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The Historical Figures of the Birthday  
Cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach

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THE HISTORICAL FIGURES OF THE BIRTHDAY CANTATAS  
OF JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

by

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A Thesis  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
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A Thesis Submitted in Partial  
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Johann Sebastian Bach is credited with writing over 300 cantatas. Sacred cantatas comprise most of that repertory, but there are just under forty known secular cantatas composed by Bach. About half of these secular cantatas were written to celebrate a person's birthday. This thesis will provide a view of the life of the historical figures for whom the birthday cantatas were written, reflections of the personality of the individual in the cantata, Bach's relationship to the recipient, and political or social connotations associated with the work. From a study of the individuals connected with the musical work, a more thorough understanding of the time period Bach lived and worked in may be gained. This in turn will provide a more complete understanding of Bach's birthday cantatas.

This thesis will not address recipients of name day cantatas nor will it address recipients of birthday cantatas that were not fully preserved. These are the historical figures and works that will be examined: Duke Christian of Saxe-Weißenfels, including references to Dukes Wilhelm Ernst and Ernst August of Saxe-Weimar, *Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd*, BWV 208; Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen, *Durchlauchtster Leopold*, BWV 173a; Crown Prince Friedrich Christian of Saxony, *Laßt uns sorgen, laßt uns wachen*, BWV 213; Maria Joseph, Archduchess of Austria, Electress

of Saxony, Queen of Poland, *Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten*, BWV 214; and Augustus III, Elector of Saxony, King of Poland *Schleicht, spielende Wellen*, BWV 206.

## DEDICATION

*Soli Deo Gloria*

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) probably composed over 300 sacred cantatas.<sup>1</sup> There is evidence Bach composed roughly forty secular cantatas but more of these are lost than survive.<sup>2</sup> The secular cantatas were written for a variety of purposes and occasions such as weddings, coronations, civic ceremonies, festive events, or birthday celebrations. About twenty of the forty known secular cantatas celebrate the birthday of someone in Bach's world.

This thesis will provide a view of the life of the historical figures for whom the birthday cantatas were written, reflections of the personality of the individual in the cantata, Bach's relationship to the recipient, and political or social connotations associated with the work. From a study of the individuals connected with the musical work, a more thorough understanding of the time period Bach lived and worked in may be gained. This in turn will provide a more complete understanding of Bach's birthday cantatas. This introduction will include a brief explanation of the government or territorial structure of Germany during Bach's life, a brief explanation of titles Bach held during the time the birthday cantatas addressed in this thesis were written, the definition of cantata, *dramma per musica*, and *serenata* as they apply to the works mentioned in this

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1. Malcom Boyd, ed., *J.S. Bach, Oxford Composer Companions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 84.

2. Christoph Wolff, et al., "Bach," in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40023pg10> (accessed 13 February, 2010).

thesis, and a list of birthday cantatas that are discussed as well as those that will not be discussed.

*Germany during the Life of Johann Sebastian Bach*

Bach was born into a world still trying to recover from the Thirty Year's War (1618-1648), a conflict between France, Sweden, and Denmark on one side and the Holy Roman Empire and Spain on the other. This war ravaged the land and devastated Germany reducing the population by half in some areas.<sup>3</sup> Although it was ended by the signing of the Peace of Westphalia that guaranteed religious freedom and lessened the power of the Holy Roman Emperor, Germany continued to have wars of some kind or another, especially regarding right of succession and territorial conflicts.<sup>4</sup> Bach witnessed these conflicts and wrote birthday music for some of the characters involved in them. In Bach's later years he saw the rise of Prussia and the Prussian invasion of Leipzig.<sup>5</sup>

The world that Johann Sebastian Bach lived and worked in was far different from the Germany of today. During Bach's lifetime, Germany was still a part of the Holy Roman Empire that Fulbrook describes as a "loose political framework" for a group of "small and medium-sized principalities, courtly nobilities, and bureaucracies."<sup>6</sup> Large territories and towns were mostly self governing and individual rulers within small states

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3. Barbara Russano Hanning, *Concise History of Western Music*, 3rd Ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 164.

4. Mary Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 72.

5. Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), 333.

6. Fulbrook, 96.

had a fair amount of power over the people in their state, territory, or principality.<sup>7</sup> A principality was usually a small state ruled by a prince and was considered a little lower than a duchy. A duchy was a territory ruled by a duke or duchess and was generally independent. Many territories were noted as “Saxe” such as Saxe-Weimar with the major or court city being Weimar. Some of the more important territories, such as Saxony, were ruled by electors who were members of the Electoral College and second in power only to the emperor. Electorates were more prestigious as their electors had a vote in selecting the Holy Roman Emperor. The emperor was technically elected but many families such as the Habsburgs managed to keep the crown in the family for generations. Five towns mentioned in this thesis are: Köthen, the princely residential town of Anhalt-Köthen; Weimar, the ducal residential town of Saxe-Weimar; Weißenfels, the capital of the duchy Saxe-Weißenfels; Leipzig, a city in electoral Saxony; and Dresden, the capital of electoral Saxony.<sup>8</sup>

German territories during Bach’s lifetime were extremely diverse. They ranged from the elaborate courts of the Austrian Habsburgs at Vienna and the Dresden court in Protestant Saxony to ecclesiastical territories, such as Mainz, and smaller territorial states. Whatever the size, status, or religion of the territory or principality, the court sought to imitate the splendors of the great courts, especially that of Louis IX. During Bach’s time it was fashionable to adopt French manners, customs, and language. At these courts great amounts of money were spent on the music and the arts, especially opera, and other prestigious activities such as hunting expeditions, sleigh rides, and of course,

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7. Fulbrook, 69.

8. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 537.

birthday music. These activities were for the wealthy and those privileged through noble birth. The average person was looked upon more as a subject than as a citizen.<sup>9</sup>

Musicians at these grand courts were considered subjects as well. A musician was viewed in same respect as a servant “in accordance with the inferior status of musicians”<sup>10</sup> in the structure of Baroque society. In records from Weimar, Bach is included in the list of servants at the court. Performing and composing were considered forms of service and demands upon the composer were defined by the preferences of the employer.<sup>11</sup> Whether it was the court, church, or city, Bach and other musicians were dependent upon the whims of their patron. Court musicians participated in sacred music and helped with the music of the court church as well as providing entertainment.

#### *Titles Held by Bach*

Bach held several positions in his lifetime. His first major post was at Weimar as *Hoforganist* (court organist). In northern Germany and Thuringia most organists were well regarded, were of a higher status than *Kantors*, and received a higher salary. Bach was then promoted to *Konzertmeister* (concert master) at Weimar, a position not as high in rank as *Kapellmeister* (chapel master). The *Konzertmeister* helped the *Kapellmeister* with the instrumentalists and in Weimar had additional composing duties. The duties of *Konzertmeister* varied but it was usually the highest paid instrumentalist position at court.

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9. Fulbrook, 71-74.

10. Christoph Wolff, *Bach: Essays on his life and music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 32.

11. *Ibid.*

Bach left Weimar to take the prestigious job of *Kapellmeister* at Köthen. Here he was in charge of the *Kapelle* or the court musical establishment. The *Kapellmeister* usually received the highest pay of all the court musicians and was highest in authority. The *Kapellmeister* often determined the character of music at the court. He composed and performed his own works and performed the latest musical pieces of other current composers.<sup>12</sup>

Bach is most well known for his last and longest position as *Kantor* of the *Thomasschule* and *Director Musices* at Leipzig. Here he was responsible for organizing the music program at the four major churches in Leipzig as well as teaching the boys at the school.<sup>13</sup> As *Kantor*, a musician was not necessarily regarded as an artist and the post was not as prestigious as court positions such as *Kapellmeister*. There were several redeeming qualities to this *Kantor* position for Bach such as the excellent Lutheran schools for his sons and the important role he would have in the city as *Director Musices*. During his tenure at Leipzig, Bach would receive the prestigious title of *Hofcompositieur* (court composer) at Dresden where his only real role was to write music for special events at court but allowed him to be recognized as a composer.

Bach tried to keep the title of *Kapellmeister* attached to his name at all times, even if in a nonresident role, as this added prestige to his name and gave him the potential for extra income. When Bach left Köthen he retained the title of *Kapellmeister von Haus aus*. After Prince Leopold of Köthen died, Bach renewed his connections at the Weißenfels

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12. Uitgeverij Uniepers, *The World of the Bach Cantatas, Johann Sebastian Bach's Early Sacred Cantatas*, ed., Christoph Wolff (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 45.

13. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 237.



court and received the title of *Kapellmeister* of Saxe-Weißenfels. He retained this title until Duke Christian's death in 1736. Later that year Bach renewed his petition to the court at Dresden for an appointment and was granted the title of *Compositeur* to the Royal Court Orchestra that he kept until his death.<sup>14</sup>

### *The Cantata and Drama per Musica*

An explanation of the use of the word "cantata" in relation to these birthday works is necessary. The first use of the term cantata is described as multi-movement "Italian strophic songs with music varying from one strophe to the next."<sup>15</sup> These songs were later combined with the aria and taken to Germany where they took such forms as church, theatre, and chamber cantatas. It is the chamber cantata that was the secular cantata. These borrowed elements of opera, were usually for one or two singers, and were often on a mythological subject. The chamber cantatas of Alessandro Scarlatti introduced the da capo structure and alternating arias and recitatives.<sup>16</sup>

During Bach's lifetime secular cantatas were often used as part of celebrations at special occasions. These occasions included birthdays, name days, weddings, dedications, council elections, New Year's Day, and coronation celebrations. The secular cantatas were similar to the Italian form of chamber cantata in that they were for two to four voices, accompanied by a small instrumental ensemble, and consisted of alternating

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14. J. S. Bach, *The New Bach Reader, A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents*, eds., Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, rev., Christoph Wolff (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), 188.

15. Boyd, ed., *J.S. Bach, Oxford Composer Companions*, 87.

16. *Ibid.*, 88.

recitatives and arias and combined numbers for the singers. The librettos of the celebratory cantatas often revolved around mythological characters that showered the recipient with praise. Sometimes the libretto contained a simple plot but the primary goal of the text was to pay homage to the recipient.

Rarely, did Bach use the term “cantata” for these works. German theorists after 1700 began to use the term cantata for multi-movement liturgical works. Spitta and the editors of the *Bach Gesellschaft* began to apply the term in the nineteenth century to Bach’s sacred works.<sup>17</sup> Bach tended to reserve the term cantata for the form of the Italian style solo cantata, using the term *drama per musica* for his secular cantatas and other terms, such as “motetto” or “concerto,” for his sacred cantatas.<sup>18</sup> The exception to this is *Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd!* (The Cheerful hunt is all that pleases me!), BWV 208, for Duke Christian at Saxe-Weißenfels. It is labeled “Cantate.”<sup>19</sup> Although these were not staged with scenery and costumes, sometimes a prop or action would be added, as in *Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd!* where the mythological character Pan lays down his shepherd’s crook in front of the duke.<sup>20</sup>

Bach used the operatic term *dramma per musica* to describe many of his secular cantatas. Grove points to the *dramma per musica* as being a favorite form for Bach’s later secular cantatas and describes it as having “a simple plot suited to the specific nature of

17. Boyd, ed., *J.S. Bach, Oxford Composer Companions*, 82.

18. Wolff, et al., “Bach,” in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*.

19. J. S. Bach, *Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd!*, ed., Paul Graf Waldersee, in *Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe, Band 29* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Hartel, 1887): 3, [http://imslp.info/files/imglncs/usimg/9/96/IMSLP03352-Bach\\_-\\_BGA\\_-\\_BWV\\_208.pdf](http://imslp.info/files/imglncs/usimg/9/96/IMSLP03352-Bach_-_BGA_-_BWV_208.pdf) (accessed February 23, 2010).

20. Boyd, ed., *J.S. Bach, Oxford Composer Companions*, 44.

the occasion being celebrated.”<sup>21</sup> The work was not acted out as in opera but presented as a concert performance.<sup>22</sup> This is somewhat confusing as *dramma per musica* is an operatic term. The *drammi per musica* by Bach were not intended to be performed on stage but in places like Zimmerman’s coffee house by the *collegium musicum* and served the purpose of celebrating an important event. The *drammi per musica* were not written expressly for royalty but were also commissioned by Leipzig authorities for public figures of the city. Bach wrote a few secular cantatas for public entertainment such as *Schweigt stille, plaudert nicht* (Coffee Cantata), BWV 211, which was performed at Zimmerman’s coffee house by the *collegium musicum* under his direction.

The *dramma per musica* provided a masterful substitute for opera for Leipzig citizens since there had been no opera house there since 1720.<sup>23</sup> Bach’s *drammi per musica* usually contained from two to four mythological figures and included from nine to fifteen movements. There was often a chorus of the combined singers at the beginning and end of the work that seemed to distinguish Bach’s secular cantatas from those of his contemporaries. The rest of the work usually consisted of alternating recitatives and arias. Bach’s music was more elaborate than opera, especially the recitatives.<sup>24</sup> The music was very festive and had an Italian sound but the texts were in German.<sup>25</sup>

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21. Wolff, et al., “Bach,” in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*.

22. J. A. Westrup, *Bach Cantatas* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1996), 5.

23. Thomas Braatz, trans., “Oper und Drama per Musica,” summary translation from *Die Welt der Bach-Kantaten*, Vol. 2, *Johann Bachs weltliche Kantaten*, by Alberto Basso, eds. Christoph Wolff and Ton Koopman, (Stuttgart and Kassel: Metzler and Bärenreiter, 1997): 48-64, <http://www.bach-cantatas.com/Articles/Opera-Drama%5BBraatz%5D.htm> (accessed March 10, 2010).

24. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 363.

25. Braatz, [bach-cantatas.com](http://bach-cantatas.com).

### *The Serenata*

The birthday cantata for Prince Leopold of Köthen, *Durchlauchster Leopold* (Illustrious Leopold), BWV 173a, is given the classification *serenata* by Bach. This was an “Italian term for a type of musical work performed in the evening, usually in the open air, in celebration of a particular occasion or to pay homage to a particular person.”<sup>26</sup> It has most of the same features of the secular cantata or what Bach called the *dramma per musica*. These *serenata* were usually “courtly entertainment given privately before an invited audience” for most of the same occasions as the *dramma per musica*. Most *serenata* specifically state in the text, the occasion being celebrated.<sup>27</sup> Although there is no mention of why Bach labeled this work as *serenata* one can only assume it has to do with the fact that this work was on a much smaller scale than the works Bach labeled *dramma per musica*. Durr considers *Durchlauchster Leopold* “relatively unambitious.”<sup>28</sup> It is one of the shortest of the birthday cantatas and is scored only for soprano, bass, two flutes, bassoon, two violins, viola and a continuo of harpsichord and violone.

### *Difference in Birthday and Name Day*

Members of the court not only celebrated birthdays but also celebrated their “name days.” Even though these are on different dates, the name day was considered as important as the birthday. These were especially celebrated by the more traditional

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26. Boyd, ed., *J.S. Bach, Oxford Composer Companions*, 448.

27. Michael Talbot, “Serenata,” in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/25455> (accessed February 27, 2010).

28. Alfred Dürr, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach with their Librettos in German-English Parallel Text*, rev. & trans. Richard D.P. Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 816.

Catholics. A name day is a particular day of year associated with a person's given name. It could be the feast day of the saint after whom the person was named or the day a person was christened or baptized. For example Bach wrote *Schleicht, spielende Wellen* for the October 3 birthday of Augustus III. Bach wrote *Frohes Volk, vergnügte Sachsen* (music lost) for the August 3 name day of the same ruler. Name day cantatas and their recipients will not be addressed in this thesis. Only the recipients of birthday cantatas will be discussed.

Works where only the text survives or works where the music has been lost but is parodied in other works will not be addressed. Below is a list of known birthday cantatas that have not been completely preserved. These will not be addressed in this thesis:

- 1718, for the birthday of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen: *Lobet den Herren, alle seine Heerscharen* (Hunold).
- 1718, for the birthday of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen: *Der Himmel dacht auf Anhalts Ruhm und Glück*.
- 1720, for the birthday of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen: *Heut ist gewiss ein guter Tag* (Hunold).
- 1722, for birthday of Johann August of Anhalt-Zerbst: title unknown, librettist unknown.
- 1723, for birthday of Duke Friedrich II of Saxe-Gotha: title and librettist unknown, called "Latin ode."
- 1725, for the birthday of Duke Christian Christian of Saxe-Weissenfels: *Entfliehet, verschwindet, entweichet, ihr Sorgen* (Picander), parodied in BWV 249

- 1725, for unknown recipient: *Schwingt freudig euch empor* (librettist possibly Picander).
- 1726, for Princess Charlotte Friedericke Wilhelmine of Anhalt-Köthen, younger sister of Prince Leopold: *Stiegt freudig die Luft* (Picander), music lost but some reconstructed from 36c.
- 1726, for birthday of Joachim Friedrich, Graf von Flemming: *Die Feier des Genius: Verjaget, zerstreuet, zerrütet, ihr Sterne* (Picander).
- 1727, for a birthday visit of Augustus the Strong: *Entfernet euch, ihr heitern Sterne* (C.F. Haupt).
- 1731, for birthday of Joachim Friedrich, Graf von Flemming: *So kämpfet nur, ihr muntern Töne* (Picander).
- 1739, for the birthday of Augustus III: title unknown, librettist unknown.

Only recipients for whom a work has been completely preserved will be addressed in this thesis. The recipients and the birthday works written for them that will be addressed are:

- Duke Christian of Saxe-Weißenfels, *Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd*, BWV 208.
- Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen, *Durchlauchtster Leopold*, BWV 173a.
- Friedrich Augustus, Crown Prince of Saxony, *Laßt uns sorgen, laßt uns wachen*, BWV 213.
- Maria Josepha, Archduchess of Austria, Electress of Saxony, Queen of Poland, *Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!* BWV 214.

- Augustus III, Elector of Saxony, King of Poland, *Schleicht, spielende Wellen*, BWV 206.<sup>29</sup>

This thesis continues with brief biographies of the five recipients of birthday cantatas written by Bach, a discussion of the occasion that the cantata celebrated, and a brief discussion of the work.

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29. Wolff, et al., "Bach," in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*.

## CHAPTER 2

### DUKE CHRISTIAN OF SAXE-WEIßENFELS

Johann Sebastian Bach's *Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd* (*The Cheerful hunt is all that pleases me*), BWV 208, is a story of three lives entwined around a birthday cantata: an employer, a friend, and a birthday recipient. The story takes place in the city of Weimar, the capital of the duchy of Saxe-Weimar. Bach worked in Weimar briefly in 1703 at the court of Duke Johann Ernst. He returned to work in Weimar in 1708, this time employed by Duke Johann Ernst's brother, Duke Wilhelm Ernst, who now co-ruled the duchy with his nephew, Ernst August. It was during this time period that Bach wrote *Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd*.

Bach's employer, Duke Wilhelm Ernst (1662-1728), was a most serious sort. He apparently suffered an unhappy marriage that produced no heirs. Wilhelm forbade dances that had been a part of previous celebrations and even had a "lights-out" curfew of 9 p.m. in the summer and 8 p.m. in winter.<sup>30</sup> He was an orthodox Lutheran and his primary pursuits were religious, such as rebuilding St. Jacob's Church.<sup>31</sup> He also valued cultural pursuits and Weimar boasted a library, coin collection, orphanage, and seminary.<sup>32</sup> Duke Wilhelm (figure 1) was dedicated to the arts and was open to new styles of music

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30. Malcolm Boyd, *Bach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 37.

31. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 118-119.

32. Boyd, *Bach*, 37.



providing opportunities for his court musicians to study the newest Italian literature. This gave Bach a chance to become familiar with the style of Vivaldi.<sup>33</sup>



Figure 1. Duke Wilhelm Ernst of Saxe-Weimar, Martin Bernigeroth, engraver. *Source:* ©Deutsche Fotothek (Bidok), Rödl, Karin, Heinrich, Gabriele/SLUB Dresden. Used by permission of SLUB Dresden/Deutsche Fotothek. <http://www.deutschefotothek.de/obj80463151.html> (accessed March 18, 2010).

Bach's primary position at Weimar was that of *Hoforganist* (court organist). He also served in the *Wilhelmsburg* (Wilhelm's palace) at the many religious ceremonies held by Wilhelm and played the outstanding organ in the ducal chapel, the *Himmelsburg* (heaven's castle). Many of Bach's most well-known works for organ such as the *Prelude and Fugue in D major*, BWV 532, the *Fantasia and Fugue in G minor*, BWV 542, the *Tocatta, Adagio, and Fugue in C major*, BWV 564, and many of the chorale preludes in

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33. Wolff, *Bach: Essays on his life and music*, 33.

the *Orgel-Büchlein* (Little Organ Book), BWV 599–644 come from this time period.<sup>34</sup> Young Prince Johann Ernst, a nephew of Wilhelm, encouraged Bach in the practice of transcribing Italian instrumental concertos for the keyboard. Johann learned this from Jan Jacob de Graff while traveling in Amsterdam and brought the practice back to Weimar.<sup>35</sup> In addition to his duties as organist and composer, Bach is listed in Weimar documents as *Cammermusicus*, requiring the wearing of the traditional “hussar costume” that Weimar court musicians wore when playing violin or viola in the court orchestra.<sup>36</sup> As a member of the *Kapelle* he was expected to participate in both sacred and secular music endeavors.

Wilhelm’s nephew and co-ruler, Ernst August (1688-1748), lived in the *Rotes Schloß* (Red Castle) that was connected to the *Wilhelmsburg* by a long covered gallery. Although Bach was initially employed by Wilhelm, he enjoyed friendly relations with Ernst August and participated in musical activities in the *Rotes Schloß*. The pious Wilhelm resented Bach’s association and friendship with the not-so-pious residents of the *Rotes Schloß*. Ernst August contributed to Bach’s support and he and his younger half-brother, Prince Johann Ernest, were themselves musicians and very fond of Bach. This added to the spirit of rivalry already present in the family.<sup>37</sup>

Bach probably had no idea he was walking into a continuous family feud. The two dukes were co-equals in their authority but Wilhelm was by far the dominant of the

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34. Basil Smallman, “Bach, Johann Sebastian,” in *The Oxford Companion to Music*. *Oxford Music Online*, ed., Alison Latham, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/3522> (accessed April 15, 2009).

35. Boyd, ed., *J.S. Bach, Oxford Composer Companions*, 250.

36. Boyd, *Bach*, 38.

37. *Ibid.*, 42.

two. While Bach was court organist and chamber musician, records show he belonged to the group of “joint servants.” This indicated employment by both dukes, and payment from the joint treasury.<sup>38</sup> Musicians were regarded as servants and Wilhelm had decreed even before Bach’s arrival that members of the court *Kapelle* were allowed to make music in the *Rotes Schloß* only with permission from him.<sup>39</sup> Later Wilhelm declared anyone participating in events without his permission was subject to fines and arrest. Somehow Bach managed to elude or ignore all of this, perhaps justifying his attendance at musical events in the *Rotes Schloß* as a private music instructor to Duke Ernst August (figure 2) and Prince Johann Ernst.<sup>40</sup>



Figure 2. Duke Ernst August of Saxe-Weimar. *Source:* © Deutsche Fotothek/SLUB Dresden. Used by permission of SLUB Dresden/Deutsche Fotothek. <http://www.deutschefotothek.de/obj70250588.html> (accessed March 18, 2010).

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38. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 121.

39. *Ibid.*, 119.

40. *Ibid.*, 176.

In 1713 Bach was invited to compose some *Tafel-Music* for a banquet held in honor of the thirty-first birthday of Duke Christian of Saxe-Weißenfels (1682-1736). The “musical arrangements for the festivities were probably made by Adam Immanuel Weldig, Bach’s Weimar colleague and landlord, who had just moved to Weißenfels.”<sup>41</sup> Young’s account states that Bach’s employer, Wilhelm Ernst, had been invited to the festivities and the musical piece was his birthday surprise for Duke Christian.<sup>42</sup> The banquet took place at the ducal hunting lodge. Like many Baroque rulers, Duke Christian tried to imitate the court of the “Sun King,” Louis XIV. These birthday celebrations were lavish, extravagant events that often lasted for several weeks. It is possible that several hunts were included in the festivities as Duke Christian was a passionate hunter.<sup>43</sup>

#### *The Birthday Cantata for Duke Christian*

Written for the hunt-loving Duke Christian (figure 3), *Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd* makes use of mythological characters and a great deal of flattery, quite common in a homage or congratulatory work. The libretto is attributed to Salomo Franck who came to Weimar in 1701 as secretary of the consistory and provided librettos for Bach. There are four mythological characters in the text: Diana (goddess of the hunt), Endymion (her lover and a shepherd), Pan (god of the shepherds), and Pales (goddess of the flocks).<sup>44</sup>

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41. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 135.

42. W. Murray Young, *The Cantatas of J.S. Bach, An Analytical Guide* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1989), 238.

43. Dürr, 802.

44. Young, 238.



Figure 3. Duke Christian of Saxe-Weissenfels. *Source:* © Deutsche Fotothek/SLUB Dresden. Used by permission of SLUB Dresden/Deutsche Fotothek. <http://www.deutschefotothek.de/obj70252278.html> (accessed March 18, 2010).

Diana claims the first recitative-aria set. She declares that today on the day of Prince Christian's birthday, the day should be his. On this day, Diana is devoting herself totally to hunting in honor of Prince Christian. In the following recitative-aria set, Diana's lover Endymion is disappointed and a bit rejected over Diana's obsession with the hunt. The recitative returns to Diana as she convinces Endymion that she still loves him and that today they must join together in celebrating the hunt for the birthday of Prince Christian. They end the recitative in a charming arioso duet of well-wishing for the day.

In Pan's recitative-aria set, he lays down his shepherd's crook before the prince and exclaims how happy the prince makes the land. After this, Pales performs the last recitative-aria set to laud the prince and declares Christian their Saxon hero. In her aria "Sheep may safely graze" she completes the praise by naming the prince their good shepherd. Pales further sings, *Wo Regenten wohl regieren, Kann man Ruh und Friede spüren* (Where rulers govern well, One can feel calm and peace).<sup>45</sup> Diana then calls them all to join together in a chorus of praise. An aria duetto and two solo arias full of flattery follow. In the final chorus, the characters wish the prince blessings and good fortune. The libretto contains beautiful language lauding the duke, but has very little plot. Diana and Pan carry appropriate props. "Diana is provided with an arrow (mentioned in her opening recitative), and Pan lays down his shepherd's crook in front of the duke. Both 'props' suggest that the cantata may have been performed in at least a semi-stage manner."<sup>46</sup>

Reality was often ignored in these royal birthday works. In the aria "Schafe können sicher weiden" (Sheep may safely graze),<sup>47</sup> the duke is lauded as one who governs well. The truth is Duke Christian spent lavishly and did not manage his land well. Just a few years after this cantata was presented, Duke Christian was arraigned before the *Reichsgericht* (supreme court) because of his extravagant and wasteful expenditures, especially where hunting was concerned.<sup>48</sup> The Kaiser "set up a royal

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45. Dürr, 801.

46. Boyd, ed., *J.S. Bach, Oxford Composer Companions*, 508.

47. Dürr, 801.

48. Boyd, ed., *J.S. Bach, Oxford Composer Companions*, 508.

commission to administer Duke Christian's finances."<sup>49</sup> Of course the truth would not make a very uplifting or flattering libretto for a birthday musical production.

Although there may be other unknown secular cantatas, this appears to be Bach's first secular cantata. It is a large work with an instrumental ensemble of three hunting horns, three oboes, a bassoon, two recorders, solo violin, and a large continuo group of two bassoons, violone, and violono grosso.<sup>50</sup> The vocal scoring is for two sopranos, tenor, and bass, probably due to the availability of singers at Weißenfels.<sup>51</sup> Boyd calls this Bach's first "'modern' cantata, including both da capo arias and recitative."<sup>52</sup>

It is assumed that *Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd* opened with an instrumental movement. The opening instrumental sinfonia is missing and Wolff presumes it may have resembled or indeed was "the early (five-movement) sinfonia version BWV 1046a of the *Brandenburg Concerto* No. 1."<sup>53</sup> This composition seems to fit well with the cantata, having a similar theme. Complete with hunting horns, the instrumental scoring is the same.

Diana's opening recitative is in a free rhythm and includes noticeable tempo changes. Durr says the tempo changes "depict the flight of Diana's arrow."<sup>54</sup> In the aria, hunting horns send a call to hunt. The vocal part includes decorative melismatic passages

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49. Dürr, 208.

50. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 135.

51. Dürr, 804.

52. Boyd, ed., *J.S. Bach, Oxford Composer Companions*, 508.

53. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 135.

54. Dürr, 803.

and vocal leaps that mimic the hunting horn in a depiction of joy and celebration as Diana declares that “Hunting is fit for heroes.”<sup>55</sup> A running bass in the bassoon builds anticipation. The music is respectful of the duke’s royal position but still festive. The elaborate virtuoso singing is a tremendous way to open this celebration in song.

Endymion’s numbers use continuo only. They are more emotional and tender, as well as in a minor key suggesting his distress at wondering if Diana will still show her love for him. Once Diana has convinced Endymion she still loves him they sing a playful and happy duet as they decide together to “celebrate his lofty birthday feast.”<sup>56</sup> The constant interchange of musical material between the two vocalists is charming, again adding to the festivities at hand.

“Ein Fürst ist seines Landes Pan” (A Prince is his country’s Pan) sung by Pan is a more dignified recitative-aria set than the preceding sets. Pan, a bass, exudes more power. The dotted rhythms and triplets added to the accompaniment of two oboes and *taille* (oboe in F) give the aria a royal and dignified sound. This aria was later adapted with very little change for the Whit Monday Church Cantata 68, *Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt*.<sup>57</sup> Whether Bach is praising God or flattering earthly rulers he knows how to compose appropriate music.

Nothing compares with the beautiful and well-known aria of Pales, “Schafe Können sicher weiden, Wo ein guter Hirte wacht!” (Sheep may safely graze, Where a

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55. Dürr, 799.

56. *Ibid.*, 800.

57. W. Gillies Whittaker, *The Cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach, Sacred and Secular, Vol. II*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 53.



good shepherd keeps watch).<sup>58</sup> The flowing soprano melody is less embellished than in previous numbers and the mix of soprano voice and recorders, the shepherds' instruments, is heavenly. The music is so heavenly, in fact, that one might easily think that when Bach composed this piece he was thinking of the heavenly Good Shepherd, rather than the not-so-good earthly shepherd of the cantata. Perhaps that is why this was the other aria to be lifted from *Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd* and set in church cantata *Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt*, BWV 68, as “Mein gläubiges Herze, frohlocke, sing, scherze, Dein Jesus ist da!” (My believing heart, Exult, sing, jest, Your Jesus is here!).<sup>59</sup>

In a short recitative following Pales, Diana calls the group to join together to celebrate. They dive into an exciting chorus, “Lebe Sonne dieser Erden” (Live son of the earth). There is no instrumental introduction and the voices enter fugal style joined by the instruments (figure 4). The middle section provides a brief respite from the driving fugue with its homophonic texture. This lively chorus in da capo aria style is presented with full orchestration, complete with the call of the hunting horns.

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58. Dürr, 801.

59. Ibid. 359-360.

The image shows a musical score for the cantata 'Was mir behagt, BWV 208' by J.S. Bach. It features four vocal parts: Soprano I, Soprano II, Tenore, and Basso. The lyrics are: 'Lebe, Sonne dieser Erden, lebe, Sonne, le - - - be, Sonne dieser Er - den, le - be, Lebe, Sonne dieser Erden, le - be, Sonne, le - - - be, Sonne Lebe, Sonne dieser Erden, le - be, Sonne, Le - be, Sonne die - ser'. The score is in G major and 3/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

Figure 4. Voices entering in fugal form in “Lebe Sonne dieser Erden” from *Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd*, BWV 208, by J.S. Bach, mm 1-4. *Source:* Used by permission of Bach Cantatas Website, Webmaster Aryeh Oron. <http://bach-cantatas.com/BGA/BWV208-BGA.pdf> (accessed March 14, 2010).

The minimal plot has reached its peak at this point. All have been convinced to join together in this birthday celebration. There is no action to move forward with recitatives. Now instead of recitative-aria sets, three arias follow, the first one an aria duetto between Diana and Endymion with driving continuo, the next, an aria presented by Pales, and finally one by Pan before the final chorus. All continue to herald Duke Christian and wish him blessings and good fortune. Festive oboes and the signal of the hunting horns, absent since the last chorus, return for the final chorus reminding all present of Duke Christian’s love of hunting in this birthday celebration. The final chorus is more powerful than other selections and provides an extremely royal and festive ending to the work.

Bach has done an excellent job of creating royal sounding music that is not too overbearing or stuffy, keeping the light-hearted festive feel, so appropriate for the situation. There are plenty of opportunities for virtuoso displays in the singing and instrumental parts, giving appropriate honor to the duke. Even though it is nearly forty minutes in length, with a minimal plot, the variety of melody and instrumentation in the recitatives, arias, duets, and choral numbers keep the listener attentive. Bach never wrote

an opera but this refined piece shows he certainly was capable. Perhaps his intent was to mimic opera as during the reign of Duke Christian, the town of Weißenfels was known for “home-produced opera, and also as a centre for trumpet-playing.”<sup>60</sup> Bach no doubt knew what would entertain his honored birthday recipient.

Bach’s composition and performance at the event were so successful that it began a long friendship with Duke Christian that would be beneficial to Bach in years to come. Later, Bach would find himself without a title due to the death of a patron and would quickly secure an appointment from Duke Christian. The performance did not hurt things at home either. After the event Bach’s employers at Weimar gave him an immediate and unprecedented salary increase that raised his salary above that of the *Kapellmeister*’s.<sup>61</sup>

In March of 1714, the year after *Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd* was performed, Bach was promoted to *Konzertmeister*. This was a newly created post at the court basically to keep Bach employed as a result of his consideration of taking a post at Halle as organist and music director.<sup>62</sup> Even though Bach’s salary was higher than anyone else in the court *Kapelle*, his *Konzertmeister* post was not as high in rank as *vice-Kapellmeister* Johann Wilhelm Drese (son of *Kapellmeister* Samuel Drese), but it was a step closer to Bach’s dream job as *Kapellmeister*.<sup>63</sup> Upon this promotion Bach wrote his

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60. Boyd, ed., *J.S. Bach, Oxford Composer Companions*, 514.

61. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 135.

62. Boyd, *Bach*, 39-40.

63. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 148.

first series of church cantatas, among them the Palm Sunday cantata, *Himmelskönig, sei willkommen*, BWV 182.<sup>64</sup> About twenty church cantatas from Weimar survive.<sup>65</sup>

It is difficult to determine the amount of celebratory and occasional music Bach wrote for Wilhelm Ernst and Ernst August during his time in Weimar. It does not appear that Bach's regular duties as *Konzertmeister* included writing celebratory or homage cantatas, even though he wrote many church cantatas during this period. Wilhelm was not totally opposed to these kinds of works. He allowed opera with a moral theme in 1696 but after four years rescinded. By the amount of non-liturgical works written during this time, it can be assumed that Bach wrote and performed for court and family occasions, such as performances at the end of church services or for visitors to the court.<sup>66</sup> Bach was the likely composer of a wedding cantata to celebrate the marriage in 1716 of Duke Ernst August to Princess Eleonore Wilhelmine, sister of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen, (to whom Bach would one day be employed). The music is lost, but the text was written by Salomo Franck, whom Bach was working with at this time in Weimar. Bach gave a repeat performance of *Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd*, changing the name of the recipient, for Duke Ernst August's twenty-eighth birthday in 1716. The name of "Ernst August" is substituted for "Christian" in Bach's autograph score.<sup>67</sup> It is also recorded that Bach wrote *Amor, die Treue und die Beständigkeit* for Ernst August's new bride mentioned above, the duchess of Saxe-Weimar, Eleonore Wilhelmine, for her birthday

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64. Boyd, *Bach*, 41.

65. Boyd, ed., *J.S. Bach, Oxford Composer Companions*, 511.

66. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 125.

67. *Ibid.*, 177.

celebration in 1716. Again, the music is lost but the text is by Franck, making Bach the most likely composer. Works of the composer often became the property of the patron, remaining at the court after the composer left. Sadly, the *Wilhelmsburg* burned in 1774 destroying most everything.<sup>68</sup> This makes it impossible to get a clear picture of the homage music Bach may have composed at Weimar.

Weimar *Kapellmeister*, Samuel Drese, died in 1716 giving Bach hope that he would get that position. When he did not, the disappointed Bach realized he would have to look elsewhere for a *Kapellmeister* position. The rest of the story is well known. Duke Wilhelm would not release Bach to take the position of *Kapellmeister* offered by Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen. For almost five months the two battled it out until Bach was arrested and put in jail. Finally, on December 2, 1717,<sup>69</sup> after about a month in jail, Bach was released and given an unfavorable discharge from his post. Bach was allowed to leave for Köthen and as far as we know, the pious employer, Wilhelm Ernst, never received a birthday day cantata from Bach. *Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd* would show up later in the opening chorus of church cantata, *Man singet mit Freuden vom Sieg*, BWV 149,<sup>70</sup> and be used again by Bach as late as 1742 for the name day of Augustus III, Elector of Saxony, and King of Poland.<sup>71</sup>

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68. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 134.

69. *Ibid.* 184.

70. Dürr, 703.

71. *Ibid.*, 820.

## CHAPTER 3

### PRINCE LEOPOLD OF ANHALT-KÖTHEN

The *Kapellmeister* position for Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen (1694-1728) was perhaps one of Bach's most enjoyable jobs. Due to the resignation of A. R. Stricker, Bach was hired in 1717 by Prince Leopold (figure 5) to fill the post. Leopold apparently had an inkling of the musical genius of Bach, as he doubled the *Kapellmeister* salary that he had been paying Stricker.<sup>72</sup>



Figure 5. Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen. *Source:* © Deutsche Fotothek/SLUB Dresden. Used by permission of SLUB Dresden/Deutsche Fotothek. <http://www.deutschefotothek.de/obj70240667.html> (accessed March 12, 2010).

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72. G. Kraft and Percy M. Young, "Cöthen," in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/06664> (accessed April 15, 2009).

Were it not for Johann Sebastian Bach, Köthen would not be well known today. Anhalt-Köthen was a minor principality of the imperial principality of Anhalt. Anhalt was a large area, divided into smaller *Kreise* or districts. Each *Kreise* had its own court and titular prince. Anhalt was not particularly prosperous economically and the princes of Anhalt, somewhat complacent about politics, did not have much power during this time. The city of Köthen was where Prince Leopold held court.<sup>73</sup>

Circumstances point to Leopold discovering Bach through his sister, Eleonore Wilhelmine. She was married to Duke Ernst August of Weimar in 1716, while Bach was still employed at Weimar. Bach is the assumed composer of a wedding cantata for the event and of a birthday cantata for Eleonore only a few months later.<sup>74</sup> Leopold would most certainly have attended the wedding and possibly the birthday celebration. The music-loving Leopold would no doubt have been interested in his new brother-in-law's talented *Konzertmeister*.

The idea of a new start at Köthen must have been appealing to Bach in light of the circumstances of his last year at Weimar. The co-reigning dukes of Weimar were in continual dispute over events at the court, including Bach's duties. Also during this time Bach made his famous trip to Dresden to compete against Marchand in a much publicized harpsichord competition. Although Bach got to perform, he was disappointed at Marchand's no-show. Further frustrating was that the prize money of 500 talers, a

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73. Friedrich Smend, *Bach in Köthen*, trans. John Page (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1985), 164.

74. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 177.

whopping amount, was embezzled from him somehow, the details of that are not clear.<sup>75</sup> The biggest reason for going to Köthen probably involved Bach seeking to improve his status as a musician since the doors of advancement at Weimar appeared to be closed to him. Leopold's love of music, his recent expansion of the Köthen court *Kapelle*, and his offer of a *Kapellmeister* post, were certainly more appealing than being *Konzertmeister* for the bickering dukes of Weimar.

Young Leopold's musical background gave him an appreciation for Bach's musical abilities. Leopold himself was a musician and played the violin, bass viol and harpsichord.<sup>76</sup> At the age of twelve, Leopold had convinced his mother to hire court musicians that he could play chamber music with.<sup>77</sup> As a youth Leopold studied in Rome with Johann David Heinichen, who would later become *Kapellmeister* at the Dresden court.<sup>78</sup> Leopold studied music in Berlin, and then spent two-and-a-half years studying and traveling through Holland, England, Italy, Vienna, Prague, and Dresden<sup>79</sup>. He hired some of the best musicians in the empire (Spiess, Rose, Torlé, Lienicke, and Marcus) after Friedrich Wilhelm I of Berlin disbanded his *Kapelle*.<sup>80</sup> Upon Leopold's return to Köthen from his travels, he set up a *Kapelle* that he liked to call his *collegium musicum*.<sup>81</sup>

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75. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 179.

76. Smallman, "Bach, Johann Sebastian," in *The Oxford Companion to Music*. *Oxford Music Online*.

77. Boyd, *Bach*, 70.

78. George J. Buelow, "Heinichen, Johann David," in *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. <http://oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/12688> (accessed April 15, 2009).

79. Uniepers, 68.

80. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 195.

81. Boyd, *Bach*, 71.



When Leopold became ruler of Anhalt-Köthen he increased the number of musicians in his *Kapelle* to eighteen, no small ensemble for Bach to work with when he arrived in Köthen a year later.

Although there are no concise records of daily musical activities at the court of Anhalt-Köthen, there is speculation that weekly concerts were held in the *Schloss* (castle) for Leopold and other members of the family or court. Musical events would most likely have been performed in the main hall, the largest room in the *Schloss* that doubled as a music room and throne room. Here the prince would receive guests, carry out the business of the principality, and preside over his privy council. It was fashioned with mirrors and called the *Spiegelsaal* or “Hall of Mirrors.” The prince most likely had a smaller, more personal room set aside for practicing on his viola da gamba.<sup>82</sup>

The Calvinist nature of the court at Köthen created almost no demand for church music in contrast to Bach’s previous job as *Konzertmeister* at Weimar where Bach wrote music for the many religious services of Duke Wilhelm Ernst. This change in employment brought about a change in the musical output of Bach from mostly organ music and church cantatas, to chamber music, concertos, overtures, and occasional music. Although there may have been others, there is only one documented performance of a church cantata at the Köthen palace, *Lobet den Herrn, alle seine Heerscharen*, BWV Anh. 5, on December 10, 1718.<sup>83</sup> At Köthen, Bach wrote some of his most well-known keyboard works, including the first part of *Das wohltemperirte Clavier*, BWV 846-69 and the English and French suites, BWV 806-17. Here he also wrote the Brandenburg

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82. Smend, 173-176.

83. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 199.

Concertos, BWV 1046-51, and much other instrumental music for harpsichord, string instruments, solo violin, violoncello, viola da gamba, and sonatas for string instruments and harpsichord.

Although instrumental music seemed to dominate Bach's output during his time in Köthen, as *Kapellmeister* Bach wrote secular cantatas to be performed on special occasions.<sup>84</sup> Smend reports that Köthen "lacked a well-trained four-part choir"<sup>85</sup> for whom Bach may have written vocal music. However, occasional works, a few sparse examples of congratulatory cantatas, and records of salaried singers (such as Anna Magdalena) on the court payroll show that vocal music was indeed a part of court life.<sup>86</sup>

Much music is lost from the Köthen period. Music was typically the property of the court and Leopold would have felt "it was his to keep since he had paid for its composition, its copying, its binding, and its actual performance."<sup>87</sup> Bach did not do as much private teaching at Köthen, therefore not much music was copied by students. Bach was probably allowed to take some music with him when he left, but probably could not take a lot of music with him in the four cartloads that he took to Leipzig. Once Bach left Köthen, no one knows how carefully the music was kept, or if it even was kept. The keyboard pieces were probably difficult to play and the musicians were ready to move on to new music, since Bach's compositions were considered somewhat old fashioned.

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84. Uniepers, 70.

85. Smend, 27.

86. *Ibid.*, 35.

87. *Ibid.*, 181.

There is no record of what happened to the music after Leopold's death and the disbanding of the *Kapelle* in 1754.<sup>88</sup>

At Köthen, vocal music was written and performed for New Year's Day celebrations and for the prince's birthday. Two cantatas were presented for each celebration—one sacred and one secular.<sup>89</sup> Only two works survive in full from the Köthen period: *Die Zeit, die Tag un Jahre macht* (Time that makes days and years), BWV 134, written for a New Year's celebration, and *Durchlauchster Leopold*, BWV 173a, for the birthday of Prince Leopold. Six others are known because either the text survives or Bach borrowed from them for later use in other cantatas. Several works have been reconstructed since they were parodied by Bach in other works. The birthday cantata, *Durchlauchtster Leopold*, BWV 173a, is the one that will be examined here.

#### *The Birthday Cantata for Prince Leopold*

The title of the work, *Durchlauchtster Leopold*, is translated as "Most Serene Leopold"<sup>90</sup> or "Most Illustrious Leopold."<sup>91</sup> The date is uncertain. It was originally thought to be 1718 by Whittaker but has been reassigned as 1722 by Durr and questionably 1724 by Stokes. This cantata is parodied in a sacred cantata, *Erhöhtes Fleisch und Blut*, BWV 173, for Whit Monday.<sup>92</sup> Six of the eight movements were reused

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88. Smend, 182.

89. *Ibid.*, 44.

90. Young, 240.

91. Dürr, 815.

92. *Ibid.*, 357.

in some form.<sup>93</sup> It was first performed as a church cantata in 1724. It was performed again several times, with one performance documented by a printed libretto in 1731.<sup>94</sup> The final bass aria, not used in BWV 173, was later changed to a tenor aria for *Er rufet seinen Schafen mit Namen* (He Calls His Sheep by Name), BWV 175.<sup>95</sup>

Like the date, the librettist is uncertain. Young assumes Bach was the librettist for the work<sup>96</sup> but due to the antiquated verse structure of the fourth movement and given that the verse does not seem designed for recitative, Dürr assumes that the poet was from an “older generation of poets.”<sup>97</sup> In many homage or congratulatory cantatas of this time period, the plot is minimal and mythological characters shower the recipient with abundant flattery. In this one, there are no mythological characters nor is there any plot at all. The singers could have been “conveyed as allegorical figures, for Bach often failed to enter such names in his score and the printed libretto has not survived.”<sup>98</sup> In any event, the two singers simply take turns declaring how wonderful Leopold is and how happy everyone should be to have him as prince. As is customary, the libretto closes with the singers heaping blessings upon Leopold and his people such as, *Sei dem volke solcher Segen, Den auf deinem Haupt wir legen!* (May such blessing be to your people, As we

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93. Young, 241.

94. Dürr, 358.

95. Young, 241.

96. Ibid.

97. Dürr, 817.

98. Ibid.

lay upon your head!).<sup>99</sup> Even though the libretto lacks a plot, the language is figurative and beautiful.

*Durchlauchtster Leopold* was written for only two singers—soprano and bass—possibly due to the availability of court singers. The virtuoso soprano part is extremely high pitched and there is some speculation that the bass soloist could have been designated as such because the music loving Leopold was a bass and liked participating in the performance of court music.<sup>100</sup> The work is designated as a *serenata* in the original score describing its qualities better than the term “cantata.” This *serenata* is like a mini-opera minus the elaborate staging, cast, costumes, and plot. It is an eight-movement piece that is a mixture of recitative, aria, and chorus. It does not follow the strict alternating recitative-aria pattern found in most of Bach’s secular cantatas. This could be because there were only two singers or because the regular verse structure of the libretto was not suitable for a recitative.<sup>101</sup>

The instrumental ensemble contains a variety of instrumental combinations using the instruments violino I & II, viola, flauto traverse I & II, violincello, fagotto, and continuo of cembalo and violone.<sup>102</sup> The scoring is simple and somewhat light, probably making best use of the instrumentalists available at the court. The work has the sound of a chamber music ensemble. Although requiring virtuosic skill to sing and play, the music

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99. Dürr, 816.

100. Young, 241.

101. Dürr, 817.

102. J. S. Bach, *Durchlauchtster Leopold*, ed., Paul Graf Waldersee, in Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe, Band 34 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Hartel, 1887): 1-38, [http://imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/4/48/IMSLP03363-Bach\\_-\\_BGA\\_-\\_BWV\\_173a.pdf](http://imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/4/48/IMSLP03363-Bach_-_BGA_-_BWV_173a.pdf) (accessed February 23, 2010).

is not particularly astounding to hear in comparison to some of Bach's other works but is very creative and quite suitable for a festive court event such as a birthday celebration.

The opening movement of *Durchlauchtster Leopold* is a very high soprano recitative heralding the "Most Illustrious Leopold."<sup>103</sup> Young likens it to a "birthday card message."<sup>104</sup> An amazing coloratura on the words *Durchlauchtster Leopold* at the end of the recitative (figure 6) immediately signals the importance of the honored guest, Leopold.



Figure 6. Coloratura on "Durchlauchtster Leopold" in opening recitative from *Durchlauchtster Leopold*, BWV 173a, by J.S. Bach, mm. 5-7. *Source:* Used by permission of Bach Cantatas Website, Webmaster, Aryeh Oron. <http://bach-cantatas.com/BGA/BWV173a-BGA.pdf> (accessed March 12, 2010).

The first aria, "Güldner Sonnen frohe Stunden" (Glad hours of golden suns),<sup>105</sup> again presented by the soprano, follows the recitative. It is the longest movement of the entire work and in the da capo form of instrumental section (A), vocal section (B), instrumental section (A). Dotted rhythms followed by ornamented notes plus many repeated triplet figures in the strings dominate this piece (figure 7). The movement sounds like the stately promenade of a French court or a French opera overture. It has a dignified dancelike sound with delightful interplay between the voice and instruments in

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103. Dürr, 815.

104. Young, 241.

105. Dürr, 815.

the middle section. Like the ending in the first movement, the high soprano part ends, on a coloratura figure. This very high figure is spread out over two measures and repeated as Bach paints a picture in music of the phrase *Seinen Nachruhm auszubreiten* (His fame to spread out).

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**ARIE.**

The musical score is arranged in five staves. The top staff is for Violino I and Flauto traverso I. II., the second for Violino II, the third for Viola, the fourth for Soprano, and the fifth for Continuo. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The score shows the first two measures of the piece, featuring dotted notes, ornaments (trills), and triplets in the upper parts, and a rhythmic accompaniment in the lower parts.

Figure 7. Beginning of aria “Rühmet, singet, stimmt die Saiten” showing dotted notes, ornamentation and triplets, from *Durchlauchtster Leopold*, BWV 173a, by J.S. Bach, mm. 1-2. *Source:* Used by permission of Bach Cantatas Website, Webmaster Aryeh Oron. <http://bach-cantatas.com/BGA/BWV173a-BGA.pdf> (accessed March 12, 2010).

The third movement is a bass solo that is a powerful declamation of Leopold’s splendors. It is in a minor key and has a serious tone conveyed by agitated playing on strings and continuo. It is immediately followed by an aria duetto. The music returns to its royal sound with a solid beat in a meter of three as the bass enters singing, *Unter seinem Purpursaum, Ist die Freude* (Under his purple robe, Is joy).<sup>106</sup> A melodious flute duet precedes the entrance of the soprano voice singing *Nach landesväterlicher Art Er*

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106. Durr, 815.

*ernähret* (Like a father of the people, He nourishes us).<sup>107</sup> This movement builds in intensity, adding layer upon layer of sound. The instruments are not merely an accompaniment but equal partners with the voices. The movement ends as the two singers proclaim Leopold as “heaven’s light” and that he “Makes his servants joyful.”<sup>108</sup>

The duetto aria is immediately followed by a duetto recitative. The ending line of the recitative “Soll sich der Seufzer Glut zum Himmel schwingen” (A blaze of sighs shall leap up to heaven)<sup>109</sup> is appropriately and colorfully painted in the music by Bach. The last word of the phrase *schwingen* carries the idea to “swing, or leap, as in leaping upon one’s horse.”<sup>110</sup> To end this movement the singer vocally leaps and swings with an elaborate figuration up to the heavens on an *f*<sup>3</sup>.<sup>111</sup>

Accompanied by strings, two flutes, and continuo, the sixth movement is a fairly uneventful soprano aria that takes the listener through more virtuosic high soprano singing. The two flutes mostly double the violin parts. This movement has the dancelike character of a bourrée.<sup>112</sup> The soprano aria is followed by a bass solo with a bassoon obbligato that sounds like a duet between the bass soloist and bassoon. The mixture of the two low timbres is unusual and clever. It makes quite a contrast to the previous

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107. Durr, 815.

108. Ibid., 816.

109. Ibid., 816.

110. *WordReference.com*., <http://www.wordreference.com/deen/schwingen> (accessed February 27, 2010).

111. J. S. Bach, “Soll sich der Seufzer Glut zum Himmel schwingen” from *Durchlauchtster Leopold*, ed., Paul Graf Waldersee, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe, Band 34 (Leipzig:Breitkopf & Hartel, 1887): 25, [http://imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/4/48/IMSLP03363-Bach\\_-\\_BGA\\_-\\_BWV\\_173a.pdf](http://imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/4/48/IMSLP03363-Bach_-_BGA_-_BWV_173a.pdf) (accessed February 23, 2010).

112. Dürr, 818.



movement. The vocalist repeats the name of Leopold several times in broken chords of half notes, emphasizing the importance of the name Leopold, while the instrumental parts move in melodies of eighth and quarter notes. In this movement Bach exhibits his expert craftsmanship of making a perfect union of voice and instrument.

Even though the last movement is designated “Chorus” it is actually a duet of the two singers. This movement, like several others has a dancelike feel with a strong, heavy second beat. Durr interprets the movement as a polonaise.<sup>113</sup> This chorus provides the *serenata* with a royal, refined ending.

In the bass aria before the last chorus, “Dein Name gleich der Sonnen geh” (May your name move like the sun), the singer lauds the name of Prince Leopold that it may “always dwell among the stars!”<sup>114</sup> Leopold’s only real claim to stardom is that he hired Johann Sebastian Bach and was his friend. Although not a bad ruler, Leopold did nothing noteworthy during his reign and like many rulers during this time period, his extravagant court lifestyle presented a drain on the court treasury. Ironically, Leopold’s decision to hire Bach and provide him with the much sought-after title of *Kapellmeister* would make Leopold’s name common in historical accounts of Bach and known for generations to come.

For many years life at Köthen was a happy time for Bach. Even though Calvinism was the official faith of the region, Leopold’s mother Gisela Agnes, née von Rath, was Lutheran. She continued to adamantly follow her Lutheran beliefs, built a Lutheran

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113. Dürr, 818.

114. Richard Stokes, trans., *The Complete Church and Secular Cantatas*. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1999), 273.

church, and named it St. Agnus's Church. Since Bach was free of church duties, it was here at the *Agnuskirche* the Bach family rented their pew and the children attended the Lutheran school, also built by Gisela Agnes.<sup>115</sup> Bach seemed fond of Leopold and named one of his children (Maria Barbara's seventh and last) Leopold Augustus in his honor. Prince Leopold was chosen as godfather of the child. Leopold's sister, Eleonore Wilhelmina, wife of Duke Ernst August of Weimar, was the godmother. Unfortunately the child died in infancy (1719) and was buried at Köthen.<sup>116</sup>

Several life-changing events occurred for Bach during his time at Köthen. Bach's wife of thirteen years, Maria Barbara, died suddenly in July of 1720 while Bach was away at Carlsbad with Prince Leopold. Sadly, she was already buried when Bach returned home and learned of her death. Bach met his second wife Anna Magdalena at Köthen and married her in December of 1721. Her father was a court trumpeter, Johann Caspar Wilcke. She was a soprano at the court.<sup>117</sup> About two weeks after Bach and Anna Magdalena married, Prince Leopold married his cousin, Friederica Henrietta of Anhalt-Bernburg.

Leopold's love of music seemed to cause a problem between him and his new wife.<sup>118</sup> Bach referred to Henrietta as an "amusa" because she seemed to share none of Leopold's love for music. There is some thought that this caused Bach to look for employment elsewhere, but Princess Henrietta died a month before Bach signed his

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115. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 191.

116. Boyd, *Bach*, 71.

117. G. Kraft and Percy M. Young, "Cöthen," in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*.

118. Smallman, "Bach, Johann Sebastian," in *The Oxford Companion to Music. Oxford Music Online*.

contract at Leipzig. It is Unieper's opinion that the death of Maria Barbara was more of a factor in Bach seeking employment elsewhere as Bach had begun exploring some other employment options in 1720 after her death. He states "Maria Barbara's death hit Bach so hard that he no longer wished to stay in Köthen."<sup>119</sup>

Bach did not like the idea of losing his prestigious position as court *Kapellmeister* at Köthen but proceeded in 1722 to apply for the position of *Thomaskantor* at Leipzig.<sup>120</sup> He may have had several reasons to seek a fresh start. Bach indicated in a letter to Georg Erdmann that the education of his sons may have been a concern.<sup>121</sup> The university at Leipzig was highly regarded and considered one of the most progressive in Germany.<sup>122</sup> Köthen was a Calvinist region whereas Leipzig was a Lutheran area, better suited to the Bach family's religious beliefs. Leipzig was considered second only to Dresden as one of the most important cities in Saxony and Köthen was a rural area, named by scoffers as "Cow Köthen."<sup>123</sup> By 1722 the membership of the court *Kapelle* was beginning to decline. Several musicians had died and were not replaced. The family was in a quarrel about feudal pensions and Leopold faced continual health problems.<sup>124</sup>

Bach's choice to leave Köthen with honor was wise. This allowed him to retain the title of nonresident princely *Kapellmeister* or *Kapellmeister von Haus aus* of Anhalt-

119. Uniepers, 72.

120. Smallman, "Bach, Johann Sebastian," in *The Oxford Companion to Music*. *Oxford Music Online*.

121. Bach, *The New Bach Reader*, 151.

122. Boyd, *Bach*, 110.

123. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 207.

124. Uniepers, 73-74.

Köthen. This courtesy title required little of Bach except for composing court music for special occasions from time to time. He did this despite his massive workload at Leipzig. Several guest performances by Bach in Köthen are recorded, notably visits for Leopold's birthday.<sup>125</sup> Leopold and Bach remained friends and Leopold continued to perform Bach's music even after Bach left for Leipzig.<sup>126</sup>

The last music Bach would write for Prince Leopold would be funeral music. Leopold died at the young age of thirty-three on November 19, 1728. Bach, his wife, and eldest son Wilhelm Friedemann, traveled to Köthen for the memorial services. Bach's *Klagt, Kinder, Klagt es aller Welt*, BWV244a, was performed,<sup>127</sup> a tribute to the employer who was also a friend.

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125. Smend, 36-37.

126. Kraft and Young, "Cöthen," in *Grove Music Online.Oxford Music Online*.

127. Boyd, *Bach*, 114-115.

## CHAPTER 4

### BIRTHDAY MUSIC FOR THE HOUSE OF SAXONY

In April of 1723 Bach issued a request to be dismissed from his duties as *Kapellmeister* at Köthen that was graciously granted by Prince Leopold. In May of 1723 Bach and his family moved to Leipzig for Bach to take the position of *Kantor* of the *Thomasschule*. While in Leipzig Bach continued as *Kapellmeister von Haus aus* to the court of Anhalt-Köthen, a title he retained until Leopold's death.

Even though Bach had expressed dismay at giving up a *Kapellmeister* position for a *Kantor* position the importance of Bach's position at Leipzig should not be underestimated. "Leipzig was the second only to Dresden as the most important city in Saxony."<sup>128</sup> It had one of the most progressive and important universities in Germany and was noted as a center of book trade and publishing.<sup>129</sup> Until 1720 Leipzig had boasted an opera house where Telemann had premiered some of his operas. "The Leipzig cantorate was one of the most prestigious in Germany."<sup>130</sup>

From the beginning of Bach's tenure at Leipzig the road had been rocky. In addition to his numerous duties as *Kantor* at the school, Bach also was to supervise the church music of the city as a whole and on occasion provide music for civic occasions. As simple as that sounds, many frustrations arose between Bach and the university authorities, the city council, and later the rector of the *Thomasschule*. As early as 1725,

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128. Boyd, *Bach*, 110.

129. *Ibid.*

130. *Ibid.*, 111.

Bach had petitioned the elector of Saxony, at that time *August der Starke*, about a dispute regarding services at the Paulinerkirche (university church) “asking that the university be made to grant him control of both the old and the new services, together with the full stipend and the *Accidentien* accruing from them.”<sup>131</sup> Bach was granted control of the old service and the full salary to go along with it, but *August der Starke* denied Bach control of the new service and gave the university control over it, after which it seems Bach even lost interest in the old service.<sup>132</sup> More disputes over various matters between Bach and his superiors would follow. The Bach family would receive another blow in November of 1728 when Prince Leopold of Köthen died, ending Bach’s tenure as *Kapellmeister von Haus aus* at the Köthen court and leaving him without a court title. By February of 1729, Bach had visited Duke Christian at Weißenfels and secured an appointment there as *Kapellmeister von Haus aus* of the ducal Saxon-Weißenfels court.

The death of elector *August der Starke* (August the Strong) in February of 1733 gave Bach a new opportunity to gain recognition at the Dresden court. In July of 1733, following the required five month period of mourning for *August der Starke*, Bach traveled to Dresden to personally present and dedicate to the new elector, Augustus III, the *Kyrie* and *Gloria* of the B minor *Missa*. Upon presentation of this work, Bach petitioned the court for a title in the royal *Hofkapelle*.<sup>133</sup> Like his father *August der Starke*, the new Saxon elector, August III, was a great patron of the arts and spent

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131. Boyd, *Bach*, 113.

132. *Ibid.*

133. *Ibid.*, 166.

enormous amounts of money on musical pursuits at the Dresden court.<sup>134</sup> Besides securing a prestigious title, Bach had hopes that having the title would give him leverage in church disputes. Bach's submission of the B minor *Kyrie* and *Gloria* and petition for a court appointment did not produce the desired results and what we see following is at least half a dozen known celebratory works for the royal family in the next year. Terry states that "the libretti of at least two of them—'Tonet ihr Pauken' and 'Blast Lärmen'—were certainly sent up to Dresden."<sup>135</sup>

Articles by Basso and Terry indicate the university or the city may have commissioned the birthday works for the elector and family. Basso states, "Between 1727 and 1742 Bach was commissioned by the Leipzig authorities to provide the music for the festivities in honor of the elector's family."<sup>136</sup> Terry says, "Commissioned by a Leipsic audience, Bach undoubtedly regarded them as an opportunity to demonstrate his ability and loyalty to a sovereign whom the B minor *Kyrie* and *Gloria* apparently had failed to impress".<sup>137</sup> Durr reports that "Nobles and prosperous citizens often approached the Thomascantor and *Director musices* with requests for congratulatory cantatas for festive occasions."<sup>138</sup> Although these comments indicate the birthday works may have been

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134. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 365.

135. C. Sanford Terry, "The 'Christmas Oratorio': Original or Borrowed? I," *The Musical Times*, Vol. 71, No. 1052, (October 1, 1930): 888, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/916873> (accessed January 22, 2009).

136. Braatz, [bach-cantatas.com](http://bach-cantatas.com).

137. Terry, "The 'Christmas Oratorio': Original or Borrowed? I," *The Musical Times*, 888.

138. Dürr, 46.

commissioned or requested, specific references to commissions for individual birthday cantatas for the elector's family were not found.

Specific references to payment for the birthday cantatas were not found but references to payment for other secular congratulatory cantatas were found. Birthday works for the elector and family were produced by the *collegium musicum* and Bach was probably paid for them as Wolff reports that Bach “usually collected 50 talers for composing a cantata in honor of the royal family.”<sup>139</sup> Recorded in Bach's letters is confirmation of receipt of payment of 50 talers for the cantata, *Preise dein Glück, gesegnetes Sachsen*, BWV 215, “That there has been duly paid to me, the undersigned, by the Registrar Eberhardt, 50 thlr., say fifth thaler, for the provision of the music recently offered to His Royal Majesty.”<sup>140</sup> It is assumed since the *collegium musicum* produced the work that the city of Leipzig or the university paid Bach for his composition. Another occurrence of payment found in the *New Bach Reader* clearly indicates payment by the university for a secular cantata for the king's visit and the marriage of Princess Maria Amalia in April of 1738. “Fifty-eight thaler for the evening music offered to His Royal Majesty, etc., on April 27, 1738, were paid to me by a Worshipful University in Leipzig this day.” Eight talers<sup>141</sup> of that went to the town pipers.<sup>142</sup>

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139. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 358.

140. Bach, *The New Bach Reader*, 164.

141. Thaler is the historical spelling of the word. Taler is modern spelling and will be used in all cases except for quotes.

142. Bach, *The New Bach Reader*, 199.



It is assumed from these remarks that Bach was compensated by the university for works presented by the *collegium musicum*. The university in connection with the city organized many of the events that were good publicity for Bach. The events at Zimmerman's were also good publicity for Bach as they were well attended by paying guests and by spectators who filled the square trying to listen for free.<sup>143</sup> The fifty thalers paid to him for composing the work was equivalent to half of his annual salary, making it an attractive bonus.<sup>144</sup>

Finally, on November 19, 1736 Bach was granted the title of "*Compositeur* to the Royal Court Orchestra."<sup>145</sup> We do not know Bach's personal feelings about the elector or electress or his feelings about the appointment, other than being hopeful it would help him in dealing with conflicts between him and his superiors in Leipzig. What we do know is that once Bach received his title, with the exception of a few birthday or name day cantatas that were remakes of earlier works, the flow of these congratulatory works for the royal family stopped.<sup>146</sup>

The next portion of this thesis will be devoted to three members of the royal family at Dresden, capital of Saxony: Augustus III, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland; Maria Josepha, Archduchess of the Hapsburg Empire, Queen of Poland and Electress of Saxony; and their son, Crown Prince Friedrich Christian.

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143. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 360.

144. Ibid.

145. Bach, *The New Bach Reader*, 188.

146. C. Sandford Terry, "Bach's Dresden Appointment," *The Musical Times*, Vol. 73, No. 1070, (April 1, 1932): 316, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/920088> (accessed January 22, 2009).

*Friedrich Christian, Crown Prince of Saxony*

In the life of a Baroque composer such as Johann Sebastian Bach, one of the ways that a composer made himself known was to compose special occasion works for current or potential patrons. The birthday of a prince would be an event significant enough to warrant a musical composition. This is exactly what Bach did for Crown Prince Friedrich Christian of Saxony (1722-1763). For the prince's eleventh birthday Bach wrote *Laßt uns sorgen, laßt uns wachen* (Let us care for, let us watch), BWV 213, more commonly known as *Hercules auf dem Scheidewege* (Hercules at the Crossroads).<sup>147</sup>

The purpose of this birthday composition for the prince was more to garner favor with the parents than the prince. Friedrich Christian's father was Augustus III, newly crowned Elector of Saxony and declared King of Poland, son of recently deceased *August der Starke*. Friedrich Christian's mother was Maria Josepha of the famous house of Habsburg, daughter of deceased Holy Roman Emperor Joseph, and Electress of Saxony and Queen of Poland through her marriage to Augustus III. The composition of a birthday piece for a crown prince would be quite a flattering display of loyalty to Augustus III and Maria Josepha, known to spend large amounts of money on music and theatre at the Dresden court.<sup>148</sup>

*Laßt uns sorgen, laßt uns wachen* was one in a series of works Bach composed for the royal family and was performed September 5, 1733,<sup>149</sup> less than two months after

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147. Durr, 824.

148. Ortrun Landmann, "The Dresden Hofkapelle during the Lifetime of Johann Sebastian Bach," *Early Music*, Vol. 17, No. 1, Oxford University Press (February 1989): 17, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3127257> (accessed March 15, 2009).

149. Durr, 820.

Bach's petition to the elector of Saxony for a court title. Several more works for the royal family followed *Laßt uns sorgen, laßt uns wachen* in the next two years. These included a birthday cantata for Maria Josepha, a coronation cantata for Augustus III, a cantata to celebrate the first anniversary of his ascension to the throne, and a birthday cantata (performed later) and name day cantata for Augustus III.<sup>150</sup> The birthday cantatas for Maria Josepha and Augustus III will be discussed in other chapters.

### The Birthday Cantata for Prince Christian

*Laßt uns sorgen, laßt uns wachen* was performed by Bach and the student *collegium musicum* in the coffee garden at Zimmermann's Coffee House in Leipzig on September 5, 1733.<sup>151</sup> The honored person was not always present at these honorary musical events but the composer had hopes that word of the production would get back to the honoree and the composer would be granted some sort of title, court appointment, or notoriety. No one in the royal family was in attendance but assuredly Bach's hopes were that they would hear of the performance.

Picander was the librettist for Bach's *Laßt uns sorgen, laßt uns wachen*. In many works regarding royal or notable families, the obvious is ignored and the story much more idealistic. This libretto likens the eleven-year old prince to the mythological Hercules who was a "favorite symbol of baroque ruling figures."<sup>152</sup> Friedrich was born with a physical handicap and consideration was given to passing the throne to his

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150. Durr., 819-820.

151. Ibid., 824.

152. Ibid.

younger brother, Xavier. Apparently legal reasons prevented this.<sup>153</sup> Whittaker refers to the prince as “crippled and delicate.”<sup>154</sup> Poets and musicians would bend or ignore the truth to please royalty.

Works of this nature were not necessarily intended to be realistic but overlooked the faults of royalty in a grand display of flattery. In Virtue’s recitative, “Mein hoffnungsvoller Held!” (My hero, full of promise!)<sup>155</sup> Virtue asks Hercules to “take his hand and he will show him the way to attain his ancestors’ fame and deeds.”<sup>156</sup> Friedrich Christian’s ancestors’ fame and deeds include those of his grandfather, *August der Starke*, who was notorious for indulging his passions and fathering perhaps hundreds of illegitimate children, and Friedrich’s father Augustus III, declared by historians as a terribly inadequate and inferior ruler whose ascension to the Polish throne plunged Poland into the War for Polish succession (1733-1735).<sup>157</sup> In all fairness to the royal family, the Dresden court was unrivalled throughout the reign of these two men in its artistic devotion, particularly in the areas of music and theatre.

This *dramma per musica* actually goes beyond the usual inflation of the ego of the honoree to include somewhat of a plot. The drama begins as the opening chorus calls on the gods to watch over their divine son, Hercules, that he may become “glorious and

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153. Karlheinz Blaschke, “Friedrich Christian,” from *Sächsische Biografie*, Institut für Sächsische Geschichte und Volkskunde, Online-Ausgabe, Martina Schattkowsky, ed., <http://www.isgv.de/saebi/> (accessed August 26, 2009).

154. Whittaker, 623.

155. Dürr, 822.

156. Young, 262.

157. Harold D. Nelson, ed., *Poland: a Country Study*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Foreign Area Studies, Area handbook series, The American University (Washington D.C.: United States Government as represented by the Secretary of the Army, 1983), 27.

radiant.”<sup>158</sup> Hercules meets two women at a crossroads. As expected each woman has a promise if he will follow her path. The path of the first woman, Pleasure (*Wollust*), is that of ease and luxury. The other woman, Virtue (*Tugend*), offers hardship, but virtue and glory. Hercules must make a choice of whether he will follow the path of Pleasure or Virtue. The following recitatives and arias take the listener through a discussion of which path to pursue as Pleasure tries to lure Hercules down her road and then Virtue claims Hercules as her true son. Hercules decides to follow the virtuous path and joins himself to Virtue in the hope of being a virtuous ruler. Hercules and Virtue then join together in an aria duetto where they claim to be united.

In the closing recitative, Mercury, the god of tradesmen, whom Durr says is a personification of Leipzig and its citizens,<sup>159</sup> declares to the listener that this is a picture of the Crown Prince Friedrich. Mercury lauds the virtue of the Saxon Crown Prince and declares him full of promise. Perhaps in this particular case, Bach and Picander got it right. In reality it seems that despite his grandfather’s sensuous appetites and his father’s lack of leadership qualities, Frederick did make some virtuous choices in life. Frederick rejected the disinterested attitude of this father in governmental affairs and contrary to his father’s reign developed the attitude that the prince existed for his subjects rather than the subjects for their princes. The prince was tolerant of varying religious beliefs in contrast to his father to whom religious beliefs were a means to gain power and control. Augustus III converted from Lutheranism to Catholicism in order to be crowned King of Poland. Prince Friedrich (figure 8) began his rule with many plans for reform but died suddenly

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158. Dürr, 820.

159. *Ibid.*, 825.

after only ten weeks of ruling. In his short life he impacted Saxony as he placed the welfare of his state above his own personal ambitions.<sup>160</sup>



Figure 8. Painting by Anton Raphael Mengs of Prince Friedrich Christian, Crown Prince of Saxony. *Source:* © Deutsche Fotothek/SLUB Dresden. Used by permission of SLUB Dresden/DeutscheFotothek. <http://www.deutschefotothek.de/obj70249124.html> (accessed March 18, 2010).

*Laßt uns sorgen, laßt uns wachen* is not as regal and powerful as the cantatas written later for parents Augustus III and Maria Josepha but still has a royal, refined feel. It is elegant and beautiful, proper for a royal honoree. As it was written for an eleven-year old prince, it is fitting that it is more sedate and tender than the works written for the boy's mother and father. The role of Hercules was sung by an alto and probably was

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160. Blaschke, "Friedrich Christian," from *Sächsische Biografie*.

performed by a young boy or a falsettist.<sup>161</sup> The cantata follows the alternating recitative aria form, encompassed by a four-part chorus on each end, common to secular cantatas written by Bach. The vocal parts consist of Soprano (*Wollust*), Alto (*Herkules*), Tenor (*Tugend*), and Bass (*Merkur*). The orchestration consists of two horns, oboe *d'amore*, oboe, two violins, viola, and continuo including bassoon.<sup>162</sup> As was so common in Bach's compositions, the effects of the instruments and voices are used to paint the text in a variety of interesting ways.

Bach expresses Picander's words well through music in a popular aria from this cantata, Hercules "Echo Aria" or "Treues Echo dieser Orten." The preceding aria is a dialogue between Pleasure and Virtue as to why Hercules should follow each. In the "Echo Aria" that follows this, Hercules asks "Echo" for advice, but it appears as though Hercules is really questioning within himself which is the better path. The aria contains a simple beauty being scored only for oboe *d'amore*, two alto singers, and continuo. The obvious imagery is that of an echo. Although the "echo" answers quietly, like a distant voice, the aria is more like a trio between the two voices and the oboe *d'amore* as the oboe *d'amore* participates in the echo effect along with the secondary alto voice (figure 9). The continuo supplied by harpsichord and bassoon and marked *pizzicato*,<sup>163</sup> lends to the pensive and thoughtful mood of the aria.

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161. Dürr, 825.

162. Johann Sebastian Bach, *Laßt uns sorgen, laßt uns wachen*, in *Neue Ausgabe Samtlicher Werke*, Series I, Band 36 (Kassel: Barenreiter, 1963).

163. Johann Sebastian Bach, "Treues Echo dieser Orten" from *Laßt uns sorgen, laßt uns wachen*, in *Neue Ausgabe Samtlicher Werke*, Series I, Band 36 (Kassel: Barenreiter, 1963), 40.

The image shows a musical score for the cantata 'Laßt uns sorgen, laßt uns wachen' by J.S. Bach, BWV 213. It features an oboe part and two vocal parts (soprano and tenor). The oboe part is marked 'pianissimo' and 'piano'. The vocal parts are marked 'pianissimo' and 'piano'. The lyrics are 'ja, ja, ja, ja, ja, ja, ja, ja!'. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of 12 measures.

Figure 9. Echo imagery between oboe and voices in “Treues Echo dieser Orten” from *Laßt uns sorgen, laßt uns wachen*, BWV 213, by J.S. Bach, mm. 121-124. *Source:* Used by permission of Bach Cantatas Website, Webmaster Aryeh Oron. <http://bach-cantatas.com/BGA/BWV213-BGA.pdf> (accessed March 18, 2010).

Virtue’s tenor da capo aria “Auf meinen Flügeln sollst du schweben” (On my wings you shall hover)<sup>164</sup> is in fugal form; oboe, solo violin, continuo (including bassoon), and voice each take their turn presenting the subject in the introduction. Dürr says this fugal form is rare in a solo aria.<sup>165</sup> Virtue is urging Hercules to follow her that he would be free to soar like the eagle. Virtue sings the words *Auf meinen Flügeln sollst du schweben, Auf meinem Fittich steigst du* (On my wings you shall hover, On my pinions you climb).<sup>166</sup> Bach illustrates the flight of the eagle as the singer hovers on *schweben* (hover) measures 14-16, through a series of turns based around a B-natural (figure 10), followed by a climbing melody of sixteenth notes on the word *steigst* (climb) measures 17-18 (figure 11).<sup>167</sup> This feature appears throughout the piece,

164. Dürr, 822.

165. *Ibid.*, 826.

166. *Ibid.*, 822.

167. Johann Sebastian Bach, “Auf meinen Flügeln sollst du schweben” from *Laßt uns sorgen, laßt uns wachen*, *Neue Ausgabe Samtlicher Werke*, Series I, Band 36 (Kassel: Barenreiter, 1963), 47.



including its presentation in the introduction. As in a fugue, all instruments and the voices take turns with the hovering and soaring melody. The intense fugal sound of this aria in a minor key combined with imagery of the flight of the eagle makes this piece interesting and exciting.



Figure 10. Text painting on schweben in “Auf meinen Flügeln sollst du schweben” from *Laßt uns sorgen, laßt uns wachen*, BWV 213, by J.S. Bach, mm. 14-16. *Source:* Used by permission of Bach Cantatas Website, Webmaster Aryeh Oron. <http://bach-cantatas.com/BGA/BWV213-BGA.pdf> (accessed March 12, 2010).



Figure 11. Text painting on steigt in “Auf meinen Flügeln sollst du schweben” from *Laßt uns sorgen, laßt uns wachen*, BWV 213, by J.S. Bach, mm. 17-18. *Source:* Used by permission of Bach Cantatas Website, Webmaster Aryeh Oron. <http://bach-cantatas.com/BGA/BWV213-BGA.pdf> (accessed March 12, 2010).

Bach used the opening and closing chorus and all of the arias from *Laßt uns sorgen, laßt uns wachen* in some form in the *Christmas Oratorio*. “Excepting the final chorus, taken from BWV 184, all the principal numbers of this cantata were incorporated in the *Christmas Oratorio*.”<sup>168</sup> Terry and Whittaker speculate that Bach was already preparing the *Christmas Oratorio* and actually borrowed numbers from it, as it had yet to

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168. Young, 261.

be performed, and then quickly adapted them for the Crown Prince's birthday cantata.<sup>169</sup> In reference to the opening chorus Whittaker states, "It is inconceivable that this great and broad chorus, with its majestic sweep of movement, its lofty dignity, its immense spaciousness, should have been written as a *pièce de circonstance* for the birthday of an absent, sickly child."<sup>170</sup> Many his suppositions are based on the premise that the words and text painting fit the *Christmas Oratorio* better than *Laßt uns sorgen, laßt uns wachen*. The mystery of Bach's intent and what work was composed first will most likely never be solved but whether for the Christ Child or the crown prince, the beauty of the music is befitting royalty.

*Maria Josepha, Archduchess of Austrian, Queen of Poland, Electress of Saxony*

The next historical figure discussed is Maria Josepha (1699-1757) Archduchess of Austria, Queen of Poland, Electress of Saxony, for whom Bach wrote *Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!* (Sound, you drums! Ring out, you trumpets!), BWV 214. Maria Josepha is one of the most prestigious recipients of a Bach birthday cantata. Her Hapsburg lineage places her in the highest social and political spheres during this time period. Press describes the imperial court of Austria as "doubtless the most important court in the Holy Roman Empire."<sup>171</sup> Maria Josepha's grandfather was the famous Leopold I, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire (1657-1705) and archduke of the

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169. Terry, "The 'Christmas Oratorio': Original or Borrowed? I," *The Musical Times*, 887-889.

170. Whittaker, 625.

171. Volker Press, "The Habsburg Court as the Center of the Imperial Government," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 58 Supplement: Politics and Society in the Holy Roman Empire, 1500-1806 (University of Chicago Press, December 1986): S23 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1880006> (accessed March 14, 2009).

Habsburg Empire. Maria Josepha's father was Emperor Joseph I of Habsburg (1678-1711). Crowned as King of Hungary in 1687 and in 1690 as King of the Romans, (similar to a pre-election for emperor used to guarantee succession) he was elected as successor to the imperial crown as a boy of eleven.<sup>172</sup> At the age of twenty-six, Joseph I succeeded his father as Holy Roman Emperor (figure 12).

Not only were the Hapsburgs a politically-important family but they were definitely patrons of the arts. Music was a part of state and family occasions in the Habsburg monarchy. Maria Josepha's family promoted music through their elaborate chapels and contingent of court musicians, their patronage, and their introduction of foreign musicians into the Austrian court. Maria Josepha's grandfather Leopold encouraged the growth of opera and the patronage of Italian composers and performers. Leopold and son Joseph, sang, played instruments, composed, and even conducted at court performances.<sup>173</sup> Maria Josepha grew up well educated and trained in music. As a Habsburg archduchess, she was a student of the imperial *Kapellmeister* Guiseppe Porsile. Maria had a "special fondness for Italian poetry and music"<sup>174</sup> coming as no surprise, considering the Italian influence of her father and grandfather's musical courts.

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172. Eduard Vehse, *Memoirs of the Court of Austria*, Vol. II Secret Memoirs, Courts of Europe. 79.

173. H.V.F Somerset, "The Habsburg Emperors as Musicians," *Music & Letters*, Vol 30, No. 3, (Oxford University Press, July 1949): 205-207, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/731004> (accessed March 14, 2009).

174. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 365.

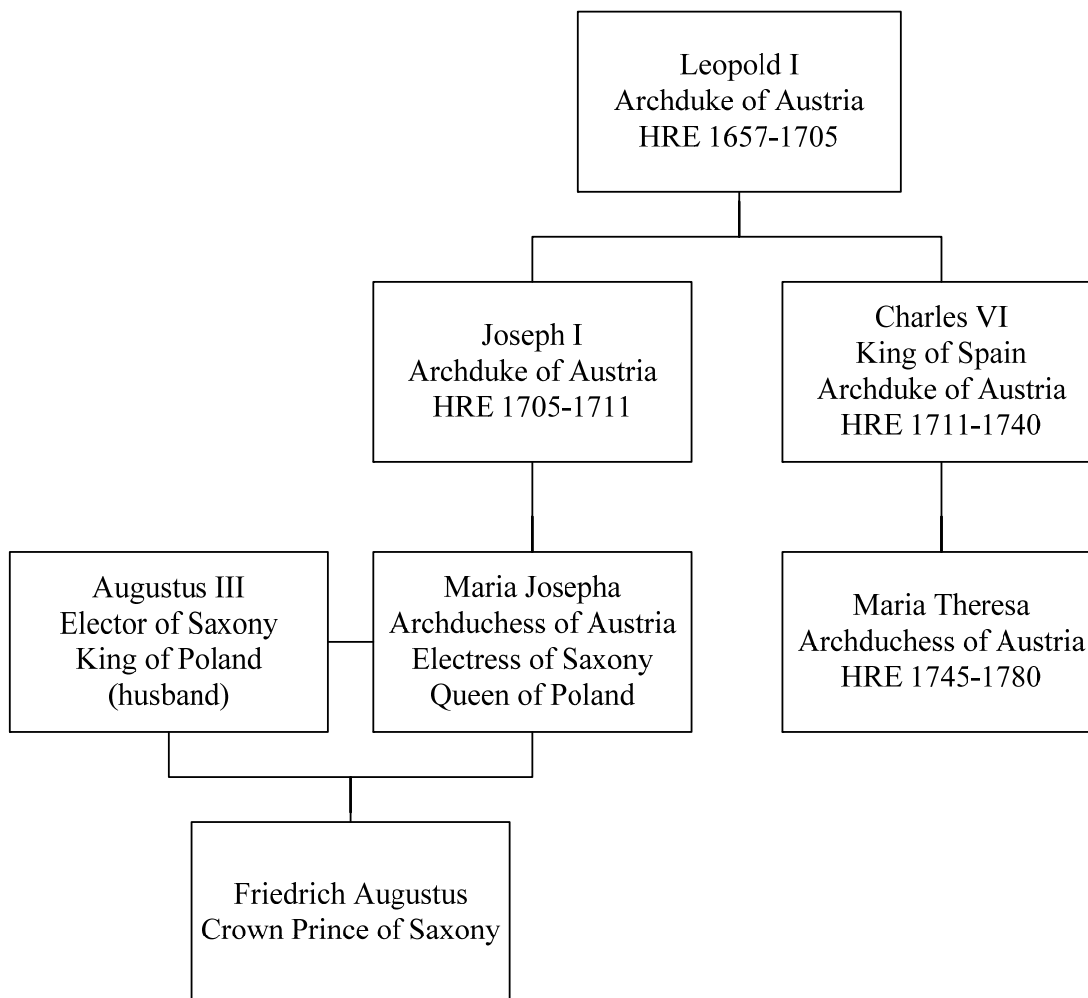


Figure 12. Simplified Habsburg family tree showing connection to the House of Saxony (includes only historical figures mentioned in this chapter).<sup>175</sup>

Fate would cheat Maria Josepha out of the highest position a woman could hold in the Holy Roman Empire. Her father Joseph, who had avoided smallpox as a child,<sup>176</sup> contracted it and died suddenly on April 17, 1711, at the age of thirty-three, leaving as his only heirs twelve-year-old Maria Josepha and her younger sister Amalia. Upon Joseph's

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175. Source: adapted from R. J. W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1550-1700, An Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 454-455.

176. Dorothy Gies McGuigan, *The Habsburgs*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966), 216.

death, his brother, Charles VI, quickly relinquished his claims to the throne of Spain to take Joseph's place as the archduke of Austria and elected emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Joseph's insistence of succession to the throne for his daughters written in the *pactum mutuae successionis* lost its power after his death. Charles felt no obligation to keep this part of the agreement and made public the famous Pragmatic Sanction of 1713 allowing for female succession to the throne of Austria and transferred rights of succession to his children.<sup>177</sup> Through this act, Charles secured the throne of Austria for his daughter, Maria Theresa who would later become Empress of the Holy Roman Empire and mobilize an army against Frederick the Great during the War of Austrian Succession.<sup>178</sup>

Marriage in the house of Habsburg was often more of a question of politics than romance and such was the case for Maria Josepha. She was married in 1719 at the age of twenty to Augustus III, son of *August der Starke* (Augustus the Strong). The purpose of this marriage was to “counter-balance Russian influences in Poland and to secure Saxon succession to the Polish throne.”<sup>179</sup> Indeed, years later she was crowned with her husband in 1734 as Queen of Poland when he became king (still maintaining the title of elector of Saxony). Upon Maria Josepha's marriage to Augustus III in 1719, her uncle Charles VI made her renounce any claims to succeed his daughters to the throne of the Holy Roman

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177. Victor S. Mamatey, *Rise of the Habsburg Empire 1526-1815* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1971), 92-93.

178. Francis Russell, *The Horizon Concise History of Germany* (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1973), 144.

179. George Lerski, *Historical Dictionary of Poland 966-1945* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 399.

Empire. Augustus III made a renouncement of claims to the throne along with her.<sup>180</sup>

While married to Augustus III Maria Josepha “participated in politics, wished to see her husband as the next Emperor, and strengthened the dynastic positions of the Wettins through politically attractive marriages of her fourteen children. She unsuccessfully tried to assure the succession of her son Xavier to the Polish throne.”<sup>181</sup>

Maria Josepha (figure 13) arrived at the Dresden Court of imperial elector *August der Starke*, in 1719 upon her marriage to his son Augustus III. There she was involved in the court music, especially music for the court church. For the purpose of developing the church music there, she “personally saw to acquiring for the court church’s music library the estates of court capellmeisters Johann Christoph Schmidt and Johann David Heinichen, concertmaster Jean-Baptiste Volumier, and later, court composers Jan Dismas Zelenka and Giovannin Alberto Ristori and concertmaster Johann George Pisendel.”<sup>182</sup> Maria also had a large *Chambre de Musique* constructed for orchestral performances soon after her arrival at Dresden.<sup>183</sup>

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180. Mamatey, 83.

181. Lerski, 399.

182. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 365.

183. Landmann, 28.



Figure 13. Maria Josepha of the House of Habsburg, Archduchess of Austria, Electress of Saxony, Queen of Poland. Painting by court painter Louis de Silvestre in 1719. *Source:* ©Deutsche Fotothek/SLUB Dresden. Used by permission of SLUB Dresden/Deutsche Fotothek. <http://www.deutschefotothek.de/obj70239320.html> (accessed March 18, 2010).

Maria Josepha and her husband Augustus III shared a desire for the arts and both participated frequently in court productions. They would often get personally involved in the details of staging and cast selection for operas performed at the court. Passing the cultivation of the musical arts on to her children, Wolff records that the children received a thorough musical education as well.<sup>184</sup> At this time the Saxon court at Dresden was the biggest in Germany. With such a well-established court, the exposure alone to the music and musicians would have provided an excellent background for a musical education.

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184. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 365.

## The Birthday Cantata for Maria Josepha

*Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!* was performed by Bach and the student collegium musicum under Bach's direction on December 8, 1733. Bach completed the composition the night before the performance.<sup>185</sup> It was large for an indoor work of this kind, and is scored for tromba I, II, III, timpani, traverse flute I, II, oboe I, II, violin I, II, viola, and continuo (including violoncello and violone).<sup>186</sup> Sadly, this inspiring composition was probably only heard once. It is also sad that no one in the royal family was in attendance, but as many aspiring composers of that time period, Bach surely had hopes that word of the composition and performance would make its way back to the Dresden court. Terry expresses certainty that at the very least the libretto was sent to Dresden.<sup>187</sup>

Bach gave *Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!* the operatic subtitle *dramma per musica*. This makes a great deal of sense when Maria Josepha's background and fondness of Italian opera is considered. The work also follows the scheme of Bach's other *drammi per musica*: alternating recitative-aria sets, sandwiched by a chorus on each end. There is no plot, it simply lauds the queen. *Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!* is scored for four voices representing four mythological characters: "Bellona, goddess of war (soprano); Pallas, guardian of the muses and of knowledge (alto); Irene,

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185. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 363.

186. Johann Sebastian Bach, *Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!* in *Neue Ausgabe Samtlicher Werke*, Series I, Band 36 (Kassel: Barenreiter, 1963).

187. Terry, "The 'Christmas Oratorio': Original or Borrowed? I," *The Musical Times*, 888.



goddess of peace (tenor); and Fama, goddess of fame (bass).”<sup>188</sup> Yes, oddly, two of the female goddesses have male ranges (tenor and bass), but this enabled Bach to put together a four-part chorus and gave more variety to the solos. Each goddess showers the queen with flattery and extols her greatness and as Dürr so aptly writes, “Nothing else happens.”<sup>189</sup>

The librettist is unknown or undecided. Since the libretto is initialed “J. S. B.” Forkel<sup>190</sup> and Spitta<sup>191</sup> give credit to Bach for the libretto as do Whittaker<sup>192</sup> and Young.<sup>193</sup> Scholars now seem to refute that according to Dürr “. . . but this is contradicted by the observation that all three arias are designed according to the same verse scheme: it is most unlikely that Bach would have imposed this constraint upon himself without drawing the least consequences from it in his musical setting of the words.”<sup>194</sup>

In contrast with a libretto that goes nowhere, the music is outstanding. The music for *Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!* certainly is befitting a lady of royal birth and sounds like a processional written for a queen. The opening chorus is exuberant and

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188. Dürr, 830.

189. Ibid.

190. Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Johann Sebastian Bach, His Life, Art, and Work*, trans. uncertain (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1920), 44.

191. Philip Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach, His Work and Influence on the Music of Germany, 1685-1750*, Vols. 2 & 3, trans., Clara Bell and J.A. Fuller-Maitland, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1951), 574, 630.

192. Whittaker, 640.

193. Young, 263.

194. Dürr, 830.

proud reflecting Maria Josepha's Habsburg heritage. Timpani drums sound and trumpets enter in fanfare as the opening chorus demands attention and inspires the listener. Exciting runs of thirty-second notes in the flutes and violins lend to the royal flurry of sound. Echos of *Königin lebe!* ((May the) Queen live!)<sup>195</sup> set the tone for the cantata. This chorus, reused as the first chorus of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, is absolutely exhilarating from the first note. The drums and trumpets enter in turn as dictated in the first line of the chorus. The trumpet fanfare not only suggests royalty but is "associated with heroic arias."<sup>196</sup> The thrilling runs and strong repeated notes of the instruments suggest strength and majesty. Repeated jumps and leaps in the melodic line portray the joy of the celebration.<sup>197</sup>

Each of the arias in this work has a distinct sound through use of unique instrumentation. "Blast die wohlgegriffnen Flöten" (Blow the well-bored flutes) makes use of two flutes, pizzicato bass, and soprano. The interaction between voices and instruments makes them more like partners than voice and accompaniment. This is especially notable in "Fromme Musen! Meine Glieder!" (Devout Muses! My members!) with its lovely interaction between the alto, Pallas, and the oboe *d'amore*. Use of a trumpet obbligato and strings along with a driving continuo part in the bass aria "Kron and Preis gekrönter Damen" (Crown and prize of crowned ladies) make it powerful and dramatic. The unusual trumpet obbligato emphasizes the royal quality of the aria.<sup>198</sup>

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195. Whittaker, 644.

196. Westrup, 54.

197. James Day, *The Literary Background to Bach's Cantatas* (London: Dobson Books Ltd., 1961), 81.

198. All titles in this paragraph from translation in Dürr, 827-828.

The vocal parts of these arias are written in a very festive and decorative style. In “Blast die wohlgegriffnen Flöten” the soprano, Bellona, goddess of war, invites everyone to celebrate. Pallas, goddess of peace, calls on the Muses to join in the celebration in “Fromme Musen! Meine Glieder!” Fama, goddess of fame (although a bass), sings the final exciting aria “Kron and Preis gekrönter Damen.” Each of the soloists makes use of elaborate melismas and vocal leaps and jumps for joy as they praise the queen. The final chorus is introduced by vigorous trumpets as all characters recap their good wishes and praise to Queen Maria Josepha and wish her a long life.

Even the recitatives in this work are musically dramatic and exciting, and like the arias, contain decorative lines and elaborate melismas. The recitatives do little to advance the plot, since there is none, and simply laud the Queen. In the first recitative, “Heute ist der Tag,” Irene, the goddess of peace, opens the celebration and rejoices that Poles, Saxons, and all have good fortune while in “Mein knallendes Metall” Bellona, the goddess of war, recalls the battle and the pleasure of Saxony’s victory. The other two recitatives by characters Pallas and Fama wish the queen well-being and commend her to heaven’s protection. These sentiments may not have caused Poles who were opposed to Saxon rule much rejoicing. Actually, Maria Josepha’s Saxon husband’s ascension to the Polish throne had prompted the onset of the War of Polish Succession. Victory was not as well wrapped up as this *dramma per musica* would have us to believe. Even though Augustus would eventually be victorious and maintain the throne, the war would last for almost two more years.

Bach borrowed four of the nine numbers (two arias and two choruses) of *Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!* for the *Christmas Oratorio*. *Tönet, ihr Pauken!*

*Erschallet, Trompeten!* was performed first but as arguments between historians show, the order of performance does not necessarily indicate that it was composed first. Terry is of the opinion Bach was already in the process of composing the *Christmas Oratorio* and borrowed *from* it to write Maria's birthday music. He bases his much of his argument on the way the music and instrumentation fit the text in each work. Terry states in comparison of sections of the two works (arias "Tönet, ihr Pauken"/"Der die ganze Welt erhält,") "Is it possible to misread the inspiration of this masculine music? Not the lowliness of Bethlehem, but the celestial might of the Lord of heaven is Bach's theme. How proudly it is declaimed! How brilliantly the trumpet echoes through the royal halls! Not even with her proud Habsburg traditions could Maria Josepha have inspired this virile music!"<sup>199</sup> Terry states further that "some of the declamation in Part II is awkward in the *Dramma* [*Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!*] but natural in the C.O. [*Christmas Oratorio*]."<sup>200</sup>

Westrup is of the opposite opinion that Bach was indeed composing for the occasion of the birthday of a queen and that later he adapted it for the *Christmas Oratorio*. He states that the music was "written to order" and that "He [Bach] may or may not have had regard for the daughter of the late Emperor Joseph I, but he knew very well the sort of music that was proper for a queen's birthday."<sup>201</sup> In reference to the opening chorus when used in the *Christmas Oratorio*, Westrup points out that use of

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199. Whittaker, 651.

200. Ibid.

201. Westrup, 44.

timpani (figure 14) for a church cantata is a “unique occurrence in Bach’s work.”<sup>202</sup>

Young considers it the only time a sacred cantata begins in this manner.<sup>203</sup> Westrup

concludes that drums and trumpets would be more appropriate in celebrations concerning royalty;

The image shows a musical score for the opening chorus of 'Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!' BWV 214 by J.S. Bach. The score is for a choir and instruments. The instruments listed are Tromba I, Tromba II, Tromba III, Timpani, Flauto traverso I, Flauto traverso II, Oboe I, Oboe II, and Violino I. The timpani part is the focus, showing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The other instruments have rests in the first five measures.

Figure 14. Timpani introduction in opening chorus of *Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!* BWV 214, by J.S. Bach, mm. 1-5. *Source:* Used by permission of Bach Cantatas Website, Webmaster Aryeh Oron. <http://bach-cantatas.com/BGA/BWV214-BGA.pdf> (accessed March 12, 2010).

therefore, *Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!* was most likely composed first and borrowed *from* rather than the opposite. As Young points out, it was “quite appropriate for Bach to transfer this music from terrestrial to celestial royalty.”<sup>204</sup>

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202. Westrup, 23.

203. Young, 278.

204. Young, 278.

It is no secret that Bach borrowed extensively from his own library of music apparently without much worry about association with the original composition. If perchance the same audience had been in attendance at both the performance of *Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!* and the *Christmas Oratorio* it is doubtful they would have minded hearing this regal music for the second time even if they did recognize it! One cannot deny the combination of beauty and genius in this rich musical composition. Upon hearing *Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!* it is easy to agree with Dürr who says of the music “Bach is here discovered in the role of one who pays a courtesy call not with a bunch of flowers but with real jewels.”<sup>205</sup>

*Augustus III, Elector of Saxony, King of Poland*

The final birthday recipient to be discussed in this chapter is Augustus III, Elector of Saxony, King of Poland (1696-1763), for whom Bach wrote *Schleicht, spielende Wellen* (Glide playful waves), BWV 206. Written in 1734, *Schleicht, spielende Wellen* was one of the works in a series that Bach presented to the royal family from 1733-1736, apparently in his desire to achieve an appointment at the Dresden court. The circumstances surrounding this composition and the date of the performance will be discussed later.

Bach was no stranger to the Dresden court. His recorded connections with the Dresden court began as early as 1717 toward the end of his tenure at Weimar. It was here he went for his famous competition against the “no-show” French harpsichordist Louis

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205. Dürr, 830.

Marchand. Bach traveled on occasion to Dresden to give organ recitals and was invited to attend the premiere of Hasse's opera "*Cleofide*" in September of 1731.<sup>206</sup>

Bach's courtship of Dresden royalty began with the father of Augustus III, known as *August der Starke* who was the elector of Saxony when Bach took his appointment as *Kantor* at the *Thomasschule* in Leipzig in 1723. Writing music for events such as birthdays, coronations, or academic ceremonies was not a part of Bach's regular job at Leipzig, but Bach knew that works of this kind were indispensable in gaining the attention of the court. Bach wrote three known celebratory works for *August der Starke*. After *August der Starke* died, Bach wrote several works for Augustus III, including *Schleicht, spielende Wellen*.

The Dresden court presents a picture of great irony. The court was the most elegant in Europe yet considered reckless and immoral. Both father and son have historical reputations as anything but stellar rulers in the annals of Polish history. *August der Starke* was thought to have had over 300 illegitimate children.<sup>207</sup> Under the rule of both father and son, the cultural and economic situation in Poland is described as being at "its lowest ebb."<sup>208</sup> Davies refers to this time period as "the pit of Saxon decadence."<sup>209</sup>

Despite this reputation, the Dresden court was above comparison in Europe during the time of Bach and attracted many musicians such as Hasse, Quantz, Zelenka, Pisendel, Weiss, and Ristori. One can be certain that Bach was aware that *August der*

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206. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 365.

207. Russell, 142.

208. Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe, a Short History of Poland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 305.

209. *Ibid.*, 307.

*Starke* and his son Augustus III appropriated a great deal of money to the cultivation of the arts. Following his travels from 1714-1717 Prince Augustus III returned to Dresden and increased the size of the *Hofkapelle*.<sup>210</sup> He brought back from Venice an entire Italian opera troupe!<sup>211</sup> At the time of Bach's 1717 visit to the Saxon capital for his harpsichord competition with Marchand, the personnel budget for the Italian opera company was 45,033 talers. Stage sets, decorations, and costumes for a performance of the opera *Giove in Argo* amounted to 8,578 talers. *Kapellmeister* Lotti and his wife, singer Santa Stella, earned the extraordinary amount of 10,500 talers. At the Dresden court, *Vice-Kapellmeister* Heinichen was paid 1,200 talers—three times the amount Bach would be paid as *Kapellmeister* when he went to Köthen.<sup>212</sup> These are but a few examples of the expenditures of the Dresden court under *August der Starke*.

In 1719 Augustus III was married to Maria Josepha, Archduchess of Habsburg, and daughter of deceased Holy Roman Emperor Joseph I. The elaborate marriage festivities included the performance of an Antonio Lotti's opera *Teofane*. Handel and Telemann were both there.<sup>213</sup> Maria Josepha, was accustomed to spending large amounts of money on elaborate musical productions and pursuits. She continued to do so after her marriage to Augustus III. Once her husband ascended to the throne, she lost no time in having a *Chambre de Musique* of 85 square meters constructed at the court.<sup>214</sup> She and

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210. Landmann, 17.

211. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 182.

212. *Ibid.*, 183.

213. Landmann, 23.

214. *Ibid.*, 28.



her husband shared a love of Italian opera, as well taking an active role in promoting the development of music for chamber, theatre, and church.

The Dresden court had one of the best-trained orchestras in Europe. Employment as a musician at the Dresden court during the rule of Augustus III and his father was certainly something to be desired. When Bach visited in 1717 the *Kapelle* consisted of approximately thirty-three instrumentalists, not including composers, trumpeters, or the *Kapellmeister*. Upon the ascension of Augustus III the number increased to around forty-two,<sup>215</sup> more than twice the number of instrumentalists Bach would have to work with at Köthen.<sup>216</sup> The Dresden court had regulations in musicians' contracts specifying a single instrument for each player—almost unheard of in court orchestras at this time—and boasted a group of court trumpeters unrivaled in the empire.<sup>217</sup> The court even had its own professional, full-time copyists as opposed to many other courts where copying music was assigned as part-time work to someone already in the court's employ.<sup>218</sup> Landmann describes the “central elements of the Dresden repertoire: virtuosity (or technical ability united with tasteful performance) and a desire to experience the sensuous beauty of sound.”<sup>219</sup> Bach may have considered the sound of the Dresden court the model

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215. Landmann, 20.

216. G. Kraft and Percy M. Young, “Cöthen,” in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*.

217. Landmann, 20, 23.

218. Landmann, 20.

219. *Ibid.*, 28.

for some of his compositions at Leipzig.<sup>220</sup> It is no small wonder that Bach would desire a position at this court.

Augustus III (figure 15) became the imperial elector of Saxony in 1733 upon the death of his father, *August der Starke*. As *August der Starke* was also king of Poland, his death left the Polish throne vacant. This led to a conflict known as the War of Polish Succession.<sup>221</sup> A convention of Polish nobles, backed by France and Sweden and tired of the rule of *August der Starke*, elected Stanislas Leczinski, father-in-law of Louis XV to the throne.<sup>222</sup> Stanislas had worn the crown previously in 1704-1709. Augustus III was the rival candidate, wanting to succeed his father. Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI, the uncle of Augustus III's Habsburg wife, was willing to back Augustus III in return for a complete guarantee to honor the Pragmatic Sanction. Russia and Austria were afraid the Poles would form an alliance with Sweden and France, so Russia invaded Poland and ousted the newly elected Stanislas and set Augustus III on the throne. A minority of the Polish gentry then confirmed his election as King of Poland after he agreed to respect their freedoms. He converted to Catholicism as his father had done, in order to receive the crown.

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220. Hans-Joachim Schulze, "Johann Sebastian Bach's Orchestra: Some Unanswered Questions," *Early Music*, Vol 17, No. 1, Oxford University Press (February 1989): 14, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3127256> (accessed March 14, 2009).

221. Russell, 142.

222. Nelson, 26-27.



Figure 15. Augustus III, Elector of Saxony, King of Poland. *Source:* ©Deutsche Fotothek/SLUB Dresden. Used by permission of SLUB Dresden/Deutsche Fotothek. <http://www.deutsche-fotothek.de/obj70249155.html> (accessed March 18, 2010).

Augustus III was King of Poland for twenty-seven years. Apparently he liked the title of king more than the actual duties of being a king. He made no attempt to learn the Polish language and reportedly disliked the country itself, spending only two of his twenty-seven year rule there. He left the leadership of the country to some of his royal favorites and corrupt ministers, and maintained his alliance with Russia since he owed Peter the Great help in gaining the throne.<sup>223</sup> The reign of Augustus III and his father are

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223. Lerski, 20-21.

referred to as “Undoubtedly the worst dynasty in Poland’s history.”<sup>224</sup> With pleasure more important than government, state finances, education, and the administration of justice rapidly went downhill. The central government almost ceased to function and the Polish nobles lived as though there was no tomorrow, depleting their resources. They had a saying, “Under the Saxon king, loosen your belt, eat, and drink!”<sup>225</sup> Obviously, this was a side of the recipient of the inspiring *Schleicht, spielende Wellen* that we do not see presented in Bach’s cantata.

### The Birthday Cantata for Augustus III

*Schleicht, spielende Wellen* was supposed to have been the first personal presentation of one of Bach’s compositions to Augustus III.<sup>226</sup> Leipzig citizens were anticipating the arrival and birthday celebration of the elector and king. The excitement of this opportunity may have been a factor in prompting Bach to write an entirely original work. Unfortunately for Bach, the elector and consort arrived in Leipzig to attend the Michaelmas Fair ahead of schedule for a birthday celebration but just in time for the first anniversary of his coronation as King of Poland.<sup>227</sup> Of course one would be obliged to honor the elector on such an important occasion so Bach hastily composed, in about three days, *Preise dein Glucke, gesegnetes Sachsen* (Praise Your Good Luck, Blessed Saxony), BWV 215, to honor the coronation anniversary date. It was presented to King Augustus

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224. George Sandford and Adriana Gozdecka-Sanford, *Historical Dictionary of Poland*, European Historical Dictionaries, No. 3 (Metuchen, N. J. & London: Scarecrow Press, 1994), 183.

225. Nelson, 27.

226. Whittaker, 674

227. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 363.

III and Queen Maria Josepha on October 5, 1734 complete with a procession of 600 torch-carrying students, only three days before the intended performance of *Schleicht, spielende Wellen*.<sup>228</sup> Although no historical documentation was found to support this opinion, it surely must have been somewhat of a disappointment to Bach, who was seeking court recognition, to not have been able to extol and dazzle the elector with the much-planned performance of the birthday cantata first.

At this point accounts differ as to the date of the performance of *Schleicht, spielende Wellen*. Young reports that it was presented by Bach three days later on October 7, 1734. He concludes that *Schleicht, spielende Wellen* was performed in a public ceremony before the home of a merchant, Apel, where the elector and his consort often stayed during their time in Leipzig. They heard the work played by members of Bach's *collegium musicum* through the windows of the home.<sup>229</sup> Wolff favors the view that *Schleicht, spielende Wellen* was written in 1734 but performed two years later for the elector's birthday in 1736 at Zimmerman's Coffee House.<sup>230</sup> Durr concludes that Bach intended to perform the work for the elector's birthday in 1734 but due to being preempted by the anniversary coronation ceremony, the work was completed and performed in 1736. He suggests an outdoor performance, even though the elector's birthday was in October, due to the festive scoring complete with trumpets I, II, and III, and timpani drums.<sup>231</sup>

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228. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 360.

229. Young, 267.

230. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*.

231. Dürr, 847.

To help determine whether *Schleicht, spielende Wellen* was an indoor or outdoor performance Wolff compares the numbers on invoices from the Breitkopf music publishing firm for printing copies of the text for the public and presentation copies for the honored person. He records 200 copies for *Schleicht, spielende Wellen*, BWV 206, similar to the indoor orders of 150 each for *Blast Lärmen, ihr Feinde!* BWV 205a and *Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!* BWV 214. About the same amount were printed for outdoor works in the Zimmerman Coffee House gardens, for example, 200 copies for *Hercules auf dem Scheidewege*, BWV 213. For works performed outdoors in front of Apel's house on the south side of the market square with the king present, greater amounts of copies were ordered. One example is that 700 copies were ordered for *Preise dein Glück, gesegnetes Sachsen*, BWV 215.<sup>232</sup> These numbers would indicate a performance of *Schleicht, spielende Wellen* took place indoors or in the Zimmerman Coffee House gardens.

*Schleicht spielende Wellen* appears to be entirely original music with no borrowing from other cantatas or instrumental works. It also appears that Bach never re-used any of the melodies.<sup>233</sup> This is very unique since Bach frequently borrowed from himself. Since these secular tunes were often occasional and possibly would not be heard again, Bach would often “repeat a secular cantata with new words to suit a different occasion.”<sup>234</sup> As far as we know Bach did not do the reverse and use sacred cantata tunes to write secular cantatas, although there is some discussion among scholars about this

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232. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Learned Musician*, 360.

233. Young, 267

234. Westrup, 19.

point in regards to the *Christmas Oratorio*. (This aspect of Bach's "borrowing" was discussed in the sections regarding *Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!*, BWV 214, for Queen Maria Josepha and *Hercules auf dem Scheidewege*, BWV 213, for Maria Josepha's son, the crown prince.) Bach revised the text and repeated *Schliecht, spielende Wellen* for the elector's name day, August 3, 1740.<sup>235</sup>

*Schliecht, spielende Wellen* is scored for three trumpets, timpani, two oboes d'amore, three traverse flutes, three strings, and a continuo of a cello and double-bass, lavish for this time period and similar to the other royal cantatas.<sup>236</sup> In the *Bach Neue Ausgabe Sämtlicher Werke* score the brass parts are listed as Tromba I, Tromba II, and Tromba III. Bach was probably referring to the *tromba da tararsi*, a slide trumpet. The cantata is also scored for four voices, SATB, each representing one of the rivers that flow through Saxony or Poland. The soprano represents the Pleisse; the alto, the Danube; the tenor, the Elbe; and the bass, the Vistula. This will be discussed in more detail later.

Two choral numbers performed by the four voices or "rivers" frame the cantata. The opening number is an absolutely exhilarating chorus; the closing chorus while not as invigorating as the opening, is still a very powerful and emotional prayer. This seems to fit the style and form of many of Bach's Leipzig cantatas, sacred or secular.<sup>237</sup> The interior of the work is alternating recitative-aria sets. Each river in turn presents a solo recitative and aria that contributes to the message of the cantata. The last recitative of the cantata, before the grand finale, is a combined recitative of the four rivers.

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235. Dürr, 847.

236. Young, 267

237. Wolff, et al., "Bach," in *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*.

Bach used the operatic term *dramma per musica* to describe *Schliecht, spielende Wellen* as he did with many of his secular cantatas. Although Bach never wrote an opera, operatic elements pervade this cantata. As Westrup comments, “The influence of the opera aria is never far away in Bach’s cantatas.”<sup>238</sup> The interior recitative-aria structure follows the operatic style of the period. The recitatives serve as a narrative to advance the drama, follow the inflections and rhythms of speech, have few repeated words, are usually accompanied by continuo only, and introduce the arias. The arias in da capo aria form are more decorative with ornamentation, difficult melismatic passages, repeated phrases, and rhythmic orchestral accompaniment. The instrumental parts provide their own colorful enhancement of the text. The choruses are in ABA or da capo aria form and are rhythmic and lively. *Schliecht spielende Wellen* has a magnificent sound, but most of the music is not complex with “tunes which people could whistle afterwards.”<sup>239</sup> Bach’s description of *dramma per musica*, or a drama in music, is a much better term than cantata for this work.

Christian Friedrich Henrici, known by the pen name of Picander<sup>240</sup> is assumed to be the librettist, although his name is not attached to the cantata.<sup>241</sup> Bach and Picander worked together regularly at Leipzig<sup>242</sup> and Bach made use of Picander librettos in many of his Leipzig cantatas, sacred and secular. “He seems to have been Bach’s favourite

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238. Westrup, 43.

239. *Ibid.*, 5.

240. Day, 36.

241. Whittaker, 674.

242. Ian F. Finlay, “Bach’s Secular Cantata Texts,” *Music & Letters*, Vol 31, No. 3 (July 1950): 189-195, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/729786> (accessed October 27, 2008).



librettist, as he was entrusted, not only with the two passion texts, but also with most of the *pièces d'occasion* where Bach was called upon to provide for birthdays, royal occasions, and so on.”<sup>243</sup>

The plot of this drama in music is intriguing and clever. As mentioned before the main idea revolves around four rivers that flow through Saxony or Poland. The rivers together and in turn praise King Augustus III and in some movements, his Queen. The Pleisse (soprano) is the small river running near Leipzig and is distinguished because of the King’s visit. Part of the Danube or *Donau* (alto) flows through Austria, and represents the Queen, Archduchess Maria Josepha, who came from the Austrian Court. The Elbe (tenor) runs through Saxony and the Vistula or *Weichsel* (bass) through Poland, representing the two countries united under the rule of Augustus.<sup>244</sup> Together the rivers open the cantata with a feeling of joy and anticipation and set the mood for celebration.

The drama of *Schleicht, spielende Wellen* is more involved than the usual series of collected songs praising the king. Day tells us, “the text of any cantata ought to be read as a rhetorical or dramatic unity, not simply as a collection of odd observations strung together for no very good reason.”<sup>245</sup> How true this is as we see the rivers converse with one another in their pledge of loyalty and praise to Augustus. A brief overview of the story of the rivers will be given. Translations consulted were Young, Whitaker, Durr, and Stokes.

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243. Day, 43.

244. Whitaker, 674.

245. Day, 52.

Vistula, the longest river in Poland<sup>246</sup> presents the first recitative-aria set. In this politically charged set he recounts the bloody battles that have taken place in Poland and the dead soldiers whose rusting weapons lie in his waters. He praises Augustus for ending this bloody battle and asks all Poles to pledge their allegiance to Augustus as King. Augustus III, Elector of Saxony, took the Polish throne through the War of Polish Succession. In the aria following this recitative, Vistula makes known his faithfulness to Augustus III. The text is wrought with emotional feelings that would please a new king, seen in phrases such as “*Unsre Herzen öffnen wir!* (We are opening our hearts!) and *Treibt allein, Herr, deine Gute/Unser kindliches Gemute/Zum Gehorsam gegen dir* (Your goodness alone, Lord, urges/Our child-like mind/to obedience towards you).”<sup>247</sup>

The next recitative-aria set is actually a recitative-arioso and aria and is performed by Elbe, one of the most important rivers in Saxony. Elbe agrees with Vistula and expresses his admiration for Augustus III. As a Saxon river, Elbe makes it clear to Vistula that Poland is only “borrowing” Augustus III; Saxony is not giving him up. In the aria portion, Elbe calls to the Tritons beneath his waves to see the delight brought by the name of Augustus III.

Danube, the alto, honors the Queen, the Archduchess Maria Josepha, and represents her Austrian roots. The librettist includes the fact that she is of the Habsburg house, and is sure to be politically correct in speaking fondly of her Austrian uncle, Charles VI, who was the Holy Roman Emperor at the time. In her aria, Danube praises

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246. R. Kay Gresswell and Anthony Huxley, *Standard Encyclopedica of the World's Rivers and Lakes*, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1965).

247. Young, 268.

the queen and wishes her a fruitful union with Augustus III. History proves this to be so as Augustus III and Maria Josepha had fourteen children.

The last river to present its praise to Augustus III is Pleisse, the river that runs by Leipzig. She is smaller than the others but is significant because the royal family visited there. Political overtones can be read into this recitative as Pleisse encourages the other three rivers to join in giving Augustus III their hearts and to get along like brothers. Pleisse furthers her plea for unity in the aria by singing of the power of their undivided union making lovely harmony.

The last recitative before the closing chorus presents all four rivers pledging their allegiance to king. The recitative closes with a jubilant Pleisse singing that the Naiads are dancing in happiness because the light of Augustus III has come. At the close of the recitative Pleisse invites all of the rivers to sing with her in the closing chorus. How ironic that the ruler lauded as the “long awaited light”<sup>248</sup> in the cantata *Schleicht, spielende Wellen* proved to be one of the worst rulers in Polish history.

The finale of this intriguing story in song concludes with a prayer to divine Providence for protection, guidance, and joy over the life of Augustus III, a somewhat peculiar ending to the modern reader after the many allusions to Greek and Roman mythology. This mixture was not unusual for this time period. Finlay reports, “The poet of the baroque age undertook to add higher significance to the event to be celebrated by transporting the characters to Olympus and clothing them in the costumes of antiquity.”<sup>249</sup> The shift from Greek mythology to Lutheran theology would not have

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248. Dürr, 846.

249. Finlay, 192-193.

surprised the Saxon listener. In this finale Bach almost turns a royal secular work into a church cantata with this inspiring prayer.

Now that the text and drama are familiar, attention can be turned to the music Bach composed for this occasion. The wonderful thing about the music of Bach is that it is of such quality that it can stand alone. If the text was completely removed and not a word was sung, it would still be an exquisite and inspiring composition.

Bach's ideals about the music portraying the text were more complicated than the idea of text painting or word painting that involves "the use of music to represent the meaning of an individual word or phrase in the sung text."<sup>250</sup> Bach would have followed the "accepted principle of the period that music should 'paint the passions.'"<sup>251</sup> Through use of his musical language Bach evokes feelings such as loyalty and praise. The grand opening chorus of *Schleicht, spielende Wellen* creates a feeling of expectancy before a single word is sung. Due to the length of the work, three excerpts from *Schleicht, spielende Wellen* will be examined for examples of the music supporting the libretto: the opening chorus, the tenor aria, and the final combined recitative.

The most obvious music-text connection in the work is that of the "wave motive." Although melodically different for each aria and chorus, each piece has its own individual wave motive. In the opening chorus it is a strong-weak slur pattern. Bach presents this wave motive at the very beginning of the opening chorus. Rather than fire away on the trumpets as one would think a celebration should begin, the work opens

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250. David Schulenberg, *Music of the Baroque* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 31.

251. Westrup, 56.

softly with the wave motive presented in the strings and simplified in the traverse flutes (figure 16).

Figure 16. Opening wave motive of *Schleicht, spielende Wellen*, BWV 206, by J.S. Bach, mm. 1-6.  
 Source: Used by permission of Bach Cantatas Website, Webmaster Aryeh Oron. <http://bach-cantatas.com/BGA/BWV206-BGA.pdf> (March 13, 2010).

The introduction soon blossoms into a full-blown celebration as the three *trombe* enter in measure seven with an entrance that has a fanfare type rhythm and then proceeds to echo portions of the wave motive at a high pitch. At measure thirteen the violins and flutes introduce a secondary motive of fast moving upward and downward scale passages that seem to evoke the feeling of swirling water. This motive will be used later as the voices sing *rauschet geschwinde* (to swish, swiftly). While listening, one can envision the rivers as they begin to flow and then burst forth. The voices then enter with the wave motive as they sing *Schleicht, spielende, Wellen, und murmelt gelinde!* (Glide playful

waves and murmur gently!).<sup>252</sup> Presentation of this primary wave motive occurs numerous times in the opening chorus, sometimes passed between voices or instruments in a fugal manner (figure 17).

The image shows a musical score for the opening chorus of 'Schleicht spielende Wellen, und murmelt gelinde' from BWV 206. The score is written for four voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and two violins. The lyrics are: 'Schleicht, spielende Wellen, und murmelt gelinde, gelinde'. The score illustrates a fugal style where the primary wave motive is passed between voices and instruments. The first voice part (Soprano) begins with the melody 'Schleicht, spielende Wellen, und murmelt gelinde, gelinde'. The second voice part (Alto) enters with the same melody. The third voice part (Tenor) enters with the same melody. The fourth voice part (Bass) enters with the same melody. The instrumental parts (Violin I and Violin II) also enter with the same melody. The score shows the primary wave motive being passed between voices and instruments in a fugal manner.

Figure 17. Example of voices entering fugal style in opening chorus of *Schleicht spielende Wellen*, BWV 206, by J.S. Bach, mm. 65-71. *Source*: Used by permission of Bach Cantatas Website, Webmaster Aryeh Oron. <http://bach-cantatas.com/BGA/BWV206-BGA.pdf> (accessed March 12, 2010).

Indications in the score show more dynamic markings than usual. Bach seemed to want to convey the idea of the gentle, murmuring waves contrasted with big waves. He indicates *piano* when the singers are singing *Schleicht, Spielende Wellen, und murmelt gelinde*. When the instruments have an upward scale passage immediately following this Bach marks it to be played *forte* as a lead in to *nein, rauschet geschwinde* (no, swish or roar swiftly)<sup>253</sup>. Bach even uses the *pianissimo* indication frequently. There are many occurrences of this back and forth dynamics pattern of *piano* to *forte* in the “A” section of the chorus. Whittaker says “Bach’s careful preparation of the splendid and poetic chorus

252. Dürr, 842.

253. Ibid.

is shown by the unusual number of dynamic indications and by meticulous attention to bowing and tonguing.”<sup>254</sup>

These dynamic indications are noticeably absent in the “B” section as well as the wave and the swirl motives. The “B” section has a more even feel, perhaps evoking pleasure, and providing a contrast to the “A” section. To keep the momentum of the piece and retain the feeling of the moving water in the rivers, Bach uses ample quick, upward scale passages in the “B” section.

It would appear on the surface that Bach could not decide if the waves should be gentle or rushing but this is not the case. As the piece represents rivers of various sizes, Bach could have been trying to incorporate the character of each river into the opening chorus. Bach could also have been echoing the literary ideal of using contrast to emphasize the political point of the people of the varying countries united under Augustus III. As Day comments, “We should do well to remember that a good deal of the ‘dramatic’ element in German baroque tragedy was dependent on rhetoric and on the thrust and counter-thrust argument.”<sup>255</sup>

We now turn to Elbe’s tenor aria, “Jede Woge meiner Wellen” (Every billow of my waves),<sup>256</sup> that expresses deep admiration for Augustus III. Driving strings, perhaps representing the rushing waves or waters of the Elbe River, pervade this technically demanding piece. It does not carry as much of the Baroque heaviness and seriousness as would be expected from a piece in B minor, but it does portray an attitude of intensity. The

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254. Whittaker, 677.

255. Day, 52.

256. Dürr, 844.

aria conveys a spirit of power as it represents one of the main rivers that flow through Saxony. True to Bach's style, the wave motive is presented in the opening measure. The opening B minor chord turns on a tritone to a D major chord and creates a striking balance between the seriousness and intensity of the B minor chord and the and royal sounding D major chord, possibly representing the power of this work for Augustus III (figure 18). This can be felt throughout the aria. The wave motive creates a feeling of rocking on the swelling, rising, and falling waves of the Elbe. In the "B" part of the aria the melody changes but the string part continues with the driving swells.



Figure 18. Wave motive in tenor aria "Jede Woge meiner Wellen," from *Schleicht, spielende Wellen*, BWV 206, by J.S. Bach, mm. 1-4. *Source:* Used by permission of Bach Cantatas Website, Webmaster Aryeh Oron. <http://bach-cantatas.com/BGA/BWV206-BGA.pdf> (accessed March 13, 2010).

The large Elbe gains its size and strength from the many small streams that form its source. In this aria Bach could have been symbolizing the many people united under Augustus III and the power he wielded. In a historical sense the Elba was a protective barrier against Roman advance into Germany<sup>257</sup> perhaps symbolic of the protection and power of Augustus III. Elbe's tenor aria is the most powerful of all of the rivers' arias. It contains so much swirling and waving that one is almost seasick by the time it is over.

"Jede Woge meiner Wellen" contains several examples of deliberate text painting. The waves in this piece call out the golden name or word of Augustus, *Jede Woge meiner*

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257. Gresswell and Huxley, 90.



*Wellen ruft das golden Wort August.*<sup>258</sup> The German *ruft* (it calls) is usually carried by an upward movement of the notes or is at one of the highest pitches in the phrase to represent the waves calling out. The name of Augustus is sung emphatically at the end of the phrase where it appears, giving the name even more of a feeling of importance. To further accentuate the name of Augustus in measures forty-nine and fifty, *August* is sung to a leap of an octave so the tenor may “call” his name in song. The octave leap is sandwiched in between the wave motive played by Violin I and a simplified version of the wave motive in the continuo (figure 19). The name *August* is sung eight times in various ways in the “A” section of the aria.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and a basso continuo line. The vocal line is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a wave-like melodic pattern with an octave leap on the word 'August!'. The basso continuo line provides a simplified version of the wave motive. The lyrics 'gust, Au-gust, Au-gust!' are written below the vocal line.

Figure 19. Example of calling the name August, complimented by wave motive in aria “Jede Woge meiner Wellen,” from *Schleicht, spielende Wellen*, BWV 206, by J.S. Bach, mm. 49-50. *Source:*Used by permission of Bach Cantatas Website, Webmaster Aryeh Oron. <http://bach-cantatas.com/BGA/BWV206-BGA.pdf> (accessed March 18, 2010).

Bach includes other examples of word painting in this aria. Of course, the wave motive is sung by the tenor to the words *Woge* (swell or surge) and *Wellen* (waves), sometimes in the original form, other times inverted. As if the waves and swells were not enough for the tenor, Bach provides further opportunities for vocal aerobics by turning

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258. Dürr, 844.

the motive into a three-measure melismatic passage on the word *Wellen* in measure fifty-one.

As the waters of the kingdom swell, *Reiches Fluten schwellen*, so does the opportunity for vocal virtuosity. In measures 65-67 the allegorical river continues to swell and at measure seventy-seven, a fantastic vocal passage of fifty-two notes, covering nearly six measures is sung by the tenor soloist (figure 20). The word sung to this incredible passage is *wiederschallen*. *Schallen* is to ring out and *wieder* means again. This could be translated with the idea of the name of Augustus ringing out, reverberating, or echoing. Indeed the music reverberates at this point. Again, this passage is placed between two indicators of the waves of the rivers, presenting a picture in music of the waves and swells of the mighty Elbe River.



Figure 20. Elaborate vocal passage on *wiederschallen* in aria “Jede Woge meiner Wellen,” from *Schleicht, spielende Wellen*, BWV 206, by J.S. Bach, mm. 77- 83. Source: Used by permission of *Bach Cantatas Website*, Webmaster Aryeh Oron. <http://bach-cantatas.com/BGA/BWV206-BGA.pdf> (accessed March 18, 2010).

The last example examined is the recitative “Ich muss, ich will gehorsam sein” (I must, I will be obedient).<sup>259</sup> The recitative begins with continuo and voice as Vistula, Elbe, and Danube each in turn pledge their obedience to Augustus III. When Pleisse

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259. Dürr, 845.

enters, the continuo is joined by three strings, Violin I, Violin II, and Viola. This could be a representation of the three rivers Pleisse is addressing.

The recitative is interesting, not through excessive or deliberate word painting, but in the conversational feel that it carries. The combination of voices breaks the solo recitative-aria pattern of the work and brings new interest to the recitative. There are some subtle text painting ideas such as the notes of the word *August* being at a higher pitch level than most words in the phrase and placement of it at the end of the phrase for emphasis, but rather than excessive coloring of individual words or phrases Bach captures the imploring soprano characteristics of little river Pleisse in urging the other rivers to unity. Bach has suited the music so well to the voice inflections of the text that the feel is natural. This recitative brings conclusion to the story as Pleisse leads into the final chorus with the words, “Da uns Gelegenheit und Zeit, Die Hände beut, So stimmt mit mir noch einmal an” (Since opportunity and time, Hold out their hands to us, Then strike up with me once more).<sup>260</sup> The recitative flows seamlessly into a beautiful chorus of all voices and instruments calling down a heavenly blessing on the life and rule of Augustus III.

It is difficult to tell whether the birthday composition or circumstances brought about Bach’s court appointment from Augustus III. The death of Duke Christian of Saxe-Weißenfels in June of 1736 left Bach without the title *Kapellmeister von haus aus* of Saxe-Weißenfels for several months. There is some thought that the Dresden court would not grant Bach a title while he still held one from a lesser court,<sup>261</sup> so loss of that title

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260. Durr, 846.

261. Boyd, *Bach*, 166.

removed anything standing in the way of being granted a new one. In September of 1736 Bach again petitioned the Dresden court for a title. If *Schleicht, spielende, Wellen* was performed in October of 1736 for the elector's birthday as Durr speculates, perhaps it did catch the attention of Augustus III. In November of 1736 Bach was granted the longed-for court appointment as *Compositeur* to the Royal Court Orchestra<sup>262</sup> placing Bach among other prominent composers, such as Telemann, that supplied music for the Dresden court. Unfortunately, the title did not seem to help Bach as much as he hoped. When petitioned about disputes at the *Thomasschule*, Augustus III did not seem to want to get involved in the conflict between Bach and the rector.<sup>263</sup> The title did allow Bach to be recognized as a composer and gave him a prestigious title at the largest court in the Holy Roman Empire. After years of waiting, he could finally sign his name "Johann Sebast. Bach, Royal Polish and Electoral Saxon Court Composer."<sup>264</sup>

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262. Bach, *The New Bach Reader*, 188.

263. Boyd, ed., *J.S. Bach, Oxford Composer Companions*, 179.

264. Bach, *The New Bach Reader*, 208.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Bach's relationship to the recipients of the birthday cantatas was usually that of a servant-employee or petitioner for a position. His personal relationship to his employers varied only slightly. The domineering Wilhelm kept the social status quo and treated Bach like a servant-employee. Prince Leopold appears to be the one employer that Bach enjoyed a relationship with on a more personal level. This may have been because the Köthen court was a smaller court or may have had something to do with Prince Leopold's personality and love of music. Bach speaks kindly of Leopold in his famous quote, "There I had a gracious Prince, who both loved and knew music, and in his service I intended to spend the rest of my life."<sup>265</sup> Although Bach does not refer to Leopold as a friend, this friendship is implied by Bach asking Leopold to be the godfather to his son who was born in Köthen. While in Leipzig, Bach was looked upon as a servant or subject by Augustus III and Maria Josepha, Elector and Electress of Saxony. Their electorship and titles of King and Queen of Poland put them on a much higher social level than either Duke Wilhelm or Prince Leopold.

Since Bach does not disclose his personal feelings about writing these cantatas it can only assume that it was part of a day's work for him. This conclusion can be drawn from Bach's life and Lutheran background. *The New Bach Reader* notes that Bach "looked upon himself primarily as a capable worker, conscientiously attending to his

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265. Bach, *The New Bach Reader*, 151.

duties.”<sup>266</sup> The Lutheran work ethic and respect for authority is described by Evans as “deeply conservative” and having “genuinely enhanced respect for traditions, established rights, and hierarchical forms.”<sup>267</sup> These qualities caused Bach to serve his employers or authorities to the best of his abilities whether it was in the courts of the Holy Roman Empire, the city of Leipzig, or the Lutheran Church.

Reconciling Bach’s mix of sacred and secular in his musical composition seems strange to the modern listener but is easy to understand from a Baroque perspective. In the Baroque world there was very little distinction between sacred and secular. Neary describes Bach’s view well, “the distinction between sacred and secular cantatas was not Bach’s own—it was as natural for him to inscribe S.D.G. (Soli Deo Gloria) at the end of a hunting cantata as it was on a Passion or church cantata.”<sup>268</sup> Bach has been criticized for borrowing music originally composed to celebrate the birthdays of kings and queens in his compositions celebrating the birth and resurrection of Christ. Bach did not divide his world into two separate components.

The birthday cantatas illustrate the length poets and musicians would go to please royalty. Great irony exists in what was true and what was proclaimed in the libretto. The librettos seem to conflict with Bach’s religious beliefs as they attribute god-like qualities to the recipients of the birthday work. During this time period it was common as a Lutheran to recognize placement by Providence of rulers in positions of authority and to

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266. Bach, *The New Bach Reader*, 27.

267. R. J. W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1550-1700, an Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 286.

268. Martin Neary, Introduction to *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Complete Church and Secular Cantatas*, Johann Sebastian Bach, trans. Richard Stokes (London: Scarecrow Press, 1999), xvii.

be submissive to them. It was also common in this time period to liken rulers to mythological figures. This practice may be linked to early Baroque dramas or tragedies such as those by dramatist D. C. Lohenstein. These dramas often had a chorus of symbolic characters (such as rivers, seasons, or virtues) that came out at the end of the play and gave a review of the moral or political issue just represented in the play and put it into the context of current events for the audience. These themes and symbolic characters may have influenced the librettists of Bach's time.<sup>269</sup>

Bach's audience would likely have known many of the stories and backgrounds of the Greek or Roman characters. For example, in the hunt cantata, the audience would have been acquainted with the legend of the goddess Diana and her lover Endymion. An understanding of this legend gave more importance to the birthday festivities since the listener would understand the festivities had the power to draw Diana away from her lover to give her attention to the hunt of Duke Christian and his birthday celebration.<sup>270</sup> Since the themes and characters of the dramas were mythological or allegorical they were easily adapted to a variety of situations.<sup>271</sup> The familiarity of the characters meant that little staging was required for the viewer to understand the implications of the libretto and imagine the scene.

In contrast to vague or pretentious librettos, Bach uniquely composed the music of each work to fit the personality or position of the recipient. The birthday cantata for Queen Maria Josepha is regal and elegant and commands attention with its proud opening

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269. Day, 54-57.

270. Ibid., 64-65.

271. Ibid., 75.

of timpani drums and trumpets. In contrast, the birthday cantata for her son, Friedrich Christian, is tender but still conveys music fit for royalty. The cantata for Augustus III, elector of Saxony, conveys underlying strength through the allegory of the union of the rivers and the music that reflects each river. In the cantata for Duke Christian, Bach balanced the sound of the festive hunt with music fit for a duke. Even when working with limited court resources such as having only a soprano and a bass, Bach penned music for Leopold that sounds as elegant as if it were meant for the French courts. This must have pleased Leopold a great deal. It is as if Bach knew what each person would like and composed accordingly.

Bach's cantatas are most often thought of as dark, intense, and heavy. Taruskin refers to this side of Bach as the essential Bach:

The essential Bach was an avatar of a pre-Enlightened—and when push came to shove, a violently anti-enlightened—temper. His music was a medium of truth, not beauty. And the truth he served was bitter. His works persuade us—no *reveal* to us—that the world is filth and horror, that humans are helpless, that life is pain, that reason is a snare.<sup>272</sup>

If this is the only Bach one is acquainted with, he is missing a great deal. The Bach of the birthday cantatas is the side of Bach that Taruskin calls the “hearty, genial, lyrical Bach of the concert hall.”<sup>273</sup> The lighter side of Bach as seen in the birthday cantatas balances the seriousness of writing music for royalty with festive celebration. The melodies are lyrical and memorable and the instrumentation and orchestration

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272. Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act, Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 310.

273. *Ibid.*



enhance the meaning of the text in a brilliant and interesting way. The birthday cantatas are exuberant, creative, and a joy to hear.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

- Bach Cantatas Lasst uns sorgen and lasst uns wachen, BWV 213, Tonet ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!, BWV 214* by Johann Sebastian Bach, dir. Peter Schreier, Carolyn Watkinson (alto), Julia Hamari (alto), Siegfried Lorenz (bass), Theo Adam (bass), Edith Mathis (soprano), Peter Schreier (tenor), Berlin Soloists (choir), Berlin Chamber Orchestra. 0002422CCC.  
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- “Tonet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten! BWV 214” from *J. S. Bach Cantatas Complete Vol. 4, BWV 198, 201, 204, 209, 211, 214, 215* by Johann Sebastian Bach, dir. Ton Koopman, Elisabeth von Magnus (alto), Peter de Groot (alto), Donald Bentvelsen (bass), Klaus Mertens (bass), Anne Grimm (soprano), Caroline Stam (soprano), Els Bongers (soprano), Lisa Larsson (soprano), Jeremy Ovenden (tenor), Paul Agnew (tenor). CC72204.  
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- “Was mir behagt ist nur die muntre Jagd, BWV 208, Hunt Cantata” from *Cantatas Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd, BWV 208, Ich bin in mir Vergnugt BWV 204* by Johann Sebastian Bach, dir. Peter Schreier, Theo Adam (bass), Arleen Auger (soprano), Edith Mathis (soprano), Peter Schreier (tenor), Berlin Soloists (choir), Berlin chamber Orchestra. 0002382CCC.  
<http://libsiu.naxosmusiclibrary.com.proxy.lib.siu.edu/streamw.asp?ver=2.0&s=117031%2Flibsiumlpd02%2F294217> (accessed January 20, 2010).



“Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd, BWV 208, Hunt Cantata” from *Weltliche Kantaten, Cantates Profanes, Secular Cantatas BWV 208, 209* by Johann Sebastian Bach, dir. Helmuth Rilling, Matthias Goerne (bass), Eva Kirchner (soprano), Sibylla Rubens (soprano), James Taylor (tenor), Stuttgart Gachinger Kantorei (choir), Stuttgart Bach Collegium. CD92.065.  
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“Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd, BWV 208” from *J. S. Bach, Cantatas Complete, Vol. 3, BWV 22, 23, 54, 63, 155, 161, 162, 163, 165, 208* by Johann Sebastian Bach, dir. Ton Koopman, Andreas Scholl (alto), Elisabeth von Magnus (alto), Klaus Mertens (bass), Barbara Schlick (soprano), Caroline Stam (soprano), Els Bongers (soprano), Ruth Holton (soprano), Paul Agnew (tenor), Amsterdam Baroque Choir, Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra. CC72203.  
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## APPENDIX B

### CONSENT FOR USE OF MUSICAL SCORES

**From:** [Aryeh Oron](#)  
**To:** [marvawatson@pubstech.com](mailto:marvawatson@pubstech.com);  
**Subject:** \*\*\*SPAM\*\*\* Re: copyright  
**Date:** Sunday, April 04, 2010 3:36:29 PM

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Dear Marva Watson,

Thanks for informing me. Glad to know that the BCW helped you with your thesis.

As said earlier, after the approval of your thesis, I shall be happy to present it on the BCW.

Sincerely,

Aryeh Oron

Bach and Jazz Music Fan

WebMaster of Bach Cantatas Website: <http://www.bach-cantatas.com>

RingMaster of J.S. Bach Web Ring: <http://b.webring.com/hub?ring=jsbachwebring>

Moderator of Bach Cantatas Mailing List: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BachCantatas>

Moderator of Bach Recordings Mailing List: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BachRecordings>

Moderator of Bach Musicology Mailing List: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BachMusicology>

----- Original Message -----

**From:** [Marva Watson](#)

**To:** 'Aryeh Oron'

**Sent:** Saturday, April 03, 2010 9:45 PM

**Subject:** RE: copyright

Dear Aryeh Oron,

My thesis concerning the historical figures of the Bach birthday cantatas is now complete. Thank you again for permission to copy small parts of the online scores for use as examples in the thesis. I have included twelve examples of seven measure or less from the online scores. I had originally told you ten examples of four measures or less. To comply with copyright guidelines (and to present to the graduate school), I wanted to clarify this.

I have enjoyed the Bach Cantatas website.

Thank you again,

Marva Watson  
Graduate student  
School of Music, SIU Carbondale

---

**From:** Aryeh Oron [mailto:oron-a@inter.net.il]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 10, 2010 6:56 AM  
**To:** marvawatson@pubstech.com  
**Subject:** \*\*\*SPAM\*\*\* Re: copyright

Dear Marva Watson,

Thanks for your message.  
You can use the scores for the mentioned purpose only.  
See Copyright notice at:  
<http://www.bach-cantatas.com/IndexScoresSources.htm>

After the approval of your thesis, I shall be happy to present it on the BCW.

Sincerely,

Aryeh Oron  
Bach and Jazz Music Fan  
WebMaster of Bach Cantatas Website: <http://www.bach-cantatas.com>  
RingMaster of J.S. Bach Web Ring: [http://b.webring.com/hub?  
ring=jsbachwebring](http://b.webring.com/hub?ring=jsbachwebring)  
Moderator of Bach Cantatas Mailing List: [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/  
BachCantatas](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BachCantatas)  
Moderator of Bach Recordings Mailing List: [http://groups.yahoo.com/  
group/BachRecordings](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BachRecordings)  
Moderator of Bach Musicology Mailing List: [http://groups.yahoo.com/  
group/BachMusicology](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BachMusicology)

----- Original Message -----

**From:** [Marva Watson](#)

**To:** [oron-a@inter.net.il](mailto:oron-a@inter.net.il)

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 10, 2010 7:46 AM

**Subject:** copyright

Can small portions of the Bach scores from this website be copied and reproduced in a thesis for a master's degree? I am writing on the Bach birthday cantatas. The thesis will include 5 -10 examples of 4 measures or less from several different works.

Thank you,

Marva Watson  
Student, SIU Carbondale

[marvawatson@pubstech.com](mailto:marvawatson@pubstech.com)

## APPENDIX C

### CONSENT FOR USE OF IMAGES

**From:** [Erlenkamp, Bettina](#)  
**To:** [marvawatson@pubstech.com](mailto:marvawatson@pubstech.com);  
**Subject:** J.S.Bach birthday cantatas  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 23, 2010 11:36:56 AM

---

Dear Marva Watson,

We thank you for your email.

You can use our images for your master's degree free of charge.  
If you are interested in a better quality, we could send you the images via CD.  
( 9/12 cm - 300 dpi /Tiff - production costs = 4,00 EUR each image)

We ask you to use the following picture credits:

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Please pay attention to the rights of third parties.

Yours sincerely,

Bettina Erlenkamp  
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