1736, could be reductions from four-part settings already made, or they could be skeletal settings to be filled in by continuo-players and harmony-students. Learning polished four-part chorale-harmony had more uses than for playing hymns for church services, and the focus on Bach the Teacher both during and after his lifetime would itself have led to a continuing interest in them. Nevertheless, it could be that in 1774 Emanuel described to Forkel the teaching of chorales because by then the tradition had begun to weaken, and both of them wished to maintain it. In any case, whether through pupils' loyalty, his own particular emphases, or both, Bach has bequeathed a bigger corpus of this kind of music than anyone else. One might have expected Emanuel's name to appear more often than it does in connection with surviving sources.

A collection of 149 four-part chorales was made by J. L. Dietel during or soon after his student-years in the St Thomas School 1727–35, when, latterly, he was also employed in copying some parts for the Christmas Oratorio (BJ 1983, pp. 83f.). This is the only known collection of chorales made in Bach's immediate contemporary circle, and is drawn in ninety-nine instances from known cantatas, perhaps from the composer's originals, and not always accurately. (How many of the other fifty chorales come from lost cantatas is another tantalizing and

unanswerable question. Or from cantatas not lost but with no cue for a chorale in the extant manuscript.) The open-score layout of Dietel's collection would serve for instruction; and it could be a draft for one of several such collections prepared for publication, rather as a 'fully professional' resource to rival the Schemelli Songbook. C. F. Penzel, a student in Leipzig after Bach's death, left a collection of 126 chorales, probably part of a bigger manuscript and including a dozen filled-in settings from the same Schemelli book. Another collection of 240 chorales, in this case melody plus bass only, was advertised by Breitkopf in the 1760s (Dok. III, p. 166) and may be the *Choralbuch* now in Rochester, NY. The book is of uncertain origin but surely speaks for other useful collections made at the time and accredited to J. S. Bach for, presumably, a wished-for authority.

The same focus by Emanuel on *Bach the Teacher* hides another and perhaps once the chief purpose of chorale-collections. This was to supplement the usual hymnbooks of the day, which had no melodies, with reliable and consistent harmonizations, and this for the sake of congregational accompaniment, a practice only gradually becoming universal. Hence perhaps one reason for two-stave keyboard scores. The gradual publication of hymnbooks with harmonized tunes would mean that while the organist had less need for separate collections for church use, these would became indispensable as teaching aids. At least, that is what happened: countless music students everywhere over the following two and a half centuries worked at some point with one or other edition of Bach chorales, and in many cases this has been students' chief or only contact with the 'Bach idiom'.

From the posthumous publications of four-part chorales, particularly the biggest of them by C. P. E. Bach and J. P. Kirnberger (four volumes, 1784–7), one could cautiously make a case that those which have apparently been taken from or were used in the cantatas after 1724 tend to have a simpler harmonization than those that had other origins. It is always possible, however, that although Emanuel told the publisher Breitkopf that they were all his father's work (Dok. III, p. 404) a few were not. It has often been noticed that over the first Leipzig cycle, from August 1723 to early 1724, Bach seems to have taken particular trouble over richly harmonizing the cantata chorales, as would also be the case with the imaginative use made of them in the St John Passion for his first Good Friday. Another possibility is that elaborate settings such as BWV 277 and 278 ('Christ lag in Todesbanden') had an origin in the classroom, whereas the simpler setting of the same chorale in Cantata No. 4 had been made much earlier for the choir of a town



Example 27 (a) Chorale, BWV 278;
(b) Chorale, BWV 277. Text: 'Christ lay in the bonds of death'

church. The earlier would have led to the later. By the 1730s a cantata's closing chorale may well be very richly textured again (Cantata No. 177).

While there is seldom a clear distinction between simple and complex, and a good deal of uncertainty about which chorales belonged to which lost cantatas, it rather looks as if the treatment in Examples 27(a) and (b) was meant to demonstrate to students two ways to handle grammatical details: passing notes, suspensions, decorations, different kinds of sevenths, and interesting vocal lines. They also illustrate implicitly a most important piece of advice: do not overdo any of these techniques. Experienced students would probably recognize two further characteristics in such music: its lines are also very singable, if sometimes difficult; and in addition, there is often an element of caprice transcending the textbook rules. So there is in the Art of Fugue.

Given the complete grounding his students had in harmony, including 'improvising' fugues in the *partimento* tradition (qv), one might well wonder what Bach's attitude was to their very different young men's tastes when they came to write their own kinds of music. In particular, one wonders how he reacted to the slack harmonic tension, the ornaments enlivening

thin and moribund harmony, the repeated phrases, the repeated bass notes, predictable modulations, superficial chromaticisms and a simple rhetoric of louds-and-softs, all of which replaced real substance of the kind he knew. Charles Burney's enthusiasm for the keyboard works of 'Bach's last student', J. G. Müthel, suggests that as with Emanuel's and Friedemann's publications, discerning as well as amateur musicians of the time were, for some reason, attracted to those very characteristics. One could suppose that J. S. Bach simply accepted the light *galant* idioms of young composers as appropriate to the style and function of their music, a music different from his own which had no reason to change.

To the extent that his last twenty years show Bach continuing to explore new frontiers more than his most gifted contemporaries Handel, Vivaldi and Rameau were, he was doing so still within the terms of traditional counterpoint and harmony, showing what can be done with them. Emanuel noted his priorities, perhaps a little too succinctly:

in Beurtheilung der Arbeiten war er, ***quoad Harmoniam****, sehr streng* (Dok. III, p. 289)

in judging works he was, with respect to harmony, very strict

Although it is not clear whether *Harmoniam* means diatonic harmony or a general harmoniousness, or whether *Arbeiten* (unusually) means actual compositions rather than 'work-assignments', it is easy to imagine that Bach was a strict judge. When Emanuel goes on to say that his father valued and approved everything good even if 'human frailties' (*Menschlichkeiten*) were found in it, he could be referring to students making mistakes or to fashionable *galant* composers writing symphonies. The remark says much about him as a teacher if it is true.

Bach's own music makes little concession to light *galant* idioms, and indeed less so in the later 1740s than in some previous years. Any emphasis on four-part chorales as teaching-material for learners was a sign either that he required young musicians to master harmonic grammar first and foremost or that he was fighting a rearguard action in fast-changing times – or, as so often with questions about Bach, both.

It would be a mistake, however, to think of the four-part chorales merely as 'teaching-material', for they strip away the accessories of baroque music's formal genres to engage the listener in pure harmony. In cantata after cantata, they seize the listener the moment they are sung, not always at the end but always with a musical presence that might even blot out whatever aria or recitative came before. *Quoad Harmoniam*, as the Obituary said.

A speculation concerning W. F. Bach

While documents do no more than hint at Bach's personal relationships, he cannot always have separated the personal from the professional. Music for his young wife could both give pleasure and improve her skills, and whatever instruction he gave his children was followed by solicitous support for their adult careers. Various sources of Emanuel's keyboard music suggest that he and his father kept up some kind of contact over it (BJ 2012, p. 196) and discussed the ways it might be developed.

Though probably being compiled while Wilhelm Friedemann was in Berlin, delivering their youngest brother Christian into Emanuel's family, the Obituary gives no hint of any favouritism for him, nor could it be expected to. Yet circumstantially, with respect to Friedemann's studies and career, some closeness between father and his first son is implied by the worklist:

Clavier-Büchlein (1720), re-bound in Halle after 1750; later recopied, probably in Halle;
Two-part and Three-part Inventions and WTC, Book 1 (1722 or 1723);
Orgelbüchlein, title-page 1723?, signs in the manuscript that Friedemann used it (BJ 2001, p. 67);
Partitas for harpsichord, from *c.* 1724, published 1726–31 (Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5 for Friedemann?);
Six Sonatas for Organ, compiled *c.* 1729, said by Forkel 1802 to be for Friedemann;
two letters for Friedemann's application at Sophienkirche, Dresden, 1733, written by J. S.;
Praeludium in G major, BWV 541, a new autograph, for Friedemann's successful audition?
Magnificat, BWV 243, D major version, *c.* 1733?, connected with Friedemann in Dresden?
Clavierübung II, published 1735, for the two-manual harpsichord familiar in Dresden;
Masses, BWV 233–6, later 1730s, parody works (partly) for Friedemann in Dresden?
contrapuntal exercises in the hand of father and son, 1736/8? (Wollny 2002b);[22]

[22] Perhaps done in Dresden (the manuscript-paper is of Dresden manufacture). The Art of Fugue subject-head appears in this manuscript, which supports Emanuel's comment that his father started off fugue-study in two parts (Dok. III, p. 289). Since this is inevitable, was Emanuel's point rather that his father insisted on writing and not merely analysing?

harpsichord concertos, BWV 1052–9, *c.* 1738. For Friedemann in Dresden or Leipzig?
Clavierübung III, published 1739. For public organ recitals?
'Goldberg Variations', published 1741, connections in Dresden;
copy by J. S. of Friedemann's Concerto for Two Harpsichords, Fk 10 (only known complete copy by J. S. of a son's work);
fair copy by J. S. of Cantata No. 34, *c.* 1746 for Friedemann's first Whit Sunday in Halle?
J. S.'s visit to the court in Potsdam, May 1747, accompanied by Friedemann?
'Schübler Chorales', published *c.* 1748, Friedemann had copies for sale in Halle;
Friedemann's Advent cantata 'Lasset uns ablegen die Werke der Finsternis';
Potential trial piece to succeed J. S. in Leipzig; some annotations by Sebastian.

In most cases, any direct connection to Friedemann is entirely speculative. Yet whatever other purposes any of these works had, the question is whether they had any special association with Friedemann and his career. The contrapuntal exercises certainly did, and it is not unlikely that father and son continued to study or perform together during visits the former paid to Dresden. Friedemann's help in preparing parts for the *Missa* presented to the elector might relate somehow to his move to Dresden in June 1733. In the case of the *Orgelbüchlein*, the eventual title-page focuses on the instruction it offers 'the young organist' (such as Friedemann) in composing chorales and playing the pedal.

The sheer technical difficulty of Friedemann's harpsichord music from the 1730s and 1740s may have been inspired by his father's collections, including the Six Partitas. One or two of these faintly recall details in the sonatas of Friedemann's violin-teacher Graun, as if the father was responding to the son's studies over that period. In the case of WTC2, Friedemann's later ownership of an autograph manuscript, as well as an important copy of it, raises the question whether the collection was assembled, insofar as it was, partly with him in mind. For this is music full of up-to-date challenges for keyboard-players, including those playing the new fortepianos, as the Bach sons were.

It would be especially helpful to know how common it was for Friedemann to return to the family home, bringing distinguished Dresden

musicians with him (one documented visit, August 1739), and whose idea it was for him to use some of his father's cantatas in Halle, adding his own recitatives to Cantata No. 130 (this in a very good style-match: see BJ 2003, p. 233), making a version of Cantata No. 199 (using his father's score and parts? – BJ 2013, p. 303), and reviving others (Nos. 51, 205a). It was through his father, no doubt, that in his early twenties Friedemann had taken as private pupil one of St Thomas's choristers (Dok. III, p. 106). But the documentation is altogether too ambiguous on incidents that might be significant. Anecdotes told after they had both died reported Sebastian as satisfied only with Friedemann among his sons ('the great organist', Dok. III, p. 518), a preference which the counterpoint exercises might confirm. A question is whether Friedemann's not unusual absence without leave from Halle for several months after his father's death (Dok. II, p. 513) was purely to oversee probate and help the family, or because he was too affected to request formal leave of absence.

Several sons, perhaps all of them, told anecdotes about their father, and of a kind familiar in many a musical family. Friedemann said that he joked about the opera when visiting it with him in Dresden; Emanuel that his father would nudge him during a fugue when something he predicted happened; Christian, that he once jumped out of bed to resolve a six-four chord. If Friedemann was particularly close to his father, it is also tempting to speculate about his and his next living brother's relationship with their stepmother. Did Emanuel's application at Naumburg in August 1733 have anything to do with Friedemann's leaving home two months earlier? Or with Emanuel's surprising move away from Leipzig the next year to continue studies in Frankfurt-an-der-Oder? It seems that Emanuel kept his stepmother's portrait with him until he died (Dok. III, p. 501), along with portraits of his grandfather, father and three brothers, but little can be surmised from this. Anna Magdalena was mentioned in an advertisement for Emanuel's book before it was published (Dok. V, p. 299).

Without Forkel's note that the Six Sonatas for Organ were compiled for Friedemann one could only guess that they were, based on their date and Friedemann's own copy of them. If the compilation was made for Friedemann's professional advancement, perhaps it was in particular for the anticipated but unsuccessful application at Halle in March 1731. One might guess too that if the organ sonatas were compiled for him so were other works, such as the Six Sonatas for Violin and Harpsichord – earlier works perhaps, but compiled and probably revised in time for his

violin studies with Graun in Merseburg *c.* 1726.[23] When eventually appointed at Halle in 1746, Friedemann evidently made special efforts with his first cantata, as his father had done at Leipzig in 1723, the two being of similar age at similar career-points. More of an organist than Emanuel, at least by profession, he owned both early and late autographs of his father's organ music, including very early examples of his handwriting (the chorale-fantasias BWV 739 and 764) kept perhaps as mementos. An early and unique organ-chorale BWV 1128, discovered only in 2008, seems to have been connected with successive musicians in Friedemann's Halle: another memento? When he claimed much later to have written one of Sebastian's manuscripts himself, the Organ Concerto, BWV 596, did he simply mistake the handwriting for his own as a boy? Selling off various of his late father's manuscripts, as he did, need not imply any disrespect or compelling indigence, for there are many reasons for disposing of a heritage, including persistent sadness.

A temptation is to seek in all this an explanation for Friedemann's relative failure in life after 1750, despite Emanuel's reported view that 'he could replace our father better than the rest of us together' (Dok. III, p. 613), and despite the high (if fruitless) regard in which the King of Prussia held him (Dok. III, p. 276). In a comparable way, one might speculate about their younger brother Bernhard's problems: his debts when a young organist, precipitous abandonment of a good job, moving to another city where a distant relative lived. Was Bernhard avoiding Leipzig, or his stepmother or a demanding father? It is certainly believable that the sons were over-encouraged, over-dependent, over-burdened by living up to expectations, and in Friedemann's case over-afflicted when his father died. He saw his younger brother become successful even as an author on a topic (keyboard-playing) in which he, Friedemann, was regarded by many as the true apostolic successor. Had there been a special love for the first son, recognition of his unusual talent, anxiety to compensate him for early loss of his mother, doubt that he had the killer instinct necessary for great success? Or inadvertent domination, making such success impossible?

[23] Parts copied by Friedemann's cousin Johann Heinrich about 1725, probably in their shared home in Leipzig. Graun was later concertmaster to Frederick II in Potsdam, where Friedemann's pupil Nichelmann was the second harpsichordist. Another reason for Friedemann to accompany his father on the visit of 1747?

9 | An epilogue

Concerning the composer's priorities

A surprising fact about Bach is that despite scant evidence of his inner and professional life, there are clear signs of something more personal: involvement in his family's musical development.

Although it is seldom clear which of his pieces were for performing with which family members, several albums were begun for them, and one son's exceptionally important book was profoundly influenced by him. In one album or another, both parents (at least in Leipzig) appear to be helping the sons, including the disabled Gottfried Heinrich working on a song, BWV 515 (NBA V/4 KB, p. 124). That there was at least one other 'Little album' of music in the family home, in addition to Friedemann's and Anna Magdalena's, became clear when the content of Emanuel's estate was listed later – the album, already mentioned, probably begun for Johann Christian (BJ 1963/4, 64). One might wonder whether other sons received such books and whether their father ever wrote 'you're my good little boy' on any other manuscript than, apparently, he did on one of young Friedemann's (Dok. V, p. 273). For him too, it seems, a unique manuscript of organ-chorales was given a new title.

As there are limits to how far such evidence can be taken, in this respect as in others, Bach's admirers have long had scope for all kinds of speculation, and this book cannot be free of it. One can, however, observe oddities in the record as it exists. For example, it is strange how rarely the Obituary of 1754 refers to other people by name or position, especially if a comparison is made with Mainwaring's biography of Handel published a few years later. Though part of a picture of the self-reliant Johann Sebastian Bach, this has a distancing effect, leaving much out of focus. When a musician does get mentioned (Zachow at Halle), one might wonder quite why. Another oddity is how scant is the attention given by the Obituary to Leipzig, barely mentioning it by name and giving more details of the other places in Bach's career, including Lüneburg when he was a teenager. Perhaps little needed to be said concerning the town in which the Obituary was published. Nevertheless, the centre of attention that Leipzig later became in

the Bach literature and research, both in the nineteenth century and today, does give the town an authority and even a reflected glory that may not speak for the composer's view of it or of his life in it.

In much recent literature there is also a reticence, already there in the Obituary but now more marked, about the career-ambition of a professional musician such as J. S. Bach, as if there was something improper in his job-searches and awareness of money. Whether known to Emanuel or not, there must have been more than one early but unsuccessful job-application, in addition to Sangerhausen. Emanuel needs to mention the successful second visit to Weimar and the hasty departure from Mühlhausen; likewise the visit to Halle, this time because the job was turned down. But were his later visit to Hamburg, his personal homage to the Margrave of Brandenburg, his various visits to Dresden, the sending of Mass movements to one king (an ecumenical Lutheran-Catholic gesture) and flattering compositions to another, unconnected with professional ambition of one or other kind? These visits, like the letter to an old school-friend in Danzig, did not have the outcome he desired? Whatever other purposes such contacts had, such as testing an organ, taking possession of a harpsichord, networking for a son, obtaining *Protection* for his position in Leipzig, etc., the motives of an ambitious musician are unlikely to have been unmixed.

Except for reporting the young orphan's anguish at losing his manuscript and the mature composer's regrets at losing a beloved ex-employer, the Obituary's only fully personal remark occurs when Emanuel speaks of his father's 'blissful marriage' to Maria Barbara and the 'severest pain' at her death. But, in picking on this event thirty years earlier, is Emanuel expressing his own feelings as her son, glossing his memory as a six-year-old, even drawing on his elder brother's? Or is he quoting his father from later years, putting words into his mouth, desiring to speak well of both his parents? Perhaps he is only speaking the simple truth. There are difficulties in accepting this, however, because Emanuel's remark indirectly involves his own existence. Nevertheless, it is perfectly credible, and whichever is the case, there is then a further and intriguing question: in keeping alive the memory of the deceased's first wife and family in this sure-to-be-noticed way, is the Obituary saying something about the second?

From the two kinds of evidence left by the extant music and by the written documentation, much can be divined about more personal details, and will continue to be so by future admirers. Concerning Bach's memory, for example: when the letter of 28 October 1730 to his school-friend Erdmann refers to 'nearly four years elapsing' since Erdmann replied to his last letter (Dok. I, p. 67), and this turns out to be accurate, one

concludes either that he had a very sharp memory or that he kept copies of all correspondence in a letter-book: perhaps the latter (Wolff 2000, p. 392), or perhaps both. Either way, there was some determined orderliness here. So there must also have been in musical matters, as in the way cantata movements were selected for re-use in the parodies. Whatever the reasons for re-using older material, and however much labour was saved in the process, Bach had to retrieve the material in both senses: from his memory and from his library, both neatly ordered, no doubt. Since not all parodied works had been recently composed – a cantata movement thirty years old was revised for the Mass – one can only assume that their original quality stayed in his mind and gave him ideas of what other uses they could be put to. How much farther to take such questions rather depends on willingness to conjecture. For example, did he recall and re-use works he especially *liked*?

As the documentation is scrutinized to answer such broad questions as 'What did he like and dislike?', or 'What kind of person, husband, father, teacher, colleague was J. S. Bach?', speculation is inescapable. From documents it is clear that he anticipated Leipzig as useful to his sons for its university, supported Friedemann in two major churches in Dresden, visited Emanuel in Potsdam, accompanied Gottfried Bernhard on appointment in Mühlhausen, and in effect trained them in various ways, not least as copyists unto the last. It is not difficult to guess the part he played in his son-in-law Altnickol's appointment at Naumburg in 1748, where he was known to the authorities, having examined the organ there fairly recently, as he reminded them. One is surely right to suppose some connection between the sons' musical education and some of their father's music, from chorale-harmonizations to virtuoso solo works, useful to them at their stages of development. Evidence for the warm and dutiful support for his children and their success is intermittent but reliable.

Recent researches have revealed for Bach a different but comparable combination of duty and potential benefit: in connection with the Kingdom of Saxony's workers in the silver mines, one of the kingdom's two conspicuous sources of wealth.[1] This was expressed when, like some other Leipzigers and the King of Saxony himself, Bach bought a *Kux*, a type of contribution or share, in a mine that might make money but was unlikely to (see Spree 2013).

[1] In his copy of the Calov Bible, Bach shows himself interested in the ritual value of silver as specified in Leviticus (see Cox 1985, facs. 71). The other main source of wealth in Saxony, Meissen porcelain, features nowhere in the listed Bach estate, unlike the metal goods (Dok. II, pp. 492f.)

One might think it out of character for Bach not to have looked for profit, but *Kux*-holders in the *Ursula Mine* near Freiberg were regularly called upon to contribute further, thus keeping its workers employed. Other Leipzigers including a *Stadtpfeifer* (town musician) had a *Kux*, as did Gottfried Silbermann in Freiberg, while the 'Minister of Mines' was the Count Brühl whose favour was important to Leipzigers and who auditioned Bach's likely successor (see p. 458). Books of the time stress the sacred nature of earth's riches as gifts of God, and such mottoes as 'God save you, O holy mine' occurred on engraved prints of Freiberg. Bach undertook this obligation from 1741 onwards, leaving on his death the usual 'contribution' (*Zubuss*) to be paid off by the family, as it was (Dok. II, p. 499). The name appearing no fewer than forty-four times in the registers says *Capellmeister in Leipzig*, not *Cantor* nor (surprisingly) *Saxon Court Composer*.

More tangible are the composer's musical priorities. For in going time and again beyond requirements, he was as ambitious for his own musical understanding as he was for his career. There are several references in this book to his constant search to create different examples of a single genre, as in the six different allemandes of the Six Partitas, six instrumental groups for the 'Brandenburg Concertos', ten canons in the Musical Offering, the very different first movements in the 'Chorale Cantatas'. These are differences achieved quite deliberately. Changes were rung not only in each genre as a whole but in individual musical elements, such as chromatic themes: these seem to have been of particular interest, and there is a huge variety in their treatment, well beyond the usual formulae known to other composers before and since. Some examples have already been mentioned, from simple chromatics in early works through to subtly discreet appearances in the Art of Fugue. One has only to think of the Ricercars of the Musical Offering or of many a chorale in the cantatas to have some inkling of the uses to which Bach could put the sliding semitone – an obscure, arcane ambition, one might think, until one hears the result.

It is possible to see Bach's thoroughness and intricacy as originating in something other than music, in sheer personality perhaps but also in the pious notion of *acts of supererogation*, defined as 'the actions of a believer beyond what is required for salvation'. Strictly speaking, this seems to go against Luther's fierce rejection of 'buying forgiveness' as exploited by the popes of Rome; his Wittenberg Thesis No. 58 affirms that no believer 'has adequately fulfilled God's commandments in this life. Therefore the saints have done nothing at all that is superabundant.' Nevertheless, the idea of supererogation existed, part of considering oneself a 'spiritual debtor' (Saint Paul), and it does offer a possible explanation for one of the biggest

puzzles about Bach: why he took so much trouble in composing, certainly beyond the normal call of duty. As with the question of why he bought shares in a silver mine not expected to make money, the answer in part seems to be: because of a religious sense of what was owed to his Maker and his neighbour. Marginalia made to the Calov Bible rather confirm this. There, obligations to the neighbour have been underlined along with the need to fulfill one's office (*Ambt*), to conquer sin, even to administering punishment without malice (Cox 1985, facs. 259–64): three points in his written agreement with St Thomas's.

Supererogatory or not, the work of the orthodox Lutheran composer is to develop his God-given talents as far as they allow, 'paying out' (*erogat*) those talents, going beyond merely what one is obliged to do (the *praecepta*) and accepting what is further recommended (the *consilia*). For Bach, the *praecepta* in this sense would be the duty to set the Word to music, and the *consilia* would be the way it was done: applying all his skills, rejecting easy solutions, continually aspiring, despising laziness. Those well read in the Gospels knew that Jesus does recommend actions that are above basic duty. Investing more effort than is normally required might show itself in the unusual length and intricacy of a particular piece of music, such as the passacaglia for organists, the fugue for violinists, the set of variations for harpsichordists. Or in the realm of vocal music it might mean rethinking each detail, in a serenade for the ruler, or a Mass for a large ensemble, or a substantial cantata for a congregation. All such works of Bach are bigger and harder to perform than any comparable music, as if he had been driven untiringly to be worthy.

When he was absent from his post in order to make particular journeys – at least sixty in his lifetime, near and far, all expensive and very troublesome (at an average coach-speed of 3–4 mph) – surely it involved musical curiosity as much as personal ambition? When he wrote no title on important manuscript collections (and on some works only after they were performed), was it through modesty, indifference, procrastination, uncertainty or simply waiting for a chance to publish? Why exactly do the 'B minor Mass' and the 'Christmas Oratorio' have no overall title-page, or indeed title? When he chose the colourless title 'Keyboard Practice' for four quite extraordinary collections of music, was he rejecting the day's many fanciful titles (*Monthly Fruits, Upright Instruction*, *Well-tempered Clavier*) or wishing to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor Kuhnau, who coined the phrase? Was he not keenly aware how far his suites surpassed Kuhnau's? If so, was the intention to surpass? And if so, because he was obliged to return his talents with interest?

On a more prosaic level, one thing does seem clear. More so than has often been appreciated, much of Bach's output can be viewed as consciously affected in some way by other music, even if documentation does not show precisely how much other music he did know, particularly the foreign instrumental repertories. 'Internal evidence' in the works themselves is suggestive rather than definitive. Since in so active a musical culture his ambition is likely to have brought a huge amount of music to his attention, he must often have reacted directly to it, either under the anxiety of influence or with the pleasure of surpassing. To whatever extent his cantata-work did decline, so much attention given over decades to imported Mass-settings in the old style must have been for practical reasons, i.e. with a view to performing the music, perhaps also to use it in teaching. However disappointed he might have been to find his published music too thoughtful and difficult for the tastes of the 1730s and 1740s, he did not respond with 'popular' publications but actually worked towards further collections of difficult music. Whether resistance to modernity can be read into this remains an open question, especially since it is not obvious what would count as evidence, but one thing is clear from his special respect for Frescobaldi: over a century apart, both composers resorted to the private world of thoughtful counterpoint *in principle* remote from the everyday requirements of church, chamber or concert-room.

Two kinds of 'influence' deserve research into a wider repertory than is usually discussed by Bach-scholars: the influences of others on him and his influences on others. Emanuel's list of older composers admired by his father is not only partial but also vague, leaving one to conjecture what exactly he found admirable. It cannot have been only their work as contrapuntists, as Emanuel implies. It was inevitable that he explored the music of earlier *contrapuntists* as he worked in similar genres, but the impact of the better *harmonists* cannot be doubted. Emanuel's later list of more modern composers comes just before the remark that Bach was strict in judging harmony (see above, p. 605). Froberger, represented in sources familiar to both young Bach and young Handel, was an admired composer whose formal work (types of fugue, types of suites) were important as a matter of course, but whose handling of harmony and texture was also admirable. If such pleasing harmony as Froberger's would not be directly imitated by composers two generations later, indirectly it could be an inspiration.

So could Frescobaldi's, though the reason he is the odd man out in Emanuel's list is probably different. Frescobaldi was an imaginative organist, a 'composer's composer' interested in creating music by playing with

basic musical ideas: model themes, combination techniques, thematic metamorphoses, diminutions, augmentations. Bach, left to himself, was an imaginative organist in much the same vein and with much the same interests. In his later years especially, he would find here models of 'thematic metamorphosis' (changing the notes and rhythms of his themes as a movement proceeds) and even acquire his taste for rewriting themes upside down or imitating the old modes from time to time. All these musical devices are demonstrated at length in Frescobaldi's ricercars and all were otherwise rare in contemporary Protestant music. (One could argue that composing later, when the major and minor keys were fixed, Bach was less free in his contrapuntal thinking than Frescobaldi had been before they were.) Although some of the other contrapuntists listed by Emanuel as admired by his father (Froberger, Buxtehude and Strunck) were already admirers of Frescobaldi, no 'mediation' through them was necessary: the Art of Fugue could go straight back to Frescobaldi's volumes. Only one of those volumes was certainly known to Bach, but that is not conclusive: it could be that the *Fiori musicali* copy survives only because he signed and dated it (1714). Frescobaldi is the *éminence grise* behind many of Bach's typical interests.

The second big question about influence, and more conjectural, is the reverse: why J. S. Bach's influence on important contemporaries was no greater than it was. Handel, who drew directly on certain Italians and borrowed from Kerll, Krieger, Zachow, Kuhnau, C. H. Graun, Telemann and others within their shared culture, seems never to have drawn on any of Bach's works. Considering the huge number of organists and cantors in Protestant Germany, mostly at best modest composers, one would expect there to be more surviving evidence of their acquaintance with at least his simpler works than there is, except among his students. But a glance at publications across Europe in the 1730s and 1740s reveals a factor working against any influence Bach might have wielded – there were precious few scenarios in which any part of his worklist would play a part, irrespective of its technical demands. He must have known this.

His must also have seemed a music that ultimately could not be emulated. One modest composer, J. G. Walther, certainly shared his interest in the traditional techniques, perhaps even 'competing' with him as a colleague in Weimar. Another, Johann Kuhnau (d. 1722), left music too unadventurous to suggest he was ever under his younger contemporary's influence. Such influence might be discerned from time to time in cantatas by Stölzel, and it is something that may once have been more in evidence, as in Pisendel's lost violin music written after Bach's *Sei Solo*. From some

chorale-settings by Georg Böhm one might think that the younger man had influenced the older as much as vice versa, and some music in 1750s Dresden might suggest that a composer there (G. A. Homilius?) knew something of the 'B minor Mass'. Cantatas of colleagues in Protestant Saxony and Thuringia naturally share with Bach many of the day's idioms, but how far their harmonic thinking was inspired by his Passions or Leipzig cantatas is another matter. Not very much, it seems, but this too is an area for further exploration.

Evidently, Bach's sustained interest in the work of various French and Italian composers was never reciprocated. Nobody played any of his music in de Grigny's Rheims or Marchand's Versailles. Admittedly, some genres (Lutheran cantatas, chorale-settings) had no purpose in the Roman liturgies, but other works could have been useful there or profitably studied by French and Italian composers (sonatas, solo concertos). With one or two exceptions, Bach's published keyboard volumes seem not to have travelled abroad much either, being (and often looking) more trouble to play than most music that did circulate well in that period. The crossed-hand music in Couperin's *Quatrième Livre* of 1730 is as if the Partita in B flat had never been. If England, Holland and many German states were as open to foreign music as they were – more so than France, Italy or Spain were, even to each other's – one would expect copies of at least the more conventional works such as the 'English' and 'French Suites' to have circulated during the composer's lifetime.

Concerning Bach the performer

Any privileged attention this book appears to give to Bach the keyboard-player and keyboard-composer agrees with the Obituary, stressing with it how crucial an area of activity it was for him from first to last, in public and in private. Not all biographies of Bach since Forkel's of 1802 have made this clear enough, for understandably, authors can feel challenged by the mass of vocal music and its deliberate, frank engagement with listeners, moving and exciting them.

Especially from a biographical point of view, keyboard music shows clearly the three levels on which a composer's interests might mature: in composing from bar to bar, in shaping substantial movements, and in planning major collections. These skills are evident even on a small scale in, say, the 'French Suites'. Certain paths taken by later composers are often anticipated, as when the classical sonata form's 'development'

(exploring main themes in different ways) is anticipated in the C minor Organ Sonata. Similarly the idea of a 'recapitulation' (themes returning in the tonic) is already there in the E minor Partita. A chorale-melody like 'Allein Gott' whose last line more or less repeats the first will encourage the principle of recapitulation, leading to a thoughtfully integrated shape even in a relatively early work (BWV 664a). While such thematic returns were already known on a small scale in, for example, Couperin's *Premier Livre*, 1713, the opening themes in mature binary movements of Bach (the D major Prelude WTC2, the C minor Fantasia, BWV 906) make a later return to the home key as conspicuous as it is in many a Haydn symphony.

In the course of his lifetime, Bach's keyboard music becomes more and more isolated, with fewer and fewer antecedents and fewer and fewer comparable works. The 'Goldberg Variations', in having more levels of organization than any previous set of variations, Bach's own or anyone else's, have almost nothing in common with other sets of their time, which had not been the case when the *Aria variata*, BWV 989, was composed thirty-five years earlier. This conformed closely to tradition as the 'Goldberg' did not, even despite its traditional bass theme. Many fugue-subjects in the 'Mass in B minor' or in the WTC2 are much stranger than one's familiarity with them allows one to recognize, and in this they could be typical of the traditional German organist's search in general for novel themes and procedures, free from the conformist French and Italian conventions. Keyboard was the most suitable medium for Bach's newly complex counterpoint, especially in his later years, and helped to acclimatize teacher and pupil to the fashionable new keys. In this respect, the ninety-six individual and idiosyncratic pieces of WTC's two books were more educative and more advanced than the choral and vocal music for church, leaving it behind despite its 'emotional power' and 'spiritual profundity'.

The Obituary's focus on the composer as organist is clear from the start with its very heading, followed by reports of his public successes, always as a performer. The anecdotes in Emanuel's part of the Obituary concern keyboard music, from the first story (the 'moonlight episode') to the last (the 'deathbed chorale'), while almost half of Agricola's part concerns keyboard-playing. Both authors, like keyboard-players ever since, cannot have been insensitive to the specially palpable, tactile quality experienced when the hands are playing even the most intricate counterpoint of Bach. Reports of Bach's success as a performer in Dresden, Hamburg and Berlin are not matched by praise of his other musical activities. Yet if Reinken in Hamburg praised Bach as an organist and improviser, is it unlikely that Zelenka in Dresden praised him as a choral composer?

The weight of evidence points to a renown that was partial and quite unrepresentative. How seldom, relative to its bulk, is his music known to have been heard elsewhere – other than in a few churches where there was usually a personal connection with him. To be increasingly labelled 'the most gifted organist in the whole of Europe', though gratifying in itself, rather suggests that it was necessary to explain who he was, as apparently it still was in 1743 when he was supporting a certain job-applicant (Dok. I, p. 275).

More than any other major German composer of the time Bach gave an emphasis to keyboard music, virtually the only music he ever published himself. He must have had enormous facility as a player. His work with keyboard music was lifelong and continuous, more even than it was with choral music, and it says much for the music market of the time that so little of it was published, despite its scope: suites for the home, fugues for the study, chorales for the service, preludes and fugues for organ recitals, solo concertos for public concerts. For his actual playing, the few surviving remarks are tantalizingly vague, as when an eye-witness said that he played Marchand's suites 'very fluently and artistically' (*sehr flüchtig und künstlich*: Dok. III, p. 125). Was this referring to touch and manner in general or specifically to Marchand's semi-free preludes?

To some degree, players of the keyboard music can share his physical experience of it, even though they cannot be sure exactly how he played, how much he hand-shifted like a violinist or used his thumbs like a later pianist, or how he changed over the years in the way he phrased and articulated. (Two things are certain: that he did change and that he had a strong fourth finger in both hands.) Right up to the Art of Fugue there is every sign that his playing style and touch could vary from piece to piece and were meant to. Another thing that is certain is that when in fugues of the last decade the themes combine, every possible step is taken to keep them playable by the two collaborating hands.

Although improvisation is more intangible than many other areas of performance, two remarks in the Obituary seem to bear on it. Any organist playing in services improvised at certain moments, but one remark (already quoted) appears to relate to major solos such as improvised preludes and fugues in recitals:

> how new, how expressive, how beautiful were the ideas that occurred to him when improvising [*im Phantasiren*]! How consummately he brought them out!

These, the Obituary's words of an eye-witness, go on to speak of his fingering abilities as if they were particularly relevant to such *Phantasiren*.

Another Obituary remark could also relate to improvisation when it says that Bach's regret at not having a fine organ at his disposal

> robs us of many fine and never-to-be-heard inventions [*Erfindungen* or 'discoveries'] . . . as he had them in his head

– again, large-scale recital works rather than chorale-preludes for the service. While early fantasias for keyboard include many musical ideas for a player to explore *ex tempore*, so do the bigger and more mature works, though less obviously so. For example, the big organ *praeludia* in G major, E minor, C major, B minor and G minor all begin with an immediate and conspicuous gesture, as if they were the opening *attacca* gesture of a skilled organist seated at his keyboards, stirred to continue in the same vein. Each of these gestures looks like a 'summons', a strong musical idea to be continued *ex tempore* as far as feasible – though, of course, one that would benefit from being considered further on the composition-desk. How far he could sustain movements *ex tempore* by bringing back a distinct theme from time to time, i.e. in a more-or-less ritornello form, will never be known. And not only ritornello form: some instances of full-voiced harmony heard in certain vocal and organ music ('Ehre sei Gott' from the Christmas Oratorio and the *Pièce d'orgue*, BWV 572) reveal the kind of music such a composer could improvise on the keyboard, on and on to some length, even *ad infinitum*. One can be sure he was not for ever limited to improvising on the runs and arpeggios of the early toccatas.

This book, *A Musical Biography,* has emphasized the keyboard music of J. S. Bach not only because he produced a large, lifelong and unique repertory of it but because better than other media, it enabled him to think purely musically, especially in his maturity. With it, as a virtuoso speaker masters a language *in itself*, so the composer works music's vocabulary and grammar *in itself*, without having to employ it for some social purpose. Viewed in this way, the cantatas, Passions, organ-chorales, chamber sonatas, string concertos, songs, arias, orchestral suites and the rest become commodities ('useful things, articles of trade', *Oxford English Dictionary*), as does the keyboard music when used today in a piano recital. For any work of Bach can be 'commodified' and generally is in the modern world, but that says little about what it was to the composer.

Concerning certain music

There must be an infinite number of observations one might make about this body of music, and it is easy to go beyond what is factually certain.

For instance, if Bach shows little sign of interest in the wandering toccatas and free preludes of Italian and French composers, while it is clear how significant classical counterpoint was to him, this is either because he did not know them or because he rejected fantasy and preferred reliable counterpoint. Is the latter why his scores have far fewer ambiguous notes than those of other composers such as Scarlatti, where several readings of a crux are in many cases equally plausible?

Often, and not only in the early cantata-cycles at Leipzig, one can sense an energetic enthusiasm for a new project, a bursting with ideas that was not to be sustained, for whatever reason. Yet the self-given challenge to plan shapes and recast musical language was undying. From the very starting point of a work he seems to respond critically to the music he was familiar with: the theme of eight bars in the Passacaglia apparently grows out of an earlier one of four; a common chaconne theme of eight notes grows to thirty-two bars in the 'Goldberg Variations'. A tendency in his early years to set chorales in a bar-form (AAB) whose second section A is a variant of the first, already results in a dynamic structure, as on a bigger scale does the sequence of variations in the Passacaglia. Gradually, longer concerto movements emerged in which there is a clear distinction between the main theme and episodes derived from it, as mature fugues usually distinguish clearly between complete and partial statements of the theme. The challenges varied: creating musical shapes for instrumental works differed from setting words in vocal music, for the latter's aim is to be 'expressive' and therefore involves using conventional and familiar means to affect the listener, as the text itself does or should. Here, therefore, the composer is less free.

A constant searching for variety, typical of the whole worklist, means that in all directions, changes are rung from one piece to the next: no cantata movement based on a chorale-melody will predict anything about the next; in one and the same work, vocal fugue-subjects will vary from *antico* ('Gratias agimus') to *moderno* ('Cum sancto spiritu'). The three violin concertos, while sharing the showiness of the new Italian string concerto, also stretch the potential of an instrumental genre far beyond the merely showy. They do this usually by means of 'thinking contrapuntally' in different ways which, at a stroke, allows them to stand out from the norm: the Concerto for Two Violins opens with a melody characteristic of Bach in the form of a complete (and unexpected) five-part fugue; in the A minor Concerto's *Andante* the counterpoint builds on an ostinato theme, also melodious (though in the bass); in the E major Concerto, after another ostinato the finale is in a model rondo form, rather Rameauesque

except in its texture. In all of them the complex texture is not only contrapuntal but dramatic and melodious.

Neither in the concertos nor elsewhere, however, does the tireless innovation result in a mere catalogue of all the possible effects, though it was not uncommon in Germany for composers or theorists to want to deal with a topic or a genre as completely as they could. The Stralsund organist Christoph Raupach made an exhaustive list of the different ways one might set a chorale for organ (listed in Mattheson 1739, pp. 474f.), presumably as a help to learning organists, but by no means are they all represented in Bach's surviving settings. And nor on the other hand does Raupach describe a way of setting a chorale that quite corresponds to the *Orgelbüchlein*'s: this required a different kind of imagination.

Incomplete works, or those not known to have been completed – arias such as the original movement No. 31 in the Christmas Oratorio, or the two fugues in C minor, BWV 562 and 906 – raise *ad hoc* questions. Among possible explanations for leaving them incomplete is that it was clear that the music was becoming congested (aria No. 31) or too ingenious (BWV 562) or its form uncertain (BWV 906), and in the first two because, one could say, the melos was not coming right. There might be some practical reason why the Harpsichord Concerto, BWV 1059, breaks off after nine bars. In the family albums, an incomplete fantasia might mean that the pupil was expected to finish it, as too when there were only incipits. The reason for some late collections being left incomplete or unfinalized (Art of Fugue, 'Eighteen Chorales') probably lies less in declining powers than in their not yet having a clear plan. In the case of the Mass Ordinary there was an ordained and totally clear plan, and Bach was certain enough of it to complete his setting, right at the end of his active life and even if it meant repeating a movement.

For the *Orgelbüchlein*'s remaining little more than a quarter complete various reasons are possible: the original purpose was lost (a certain job was not taken); Bach ceased to be a 'Sunday organist' needing it; for teaching purposes it was complete enough already. Yet one also wonders whether the thought of writing as many as 164 hymn-settings, however short and economical they were, was found too daunting even by J. S. Bach as time passed, despite starting the album optimistically and returning to it on and off in later years. Possibly, since there was one big contemporary publication already treating the whole church year's chorales in a simple and quite unvaried way (see pp. 153f.), Bach intended originally to do much the same but found himself unable to avoid searching restlessly for musical variety – something which even he would find difficult to keep up indefinitely.

One does not think of Bach as easily daunted, however, quite the opposite. The Art of Fugue, whatever the truth about the 'unfinished final fugue', already contains two exhaustive movements of nearly two hundred bars each. Their several fugal subjects are so worked as not only to satisfy any conceivable study of permutation (qv) but to create in each case a genuine musical shape. The length is sustained by clear sectional signposts and only gradually do the fugue-subjects fully declare themselves, leading in both pieces towards an undisguised increase of tension. The intricate working in music's notes, in other words, has not produced an arid demonstration but a living experience. When the themes do eventually (and cleverly) combine, the final statement is noticeably succinct, the fugue closes when at last the theme finally comes to an end. Very few Bach fugues need the drawn-out *adagio* cadence popular with Italian fugue-composers of the time, including Handel; this is another reason to see the popular 'Toccata and Fugue in D minor for Organ', which closes with a drawn-out *adagio*, as somebody else's work, possibly a transcription.

In the mature works a piece 'says what there is to say' and no more, whether for voices or keyboard, closing with a cadence both brief and apparently inevitable, the opposite of expansive. The very chorales that closed the Leipzig cantatas are succinct in a similar way: straightforward, not drawn out, as if they are a summary, defined as 'dispensing with needless details, done with dispatch' (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Movements in the Art of Fugue, however long, still close with the same inevitability of the well-timed perfect cadence. (Frescobaldi had already recognized the pleasure of perfect cadences.) Other mature examples of the tight, succinct movement are certain petite ritornello movements, in the F minor Harpsichord Concerto or the Six Sonatas for Organ. Since the Advent Fughettas and the F minor Concerto probably originated at quite different times (1740s and *c.* 1720?), 'mature' need not imply that the composer was of any great age. But succinct closes are also another reminder that Bach did not take up everything in the foreign music he knew. Nowhere does he imitate very closely certain typical forms of French organ *pièces* or opera *ouvertures*, and the diverse Italian elements he adopted in his trios, concertos, arias, cantatas and Latin church music belonged more often than not to one or other of the older generations of composers.

A case can also be made for Bach having taken, consciously or not, a keen interest in the phonemes of musical language, the elements, the basic notes, the keys and metres. This went beyond the common associations of the major and the minor, though these were useful for invoking familiar sentiments in vocal music, such as the major for the 'peaceful' or 'hopeful'

or 'comforting' at certain points in the Passions (end of St John, end of St Matthew Part I). Particular habits arose with particular keys, as with the two kinds of G major already mentioned (p. 569) or with the several fugue-subjects in B minor, a much less common key. Three of these B minor subjects (WTC1, Kyrie I of the 'B minor Mass', Flute Sonata finale) rework conventional chromatics already found in the early arrangement of Albinoni's Fugue in B minor but give them now a special colouring through special instruments and voices. Another peculiarity is that very often in F major, in all manner of pieces, the first accidental met with is not B natural (as one might expect) but E flat, the 'flattened leading note'. This can happen in the first few bars of even quite up-to-date music (Italian Concerto for Harpsichord) as well as much older (Cantata No. 208.xii), and may be a purely musical habit, as if for Bach the flat keys tend towards flatter keys. (It could be that the flattened leading note in the theme of the F sharp major Fugue WTC2 is evidence that it began life in F major.)

Each of Bach's different genres tends to share not only characteristics, such as courantes and their hemiolas (qv), but more individual details, as when in keyboard fugues, somewhere just before the final statement of the theme, there is often a scale-run, down or up. How deliberate were other little characteristic details one might observe from time to time is often unanswerable one way or the other. If the three big sets of instrumental variations (Chaconne for violin, Passacaglia for organ, 'Goldberg' for harpsichord) are all variations on a set of harmonies and in triple time, as they are, was it planned that their themes began on three different beats? Both the chaconne-like movement of Cantata No. 78.i and the chaconne in Cantata No. 12.ii (the later 'Crucifixus') have the typically French emphasis on the second beat. (One of these is conspicuously more dance-like than the other, a 'purely musical' difference irrespective of the two texts.) Purely musical details, such as the way the E major Fugue WTC2 and the chorus closing Part I of St Matthew Passion (see below) are each derived exhaustively from one theme, are easier to analyse and describe than are the warmth and richness of their E major harmonies.

A different purely musical detail can be seen in the opening fugue-subjects of Books 1 and 2 of the WTC. These are both made up of the first six notes from middle C upwards and, astonishingly, made up of no more and no less than these six notes:

c' d' e' f' g' a'
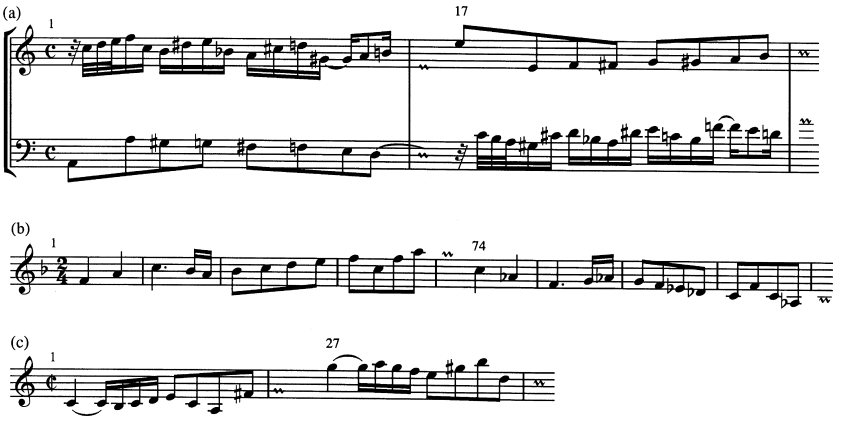
This, the theorists' *hexachordum naturalis* ('natural six-note scale'), was especially appropriate for the first fugue of a collection, whether the notes

are simply paraphrased as in WTC1 or embroidered as in WTC2. This contrast between WTC1 and WTC2 is revealing. With its rising theme, the opening fugue of WTC1 is created from a large number of stretti as if it were deliberately saluting tradition, as it surely was: a tradition going back to Froberger and his predecessors, notably Frescobaldi.[2] On the other hand, the opening subject of WTC2 is conspicuously more modern, without stretti and with a more modern metre. WTC1's first fugue closes with an unusual high chord to which the same six notes have risen – an exceptional gesture for a fugue, tempting its admirers to speak of 'ascending to heaven' – while WTC2's closes like a badinerie (qv), down to earth and as different as could be. Differences such as these between pieces similar in function are sure signs of a composer so intimate with a tradition that he can afford to *swerve away* from it. It is hardly credible that these differences arise by chance or that the orderliness of mind all this suggests showed itself only in the realm of music.

Some themes must have been conceived specially in order to allow certain technical treatments. The extraordinary range of stretti in the Fugue in D minor for organ, BWV 538, is possible (only) with its unique subject. For setting words like *ich folge* ('I follow'), such overlapping themes are naturally common, but one could claim that the organ fugue's stretti are more 'purely musical' than a cantata's or a Passion's, which are more a 'word-painting'. At the same time, the taste for some other technical devices such as inverted themes might be thought to border on pedantry; see Example 28. *Inversus* is a time-honoured device, especially for exercises in counterpoint, yet in Example 28 (three quite typical cases) there is a less than welcome cogitation behind the artifice that looms larger the more one hears them. One might also prefer the original, non-inverted form. A liking (or weakness) for inverting short motifs is already evident in one of the oldest surviving works of Bach, the chorale 'Wie schön', BWV 764, and it exists in many later cantatas. If inverting longer or complete themes appears to be less common in vocal works, perhaps it is because unnatural effects do not suit natural voices.

Judging by late works, artifice of many kinds was aimed at appealing to connoisseurs, more perhaps on the study-table than at the music-desk.

[2] E.g. the first two capriccios in Frescobaldi's *Primo libro di capricci*, 1624. Bach's Fugue on a Theme of Albinoni, BWV 946, and a work attributed to 'Signore Polaroli' in the Andreas Bach Book have other themes based on the C major hexachord, no more no less. Froberger's Fantasia No. 1 has the same theme (c d e f g a), employs many stretti like the C major Fugue WTC1 and, most significantly, was the only such German work in print (1650).



Example 28 (a) Prelude in A minor, WTC2; (b) Duetto No. 2 from *Clavierübung III*, BWV 803; (c) Fugue in C major, BWV 547.ii

Other kinds of buyer would have preferred a few *galanteries* or a set of songs in the manner of Example 22 (see p. 386). But some connoisseurs would surely follow with interest how Bach solves knotty problems in the Art of Fugue, as when he inverts the B A C H theme in the incomplete fugue or writes a canon at the tenth (which means a minor subject is answered in the major). In cantatas, good use could be made of any such artifice in setting words, for the result could be to emphasize or illustrate the text. So when altos sing a shortened, inverted, diminished version of a chorale-melody being sung at the same time in long notes by the trebles, what happens is that the all-important words get repeated and emphasized. At the beginning of Cantata No. 26, it is as if the people are murmuring among themselves 'Ah, *how fleeting – how fleeting – how fleeting* – is our life', breaking up the long chorale-melody being sung above.

Observations often made today, such as that any fondness Bach had for death-texts 'reveals an orphan's subconscious', can rarely be verified, neither the fondness nor the revelation. The same goes for the idea that a certain little canon 'reflects a metaphysical dimension to his musical thought', for canons occupied a composer's thinking in a way hard to grasp nowadays when few students study them and only children sing rounds, if they do. Since any canon is theoretically perpetual and ends, optionally, only when the canonic line is allowed to expire, most of those published in Bach's collections of the 1740s have a final cadence imposed on them. The canons of the 'Goldberg Variations' usually expire above the free bass, some exchange the order of the voices, and both methods were devised to ease the practical problems, presumably after several

drafts. In principle, however, cadences in canons are optional: they could go on for ever.

Those chosen texts dealing with death or repentance or salvation have often led to guesses being made about Bach's (or even his wife's) preoccupations, but guesses they will remain now that leading a life of constant, pious observance is so unfamiliar. For Bach to mark a text concerned with death by setting it in a distant minor key is to bow to convention, but because of that, nothing very certain will be revealed about his own views. The same goes for the beautiful cadence at the end of the Weimar Cantata No. 161, as if it is answering the final line's question, 'What damage does death do me, then?' by implying 'None'. Death itself was by no means straightforward as either an event or an image. Any modern searching for personal relevance in the texts being set might miss the fact that just as references to scriptural law assume a willing, joyful, obedient believer, so references to death encourage a hopeful, contented, saved believer. Consistently setting texts about a sinner's 'heavy punishment' and 'great distress' with tortuous or tortured harmony (*schwere Straf, grosse Noth* in Cantata No. 101) was part of a composer's duty to affect the listener towards becoming the obedient believer. There is no real torture in this harmony. However chromatic and original, it is a reminder, a kind of bookmark, at best a metaphor for distress.

Bach's attitude to death is only one of many such conjectures, for the exceptional awe and respect he inspires leave people reluctant to feel that they might be missing something significant. Hence a search for significances in various kinds of *numbers*, of bars or notes. One problem is that the counted numbers rarely match exactly or exclusively what is proposed – because they were not pre-planned but emerged, if they did emerge, in the composing process. Something similar is also behind often-accepted claims that in his music Bach was somehow influenced by powerful writers outside music, such as Pythagoras (ratios expressed in the Art of Fugue), Quintilian (rules for rhetoric in the Musical Offering), Kepler (the cosmos *passim*), Leibniz (the calculus, typical of the new rationality) or a host of Lutheran theologians (specific motifs of 'Johannine Christianity' in the Passion). Never, I think it fair to say, are claims of direct influence from these outside sources demonstrable, and in practice, they may actually distract the critic's attention.

From a musician's point of view the first fugue of the Art of Fugue is remarkable not for arithmetic but for its range of perfect countersubjects, here a series of freely invented and tuneful lines, impeccably harmonized, each line of the counterpoint a model. How or in what respect it is a

'testament' to his 'philosophical and theological background', as has been claimed, is a mystery, except in the broad sense that all his creative effort was that of a believer aware of his catechismal duty. Even the key-plans found in longer works, undeniable though they often are, might be distracting. In noticing that the key-notes of the Four Duets of 1739 are the very notes of the 'highest tetrachord' (qv) in Greek theory as described a few years earlier in Walther's *Lexicon* (1732, p. 601), one might miss an important down-to-earth detail: that like so many of Bach's sets of pieces, they have far less in common with each other than first appears. Sets of pieces in any genre often do contain a work that is different in principle from the others, something the composer must have intended, and in most cases a fruitful discussion can be had about which work in the set *is* the exceptional one, and why. Arguments can be made for seeing every work in a *set of six* as an exception to the rest, as with the six 'Brandenburgs' or the six cantatas of the Christmas Oratorio.

As well as enthusiastic discovery of the notes B A C H here and there, much is sometimes made of the so-called 'cross motif' (qv), a simple pattern of notes that in practice is hard to avoid, especially in certain keys. The question in such cases is, given that both the 'cross motif' and the four notes of B A C H can occur naturally, are there certain moments when their appearance is intentional? Since 'Yes' is the answer for the notes B A C H, so it might be for the cross motif at certain moments in the Passions. But the important phrase here is 'certain moments', for while the fugue-theme for 'Let him be crucified' begins with such a motif (a g sharp c' b) the aria 'Come, sweet cross' does not, although the words include *cross* and the music seems to be *dragging*. Much simpler is the numerical allusion in an earlier aria, BWV 1127, written for the fifty-second birthday of the Duke of Weimar, since it has a recurring bass-theme of exactly fifty-two notes. This allusion was in the air, literally: the aria's opening text appeared above the entrance to the castle itself (BJ 2013, p. 310). Note, however, that in this instance, fifty-two alludes directly to fifty-two and is not a symbol, metaphor or *gematria* either of fifty-two or of the duke himself. Note too that if in the St Matthew Passion, as has been claimed, the singer's first two phrases in the aria following Judas's suicide contain thirty notes (= thirty pieces of silver), they do so in a strangely bright manner simplifying the original string melody, which in fact contains thirty-one notes.
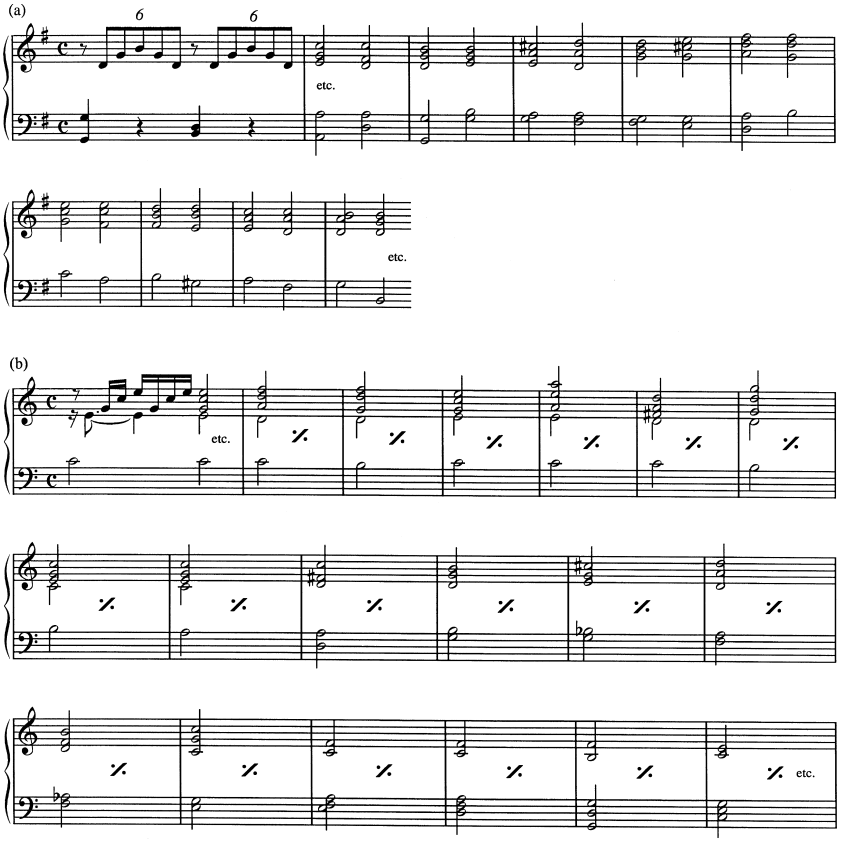
Although 'harmonic tension', a more important element, is mentioned in this book as a hallmark of the composer, there is no easy way to define it. One hears it in, for example, those movements of the Cello Suites consisting of a single line without chords but implying the harmony, all done so

sure-footedly that one can be surprised at unexpected turns of direction. In the Violin Solos, the lines in the allemandes and courantes move with a harmonic flow not familiar to any other composer of the time. Though again often surprising the listener, the harmonies move with a sense of purpose actually encouraged, one might think, by the narrow confines of the medium. If, as he did, Bach chose this restricted genre in which some other composers had been working, he also chose to write harmony that wandered in newer, sometimes unnerving and potentially unending directions. That is the case with the middle section of the *Pièce d'orgue*, BWV 572, and with the similar music (already noted) for the chorus 'Ehre sei Gott' in the Christmas Oratorio, which had a clear, 'pictorial' purpose: angels are jostling and clamouring, they do so on and on.

Harmonic tension becomes easier to see when comparing the harmony of two preludes which are not very different in principle, being a series of broken chords: the C major WTC1 and an earlier work of Kuhnau (Example 29).

Though by no means feeble or illiterate, Kuhnau's meandering harmonies rely on their natural pleasantness, revealing nothing new and returning too soon to the tonic, whereas not only does WTC1 avoid this but its fresh sequence of harmonies is both so searching and so logical that it can draw out another, compatible song in the mind of the listener. (Gounod would not have done this with Kuhnau's prelude.) Much the same point emerges from comparing Bach's sets of variations with those of Handel or Walther or Pachelbel or Rameau, which do little more than reiterate the theme's harmonies and embellish their surface. For Bach too, true harmonic 'drive' had to evolve: it is there in the final chorale of St John Passion but not in the earliest organ-chorales, where mere chromaticism replaces true harmonic tension. Even the C major Prelude in Example 29 had to evolve, so the sources suggest, and what now seems natural and inevitable in its harmonies was the result of cogitation and, probably, playing over and revising accordingly, more than once.

A lively evolution of Bach's melody from short phrases to long is suggested by comparing the returning themes in the early cantatas, No. 150, then No. 131 and No. 4. Though tracing evolution from one to the other is largely conjectural in the absence of datable sketchbooks and of other works now lost, evolution there certainly was. In a similar way, it is only possible to guess how the conventional, drawn-out, understated melody implicit in the seventeenth-century allemande and courante developed into the unbroken melody in Bach's works for solo violin, cello, harpsichord, lute and even orchestra. A natural melody driving the works



Example 29 (a) Sonata No. 5 from Kuhnau's *Musicalische Vorstellung* (1700), prelude; (b) Prelude in C, WTC1 (see also Example 17, on p. 239)

is perhaps responsible for that hallucinatory experience some listeners have in listening to the grand organ fugues, when they imagine they can hear the subject although it is not there in the score. In much the same way, in the Domine Deus of the 'B minor Mass' one can go on inwardly singing the opening flute motif on strong beats throughout most of the piece, 'hearing' it when it is not there.

A natural tunefulness inspires the recitative, where flashes of melody in the Passions draw in listeners already familiar with the story. Not the least striking detail in the Evangelists' first recitatives of both works is that, starting straight *in medias res* after the big opening chorus, each is very soon reaching up to a high g'. At the same moment in the Christmas Oratorio, listeners' attention is summoned very differently, in a much calmer way, rather reminding one of the opening of Schütz's Christmas Story. The earlier Leipzig recitatives apply the conventions so meticulously

to conveying the words that the result might seem no more than 'a job of work well done', while by the time of Cantata No. 14 (1735) an extraordinarily expressive range can be recognized – a wider range than in the leaping intervals of St John Passion's recitatives. These earlier lines of recitative are true to the genre in their rhetoric and phrasing, whether rising or falling, pressing on or hesitating, all exploring conventions such as certain intervals used traditionally for one or other effect. But gradually over time, the lines become more pleasing, and there is a new, relaxed and touching melos by the time of the Christmas Oratorio. Its story is clearly more cheerful than the Passions', where it is difficult for the listener to remain unaffected. Part of recitative's true importance, after all, is that for a congregation, its words when biblical were the most indispensable part of the text.

In the Art of Fugue the constant testing of what the notes can be made to do is achieved without the trappings of words, programme, atmosphere, instrumental colour, dynamics or anything beyond the notes. One watches to see how Bach 'makes music' in some rather intractable circumstances – as when introducing the theme in extra-long notes results in some otherwise undesirable harmonies – and one learns from the momentary touches of whimsy how irrepressible his sense of melody is, here in absolute counterpoint rather than expressive arias. The lines are intensely melodious throughout, as if the composer were singing inwardly to himself all the little turns of phrase, the sudden changes of direction, unexpected sequences, occasional moments of sensuousness, and finely placed perfect cadences.

Texts, appropriate music, parodies: sacred versus secular

In practice, any theological consideration today of cantata-texts and their meaning runs the risk of neglecting two points on which, like any composer, Bach must undoubtedly have concentrated: the down-to-earth challenge in setting any words to music (the awkward vowels, inconvenient consonants, potential mis-emphases, etc.) and at the same time, the challenge to create something musically new. To such practical considerations as these, a deep biblical knowledge, subtle allusion, pious sentiment, sincere faith and other abstractions are secondary and, to a greater or lesser degree, speculative, especially given the less than elevated language of so many non-biblical texts set by Bach. A field of Bach studies still deserving attention, especially by native speakers, concerns those texts of

higher quality: the *dramma* BWV 215 by a pupil of Gottsched, or Cantata No. 88 by an unknown poet, or parts of the Brockes Passion. If, as some have claimed, the text of Mourning Music for the Prince of Cöthen, BWV 244a, has poetic texts superior to that for the corresponding arias appearing in the St Matthew Passion, does that suggest it came first?

Not every religious text suits music, but especially at the beginning of an aria, the meaning and scansion of its text can give the composer his 'prompt', which may well not always be conventional: the melody arises in his mind as a way of saying the words to himself. Something similar could be said about organ-chorales in which the words are not actually present but can be imagined, as with the *Hallelujah* at the end of the Whit Sunday setting for organ, BWV 652. A broadly conventional musical vocabulary then conveys the various impressions and moods, and instruments have their own version of a given melody, a version which in not a few cases must have been conceived first, before the words were set. For standard topics such as *the pastoral* or *the regal* it was obligatory to draw on certain conventions and, for Bach, to give some new and original aspect to them, as when in the Christmas Oratorio an unusually syncopated trumpet solo, conventional in other respects, announces the 'great Lord'.

Words of pathos or of rejoicing tend to be matched by drawn-out notes or melismas. Words that are significant doctrinally will often be set, understandably, in fugal counterpoint. Though by nature 'neutral' in their associations, melisma and fugue can easily acquire a kind of authority when needed to underline the text and what it signifies. Many an aria-melody in the earlier Leipzig years gives the impression of being prompted by the words rather than by a tune, resulting in melodies that are not amongst the most natural or sweetly tuneful. Some years later, however, the new melodies (and those older ones selected for re-use) have a striking and memorable quality. One effect of this is that the words are marked even more clearly.

In re-using movements the composer looks for appropriate music which does not necessarily have to be affecting in the same way. The movements from Cantatas No. 136 and 179 adapted for the Kyrie and Qui tollis in the masses BWV 234 and 236 originally had cantata-texts which were concerned with hypocrisy, in a way no Kyrie or Qui tollis would or could be. And perhaps these cantata-texts as we have them were not the original either. In any case, the composer's interest in doing his duty 'purely musically' produced time and again sounds that affected his listeners to a degree hard to imagine even the best preachers achieving in a sermon

using the very same texts. A composer's rhetoric and a preacher's rhetoric might be in principle similar, but the pleasure of musical sound will usually be more direct or intense than the effect of words. Moreover, Bach's ability to produce an *Affekt* did not free him, so it seems, from 'purely musical' considerations such as constructing movements ingeniously.

One such example of ingenious musical composition in the Passions concerns the large-scale chorus eventually closing Part I of the St Matthew Passion. Here is a model of 'definite economy of means', in making use of a surprisingly small number of musical ideas to achieve the desired ends, in a movement of almost a hundred bars. For despite the undeniable impact of the movement at that point in the story, if it is analysed bar by bar, it will be seen to derive constantly from the last four notes of the hymn-melody 'O man, weep for your great sin'. They are there in every one of its lines, both vocal and instrumental, almost without break; they appear plain or paraphrased, rising or falling, in longer or shorter note-lengths. Such a rich tissue of thematic allusion requires cool calculation and is more in style with the composer's much earlier organ-chorales, a more old-fashioned and 'neutral' technique of extreme ingenuity. The four notes concerned are sung in the original hymn to the words *Kreuze lange* ('long on the cross'), and it is to these that Bach's lines could be said to allude: not expressing or symbolizing them but drawing attention to them over and over again, reiterating, underlining. There is a fine argument to be made here about whether he chose the notes because they alluded to the text or because he knew from experience that they would effortlessly (for him) generate counterpoint over a massive movement. Happily, they do both.

Such an idea as placing an *ouverture* halfway in each *Clavierübung* volume raises a question about music-without-words and whether, or how far, it naturally inclines towards schemes of one kind or another. Did this idea occur to Bach only when he saw the original print of Part I (where the ouverture is not placed physically in the middle), and then for the other volumes directed the engravers actually to count the pages (where it is)? One can explain such schemes by proposing that a central *ouverture* functions as an 'inner exordium' (a new beginning), but that need not imply that these volumes are to be played straight through: this is a conceptual matter, not a perceptual. In the final 'Leipzig Chorales' and the Art of Fugue, any clear grouping or shaping of the whole, had work proceeded further, is likely to have been similar in being visible rather than audible. A canon at every third 'Goldberg' variation is not obvious to the listener, since some non-canonic variations sound teasingly like canons, and some canons like non-canons. If the thirty-two pages for the thirty-two movements of

the 'Goldberg Variations' are significant and not accidental, it does suggest a little biographical detail: somehow, he oversaw the printed pagination himself.

The 'Goldberg Variations' are an interesting example here in that they seem to be organized on two levels, one to be seen on paper (conceptual), the other to be heard in performance (perceptual):

a symmetrical 'arch form' (aria-variations-overture-variations-aria);
an accumulative 'crescendo form' (towards the Quodlibet, then a coda).

The first is conceptual (for the connoisseur), the second perceptual (for the player). Since the 'Goldberg Variations' stand out in another respect, being Bach's only compilation to be seen as an unbroken whole from start to finish, quite how one understands its shape is rather important. Even the Passions and the Mass were not performed without a break, so that any symmetries in them were likely to be more local, less over the whole work. In the St John Passion, the simple or modified returns of certain choruses (returns easily recognized by the listener) and the symmetrical progression through flat to sharp keys and back again (less easily recognized) are there for the sake of the drama. They are not playing with patterns for the sake of it but for underlining the text.

Underlining the text is the point of planning the keys of a cantata so as to move from flats to sharps, or minor to major, from negative to positive or from despair to hope: musical means conventional in principle, however inventively handled. But such underlining can also be achieved straightforwardly, in a manner so simple as to be surprising. On the one hand, the terrible story of the St Matthew Passion is immediately announced when the work begins with a dragging pedalpoint and a series of long-breathed melismas for both instruments and voices. On the other hand, the very different story of the Christmas Oratorio is just as gripping although it begins with bright, detached beats on the drum and no melismas. These are all basic musical 'devices' as much as the distinction between minor and major, and could hardly be more contrasted. The difference between the two works is immediate: impending death and imminent birth are both conveyed through musical gestures that in principle could not be simpler.

Other simple details employed in the choral works include sustained string-accompaniments for Jesus (measured, reassuring) and canonic imitations for texts referring to 'following' the Saviour. Neither device originated with Bach. Simple stretto is useful both for picturing the pressing, impatient crowds in the St John Passion and for conveying the subtler image of the 'in one Lord Jesus Christ' in the Mass (*et in unum Dominum*).

This latter example demonstrates music's refusal to be tied to a single idea, for its theme apparently originated elsewhere, with a text speaking of a quite different oneness, 'I am yours and you are mine' (see Marshall 1989, p. 183). Music's ability to change in aspect while remaining the same in essence is put to good use in *Clavierübung III*'s final fugue, where the three forms of the subject are often held to illustrate the three-in-one doctrine of the Trinity. One could claim that only music can make the difficult Christian doctrine of the Trinity so clear: three persons as three forms of a theme, of one substance but each distinct and with a different purpose.

The parodied works raise many other interesting questions, differing as they do in kind and purpose from other composers' self-borrowings, particularly Handel's. Bach might either search existing compositions to find something suitable for a new text or look for a suitable text for a movement he wishes to re-use, and it is by no means always clear which of these was the case. Seldom, though one could not say never, would one have much idea whether a given work is a parody. From time to time a movement might strike the listener as probably originating somewhere else, though where is unknown, as in, for example, the duet aria of Cantata No. 146; or its reworking is so radical that there must have been some special affection for it, as in, for example, the second aria of Cantata No. 67 re-formed as the Gloria in the Mass, BWV 234.

It is a happy assumption that Bach had a particular fondness for movements he used two or three times in different guises, but in the nature of things this is hard to verify. One can more confidently think him taking pleasure when he takes a traditional genre and puts it into a new context, 'risking' a familiar dance in an unfamiliar connection, for instance. A fine example of this is the opening chorus of Cantata No. 78 (1724) which uses an instrumental form so polished that one might, mistakenly, assume it to be a transcribed instrumental piece. The opening theme and its *manière* have the conventional characteristics of a chaconne at the close of a French opera – in particular, a *chaconne-en-rondeau*. But in this rondo the episodes between the returns are not episodic: rather, they are the main point of the movement, being the lines of the original chorale-melody together with its text, a serious 'Jesus hymn' sung line by line.

'Sacred' works becoming 'secular' would go against the composer's beliefs and practice, or so it seems from the worklist as now understood. For he is likely to have known, and thus apparently to have rejected, ideas in a book published a year or two before his Leipzig appointment, in which one of Kuhnau's pupils, a university-trained theologian, saw no problem in using the same piece in and out of church (Scheibel 1721). Scheibel's

reason for this is that the moods of joy, sadness, etc. are appropriate to either, since what delights in opera can delight in church-music, and only the *object* changes. In theory this is true, but what seems to govern Bach's more exclusive choice in converting music for sacred use is rather more than the simple moods. Scheibel may be right that joy is joy, but genre plays an important part in choosing what kind of movement to re-use. Genres are specific, a harpsichord courante is not rewritten as a vocal aria whatever 'joy' they might otherwise appear to share. Not every one of the eighteen movements of the 'Brandenburg Concertos' is suitable for a cantata, and this makes Cantata No. 78's opening with a *chaconne-en-rondeau* all the more striking.

In any case, some thought needs to be given to the usual *sacred*/*secular* terminology, widely used in most of today's literature but not entirely satisfactory for a period in which the divine right of absolute rulers was unquestioned. Whether or not the memorial music for Prince Leopold used movements already composed for the St Matthew Passion (rather than vice versa), here would be an example of pieces that were in any case *liturgical* in two senses*:* music for a regular Good Friday service and music for a special memorial service. It would hardly be a move from sacred to secular or vice versa. If an existing musical work of whatever origin is re-used, the new words create something that is sacred because of the new use made of it. This new use makes it 'ecclesiastical' or 'religious' if it is part of the church repertory in general, or 'liturgical' if it is integral to a particular service. An existing piece might have a sacred use without being part of a regular service: memorial music for the Queen of Saxony (re-used for the St Mark Passion) is sacred and in no sense secular or 'worldly'.

About a quarter of known cantatas have one or more reworked movements. There seems to have been some prevailing idea at the time of what is or is not appropriate, for the fact remains that define as one might such words as sacred, secular, liturgical, ecclesiastical, occasional, devotional or confessional, Bach's reworkings are assumed to go in one spiritual direction only. (There is always the possibility that a false impression is given by the surviving church works being more systematically preserved than the secular, but this cannot be argued further.) While adapting music for sacred use expresses a pious regard for the church service and its supremacy, *sacred* encompasses much. There is no difficulty in a cantata for weddings (BWV 216) going across, as it were with minimal change, to become a cantata celebrating Leipzig itself (BWV 216a) or, again, vice versa. Only the recitatives need rewriting.

Any church cantata, whether totally new or a parody, would be sung on more than one occasion, regularly rescheduled for its recurring Sunday, and so not 'wasted' as a birthday cantata might be. So a text could be made to salute more than one person (different colleagues in different versions of Cantata No. 36) and its music could be used for something else. One often has the idea that some non-church cantata was composed already with the view that it could be adapted. That is probably the case with a great deal of the Christmas Oratorio and is suggested not only by the closeness in date between two versions but also by a detail in the sources: there are alterations only in the voice parts, the instrumental parts are written out almost without. In a similar way, 'Long live the king, the country's father' (*Es lebe der König, der Vater im Lande*) of Cantata BWV Anh. 11 was as appropriate for the 'Osanna' of the Roman Mass as for a hymn to the King of Saxony.

However it is answered, the question amounts to this: was it for a religious or a practical reason that 'secular' proceeds to 'sacred', one-way only? Not for the first time both reasons are possible and by no means contradictory, if only because the genres do not always differ radically, and many a regular church-service cantata could have been performed on some irregular church occasion without changes being made. Besides, tone is by no means always distinctive. Whether Cantata No. 34 originated for a wedding and then became a Whit Sunday cantata is a matter for hypotheses, but both events were church services. With a work like Cantata No. 210, known in two 'non-regular' versions (a homage cantata and a later wedding cantata), there are moments in the arias and even recitatives that one could mistake for a Passion, the most sacred of all sacred music. On the other hand, there are moments in Cantata No. 70 when the pre-Advent call to 'Wake! Pray!' is set with dramatic music hard to distinguish from an opera's.

Handel's practice was rather different, for while he pillaged his oratorios from *Il Trionfo* (1707) onwards for all kinds of music in opera, theatre oratorio, chamber sonata, concerto and church anthem, he also re-used his relatively few church anthems in theatre oratorios. That is, they went from ecclesiastical to non-ecclesiastical, in some cases becoming positively secular. In addition, many of Handel's self-borrowings take the form not of re-used movements or even exact themes but of music that merely resembles an earlier piece, as if he were relying on memory or using sketches from a portfolio of ideas-for-future-use. Perhaps he was. In Bach, less often does one hear a passage that is merely *very like* another in this way. Yet it can happen, and does between certain pieces in the same key (D major) or

in the same style (*allabreve* counterpoint, qv), and such similarities are not limited to particular periods in his life or to particular kinds of music. Every keyboardist will find details in common between two movements in C minor (a chorale-setting and a suite-movement, for example) as every singer will find certain melodic shapes shared from one recitative to another, or between a recitative and an aria.

Similarities, as when various arias or dances (gavottes) of Bach have details in common, are not rare, and an interesting question is why he does not actually repeat himself more often than he does. Generally, a genre is surveyed with such extraordinary thoroughness that it is not easy to find any two mature examples having anything much in common. The canons among the thirty 'Goldberg Variations' do not, nor do the big choral fantasias opening each of the 'Chorale Cantatas'. In Bach's output as a whole, the genres are so distinct that only now and then does a cantata movement resemble in any essential way a contemporary organ-chorale. Perhaps works that do have much in common, such as the final choruses of the two Passions or the overtures of three orchestral suites, are so similar to each other because they are 'public music', conceived to meet the need of a public audience to recognize immediately what kind of music it is hearing.

Especially in Germany much has been written about Bach's selection and setting of sacred texts, a topic not only difficult for non-native speakers but one that pushes discussion in certain directions. The ensuing reverence, even the vicarious piety, can disguise a composer's musical priorities. The questions arising when one views the standard conventions he uses in setting cantata-texts have sometimes led to imaginative answers. Did he prefer those with simple moods that could be easily expressed in music? Was he indifferent to new poetry? Did he not care about the poor quality of some other texts? Was his deep biblical knowledge so exceptional? The changes he himself may have made to texts would support the idea that he was involved in them in some way, confessionally as a believer and professionally as a musician, and this may be especially so when the new text seems quite inexpert, as occasionally happens (BWV 36b, first movement). Nevertheless, a composer's sincerity of belief, knowledge of theology, and the desire to convey either, cannot be more than secondary for his composition.

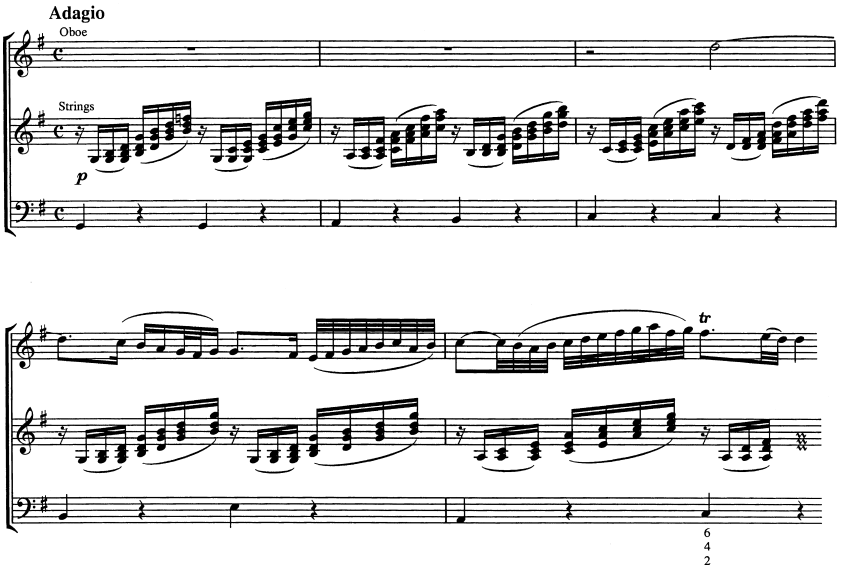
A brief note on aesthetics

When authors devote many pages to Bach's vocal music and its expressive word-setting they will be assuming, in a modern way, that music expresses

emotions or articulates feelings. This assumption then leads to another: that J. S. Bach believed the same and intended to do more than fulfil his duty to serve his neighbours with sound they understood and found affecting. But the Obituary provides no sign that it rates music's function as expressing emotions or articulating feelings, as writers of later periods generally do. One consequence of this will be that a focus on his vocal music will easily have the result of slighting the non-vocal. A book of four hundred pages on the cantatas with barely a mention of The Art of Fugue or the WTC will give a partial, even misleading, impression of the composer.

Bach's professional handling of musical sound to trigger a foreseen response is so accomplished that to see it as 'a job of work' is for many admirers an intolerable restriction. But he must know how to produce the foreseen response. To convey any affecting episode in the Passion story, such as Judas's betrayal, Jesus's capture and the disciples' flight, the beautiful sounds created will be quite sure to produce certain responses, and the listener will be transported to a world of feelings. These sounds in the St Matthew Passion include tuneful recitatives; an *andante* aria suggesting dismay (with 'leaning' notes, voices 'swelling' in sweet thirds, woodwind 'weeping'); and choral interpolations that can erupt into an 'outraged' fugue (battering rhythms, simple harmonies, a dramatic moment of silence, an unexpected turn of harmony). These are all technical devices consciously and masterfully applied so that listeners are intensely engaged in a story through the power of harmony and melody and live performance. To suppose more than this – that specific emotions are being 'expressed' or 'aroused' – is to run the danger of projecting post-Enlightenment sensibilities and assumptions back to an earlier time.

The vocal works especially, but not only they, lead performers, writers, admirers and listeners in general to marvel at the power that can be felt at countless moments in music, not necessarily vocal. Do the big D major movements for voices or for instruments express and arouse joy and exuberance, or is this a simple and predictable association for those attuned to such sounds? Exquisite slow movements such as the Air from the D major Ouverture, the Largo of the F minor Concerto, and the Passion aria 'Erbarme dich', are associated with scarcely describable feelings. Especially the last will be *moving* and even *heart-rending* in context, for it immediately follows the words of Peter's denial, and 'we are all Peter'. Listeners might often use a word like 'sad' or 'touching', for they are transported by the beauty and transience of such harmony and melody in a sympathetic performance, and the text being set is unambiguous. But it



Example 30 Cantata No. 202, introduction. Text: 'Only disperse, troubled shadows, frost, winds, go to your rest!'

requires an idealist philosopher to question whether music expresses anything, whether it is itself 'happy' or 'sad' in any practical or everyday sense of those words.

Some of Bach's mature music admits us to a world of imagination in which words are necessarily vague, even irrelevant, since what has really triggered these responses in listeners has not been sentiments they experience in daily life but some world of the imagination to which delight in sound has transported them. It is here that the captain of the guard's recognition of Jesus is such a sharp experience, and it is delight in sound that inspires the listener to experience feelings (even to burst into tears) during a performance of the Agnus dei or 'Erbarme dich'. Aware that such experiences are not like anything else, some people describe them as 'transcendental' or 'beyond words'. Others will talk or write at length in highly subjective terms, and performers, involved in the sounds they make, are convinced that Bach 'means' such-and-such. Especially orchestral and vocal conductors of a kind not known to J. S. Bach seem seldom averse to showing audiences how deeply they feel.

To encourage the listener to respond in the desired way, the manner of the music itself and of its performance has to be sympathetic, and manner is not substance. If to modern ears the soft, slow, rising string chords of the Wedding Cantata convey something wistful (see Example 30), it would

come from the unhurried tempo, the gentle manner in which the sweet rising chords were played, as well as such other technical details as the slurring (which might not be the composer's) and the chromatic touches introduced in a major key (which are). The same chords played boisterously and loud would evoke something quite different. Music's immediate beauty having opened up listeners' receptiveness, particular impressions are then given by the text or by conventional associations, and in any case by the manner of performance.

To some listeners, the Jesus in one Passion easily seems *triumphant* and the other *suffering*. Perhaps, but the Gospel itself is and can always be narrated neutrally and need not convey either emotion. Any impressions given by the spoken or the sung word will derive from the existential experience of it, and a composer's personal experience is not necessary for conveying either triumph or suffering. To assume otherwise can lead admirers to find arbitrary meaning even in music that has no text but sounds to them as good as if it did. In the slow movement of a Bach concerto they can feel an 'expression of deep emotion' and even, depending on changing critical fashions, his 'political individualism'. But neither is verifiable.

Nearly fifty years after Mattheson published his criticism of word-setting in Cantata No. 21, and conceivably in a tardy response to it, Emanuel wrote to Forkel that his father worked devoutly in his church cantatas, composing them according to the text's general sense and not its individual words, which latter technique, he says, can be comical in effect though admired by some (Dok. III, p. 284). Emanuel seems to forget that there are instances when his father did picture an individual word, like any average composer drawing on conventional effects for weeping, laughing, rising, falling, heaven, hell. (And not only in early works: see the *serpent* in the aria 'Blute nur', St Matthew Passion.) His routine in composing the cantatas is that of a master who taps into the conventions effortlessly and creatively to convey the words, usually but not always freshly attired. Particularly in the early Leipzig cantatas, a striking opening sentence will naturally include words that attract music's familiar conventional markers: for example, a positive major key when Heaven is mentioned, or a negative minor key when pain or sorrow is. For all such cases, these and other musical formulae (the conventional markers) were available for reworking.

In such instances, the verb 'to express' seems not quite right: the music is not expressing a particular word or idea but marking or underlining it, a kind of audible *nota bene!* A moment of silence can do this too as when a dramatic emphasis on the syllable *Tod* ('death) in Cantata No. 4 is achieved

by a sudden stop, a gap, as well as a discord and a modulation. A comparable moment of silence occurs in the middle of Cantata No. 106. Forty years later, at *sepultus est* ('he was buried') in the 'B minor Mass', a clear change of mode draws attention to the words and what is to follow, but in no verifiable way does it *express* or *arouse* grief, awe, subdued terror, despair or anything else at the idea either of burial or of what followed it. Rather, it creates an air of expectancy by musical means (sudden change of key, hushed dynamic), a dramatic moment not *expressed* by the music so much as contributed by it, as it would not so easily do if the Creed were plainly recited on a tone. To make such contributions, music does not need words but can do it without: when in *Clavierübung III* Bach employs characteristics of Italian and French music in two settings of the German version of a Latin Creed indebted to the Greek, he is marking its catholicity, if only to himself.

The metaphors involved when describing music's effect are illustrated in the last music example, No. 30, for the rising string chords correspond to a text speaking of 'troubled clouds yielding' to the sunny happiness of the wedding day. But since, strictly speaking, notes do not rise and clouds do not yield, the matching of musical sound to verbal picture is a metaphor to a metaphor, and both of them hang on conventions unknown in other cultures of place or time. Of course, conventions allow words to be written with a view to how musicians would set them and their listeners understand them, and have become so standard that any puzzling moments, as when the musical setting seems to contradict the sentiment, can be explained away. Thus, if the middle movement of Cantata No. 102 seems too carefree, vigorous and jolly for a text that speaks of the Day of Wrath, there must either be a hidden and ingenious programme ('Man is too busy to be always thinking of God's anger', etc.) or there is a mismatch (this, a conclusion of last resort). In a Passion-setting, when the listener is already predisposed, *es ist vollbracht* ('it is finished') will use all musical means to affect the listener, but is it because of what the composer personally *felt* at this moment or is it because he knew his job? If he were not so very expert, he could feel what he liked, but how could he induce others to feel anything?

It is a particular achievement of J. S. Bach that his works take one into such questions, into the heart of the conundrum of music: what is it, and what exactly does it do? How can there be 'spiritual depth' in a certain melody or harmony by Bach (or anyone else) when it consists of sounds in thin air? Do the first four fugues of the Art of Fugue lack 'spiritual depth' because they have no words and picture no events? Are listeners' feelings

ever more than wholly imaginary, a kind of hallucination created by the impact of beautiful sound compelling those who are delighted by it to find words for their experience, words belonging to a quite different medium? And if Bach's listeners could be said to 'hallucinate' in this special sense, did he?

There is another conundrum about J. S. Bach, different but related: how so much of his music is adaptable, open to anachronistic arrangements, performance by big choirs, transcriptions for modern instruments or adaptations by jazz-groups (including voices). It is not only the emphatic, immanent beat that encourages the jazz-group to make adaptations but also its subtler 'harmonic tension', and this combination of beat and harmony, though not unique, is unmissable. A similar point can be made about piano transcriptions: any *cantabile* piece of music will encourage modern pianists to adapt it, though only, I think, if its harmony is also compelling. Singers will draw on various vocal effects for a *cantabile* melody like the Agnus dei such as they would not for a *non-cantabile* melody. Choirs will indulge in 'expressive effects' the bigger they are, though for them the dramatic is as seductive as the *cantabile*.

When a modern pianist, without changing a note, plays the Aria of the 'Goldberg Variations' slowly, softly, soulfully, with exquisitely pregnant timing and pianoforte touch, from the first open G's to the dying fall, the result speaks movingly to listeners who have come to expect such pianism. It is this way of playing that has even inspired novels and fictions (several in English alone) around these variations. Yet if the Aria was meant to be played *andante*, *dolce*, *piano*, *affettuoso*, *cantabile e tenero*, it seems odd that none of these words (all used elsewhere by Bach, except the last) appears in what is an unusual score notated with exceptional care. None appears even in the annotations Bach made later. Whether this Aria is or is not *dolce affettuoso*, with a melody imitating a flute solo, so would be its 'prototype', the sarabande of the G major French Suite. Both of them appear in Anna Magdalena's notebooks.

If modern pianism says nothing certain about this music, the puzzle is still how the Aria can have a bewitching effect, not unlike that produced in slow, heart-on-sleeve performances of the Agnus dei or 'moving and expressive' singing of a cantata's final chorale. It cannot be because the Aria speaks as clearly as music with words would speak, since it would do so if there were no such music. Rather, it belongs to a particular concert-world in which the big Bechsteins and Bösendorfers create the characteristic *Affekt* of modern grand pianos. Busoni would not have arranged the chorales 'Nun komm' and 'Ich ruf zu dir' in the way he did if he were

playing a fortepiano of Bach's period. Nor can music that is amenable to heart-on-sleeve performance be found everywhere, even in the 'Goldberg'. The Aria and minor-key variations will be suitable for a modern *affettuoso* treatment but less so the more robust movements: Variation No. 1 easily becomes lumpy, Variation No. 29 noisy, Variation No. 16 a fish out of water and so on. Similar points can be made about the more boisterous pieces of the Well-tempered Clavier and partitas and the need, felt by pianists, to make them 'exciting', often at speeds and with articulation truer to Busoni than Bach.

From first to last, but increasingly in the mature work of Bach, a few notes are enough for one not only to recognize his hand but to be whisked away into a world that is often not far from a state of hallucination. This might be expected of the Passion arias or sweet and stirring piano performances generally, but there is also a rather more down-to-earth puzzle about Bach: how he came to be so productive, persistently alert, have such energies and (especially) acquire such a profound grasp of harmony. In an early and immature work like the *Adagio* of the Toccata, BWV 913, would we be right to see him working out his own sense of harmonic direction, putting his predecessors behind him, keen to find out for himself 'where the harmony would go', and continuing to pursue this throughout his life?

It is inconceivable that anyone would call him 'too idle' or 'lazy' to revise his music, as *Messiah*'s librettist called Handel (HHB 4, pp. 357, 361). On the contrary, it seems clear that Bach possessed exceptional physical and mental strength. This might appear all the more striking for one who was the youngest child of a mother in her forties, and born into a dynasty in which there were problems: certain mental incapacities (an aunt and a son), an especially high mortality rate (his own children and those in other Bach clans), a propensity for twins (his paternal grandparent's, his eldest brother's, his own), a much lower productivity among his sons, and perhaps more diabetes than we know about. Chance might just as well have produced an all-round weakling instead of one so strong in mind and body. That Bach came from musical families on both his father's and mother's side must be part of the picture, but how this would give him a sense of rhythm and melody that has bewitched so many different kinds of musician ever since, or a mastery of harmony that established nothing less than a norm in Western culture, is a mystery.

Glossary

***à 2, à 3,* etc.:** convention denoting the number of instruments (in chamber music) or contrapuntal parts (e.g. in the fugues of WTC). A fugue *à 3* often implies a more expansive movement than a fugue *à 4*. Elsewhere, *à 2 Clav* specifies two manuals when (i) the hands constantly cross, (ii) there is a melody above an accompaniment or (iii) the hands alternate.

ABA: 'aria form' or 'ternary form', whose first section A returns complete after a contrasting section B. The B can be quite short and new, or longer than A and derivative. The opening choruses in the Passions differ as between the simple repeated A2 of the St John and the modified A2 in the St Matthew. In later arias, A2 often shortened to its opening instrumental paragraph.

***Abendmusik*:** 'evening music', the local term in Lübeck for mixed sacred concerts given in the Marienkirche from *c.* 1650 to *c.* 1800, on five Sundays in late autumn and winter (last two of Trinity, then Advent II, III and IV), beginning at 4 p.m.

***a cappella*:** an ill-founded term for choral performance particularly of polyphonic music before 1700, either from which instruments are absent (thus 'unaccompanied music for choir') or in which they merely double (and on occasion replace) voices.

***Affekt*:** the mood of a piece of music as felt by the listener, usually invoked by conventional details of style, key, tempo, volume, melody, etc.

***allabreve*:** here, an italianate counterpoint with a moderately lively beat. Its part-writing incorporates characteristic suspensions (qv) and rhythms such as dactyls.

***appoggiatura*:** a 'leaning note', dissonant, on the beat, often approached by a leap, resolving up or down to a weaker beat. Though in theory an ornament, in practice crucial to developed harmony.

***arioso*:** 'like an aria', e.g. a section of recitative but with a regular beat, a moving bass-line and a *cantabile* melody (often with repeated words), sometimes unexpected.

B A C H: the German B flat A C B natural, a distinct motif or theme, *melodisch* according to Walther (1732, 'J. S. Bach'). Walther credited its discovery, unconvincingly, to Johann Nikolaus Bach (see Dok. II, p. 232). In the autograph of the incomplete fugue of the Art of Fugue C. P. E. Bach noted its appearance there.

badinerie: one of several terms in Germany *c.* 1730 for bright, novel character-pieces. The Finale of the B minor Flute Overture, BWV 1067, and the

badinerie-like first fugue of WTC2 may be contemporaneous. Graupner and Telemann were using 'Badinerie' by 1730. Earlier, *c.* 1725, Hurlebusch was using the comparable term 'Scherzo' – hence the Scherzo in Partita No. 3 (1727)?

***bariolage*:** a 'variegated' sound (*barioler*, 'to paint with motley colours'), specifically the rapid alternating of open and stopped strings on a violin, producing a lively, scrabbling effect.

***belcanto*:** a later term useful for the lyrical, non-declamatory 'beautiful singing' of arias, thus distinguishing them from both the narrative style of recitative and the plain singing of a chorale.

***bicinium*:** a piece for two voices or parts, by *c.* 1700 a melody plus a lively, melodic bass, the latter with typical rhythmic patterns and recurrent phrases.

binary: a movement in two sections ('binary form'), which are either equal in length (e.g. eight bars) or with the second longer. According to the notation, both are normally or optionally repeated, unlike the so-called 'bar-form' (AAB) of many chorales.

***Brustwerk*:** the small organ-chest (usually with its own manual) above the keyboards, 'in the breast' of the organ and near the performers in a gallery, useful for continuo, qv.

cadenza: 'cadence', used in this sense in the Art of Fugue print to indicate where a canon can (but does not have to) end; possibly suggesting an optional interpolated virtuoso passage.

canon at the octave, at the fifth (etc.): a canon in which the subject is pursued or 'answered' by itself an octave or fifth (etc.) higher or lower.

canon *in diminutione/augmentatione*: a canon in which the subject or line is answered not in the same note-values (as in a straightforward round) but in smaller or larger note-values, usually of half or double length.

cantata: term sometimes used for non-sacred vocal works (see also *serenata*), often with marked italianate features; or in the MS sources of sacred cantatas with solo voice (Nos. 54, 56, 82, 84, 170, 199).

cantor: the director of a church's music and musicians in Lutheran Germany. Also a teacher (not only of music) in its school, and often responsible for performances on municipal occasions.

cantus (cantus firmus): here, the 'fixed melody' of a plainchant or chorale-melody sounding out in longer notes in a cantata, organ-chorale, etc., usually one line at a time and against busier voices. A Latin mass-chant from Lutheran hymnbooks is often paraphrased rather than a true cantus firmus (as in the early Kyrie, BWV 233a, or the opening bars of the 'B minor Mass').

***cappella*:** the company of singers and instrumentalists performing a range of musical duties for their employer, in church or court.

capellmeister: musician in charge of a court's *cappella* (qv), its personnel and its performances, sacred (chapel cantatas) and secular (chamber music, opera, etc.).

Chair Organ: the little organ behind the organist's back, usually in the gallery-front, played by the lowest keyboard and physically near the congregation below.

'Chorale Cantata': a cantata-type attributed to Bach (from the second half of 1724), in which some or all of a hymn's verses are set either verbatim (opening chorus and final chorale) or paraphrased (in arias), and surveying many musical forms.

chromatic fourth: a passage of six successive semitones, descending (e.g. D C sharp C natural B B flat A) or ascending. Easily combined with melodies (major or minor), applied imaginatively by Frescobaldi; useful in conveying some negative *Affekt* if required. Example: in St John Passion, subtly integrated for the tragic opening ritornello, blatantly applied for the savage crowds (choruses 16b and 16d).

***clavier*:** 'keyboard' instrument, of whatever kind was appropriate or conventional in a particular written context.

compass ('range' in the USA): the extent from bottom to top of a keyboard.

***concertino*:** see concerto grosso.

concertmaster: in *c.* 1715, a recent term and not 100 per cent clear. A primary instrumentalist (first violinist? organist?) to serve as deputy for the capellmeister in composing for chapel; or as director for the court's chamber concerts?

concerto grosso: 'a large consort', a term used in *c.* 1700 occasionally, but today regularly, for an ensemble containing a small group of soloists (*concertino*) within the 'full' group (*ripieno*) and contrasting with it. Also, a type of music therefor.

consistory court: a board of clerical and other officials, with legal status, either at local or national/provincial level, and supervising the affairs of a particular church and its members.

consort: old English term for an ensemble of instruments, either of one family (e.g. 'viol consort') or of mixed strings and wind ('broken consort').

continuo: above a bass-line ideally also played by a bass instrument, the accompaniment improvised by a keyboard or other instrument realizing the harmony indicated by figures or implied by context.

cross motif: group of four notes whose first and last are close in pitch, the second higher and the third lower (or vice versa), so that two imaginary lines connecting notes 1 with 4 and 2 with 3 cross each other. The motif is conjectured by some to allude to the Cross but just as well to the X of *Christos* or *Christen* (written *Xristen* by Bach in e.g. Cantata 12.ii).

***da capo*:** 'from the beginning', a direction to go back and repeat the music as far as the word *fine*. 'Da capo form' or a 'da capo aria' has the shape ABA, qv. Bach's earliest known *da capo* arias are found in Cantatas Nos. 71 and 196. From time to time there are also *da capo* choruses, e.g. Cantata No. 208.

***détaché*:** notes touched or bowed separately but not necessarily played very short, as with *staccato* (theoretically the Italian equivalent).

diatonic: for this period, 'diatonic' denotes music written in an unambiguous major or minor key, distinct from the modes of an earlier period and the shifting tonalities of a later. (The equivalent American term 'tonal' is more ambiguous.)

diminished seventh: (i) an interval produced by superimposing three minor thirds: C sharp up to B flat in D minor (mode I), B natural up to A flat in C minor (a modern key), and (ii) a chord of such thirds (C sharp E G B flat or B natural D F A flat), which has a marked *Affekt* (qv) – anxious, wistful, dramatic etc. The chord's alternating notes form tritones, qv.

ditonic (or Pythagorean) comma: a small but perceptible difference between a pure octave (at twice or halved frequency) and one reached by six pure, untempered tones (C D E F sharp G sharp A sharp B sharp). The latter is sharper.

***doublée*:** 'doubled, duplicated', a variation or embellished repeat of a suite-dance such as a courante. A term found in the early Möller manuscript and again in the B minor Violin Partia.

***échappée*:** a short note off-the-beat that leaps ('escapes') in the direction opposite to where it was going; like an unaccented passing note (qv) that does not pass.

Elector: one of the nine German princes entitled to elect the Holy Roman Emperor. In this book, 'king' and 'queen' are sometimes used for the Elector and Elect(o)ress of Saxony, since from 1697 to 1763 these electors were also recognized (not always by the Poles) as King of Poland.

exposition: with respect to fugues, the opening section in which the subject is 'exposed' by the several voices in turn, against some form of countersubject; later on in the fugue, any comparable section.

false relation (cross-relation): that between two related adjacent chords the second of which for effect alters chromatically one or more of the notes they otherwise share.

***figura*:** a small, distinctive note-pattern or 'figure' in one of many shapes, listed and named by some contemporary theorists as an aid for composing (e.g. Walther, 1708).

fugue: specifically those contrapuntal pieces beginning with a theme or subject answered immediately in the dominant (sometimes at the octave) and continuing with a series of 'entries' of that subject in different keys after intervening 'episodes'. Over the years Bach tends more often to modify or transform the subject as the fugue proceeds, e.g. in the Art of Fugue. The *fughetta* subject in the 'Goldberg Variations' is transformed at least seven times, to allow for the aria's harmony.

***galant*:** eighteenth-century term now applied to light, elegant music from *c.* 1730, mostly not for church. In 1726, *Galanterien* or modern dances are referred to

both on the title-page of Partita No. 1 and in the preface to Gottlieb Muffat's *72 Versetl*. A *galante* literary style is criticized by Gottsched (*Ausführliche Redekunst*, 1736) as a *Mischmasch* (half French, half Latin/Italian), unnecessary since almost all words can be given in German.

***Geigenwerk* ('violin-work'):** a keyboard instrument in which rotating frictional wheels 'bow' any gut or metal string brought into contact with them by a special mechanism from the keys.

***gematria* ('geometry'):** term for the method of finding significances in Hebrew scripture by replacing a word with another whose letters add up to the same number when they are calculated as A = 1, B = 2, etc. Giving note-names their number equivalents (a = 1, b♭ = 2, etc.) can appear to reveal significances.

'Germany': the Peace of Westphalia (1648) gave the individual dukedoms and kingdoms the power to form their own alliances, making them virtually independent states. 'One Germany' was achieved only in 1871.

Golden Section: the point at which the smaller of two sections of anything is in the same proportion to the greater as the greater is to the whole. At a point corresponding to this ratio (1:1.62), just before two-thirds of the way through a piece of music, something conspicuous is often heard. The ratio of both this section (1:1.62) and the square root of five (1:2.236) seem to govern the physical measurements of an extant Leipzig clavichord of *c.* 1750.

***gusto*:** see below, *manière*

Hanseatic: a city usually of some importance, with prominent merchant class and municipal institutions, and belonging to the *Hanse*, a German commercial league (see maps).

harmonic rhythm: a not very felicitous phrase denoting how frequently the harmony changes. The single chord repeated over bb. 1–4 of the Sixth 'Brandenburg Concerto' produces a 'slow harmonic rhythm'. Large-scale slow harmonic rhythms, as in the opening movement or the 'Lightning and Thunder' chorus of the St Matthew Passion, were surely sketched out on paper first, presumably through the bass-line.

hemiola: here, bars of six beats alternating (or simultaneously employing) two groups of three and three groups of two, producing a pleasing ambiguity.

heterophony: 'the other sound', two or more versions of a melody sounding together – briefly in Cantata BWV 106 and Concerto BWV 1051.i.

homophonic: 'the same sound', music in which the vocal or instrumental parts move together wholly or largely in block chords, often as melody + accompaniment.

imitation: contrapuntal device in which a voice imitates the previous motif or theme, at the same or different pitch, sometimes overlapping it ('stretto', qv).

imperfect cadence: one ending (most often temporarily) on the dominant, unlike the perfect cadence (qv). The phrygian cadence (qv) is also 'imperfect'.

***Inventions*:** the second, familiar name for the two-part *Praeambula*, BWV 772–86, might be borrowed from F. A. Bonporti's *Inventioni* (Bologna, 1712), also in two parts, some of which Bach copied in about 1722–3.

***inversus*:** 'turned upside down'. A melody's rising intervals when *recta* fall when *inversa*, and vice versa. The Art of Fugue has one fugue in which each of three lines and then the whole are turned upside down; another with four lines *ditto* (bass becomes soprano, etc.). The upside-down or 'mirror fugues' may have been mislabelled or misordered in the print – their *inversa* form looks more like a *recta*.

invertible counterpoint: that in which each line can also serve as the lower, in two, three, four or more parts ('triple invertible', 'quadruple invertible', etc.). Hard to do well.

***Kammerton* ('chamber pitch'):** in Saxony, a pitch sounding about a tone lower than that usual in the churches, and generally more up to date.

***Lautenwerk*, *Lautenclavicymbel* ('lute work'):** a plucked-string keyboard instrument of short scale and gut strings, able to produce *forte, piano* and *pianissimo* by touch (Adlung II, p. 138).

leading note: the seventh note of the scale, rising to the tonic (so B in C major or minor).

***manière*:** the specific 'style of composing, writing and singing' French music (de Brossard 1705, p. 277), with characteristic rhythms, ornaments, strong–weak gestures, etc. *Goût* (*gusto* on the title-page of *Clavierübung II*) denotes 'style' rather than 'taste', as in Couperin's *le bon goût* ('in the appropriate style').

melismatic: a melody in which one syllable is sung to several notes; or a smooth instrumental line imitating this.

'melodic cells': little groups of notes, each from three to (perhaps) eight, from which a theme is created and developed, as in the many concertos, the *Orgelbüchlein*, many preludes in WTC1, choruses in the Passions, etc.

melos: here, the general melodic character of particular music; the quality or state of being melodious.

mirror fugues: see *inversus*.

***Missa*:** the 'Mass', but according to regular Lutheran usage specifically the first two parts (Kyrie, Gloria) of the fuller Roman Mass Ordinary; called *Missa* on Bach's autograph title-page for the Elector of Saxony, as distinct from the later complete 'Mass in B minor', called *Die große catholische Messe* in Emanuel's estate, 1790.

mixolydian: at this period, a key whose leading-note is flattened often enough for the harmony to tend towards the subdominant, as when G major has F naturals tending towards C major.

Neapolitan sixth: a chord of the 'flattened supertonic, first inversion' preceding the dominant; so in C minor, a chord F A flat D flat before G B D. Associated with Neapolitan cantatas of *c.* 1675 and a frequent italianate detail in early

compositions of Bach (*Adagio* of the Toccata, BWV 564) and, less frequently, in later ones (both Kyrie themes of the 'B minor Mass').

note-patterns: a name for groups of small notes shaped in various ways and used as basic material for creating music of any kind. The eight-note arpeggio of the C major Prelude WTC is an example. See also *figura* and 'melodic cells'.

***notes inégales*:** 'unequal notes', specifically running quavers played unequally (long–short) in certain French dances with a crotchet beat; for a lilting, mannered effect.

obbligato: specifically in arias, a written-out instrumental solo (violin, organ, oboe, etc.) necessary for accompanying or answering the singer.

***ordre*:** F. Couperin's categorical term for a collection of dances, i.e. an 'order' of pieces within the same 'class' (or key), and thus not a fixed set or suite to be played as such.

organ-chorale: Lutheran hymn-melody reworked for organ, generally longer and more intricate than the sung verse of a hymn. Often called 'chorale-prelude' but not necessarily a prelude to anything.

ostinato: an 'obstinate' phrase repeated (sometimes paraphrased) throughout a piece or a section, generally in the bass, creating continuity and length.

***ouverture*:** a specific French genre, with a stately, rhythmically marked prelude and then a lighter, imitative section (seldom a true fugue of the Bach or Handel kind). As in some Dieupart suites copied by Bach, the opening section, or one similar to it (as in BWV 831), returns after the fugue. A series of dances can follow, making a 'suite', sometimes long.

paraphrase: here, treatment of an existing melody so that while all its notes are there (usually on the beats), others weave around them so as to create a new melody. The descending chromatic fourth (qv) is paraphrased in the opening soprano melody of the St Matthew Passion.

parody: a vocal work in which a new sacred text replaces the original text. Without the mimicry or ridicule associated with the word in other connections.

partimento: a 'division' or (better) 'a point of departure', figured-bass exercises teaching players how to 'improvise' fugues by indicating where the subject enters above the given bass. A popular learning-aid for Italian composers, sometimes for German (examples in Daniel Speer's *Grundrichtiger Unterricht*, Ulm 1697, and Godfrey Keller's *A Compleat Method*, London 1705).

partita: used by seventeenth-century German composers for separate pieces (Froberger), separate variations (Reinken) or whole suites (Krieger's set of 1697 has two titles, the German *Partien*, the Italian *partite*). The violin solos of Bach are called *partia*, and it seems that for his first publication, 'partita' denoted a part or instalment. (An advertisement for *ein Opus Clavier Suiten* says a start has been made 'with the first *Partita*': Dok. II, p. 160). Whether he called his hymn-variations 'chorale partitas', as usual today, is unknown and unlikely.

passing note: a small but important dissonant note passing by step between two consonant notes a third apart, either on the beat ('accented') or off ('unaccented').

Passion: vernacular form of *passio*, 'suffering' (e.g. *Book of Common Prayer*, 1549). The wording of Bach's title, *Passio Domini nostri J. C. secundum Evangelistam Matthæum* ('The suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the Evangelist Matthew') is found in musical settings since at least the eleventh century.

***pasticcio*:** 'pie, pasty, mishmash', a musical work not imitating other works but assembled from them, particularly by composers of operas and Passions.

pedalpoint: usually but not necessarily in the bass, a note held or repeated through changing harmonies. Can be held longer on the organ than any other instrument.

perfect cadence: a conclusive close made by two chords, dominant followed by tonic (e.g. G major rising/falling to C major or minor).

permutation: a contrapuntal technique, especially in fugues whose several subjects or countersubjects can appear in any vertical order, which is usually varied systematically.

phrygian cadence: term commonly denoting the cadence or half-cadence whose bass-line moves down a semitone, originally F natural to E (in the so-called phrygian scale E F G A B C D), but C–B in the Third 'Brandenburg'. Often, as there, a subdued moment prefacing a lively movement.

picardy third: the final chord in the major of a piece in the minor (*une tierce picarde*, 'a sharp third'), so conventional that a minor final, when definitely intended, is striking.

Pietism: a religious and pastoral practice so called from P. J. Spener's tract *Pia desideria* (Frankfurt am Main, 1675), and becoming a personalized, introspective form of belief emphasizing a crushing contrition that ensured grace to the believer through works. Banned from Saxony in 1691, but established in Halle (then outside the Kingdom of Saxony) and its new university founded in 1694.

polychoral: modern term for a composition for two or more choirs (vocal and/or instrumental), enabling alternation, conjunction, contrast, drama, etc.

praeludium: here, specifically an organ 'prelude' of large proportions, in several sections or movements, in effect corresponding to the violin's sectional sonata.

'princely': often used to translate *fürstlich*, but in English usage more ambiguous than 'royal' or 'ducal'. 'Capellmeister to a prince', therefore, preferable to 'princely capellmeister'.

privilege: the authorized right of a craftsman such as an organ-builder to receive (or be the first choice for) as many contracts in a specified territory as he wishes.

quodlibet: 'what you please', music using several themes successively or simultaneously. Used for humour in the last of the 'Goldberg Variations' (combining

popular songs) but not in the Canonic Variations, BWV 769.v (combining four hymn-lines).

range: in the USA, the usual term for compass (qv) but strictly only a part of it.

real answer: see tonal answer.

***recitativo secco*:** later term for the 'dry recitation' when a solo singer, sparsely accompanied only by continuo players, takes the narrative further, freely as speech, generally before or after more meditative music. *Recitativo accompagnato* has instrumental accompaniment and is therefore more measured and regular.

rector: headmaster of a school, normally (as then in England) an ordained clergyman living on the school premises. Conrector, 'assistant headmaster'.

reeds: organ-pipes with a reed (like a clarinet), creating power and variety. A 32' reed is a rare, loud stop two octaves below the written note.

ricercar: unique name for the two fugues of the Musical Offering, 'seeking out' complex ways to develop fugal counterpoint in one sustained movement. Term from Krieger's *Clavier-Übung*, 1699 or, better, Frescobaldi's *Fiori musicali*, 1635.

ripieno: see concerto grosso.

ritornello: 'little return', a passage returning complete or in part, in the same or another key. Term used in Italy sometimes for a repeated final phrase (like the French *petite reprise*), but by Bach in the aria BWV 1127 (1713) for a recurring passage for strings. 'Ritornello forms': movements so constructed, with interspersing episodes usually (in concertos) for fewer instruments. 'Ritornello chorales': chorale-setting similar in principle but with the hymn's lines as episodes between *ritornelli*. 'Ritornello fugues': fugues, longer than most, whose subject returns distinctly and periodically after substantial episodes (these are nearly half the bars in the E minor Fugue for Organ, BWV 548.ii).

***rondeau*:** a dance or dance-like movement in which the opening theme, regular in length and usually ending in the tonic, returns unaltered after each of several episodes.

rubato: a later term denoting flexibility of the beat, done for expressive purposes.

***secco*:** see *recitativo secco.*

second inversion: see triad.

sequence: a phrase restated up or down a note (or several notes), to some degree changing in character. Continuing a sequence beyond a certain point is a risk not always avoided by Vivaldi.

***serenata*:** non-church ensemble work (cantata) for a special occasion such as a public figure's birthday, performed in the evening (*séra*), often out of doors, and keeping loosely to a plot, often mythological. Bach's non-church cantatas employed various terms – *cantata*, *dram[m]a per musica*, even *cantata gratulatoria* (BWV 215).

sevenths: triads (qv) plus a seventh note above the root, thus C E G plus B or B flat, each a discord needing resolution. Those notes can appear in any vertical order (E G B C, G B C E, etc.) and are still 'sevenths'.

siciliano: a term used in the period, though seldom by Neapolitan composers, to denote a gentle, tuneful movement with dotted rhythms, like a gigue but slower.

sinfonia: (i) a fully developed movement for instruments only, prefacing the first or second part of a cantata, or (ii) the second, familiar name for the three-part Fantasias, BWV 787–801. Possibly reflecting knowledge of Torelli's contrapuntal *Sinfonie a tre* (1692).

Singspiel: a species of German opera, with spoken dialogue between songs and choruses, often of a popular, picaresque nature, both in text and music.

six-four chord: see triad.

***sostenuto*:** in harpsichord music *c.* 1720, a manner of playing by holding the notes as long as appropriate or practical.

species: as formulated by J. J. Fux (1725), five 'sorts' of counterpoint in which a line of semibreves is harmonized by another line or lines, observing grammatical rules and becoming increasingly complex. Teaches students to handle intervals.

***Stadtpfeifer*:** 'town pipers' (English waits), municipal employees playing on certain public occasions. Traditionally, Leipzig's had four wind- and three string-players. Of two applicants in 1748, Bach preferred the one who played the oboe 'more purely and better-toned' and the violin 'with greater dexterity' than the other, which made him an instrumentalist useful in church (Dok. II, p. 452).

***stile antico*:** a term from the period (Mattheson's *stylus antiquus*) denoting the 'old style' of sixteenth-century counterpoint. Often taught after 1725 via Fux's book on the species (qv). *Stile moderno*: a term sometimes used antithetically.

stoplist: the number and types of stops in a given organ, the more the bigger the instrument.

stretto: 'narrow' imitation in which a theme is imitated before it finishes, often requiring harmonic ingenuity. In the first chorus of Cantata No. 21, the theme attracts the technique as a means of emphasizing the first word (*ich*).

suboctave: the sound an 'octave below' notated pitch, produced especially by organ ('16-foot' stops) and string bass (violone).

suspension: a crucial harmonic progression in which a note held over the following strong beat creates a discord requiring resolution (down, occasionally up) on the weaker beat. Helps produce continuity and variety.

tablature: for German keyboardists, musical notation not with staff-lines and notes but with pitch-letters and rhythmic signs, running from left to right at levels corresponding to the part-writing.

temperament: a tuning in which notes are not pure (which would result in sharp octaves) but are 'tempered' or modified. The greater the number of notes modified, the greater the number of just-acceptable triads (qv) and the fewer the pure.

tessitura ('texture'): the part of the compass (qv) in which the music is lying predominantly, thus 'high' or 'low'.

tetrachord: in Greek theory, a sequence of four adjacent notes in the basic 'white-note scale', illustrating the different divisions, i.e. where the semitone lies.

***Thomana Ordnungen*:** the regularly amended and published rules and regulations for the St Thomas School, its clergy, masters and pupils (see Schulze 1985).

tonal answer: in a fugue, a dominant answer in which any notes that emphasize in some way the dominant's dominant are lowered a tone (e.g. subject beginning with the fifth C–G answered by G–C, not G–D). A 'real answer' has no such alteration.

triad: here, the common chord of three notes (e.g. major C E G, minor C E flat G). The same notes in the vertical order G C E produce a 'six-four chord' or second inversion, unstable and requiring resolution. 'Triadic harmony' is that consisting very largely of such plain major and minor chords.

tritone: the interval or 'augmented fourth' produced by notes three whole tones apart, e.g. C–F sharp, either successively or simultaneously. (Strictly, C–G flat is a 'diminished fifth'.)

vespers: for Lutherans, an afternoon or evening service with New Testament canticles. Shorter and lighter than the 'Main Service' but often with important music, including organ solos and special choral items. Something of a 'church concert' in larger town churches.

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General Index

'Appts': musical and other appointments.
'JSB': Johann Sebastian Bach.
Unless otherwise stated, relations are to JSB. 'Pupil' includes those known to have taken instruction either privately or as a boy of St Thomas School, and those having some close contact with J. S. Bach in various locations.
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