

The OVPP (One Vocalist Per Part) Controversy

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A Choir of *Thomaner* on the way from the *Thomasschule* to the *Thomaskirche* [from the *Schulordnung*, 1723]
Excerpt from an engraving by J. G. Krüger

An Assessment of the Argumentation Employed in a Recent Exchange between Opposing Factions

Anyone who begins to listen to recordings by various musical ensembles of J. S. Bach's orchestrated vocal works such as his cantatas, passions, oratorios, etc., will soon become aware of the variance in the number of the musicians, singers as well as instrumentalists, employed in the performance and often also recordings of these compositions. The cause for this clearly delineated disparity in the number of performers, particularly in regard to the number of singers who constitute the choir of vocalists who sing Bach's orchestrated vocal compositions, is a theory first proposed by Joshua Rifkin nearly 30 years ago.¹ Since that point in time, purists who seek some semblance of authenticity in performance practices relating to the size of the choirs ideally suited for presenting Bach's music as he might have intended are faced with the current division among those conductors and performers of those, who, on the one hand, prefer the radical approach of generally only one vocalist per part (unless contraindicated by other factors) suggested by Rifkin, or of those, on the other hand, with a less radical approach, that has existed for almost a century, one that presents Bach's vocal music with three to four singers per part. In short, the discrepancy lies now mainly in the distinction between OVPP vs. 3-4 VP. Some historical background regarding choir sizes should prove to be quite enlightening.

¹ Joshua Rifkin, "Bach's chorus", paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, Boston, 1981 (reprinted in slightly modified form as Appendix 6 in Andrew Parrott's *The Essential Bach Choir*, Boydell Press, Woodbridge, UK, 2000).

Historical Background on Choir Sizes in Performances of Bach's Sacred Music

The size of the choirs and orchestras employed has varied greatly since Bach's death in 1750. In general, as indicated in historical accounts, there has been an increase in performing forces used for such performances of Bach's music. Outside of Leipzig where the performance parts for many of his cantatas were still located and available for use in church services during the latter half of the 18th century, Bach's orchestrated vocal works were not being performed, with C.P.E. Bach's occasional presentations of extracts from his father's music providing an important exception. During this period, however, major changes in the performance venues and the size of the musical forces used for sacred music performed only in churches were already taking place: the traditional location for the presentation of oratorios, masses, passions and cantatas changed to a secular one, a concert hall or even an opera house; and the number of performers increased radically over a period spanning only a few decades. Choral societies consisting mainly of enthusiastic amateurs met on a weekly basis to study and perform choral masterpieces. The most outstanding example of such a group that began immediately to explore J. S. Bach's music was the *Berliner Singakademie*, founded by conductor and composer Carl Friedrich Fasch in 1791. Beginning in its first year with 37 singers, this group swelled to include almost 200 singers in 1830. Felix Mendelssohn's revival of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* in 1829 featured in its concert-hall performance 158 singers plus a large number of instrumentalists drawn mainly from the membership of this choral society.² A few years later, in 1833, this work was performed in Dresden under the direction of Francesco Morlacchi with 10 solo vocalists, 220 singers in the chorus and 112 instrumentalists, the latter group with the doubling of wind instruments and 86 string players.³ When an attempt was made in 1841 to bring the *St. Matthew Passion* back into a church setting as Felix Mendelssohn did when he was the director of music for Leipzig, the results were anything but satisfactory for any well-qualified music critic sitting in the audience. Here is an extract from Clara Schumann-Wieck's family diary in which she describes her listening experience:

In der Thomaskirche gab Mendelssohn die Passions-Musik von Bach zur Errichtung eines Denkmals für selben, wie er es voriges Jahr schon einmal getan [gemeint ist hier wohl ein Orgelkonzert für denselben Zweck]. Wir hatten einen schlechten Platz, hörten die Musik nur schwach, und gingen daher nach dem ersten Theil. In Berlin hatte mir diese Musik viel mehr Genuß verschafft, was wohl teilweise mit am Local lag, das ganz für solche Musik geeignet ist, während dies in der Thomaskirche durchaus nicht der Fall, da sie viel zu hoch ist.

Mendelssohn performed Bach's [*St. Matthew*] *Passion* in the *Thomaskirche* as a benefit concert for [commissioning and] erecting a [large] statue of Bach. Last year he had done the same [with a benefit organ concert for the same purpose]. We had a bad seat/location and had difficulty hearing the music,

² Georg Schünemann, "Die Bachpflege der Berliner Singakademie," *Bach-Jahrbuch* 25 (1928), pp. 138-171.

³ Emil Platen, *Johann Sebastian Bach: Die Matthäus-Passion*, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 1991, pp. 218-219.

so, for this reason, we left after the first part. In Berlin I derived much more pleasure from listening to this music. This may have been due partly to the location [of the performance] which is ideally/completely suited for such music, while, in contrast, this is certainly not the case in the *Thomaskirche* because it is much too high.⁴

For a performance of the *Symbolum Nicenum* from Bach's *B-Minor Mass* in March, 1828 in a concert-hall setting, Johann Nepomuk Schelble conducted his *Cäcilien-Verein*, an amateur choral association with a membership of about 200 located in Frankfurt-am-Main. The orchestra included 18 violins, 4 violas, 4 cellos and 2 double basses. Additional bassoons, clarinets and horns played *colla parte* to support the vocal parts and double the instrumental lines. Approximately 200 musicians took part in this performance in which most of them participated as singers.⁵ The desire for ever-increasing vocal forces continued throughout the 19th century culminating in massive vocal choirs that are unimaginable today. In 1900, a complete performance of Bach's *B-minor Mass* by the Oratorio Society of New York under the direction of Frank Damrosch had a choir with 500 singers. During the first decades of the 20th century, Bach scholars began to question the excessive proportions that had been reached by choral societies during the 19th century. Albert Schweitzer spoke out against the use of gigantic, enormous choirs with hundreds of singers and stated: "Bach had three or at most four voices to each part."⁶ Elsewhere Schweitzer indicated that

in other works [those not employing simply a solo violin or solo oboe with chorus], internal considerations forbid the use of a large choir; by their very essence they are a kind of sacred chamber music. The works in which Bach wrote simply for the choir usually at his service – with three or four voices to a part, -- are really much more numerous than is generally supposed. Further it must be acknowledged that even Bach's largest and most powerful choruses are extremely effective with a small choir of really good voices – say six or eight to a part.⁷

After careful study of existing historical sources and manuscripts, Arnold Schering, editor of the *Bach-Jahrbuch* from 1904 until his death in 1941, began pleading for a return to performance standards that more closely resembled what Bach had at his disposal during his tenure in Leipzig. In 1936 Schering published his most definitive statement on this subject:

An der Zahl der den ersten Sonntagskantoreien zugeteilten Sänger muß jedenfalls festgehalten werden. Es war der Normalfall. Dem entspricht die Zahl der erhaltenen Stimmhefte oder Stimmlätter, die mit ganz seltenen Ausnahmen immer nur ein Exemplar für jede der vier Stimmen aufweisen....Demnach muß die U f t e l l u n g so gewesen sein,

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 219.

⁵ *Hundert Jahre Caecilien-Verein in kurzer Fassung zusammengestellt nach den in dem Archiv des Vereins niedergelegten Protokollen und Schriftstücken*, Frankfurt, 1918, p. 10.

⁶ Albert Schweitzer, *J. S. Bach*, trans. Ernest Newman A & C Black, London, 1923; reprint: Dover, New York, 1966; (originally published by Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, 1911); Vol. 2 p. 214.

⁷ *ibid.*, 2:417.

daß der mittelfte Sänger jeder Dreiergruppe – der «Solist» oder «Konzertist» – das Notenblatt hielt, in das bei Chorsägen je ein Nachbar zur Rechten und zur Linken als «Ripienist» mit hineinschaute.

In any case it is necessary to hold on to the number '12' which is the number of singers allocated to the primary church choirs that sing on Sundays. This was the normal situation. The number of existing parts (usually just **single** pages or sheets) corresponds with this number. With only rare exceptions was there more than just a single part for each voice range....Accordingly the **physical placement/arrangement** must have been as follows: the singer, the 'soloist' or 'concertist', in the middle of each group of three, held the music (for a specific part – one of the only four vocal parts usually prepared for the performance), while the singers, the 'ripienists' on either side, on his right and on his left, looked on and sang from this part during the choral movements.⁸

The Status of the Current Factional Dispute Regarding OVPP

Appearing in the May, 2010 issue of *Early Music*, two articles⁹ representing opposing viewpoints primarily attempted to rehash arguments which had been presented earlier without providing any valuable new evidence which might help to tip the scales toward one side or the other. Andreas Glöckner, essentially representing here the German academic tradition surrounding all aspects of Bach scholarship including the critical editions of Bach's works, the important Bach biographies by Spitta, Schweitzer, etc., and scholarly journals like Schering's *Bach-Jahrbuch*, for the most part, points to the key sources and the standard interpretation thereof that have always provided support for establishing the size of Bach's church choirs. Any new material, of which there is very little for anyone already acquainted with the results of the research that have already been published previously elsewhere, is rather disappointing and will not help an objective reader reach a different conclusion from that which had been held before. Andrew Parrott's response to Glöckner's presentation is likewise weak in the quality of new, truly relevant, evidence that is offered to the reader, but Parrott's response is even more disappointing in the adoption of a whining, accusatory tone which he uses to insert personal animosity into a discussion which should rather center upon refuting the factual evidence and interpretations given by Glöckner. This tone is not simply a slight,

⁸ Arnold Schering, *Johann Sebastian Bachs Leipziger Kirchenmusik*, Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, 1936, p. 30.

⁹ Andreas Glöckner, "On the performing forces of Johann Sebastian Bach's Leipzig church music" *Early Music*, Vol. xxxviii, No. 2, (May 2010), Oxford University Press, pp. 215-222, available online at www.em.oxfordjournals.org. Andrew Parrott, "Bach's chorus: the Leipzig line: A response to Andreas Glöckner" *Early Music*, Vol. xxxviii, No. 2, (May, 2010), Oxford University Press, pp. 223-235, available online at www.em.oxfordjournals.org.

single aberration but persists throughout his entire response. Perhaps it was adopted to sway the undecided reader by means of emotional arguments rather than purely logical ones. The picture that a reader may obtain from reading Parrott's response is that of someone who has been emotionally hurt by being overlooked and not having Rifkin's and his arguments taken seriously. Instead of pouting and cowering in a corner, this individual now 'stands up for his rights' and accuses the opponent of 'not fighting fairly' by 'not recognizing the truth' of his [the individual's] arguments. However, such a battle for recognition should not interfere, as it begins to do here, with the process of debating, weighing and considering the evidence that is presented in support of any truly viable theory.

Here are some examples from Parrott's response with my commentary attached (quoted material is printed in red followed by the page number from his article on which the statement is found):

Not only does it [Andreas Glöckner's article] serve to illustrate how a handful of highly influential German scholars have responded to the challenge of reassessing old certainties, its studied skepticism also invites doubt: is it shaped more by scholarly thinking or by a simple desire to bury the subject as far beyond the reach of scrutiny as possible? [p. 223] Parrott admits that Glöckner is among a small number of German Bach scholars who exhibit a 'studied skepticism' which should be present wherever theories are advanced, but for Parrott this is a double-edged sword since it might also serve as a tool to block new theories from taking hold. Thus he appears to ascribe to the German Bach Scholarship 'Establishment' a motive which is directed at not acknowledging the Rifkin OVPP theory as a fact.

Here is how Parrott begins to describe this 'establishment' where Glöckner functions as a puppet manipulated by a hierarchy above him. Members of this 'oligarchy', "a handful of highly influential German scholars," include, according to Parrott, Christoph Wolff (current director of the *Bach-Archiv*, Leipzig), and Hans-Joachim Schulze (former director of the same). Glöckner's inferior position in this hierarchy is emphasized this way:

it has fallen to Andreas Glöckner to maintain the party line, with a dedication that ... is repeatedly heedless of flaws in logic, discrimination and detail. [p. 232] Glöckner's selective reporting of him [Stölzel's 1740 report on Melchior Hoffmann's *Collegium Musicum*] turns out to be quite the opposite. Glöckner ... has inexcusably withheld Stölzel's explicit information about its vocal component.... [p. 229] A marked tendency to inflate singer numbers runs through Glöckner's work. [p. 229] Issues of this sort recur in the present contribution from one of Schulze's protégés, Andreas Glöckner. In his somewhat opaque introduction it is quality and quantity that are seemingly confused.... [p. 228] Since 2001 Andreas Glöckner has been the *de facto* spokesman on this disputed issue for the *Bach-Archiv Leipzig*, the powerful academic body behind both the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* and the *Bach-Jahrbuch*. Throughout the two preceding decades, however, this institution's unwritten

policy seems to have been ‘no comment’, leaving it to others to dispute Rifkin’s ideas in print, while at the same time sending out a clear message that his ‘theory’ warranted no serious consideration. [pp. 223, 224] Elsewhere Glöckner has misread the iconographical evidence of the well-known frontispiece to *Unfehlbare Engel-Freude* (Leipzig, 1710). [p. 235] The presumed relevance of Glöckner’s references hangs on the assumption that forces of this sort would necessarily contain large numbers of singers.... [p. 229] Glöckner chooses not to discriminate between two very different genres of composition.... [p. 234] In the space of a single sentence Glöckner manages to confuse Choir I with the Thomasschule’s entire body of singers.... [p. 234]

A casual reader could at this point begin to assume that Parrott has proven that Glöckner, as the *de facto* spokesman for the *Bach-Archiv* has certainly not measured up to the high standards of scholarship which this institution represents.

Having essentially demoted his opponent Glöckner to a subservient position, a position to which the reader should not attach too much importance, Parrott now aims his attack at the aforementioned directors of the *Bach-Archiv* and the institution itself:

On Hans-Joachim Schulze:

Wolff’s senior colleague Hans-Joachim Schulze, a former director of the *Bach-Archiv*, has never disguised his disdain for ‘an altogether different view of historically “correct” performance practice’ from his own, and is in any case skeptical ‘of recovering historical practice in its essential parameters and of drawing from it conclusions for how to proceed in the present and future’. His withering review of the 2003 German edition of *EBC* [*The Essential Bach Choir*], while failing to identify a single factual error, seeks instead to dismiss its entire thesis at a single stroke by discrediting the notion of any ‘common practice in Lutheran Germany of Bach’s time’ it seems fairly clear that Schulze simply holds a *different* view of what that ‘common practice’ was. [pp. 225, 228] While Wolff has chosen not to develop a case for his position, Schulze’s stance has been to feign incredulity. If the single-voiced choir had been part of common practice, he argues, then its “discovery” would not have had to wait until the 21st century’. [pp. 231, 232] Schulze also writes that ‘strictly speaking there should have been a trace of it’, thereby magisterially dismissing each and every ‘trace’ that he wishes not to have to acknowledge in a wide range of musical, theoretical, documentary and iconographical sources. [p. 235] Schulze is undoubtedly irked at my book [*The Essential Bach Choir*] having been ‘highly praised’ but perhaps also — if he has read my footnotes — by an illustration from his own work of the ‘danger of holding preconceived ideas’ [p. 233]

On Christoph Wolff:

‘Still waiting for the book on the subject . . . I have no intention of getting entangled in the long-running “dialogue over Bach’s performing forces”’, wrote Christoph Wolff (the *Archiv*’s present director) some 17 years after attending Rifkin’s first presentation. [p. 224] Wolff’s sole supporting example, offered as a demonstration of ‘the necessity of maintaining both accuracy and contextual perspectives’, has turned out to be an unfortunate one. [p. 224]

On the *Bach-Archiv Leipzig*:

the powerful academic body behind both the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* and the *Bach-Jahrbuch*. Throughout the two preceding decades, however, this institution's unwritten policy seems to have been 'no comment', leaving it to others to dispute Rifkin's ideas in print, while at the same time sending out a clear message that his 'theory' warranted no serious consideration. [pp. 223, 224] Witnessing the *Bach-Archiv Leipzig* operate so far below its customary high ideals and standards, it is virtually impossible not to suspect that external factors have somehow overridden the straightforward desire to learn as much as possible about the workings of Bach's music. [p. 232]

We should also acknowledge that the sole cause of this particular inadvertent misrepresentation of Bach's intentions (albeit in just a single phrase) was the continuing failure of Leipzig's senior Bach scholars to come to terms with Rifkin's findings. And we must also conclude that, while Christoph Wolff's position is very clear, he is still far from setting out a case that might support it. [p. 225]

In defence of Joshua Rifkin:

More than a quarter of a century after Joshua Rifkin first opened up this whole subject for consideration, a recent updated Dutch edition of Christoph Wolff's major biography of Bach confidently declares: "The normal composition of the vocal ensemble for church music given in Bach's 1730 *Entwurf* and called into question by Andrew Parrott — three singers of each voice range — is confirmed by two historical choir lists [for Choir I] respectively from 1729, with 12 singers . . . , and 1744–5, with 17 singers By this account, what I have called into question — no mention of Rifkin in this scenario — is anything less than *Bach's own explicit data*, rather than a hand-me-down interpretation of it. [p. 231]

Rifkin's name is also consistently absent elsewhere in Wolff's biography. [p. 235]

Rifkin's 20th-century achievements are pointedly ignored. [p. 232]

Here too Rifkin's name is conspicuously absent, other than in the separate introductory note. [p. 232]

...the scholarly response to Rifkin's unwelcome insights goes round in circles. [p. 232]

This consists of an attack on Rifkin's 'unyielding pursuit of an ageing and limping hypothesis' and includes unsubstantiated allegations of 'inaccuracies, inconsistencies and irrelevancies' and 'a general disregard for contextual matters and historical scholarship'; letter ('Bach's chorus: stomach aches may disappear!'), with Rifkin's reply at pp.541–2. [p. 233]

We may also note that the *Bach-Jahrbuch* has not seen fit to review Rifkin's important monograph *Bach's choral ideal* (Dortmund, 2002), presumably on the grounds that, together with several relevant articles which appear to have been ignored, it is written in English. [p. 235]

What is it then that these German Bach scholars are rigidly and blindly adhering to? Why do they continue to reject Rifkin's insights that have progressed to the point of being an accepted truth, a doctrine that continues to dictate a radical OVPP reduction of singers who perform the choral movements of Bach's concerted sacred music?

Here is a fairly recent statement by Rifkin on OVPP:

The great majority of Bach's performance materials contain only one copy of each obbligato vocal part. To all indications, no more than one singer read from any of these parts; only in rare instances, moreover, do separate *ripieno* parts provide reinforcement. The absence of any reference to *ripieno* voices in the Mass does not, in and of itself, preclude their use, as Bach did not always fix such details in his scores but did so only when writing out parts.¹⁰

When not read closely with attention to detail, the first sentence appears on the surface to be indisputable; however, there is a catch hidden in the word **obbligato** which usually refers primarily to a single instrument that has an obligatory (non *ad libitum*) part without which the composition would be incomplete. Less frequently there can even be two or more instruments which function in this capacity. In all of music history there may be extremely few compositions featuring, for instance, a primary organ part with an obbligato vocal part (rarely more than a single vocal part) for a single soprano voice for instance. What Rifkin is apparently trying to do is to nudge the reader almost subconsciously into accepting Rifkin's cleverly disguised OVPP theory as fact. When the word **obbligato** appears in this immediate context, most readers and listeners will most likely associate this word with the very numerous Bach arias that have an obbligato part for a single wind or string instrument. With this picture of a single instrument in mind, it becomes very easy to assume that each vocal part would be treated similarly, i.e., only one vocalist was 'obliged' to sing from such a designated vocal part. This clever, but otherwise inept, choice of a musicological term was necessary to avoid the notion that each vocal part served not only a single *concertist* for the recitatives and arias, but was also read from by the *ripienists* who joined the soloist in singing the choral movements.

Rifkin's second sentence begins with: **To all indications, no more than one singer read from any of these parts.** Here we encounter the central tenet or lynch-pin upon which the Rifkin OVPP theory is based. The catch here is the unexplained qualification, **To all indications**, a weasel word of sorts since it appears that 30 years of scholarly investigation have still not sufficed to convince some distinguished German Bach scholars that all these indications are available as hard, incontrovertible evidence which could support this contention. Almost all of the indications that Rifkin refers to here are open to more than just one interpretation. Behind all of these indications is the argument: this is

¹⁰ Joshua Rifkin, ed., *Mass in B minor Score*, Breitkopf Urtext No. 5363 of the Breitkopf & Härtel Partitur-Bibliothek, 2006, Preface, p. XIV, Scoring

how Bach intended it to be, but how do we know today what Bach intended when the evidence available today is scanty, in many instances barely relevant to the central issue, and open to various interpretations?

Parrott's Explanation of the OVPP Theory in His Response to Glöckner

The amount of evidence along with the detailed explanations/interpretations required to make sense of such evidence so that it will support the OVPP theory has severely restricted Parrott from even attempting to give a concise description of the key arguments that are used to support it. Granted, the purpose of this paper was a response to another article and not the presentation of the OVPP theory for those not already acquainted with it. As Parrott puts it: **This response will not restate the detailed case for single-voice choirs, which can readily be found elsewhere, but will merely explore the opposing lines of thinking represented here by Glöckner.** [p. 223]

At this point I will attempt to summarize the key evidence which is central to arriving at the conclusion that Bach most frequently performed his concerted sacred vocal music only with a single soloist on each part (OVPP) or that he generally used a choir of 3 or at most 4 singers to a part whenever choral movements (not recitatives or arias) were performed.

1. Bach's *Entwurf* provides the most direct evidence from Bach's own hand.¹¹ Essentially he says that each choir should have at least 3 singers for each of the usual 4 parts (SATB), but ideally this number should be increased to 4 singers for each vocal part. One singer for each part is designated to sing the solos when they occur. These are the *concertists* (there can be as many as 8 for works demanding a double choir) while the remaining singers are the *ripienists* and should number at least 2 (ideally 3) to any given part.

2. The second document,¹² also in Bach's hand, comes from the same important period in Leipzig as the first (1729, 1730 – these documents are only one year and 3 months apart). In it Bach lists the required staffing of each of the four churches that the *Thomaner* needed to serve. The choir for the

¹¹ "Kurtzer, jedoch höchstnötiger Entwurf einer wohlbestallten Kirchen *Music*", Eingabe an den Rat der Stadt Leipzig, August 23, 1730, *Bach-Dokumente*, Bärenreiter (1963) vol. 1, item 22, p. 60; also available in English translation in A. Parrott's *The Essential Bach Choir*, Boydell Press (2000) Appendix 3 and in *The [New] Bach Reader*, David & Mendel, New York (1966 & 1998).

¹² "Einteilung des Thomanerchores in 4 Chöre", Leipzig, May 18, 1729, *Bach-Dokumente*, Bärenreiter (1963) vol. 1, item 180, p. 250.

Thomaskirche needed or did have [*zum Chor gehören*] the following distribution of vocalists: 3 sopranos, 3 altos, 3 tenors, and 3 basses.

These two autograph documents constitute the most direct evidence which is used to determine the number of choristers available to Bach for his primary choir. Corroborating evidence of a lower level is also available, but by nature these consist of second-hand accounts in the form of documents written by others, printed reports of what people remembered often years or decades later, or iconographical evidence depicting events and places often far removed in time and location from Bach's performance venue in Leipzig. Evidence of this latter type may be very misleading and can easily lead to false conclusions about Bach's choirs and how he used them in the performance of his own works as well as those of other composers whether these were cantatas or the motets from the *Florilegium portense* (a collection of early 17th- century motets by Erhard Bodenschatz).

Actually the second autograph document above can be considered a restatement of what is described in even greater detail in the *Entwurf*. Thus everything hinges upon the interpretation of the latter, an undertaking that has resulted in Christoph Wolff's statement (given by Parrott on p. 224 of his article) that the *Entwurf* **simply does not allow for a reconstruction of the composition of the actual vocal-instrumental ensemble**. What this means, of course, is that neither Rifkin's limiting, extremely literal interpretation nor Schering's interpretation which implies the knowledge of Bach's circumstances as a tradition inherited from his predecessor Johann Kuhnau can be used as definitive proof to settle the dispute concerning OVPP. The reader is either forced 'to buy into' Rifkin's viewpoint based upon his personal, overly strict interpretation of the *Entwurf* or settle for an account of it which takes into consideration an actual situation which is surmised to be slightly different (not directly evident) from that presented in the *Entwurf* itself.

The reader is left in a quandary since we lack a definitive statement by Bach stating, for instance: "My intention is to have my church cantatas and any other works of similar difficulty performed by my *concertists* only. This means that only one of these select vocalists will sing from the single part that has been prepared for him. For exceptional circumstances, I will have extra *ripieno* parts copied. The latter will contain none of the arias and recitatives and the two *ripienists* for each vocal range will sing only those sections of the chorus movements where I need their reinforcement."

Once the reader has decided in favor of one interpretation over the other, a long list of evidential material will invariably follow. This will require a great amount of sifting and careful consideration.

Here are only a few examples to illustrate this:

1. A ‘note in passing’ to help prove or lend support to Rifkin’s contention regarding OVPP:

Parrott states on p. 224 of his response:

Yet none of this helps answer our question: whether all, some, or only a select few were required to sing in Bach’s concerted music (as opposed to all the other music which also formed part of Choir I’s duties). We may note in passing that at Hamburg C. P. E. Bach simply did not ‘include the choirboys in choruses etc.’

This ‘note in passing’ seems to imply that C. P. E. Bach would simply continue the tradition of his father and that this would serve as a quasi-proof, just another nail in the coffins of those who continue to reject Rifkin’s OVPP hypothesis. C. P. E. Bach did not come directly to Hamburg from Leipzig and when he did take up his post in Hamburg it was 18 years after the death of his father. Georg Friedrich Telemann had held this prestigious post from 1721 until his death in 1767. During that time, for the performance of figural music on regular Sundays in all the major Hamburg churches, the use of soloists without any additional vocal support from members of a boys’ choir was customary. Only for special occasions was a single *ripienist* added to each vocal range. The use of choir of boys to perform figural music in the churches was always problematical in Hamburg. There was no tradition that continued for decades or even centuries as the *Thomaner* have had in Leipzig. When Thomas Selle, *Thomaskantor*, left his post as *Thomaskantor* in Leipzig to become *Kantor* and *Directoris chori musici* in Hamburg in 1641, he attempted a much-needed major reform of the musical organizations that served the churches there.¹³ He tried to model these changes on the musical education structure he had been part of before in Leipzig with a school that would accept students (pupils) who demonstrated a talent for music and singing and that would offer them free tuition including room and board. By 1674/75 it became clear that Selle in Hamburg had been unable to realize his intentions to include for performing figural music boy singers to complement the regularly salaried singers (2 sopranos, 2 altos, 2 tenors, 2 basses) in all voice ranges. For their figural music, both Telemann and C. P. E. Bach had to make do without the assistance of “Schul-Chöre” which should at least have been supplied by the famous *Johanneum Gymnasium* in Hamburg. Telemann was supposed to give music lessons at this school, but never did since he found others to carry out this task for him. There are records that indicate that, for figural music in the churches, Telemann occasionally hired a few students from the *Johanneum*, but this was limited to

¹³ Jürgen Neubacher, *Georg Philipp Telemanns Hamburger Kirchenmusik und Ihre Aufführungsbedingungen (1721-1767): Organisationsstrukturen, Musiker, Besetzungspraktiken, Magdeburger Telemann-Studien XX*, Georg Olms (2009) particularly pages 210-211, 218.

only one or two students at the same time and they sang soprano parts only. It is quite clear from the historical records that there can be no real comparison between Hamburg and Leipzig as far as figural music performed in churches is concerned. There is no way that C. P. E. Bach could have turned this tradition around during his tenure in Hamburg. Parrott's statement: **at Hamburg C. P. E. Bach simply did not 'include the choirboys in choruses etc.'** demands further clarification so that a reader will not be deliberately misled into possibly assuming that it was C. P. E. Bach's intention (based upon his supposed experience under his father's direction in Leipzig) not to include choir boys in his figural music in the Hamburg churches because his father's *concertists* in Leipzig primarily performed it as soloists and not with the help of *ripienists* (other *Thomaner* in the primary choir) who might join them in the choral movements.

2. On p. 224 Parrott returns to the much discussed solo/*tutti* markings in the BWV 232 Dresden performance materials [the blue and dark blue color highlighting has been added to call attention to a specific portion of the quotation]:

A rather more straightforward question of reasoning arises in connection with two 'Solo' indications in the Dresden set of performing parts of the *Missa* BWV232. These isolated markings occur against the alto's 'Qui sedes' and the bass's 'Quoniam' (their only solo movements). In his 1994 edition of the complete *Mass in B minor* Christoph Wolff expresses the view, held since at least 1988 and repeated as recently as 2007, that not only do these markings imply a 'vocal *tutti* ensemble' elsewhere in the work (which of course they do), but that the vocal *tutti* they imply *necessarily* comprises more than just the five *concertists* (why?) and that this is therefore 'a strong argument against Joshua Rifkin's view'. This is a very large logical jump indeed, resulting from an *a priori* rejection of a one-to-a-part '*tutti*', and from two unproven (and questionable) assumptions — that each copy is intended to be read by more than one singer, and that the word 'Solo' functions in effect as an *instruction* to these hypothetical extra singers *not to sing*. This is surely a simple piece of helpful information for the singer (to the effect that 'this is a solo rather than another ensemble movement'), for otherwise one would have to wonder why a subsequent '*Tutti*' indication is lacking in these two instances, why 'Christe eleison', for example, carries no equivalent warnings for extra singers *not to sing* with the duetting sopranos, and why comparably helpful solo/*tutti* indications are absent from a dozen equivalent spots **in the carefully prepared set of vocal parts**. In short, a vocal '*tutti*' is formed simply when 'all' voices sing together, be they few or many, and in this case Bach's copies are designed clearly for five *concertists*, with no evidence whatsoever that additional singers were anticipated. [p. 224]

It becomes very difficult to reconcile the description above of **the carefully prepared set of vocal parts** where every solo/*tutti* indication must be reliably accounted for with Rifkin's own description of these parts [the special highlighting with color is mine]:

Rifkin setzte den bis dahin vorgebrachten Thesen eine gänzlich andere Sicht der Ereignisse im Juli 1733 entgegen: Die zeitliche Nachbarschaft von Bachs Widmungsschreiben mit dem Amtsantritt Friedemanns in Dresden lege, so Rifkin, den Gedanken nahe, daß erst Friedemanns Bestellung an der Dresdner Sophienkirche zu der Idee einer Missa für den neuen Kurfürsten geführt habe. Dies wiederum bedeute, daß sowohl Komposition als auch Stimmherstellung **unter größtem Zeitdruck erfolgt sein müßten....Die nötige Eile** erkläre, so Rifkin, die fast ausschließliche Verwendung bereits vorhandener Musik ebenso wie **das von Hast geprägte Erscheinungsbild von Partitur und Stimmen**. Die Missa als Ganzes sei somit “less the fruit of long reflection and planning than **a brilliant improvisation undertaken at more or less the last minute.**”

Rifkin countered with a completely different view regarding the longstanding theory surrounding the events of July, 1733: the proximity in time between Bach’s dedication page [to accompany the parts for the *Missa*] and W. F. Bach’s assumption of his post [as organist] at the *Sophienkirche* in Dresden gave Bach the idea for a mass for the new elector. This in turn, according to Rifkin, means that the composition [of the *Missa*] as well as **the copying out of the parts must have taken place under the greatest pressure of time....the urgent haste** explains, according to Rifkin, the almost exclusive use of already existing compositions as well as **the appearance of both score and parts which leave the impression that they were hastily written and copied**. As a result you could say that the *Missa* as a whole was less the fruit of long reflection and planning than **a brilliant improvisation undertaken at more or less the last minute.**”¹⁴

It is a matter of human nature that, when time presses, some items which must have seemed more obvious to Bach at that time might not, under the given circumstances, have been committed to paper. Being in a hurry, as Rifkin describes the situation, Bach would have had to restrict himself to those things which appeared to be more important at that time. Time was of the essence. This was not a project where the Bach family was comfortably sitting around the kitchen table at home leisurely copying from Bach’s score. If Rifkin is right, then Bach’s visit in Dresden would through necessity have been quite short indeed. By marking only the solo sections which are fewer than the number of *tutti* indications that would be necessary, Bach proves himself once again to be the great economizer because he can assume that those vocalists reading from a single part would have enough information to sing from the part just as the composer had intended. Uwe Wolf, who prepared the newest critical edition of the *Frühfassungen zur H-Moll-Messe, NBA II/1a* with the *KB (Kritischer Bericht)* Bärenreiter, 2005 [see footnote 14 below] wrote the following on p. VI (foreword to the *NBA* printed edition of the music):

Die von Bach selbst geschriebenen Stimmen von 1733 sind ausgiebig mit Vortragszeichen versehen, die von anderer Hand stammenden Teile sind dagegen weit geringer bezeichnet....Die Stimmen von

¹⁴ Uwe Wolf ed., *Johann Sebastian Bach: Neue Ausgabe Sämtlicher Werke, Kritischer Bericht, Serie II, Band 1a (NBA KB III/1a)* Bärenreiter (2005), pp. 25; footnote references to Joshua Rifkin, the booklet accompanying Nonesuch 7559-79036-2 a recording of the performance of the *B-Minor Mass* with The Bach Ensemble under the direction of Joshua Rifkin (1982); ideas further developed and published in his editorial notes for the facsimile edition of score and parts for the *B-Minor Mass*, Notes 44 (1988) pp. 787-799.

1733 sind gegenüber der Vorlage weiterentwickelt. So sind in Satz 8 in der Partitur noch zwei Flöten in unisono vorgesehen. In den Stimmen ist dieser Part dann der Soloflöte zugewiesen....Die Nummern 4 und 5, 8 und 9 sowie 11 und 12 bilden in den Quellen jeweils nur einen Satz. Dies mußte auch in der Edition berücksichtigt werden. Um den Vergleich mit der Edition in Band II/1 zu erleichtern, wurde allerdings die Einzelzählung der Satzteile beibehalten.

Those parts [from the Dresden set of parts from 1733] which Bach copied himself have been well supplied with performance indications [including phrasing, dynamics, embellishments, etc.] Those that have been copied by others [in the case of the vocal parts, the Soprano I & II were copied by C. P. E. Bach] have these indications to a much lesser extent....The [Dresden] parts from 1733 display a further development over the score [from which they were copied] [Compared to the score from which they were copied, the {Dresden} parts display a further stage of development in the process of composition.] For instance, the score still calls for two flutes playing in unison in movement 8....The movements numbered 4 and 5, 8 and 9 as well as 11 and 12 are conjoined as single movements in both sources [autograph score and set of parts]. It was necessary to take this into account in the present edition. In order to make a comparison with the [original] NBA II/1 easier, the individual numbering system [no combinations of movements as given above] of all the movements was maintained [the combination movements {4-5, 8-9, 11-12} were broken apart and numbered separately as they usually given elsewhere].

Missa BWV 232¹ Fassung von 1733

1. Kyrie eleison
2. Christe eleison
3. Kyrie eleison
4. Gloria in excelsis Deo 5. Et in terra pax
6. Laudamus te
7. Gratias agimus tibi
8. Domine Deus 9. Qui tollis
10. Qui sedes ad dextram Patris
11. Quoniam tu solus sanctus 12. Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris

No solo/*tutti* markings in the autograph score.

Vocal parts were copied by:

Soprano I mvts. 1-5, 6 (*tacet*), 7, 8, 9 (rests), 10 (*tacet*), 11 (rests), 12 to m 60a (J. S. Bach only from m 60b to the end) C. P. E. Bach.

Soprano II mvts. 1-7, 8 (rests), 9, 10 (*tacet*), 11 (rests), 12 to m 93 (J. S. Bach only from m 94 to the end) C. P. E. Bach.

Alto mvts. 1, 2 (*tacet*), 3-5, 6 (*tacet*), 7, 8 (rests)9, 10 **Solo**, 11 (rests) and 12 J. S. Bach.

Tenore mvts. 1, 2 (*tacet*), 3-5, 6 (*tacet*), 7, 8 **Duetto**, 9, 10 (*tacet*), 11 (rests) and 12 J. S. Bach.

Basso mvt. 1, 2 (*tacet*), 3-5, 6 (*tacet*), 7, 8 (rests), 9, 10 (*tacet*), 11 **Solo**, and 12 J. S. Bach.

These markings appear only in the parts indicated above.

With all the rests and *tacet* markings given in the above parts, why would a conjectured OVPP performance of only five vocalists need **Solo** or **Duetto** markings with all of the movements of the *Missa* presented in sequence? Do not **Solo** or **Duetto** markings imply in themselves that other vocalists of the same voice range, those who had been reading from the same part, were now being notified by the composer that only the *concertist* should be singing the part alone?

Mvt. 8 (which has mvt. 9 attached to it directly) has **Duetto** indicated only in the tenor part (actually as the title for this movement in this part). There is no similar title or instruction in the 1st soprano part. Is this another sign of the haste with which these parts were prepared? Note that the 1st soprano part was almost exclusively copied by C. P. E. Bach. Did Bach tell his son to mark mvt. 8 as a **Duetto** and his son subsequently forgot to enter this when he was copying this movement? Did Bach overlook this when quickly checked what his son had copied or was there simply no time to check his son's work? The best scenario here appears to be that Bach and his family were under great pressure of time to complete the task of composition and the preparation of the performance materials, thus in the process of 'cutting corners' such oversights were bound to occur.

In order to add all the **tutti** markings in the parts above, there would need to be at a minimum: 4 at the beginning of mvt. 12 in the S1, A, T, and B parts and possibly 5 or at least 4 at the beginning of mvt. 1. That means 8 or 9 additional markings of **tutti** while, in contrast, only 3 (or 4 with the missing indication) markings of **Solo** and **Duetto** sufficed for Bach to make his intention clear to the vocalists. The economy of time and energy dictated the simplest solution and even here Bach was guilty nevertheless of an oversight in regard to the **Duetto**.

The OVPP enthusiasts will argue as they did in the material cited above: Why were there no **tutti** markings at the beginning of movement 12 after the duet in mvt. 8 and the solo movements 10 and 11? The lack of these indications would signify that only one singer who sang the solo (or the two who sang the duet) did not require them because they were the only vocalists singing from their designated part.

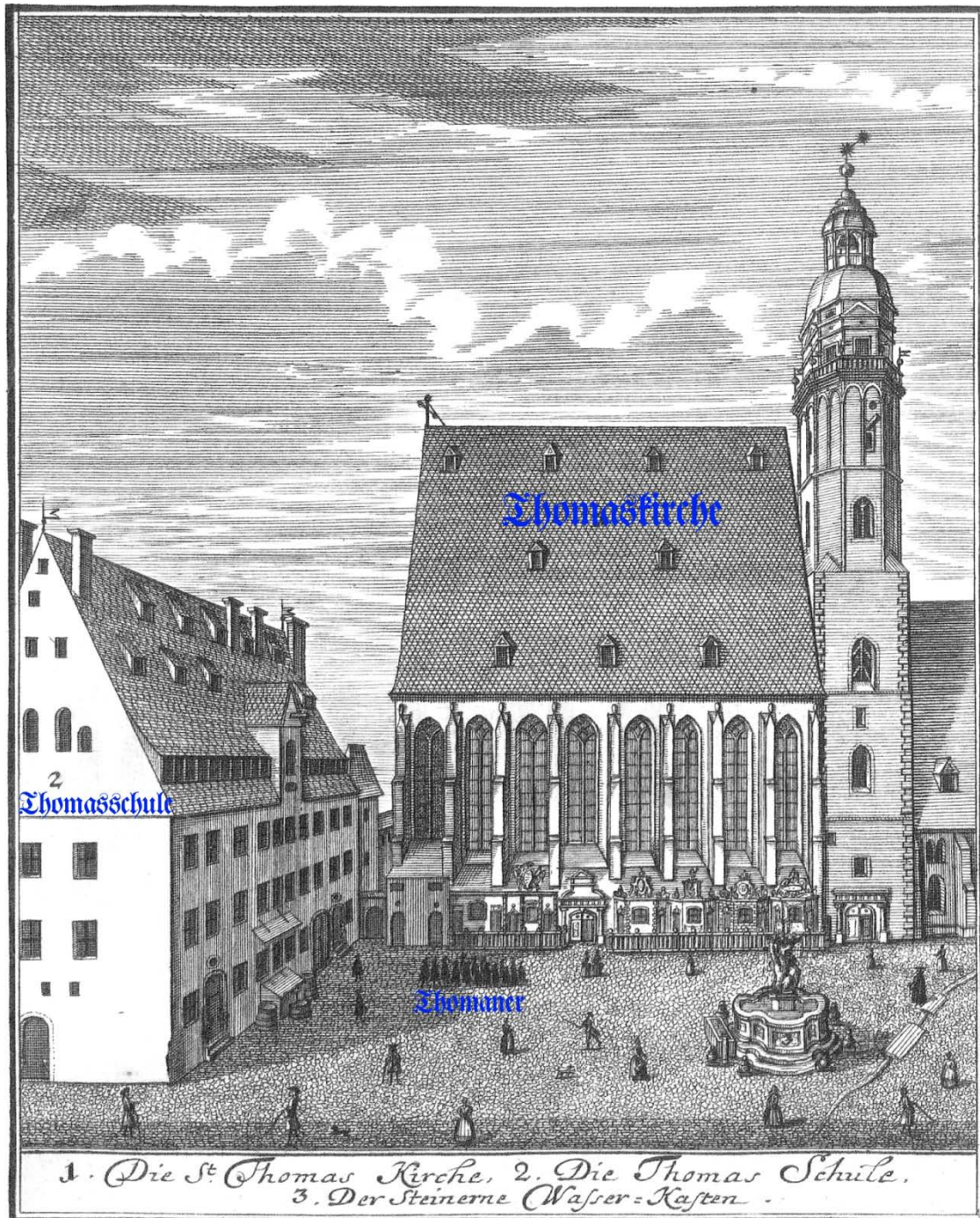
To this point the standard Bach choir enthusiasts will argue: Why did Bach even bother to indicate either *Solo* or *Duetto*, if the singers of those parts could never be confused with any other part or singer attached to such a part? The vocal parts for those vocalists have either rests or *tacet* for the movements when they are not supposed to sing. Do not *Solo* or *Duetto* clearly imply that others who have been singing from the same part have now been requested to allow the designated *concertist* to sing alone? These markings are similar to most indications of recitative and aria in the cantatas. There it was always understood that only one singer would be singing the part even when other *ripienists* have been singing in the choral movements. Generally there were no *tutti* markings for such choral movements because it was assumed that the *ripienists* would sing only in such movements. The problem with the *Missa* (1733 version) is that the usual title assigned by Bach in his cantatas (recitative, aria) has now been replaced with the Latin text incipit, thus requiring Bach, who was in a great hurry, to add the *Solo* and *Duetto* markings so that the *ripienists* who had been singing along from the same part now knew that they were not to sing movements with this markings.

Returning to Parrott's query: *one would have to wonder....why 'Christe eleison', for example, carries no equivalent warnings for extra singers not to sing with the duetting sopranos.* [p. 224] For this, a careful scrutiny of the copyists involved would easily provide an answer: C. P. E. Bach copied almost all of both soprano parts (I & II). Just as he failed to indicate *Duetto* for movement 8 of the Soprano I part (while his father, in contrast, did add this for the tenor part of the same movement), likewise C. P. E. Bach could just as easily have omitted (forgotten to indicate) *Duetto* for movement 2 'Christe eleison'. C.P. E. Bach is guilty of not including the label *Duetto* for both soprano parts in movement 2 and for the Soprano II part in movement 6. Perhaps a reasonable assumption here could be that J. S. Bach simply did not have enough time to check his son's copies in order to make the necessary corrections and additions. This would also explain why C. P. E. Bach's copies have fewer marks of expression (phrasing, dynamics, embellishments, etc.) than those which J. S. Bach had prepared.

Conclusion

It is obvious that, in lieu of new, truly relevant evidence being presented by either Andrew Parrott for Joshua Rifkin or Andreas Glöckner as a spokesman for the German academic establishment specializing in Bach scholarship (the *Bach-Archiv*, the *NBA*, the *Bach-Jahrbuch*, etc.), the issues surrounding the OVPP theory proposed by Joshua Rifkin and his followers will not be resolved at any time in the near future. Barring a miraculous discovery of some pertinent documents that will clarify just what Bach generally did with the *ripienists* in his primary choir during the performances of his sacred cantatas, the rift between the non-OVPP- and the OVPP-factions will continue to grow and the further hardening of positions will become inevitable. Based upon

Parrott's recent response to Glöckner's presentation, the methods of argumentation will continue to deteriorate to those of the *ad hominem* type that have been witnessed here in what purports to be scholarly debate on an issue that affects every current and future listener who wishes to derive all the pleasure, edification and spiritual elevation that Bach may have intended for performances of his sacred vocal works.



From the *Schulordnung*, Leipzig, 1723