

# BWV 248/19 “Schlafe, mein Liebster”

## A Background Study with Focus on the *Colla Parte Flauto Traverso* Part

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In order to understand what possible purpose a *colla parte* flute part might have played in the performance of the well-known soprano aria from Bach’s *Christmas Oratorio*, it is necessary to investigate its origin and development as based upon the existing autograph manuscripts for which detailed descriptions are available in the *NBA KBs* (critical reports).<sup>2</sup>

It has been known for quite some time that many movements from the *Christmas Oratorio* are parodies. This means, for all practical purposes, that much of the same music, first performed in the two principal churches in Leipzig between Christmas and Epiphany in late December 1734 and early January 1735 existed in an earlier secular form but with different texts. These parody transformations did necessitate certain changes in the music as well; these could include such things as transposition to different keys, the substitution or addition of different instruments from those used in the original, and even modifying at times the original musical lines.

### The Original Secular Aria

In honor of the birthday of the prince elector on September 5, 1733, Bach had composed and performed a celebratory cantata, a *dramma per musica* entitled “Laßt uns sorgen, laßt uns wachen” BWV 213. This *Glückwunschkantate zum Geburtstage des Kurprinzen*, to which Carl Friedrich Zelter (1758-1832) later added the title *Die Wahl des Hercules* (Picander’s<sup>3</sup> title which Bach never used was *Hercules auf dem Scheide-Wege*) was performed outdoors in a garden setting outside one of Leipzig’s city gates. This garden was owned and managed by Gottfried Zimmermann (died in

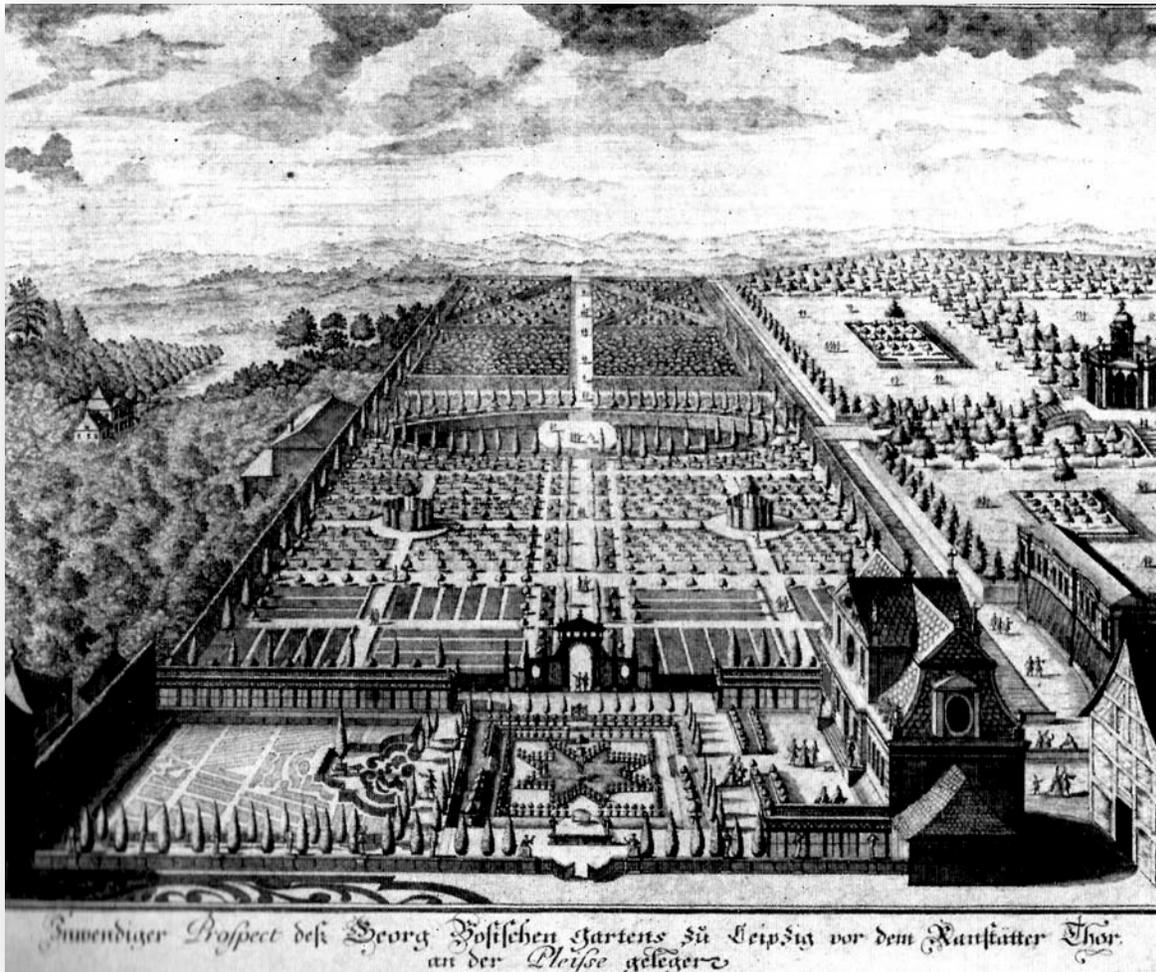
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<sup>2</sup> *Johann Sebastian Bach: Neue Ausgabe Sämtlicher Werke, Kritischer Bericht, Serie I/36 & II/6*, Bärenreiter (1962); ed. Werner Neumann (I/36, pp. 28-80), Walter Blankenburg & Alfred Dürr (II/6, pp. 14-15, 88, 90, 214) [subsequent references will be given as follows: *NBA KB II/6 p. 88*]

<sup>3</sup> Picander is the pen-name for Christian Friedrich Henrici (1700-1754).

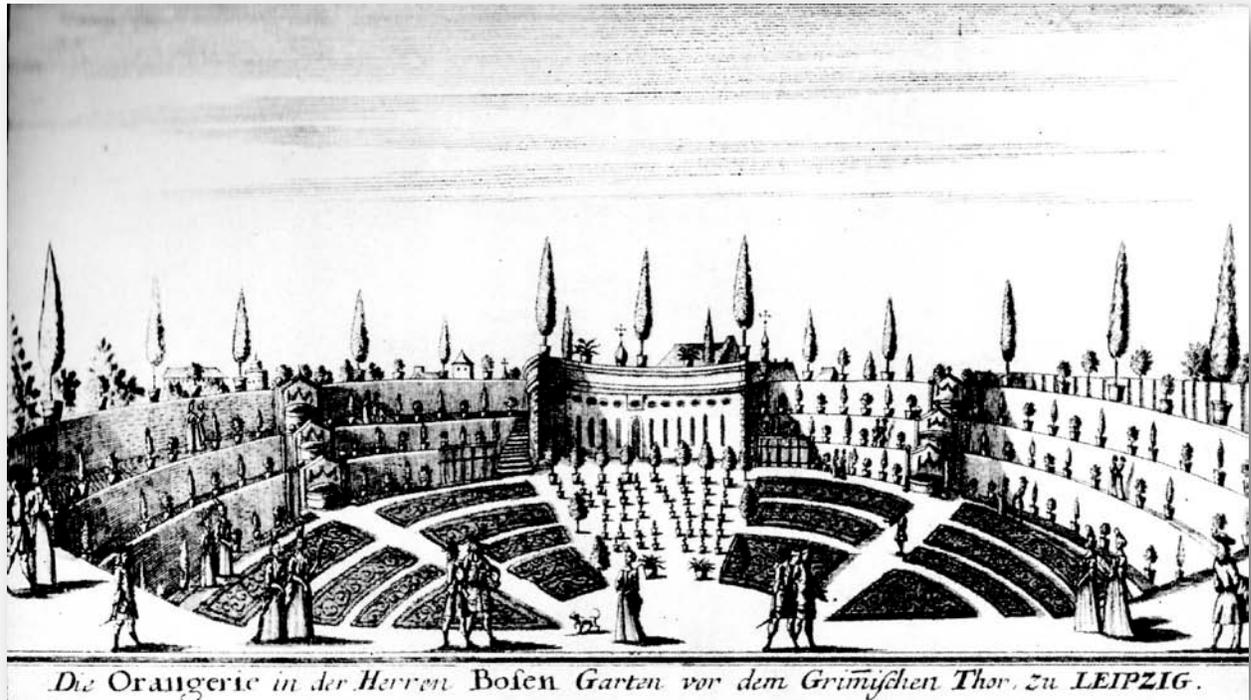
1741), who also owned one of the largest cafes in Leipzig, a cafe where Bach frequently performed his music and that of other composers with his *Collegium musicum*.



**Figure 1** The View toward Bose's Garden outside Leipzig's Ranstädt Gate on the Pleisse River.

Unfortunately there are no engravings of the Zimmermann garden extant today, but the views of other similar gardens that existed during Bach's tenure in Leipzig can provide an approximation of the outdoor venues that musicians and audience experienced. Of particular interest are the elaborate landscaping designs realized by

members of the Bose family.<sup>4</sup> These gardens were open to the general public as illustrated by the various figures strolling along the promenades.



**Figure 2 The Orangerie in Mr. Bose's garden outside of Leipzig's Grimma Gate.**

If Zimmermann's outdoor cafe resembled the garden constructed by Caspar Bose (1645-1700), a large garden of which the Orangerie above was only one section, then it is easy to imagine how Bach could successfully perform music under such conditions. The shape of this Orangerie resembling an amphitheater would be quite conducive to outdoor performances.

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<sup>4</sup> The members of the Bose family were very wealthy merchants in Leipzig. The 'Kleinbosischer Garten' is depicted in Figure 1 above and was created by Georg Bose (1650-1700) while the 'Großbosischer Garten', only a portion of which is shown in Figure 2, was developed by his brother Caspar Bose (1645-1700). It is very likely that Georg Heinrich Bose (1682-1731), a gold- and silversmith whose residence was located at Thomaskirchhof 16 just around the corner from Bach's flat in the *Thomasschule* and with whom Bach was on very friendly terms, was related to the Boses mentioned above.

In preparation for this event, Bach had to accomplish the following tasks for which evidence still exists:

### 1. to obtain a newly conceived text from a poet

The poet whom Bach depended upon mostly during this period in Leipzig was Picander. It is conceivable that Bach collaborated with Picander in order to improve the resulting text so that it would suit what Bach had in mind as a composer. The evidence here is the text printed on pp. 22-26 of *Picanders Ernst-Schertzhaffte und Satyrische Gedichte, Vierter und letzter Theil, Leipzig 1737*. The caption also includes the date of the first performance, September 5, 1733, after which date Picander may still have made a number of minor editorial changes, or, perhaps, Bach had made them after having received the text from Picander prior to the performance date. As far as the aria in question is concerned (it is movement 3, an aria for soprano, “Schlafe, mein Liebster”), Bach writes both “Liebster” and “Lieber” in the score and only “Liebster” appears in the vocal part, while Picander’s text has “Lieber”. Also, Bach does not indicate a role title for the singer, but Picander, in contrast, has designated this part as *Wollust* [sensuality, lust].

### 2. to compose the score

Werner Neumann, in the *NBA KB II/36* p.33, describes the appearance of Bach’s handwriting for this score as *flüchtig* (literally ‘flighty’), a term, when applied as a description of handwriting style, means that it appears to be cursory, that is, hurriedly written with numerous mistakes and corrections. This is customarily considered to be a ‘composing’ score as opposed to a calligraphic version which has a much cleaner appearance because it is being copied from another previously composed source. In BWV 213 only movement 11, a duet for alto and tenor, could possibly be based on an earlier composition because its appearance is more even throughout and the introductory ritornello along with all of the instrumental parts reveals no errors. Thus BWV 213/3, the soprano aria in question, must be considered to be an original composition that Bach composed just prior to the performance date on September 5, 1733.

It would appear that the title at the top of the first page of music was written before the cover title. The latter has no indication of flutes while the former has *2 Trav.* crossed out and the *2 Viole conc.* not mentioned in the former are included in the latter after the composition of the cantata had been completed. Here for comparison are the two autograph titles:

On the outside folder:

*Glückwünschungs Cantate | auf einen Sächsischen Prinzen | à | Soprano | Echo | Alto, Tenore e Baſſo | 2 Corni | 2 Hautb. | 2 Viol. | 2 Viole conc. | Viola | e | Cont. | di | J. S. Bach.*

On top of the first page of the score:

*Drama à 4 Voci. 2 Corni da Caccia. [2 Trav: crossed out] 2 Hautb. 2 Violini. Viola e Cont. di Bach.*

Mvt. 3 is entitled simply *Aria* (no indication of the role: *Wollust*).

### 3. to prepare the performers’ parts

The *Canto. Solo.* [Soprano] part was prepared entirely by Johann Gottlob Haupt (?) JGH. He was born in 1714 in Dewitz and attended the *Thomasschule* from 1727-1735. He served as Bach's copyist from Aug 17, 1731 until Jan 1, 1735 and was his main copyist from July 6, 1732 until the end date. Including 213, he was involved with the following works BWV 29, BWV 93, BWV 96, BWV 140, BWV 177, BWV 214, BWV 215, and 248/II, III, IV.

The soprano part for BWV 213/3 has only *Aria* as its title and a *DaCapo* at the end. The *Hautbois Imo* has  $2/4$  *Aria* | *tacet* for mvt. 3, the latter title indication is autograph (J. S. Bach).

#### 4. to have the texts printed in time for the performance

Before Picander's printed version of the libretto appeared in his collection of poetry from 1737 cited above, a fancy presentation copy was printed by Breitkopf and paid for by Bach. It is very likely that in addition 150 copies were printed at the same time on cheaper paper. Breitkopf's charges for his paper and services (including censorship by the local authorities!) are entered in his account books as *Dem Hn Capellmeister Bach vor ein Drama auf den Geburtstag des Churprintzen* dated September 3, 1733, thus confirming this particular event and possibly also indicating that Bach may have had only two days to compose and prepare parts for this performance, or possibly he had just finished composing this work on September 3 (with the finalized version of the text) before submitting it directly to the printer. For an outdoor performance, copies of the libretto would have been extremely helpful and perhaps Bach (or Zimmermann) profited from selling them to those who attended this performance.

#### 5. to insure publicity for the event

A newspaper report announced this event one day before the actual performance. This is the text that appeared in the *Leipziger Zeitungen* on September 4, 1733:

*Das Bachische Collegium Musicum wird Morgen als den 5. Sept. a. c. im Zimmermannischen Garten vor dem Grimmischen Thore den hohen Geburts-Tag des Durchl. Chur-Prinzen von Sachsen mit einer solennen Musick von Nachmittag 4. bis 6. Uhr unterthänigst celebriren.*

[Tomorrow afternoon from 4 to 6 pm on September 5 of the current year, Bach's *Collegium musicum* will, with greatest humility, celebrate the highly esteemed birthday of His Highness, the Prince Elector of Saxony, with a performance of festive music in Zimmermann's Garden just outside of the Grimma City Gate.]

### **The Parody as BWV 248/19**

Bach did not pick up this aria [BWV 213/3] until during Advent 1734 when he began in earnest to compile and compose the *Christmas Oratorio* BWV 248:

*In Wahrheit dürfte sich Bach der Arbeit am Weihnachts-Oratorium vorzugsweise in den an Kirchenmusik armen Wochen zwischen 1. Advent und Weihnachten 1734 gewidmet haben.*

In reality Bach would have primarily devoted himself to the task of composing the *Christmas Oratorio* during the period between the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent and Christmas 1734, a [quiet] time [*tempus clausum* = ‘closed time’] which required very little from him in regard to composing and performing cantatas.<sup>5</sup>

The librettist for the *Christmas Oratorio* is unknown. Although it has long been suspected that Picander was the author, there is no direct evidence such as the inclusion of this text in one of his volumes of poetry to prove this. Since the libretto contained a considerable amount (perhaps about 2/3 of the entire text) of chorale texts and passages from the Bible, while the free verse amounted to about 1/3, is it possible that, for this reason, Picander simply decided not to attach his name to it? Perhaps Bach had made considerable contributions to the text or found some of the poetry in other sources. In any case, it is very likely that Bach collaborated considerably with the unknown author:

*Bei einer großen Zahl dieser Texte [freie Dichtung] läßt sich nachweisen, bei einigen weiteren vermuten, daß sie vom Dichter so angelegt waren, daß ihr Text die Wiederverwendung einer bereits früher durch Bach komponierten Musik ermöglichte. Dieses Parodieverfahren stellte an den Dichter erhöhte Anforderungen, da er nicht nur das Versschema des bereits komponierten Textes genau nachzubilden, sondern auch die Zäsuren des Textes, ja den Affekt der einzelnen Worte möglichst getreu zu übernehmen hatte, sollte die vorliegende Komposition ihren Sinn behalten.*

In regard to the greater number of these texts [of free verse, not the chorales and biblical passages], it can be demonstrated, and in the case of several additional texts it is probable, that the librettist set the words in such a manner that they would make possible the adaptation of the music that Bach had composed for a previous occasion. This parody method made even greater demands than usual on the librettist to accept and render precisely not only the rhyme scheme but also the breaks in each line of the already existing earlier text and to recreate as faithfully as possible the affect associated with certain words so that the original musical composition would be able to maintain the same meaning with the new words that have been created for the new context.<sup>6</sup>

Here is a comparison of the two texts involved with this particular aria:

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<sup>5</sup> *NBA KB III/6*, pp. 109-110.

<sup>6</sup> *NBA KB III/6*, pp. 199-200.

BWV 213/3

Schlafe, mein Liebster, und pflege der Ruh,  
Folge der Lockung entbrannter Gedanken!  
Schmecke die Lust  
Der lüsternen Brust,  
Und erkenne keine Schranken!

BWV 248/19

Schlafe, mein Liebster, genieße der Ruh,  
Wache nach diesem vor aller Gedeihen!  
Labe die Brust,  
Empfinde die Lust,  
Wo wir unser Herz erfreuen!

BWV 213/3

Sleep, my dearest, and get some rest, |  
Follow the temptation of your thoughts  
burning with passion! | Get a taste of the  
sexual desire in your lecherous heart, | and  
recognize no limits to it!

BWV 248/19

Sleep, my dearest, and enjoy your rest, | After  
your rest wake up so that all people may  
prosper! | Refresh your heart, | and sense the  
pleasure, | where our hearts are joyful!

Although the music for BWV 213/3 remained essentially the same in BWV 248/19, a number of important changes were nevertheless necessary. A quick comparison of the opening bars of each as printed in the NBA volumes I/36 and II/6 will at once reveal many of these essential differences.

BWV 213 3. Aria

The image shows the first five staves of the musical score for BWV 213 3. Aria. The staves are labeled from top to bottom: Violino I, Violino II, Viola, Soprano Wollust, and Continuo. The music is in 2/4 time and B-flat major. The Soprano part is mostly silent, indicated by a large 'z' (zast) symbol. The Continuo part provides a steady bass line with eighth-note patterns.

## BWV 248 19. Aria

The image shows a musical score for BWV 248 19. Aria. The score is written for a 4/4 time signature and G major. The instruments listed are:

- Flauto traverso I
- Oboe d'amore I
- Oboe d'amore II / Violino I
- Oboe da caccia I / Violino II
- Oboe da caccia II / Viola
- Alto
- Continuo (2 x) / Organo (bez.)

The score includes figured bass notation for the Continuo/Organo part, with figures such as 6/4, 5/3, 7/4, 5/3, 8, 7b, 6/4, and 7/4. The Alto part is written in a higher register than the original.

An itemized list of these differences will include the following:

1. A change of key (transposition) from Bb major to G major.
2. A change of vocal range from soprano to alto (the soprano aria becomes one for alto voice).
3. A change in orchestration/instrumentation: In the ritornelli the strings receive support from *colla parte* reed instruments; in mm 121-135 the oboe d'amore I replaces the solo part played by the violino I; a transverse flute part is added which plays the alto solo part an octave higher.
4. Changes to the music: Not taking into account the musical changes necessitated by transposition from one key to another, other changes in the musical line, particularly in the middle section, involve changes in the vocal part from mm 118 to 131 and mm 137ff along with similar changes in the imitative instrumental part (cf. original violino I with the oboe d'amore I part) which caused changes in mm 126 to 129 and mm 134ff.; the accompanying figures in the violino II and viola parts were given a new treatment in the parody version in mm 122 to 135.

In contrast to the above, however, the overall form of this aria and the number of measures it contains remain the same.

## Some Highlights from the Process of Composing BWV 248

The original autograph cover page or folder for the autograph score is missing. Here are the autograph titles and conclusions for each part of BWV 248 (the autograph text appears in italics):

### Part I

*JJ Feria 1 Nativitatis Xsti. à 4 Voci. 3 Trombe Tamburi. 2 Trav. 2 Hautb. | 2 Violini, Viola e Cont di Bach Oratorium.*<sup>7</sup>

Under the lowest staff in middle of the page: *Pars 1. Oratorii.*

At the right in the space remaining in staff 19: *Fine.*

In staff 20: *SDG 1734.*

### Part II

*J. J. Feria Nativit: Xsti 2. a 2 Hautb: d'Amour. 2 Hautb da Caccia. 2 Violini Viola, 4 Voci | e Cont. di Bach*

On the bottom margin of this page under the lowest staff: *Pars 2. Oratorii.*

At the end of movement 18, Bach writes: *Aria.*

Movement 19 follows directly below this with the topmost 3 staves given as *Violino 1 et due Hautb: d'Amour | Violino 2. et Hautb da Caccia 1 | Viola e Hautb da Caccia 2.*

There is no separate staff for a transverse flute part nor does the designation *Flauto traverso* appear anywhere in Part II.

*Fine SDG 1734.*

### Part III

*J. J. Feria 3 Nativit: Xsti. a 3 Trombe, Tamburi, 2 Travers. 2 Hautb. 2 Violini Viola | 4 Voci e Cont. di Bach.*

Between staff 22 and 23: *Pars 3 Oratorii.*

*Fine SDG 1734.*

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<sup>7</sup> This word is written in slightly larger script but nevertheless squeezed in tightly at the left under the last line of the title and above the topmost staff of music. "Darunter links in etwas größerer Schrift, offenbar nachträglich eingezwängt" = "forcibly squeezed in on the left in somewhat larger script, obviously done at a later time" *NBA KB III/6*, p. 12.

Part IV

*J. J. Festo Circumcisionis Xsti. à 4 Voci. 2 Corni da Caccia. 2 Hautb. 2 Violini | Viola e Cont. di Bach.*

On staff 22: *Pars 4 Oratorii.*

*Fine.*

Part V

*J. J. Dominica post Fest: Cirumcis: à 4 Voci. 2 Hautb. d'Amour. 2 Violini Viola | e Cont. di Bach.*

*Fine DSG. 1734.*

Part VI

*J. J. Festo Epiphantias. a 4 Voci. 3 Trombe, Tamburi. 2 Hautb. 2 Violini Viola e Cont. | di Bach.*

Under staff 22: *Pars 6 seu ultima Oratorii.*

*Fine SDG. 1734.*

Movement 19 in the score has numerous corrections of mistakes caused by copying and transposing at the same time. These mistakes show that the original note, a third higher, has been corrected from the key of Bb (the original BWV 213/3) to a third lower in the key of G major in the present version.

The original sets of parts:

For each part of the *Christmas Oratorio* there is a separate set of parts: Part I has 21 parts, Part II has 18, Part II has 20, Part IV has 17, Part V has 15, and Part VI has 18. These 6 sets of parts are contained in folders with autograph titles on the outside (in regard to Part I, only the cover sheet with the title has survived).

Cover sheet titles:

Part I

*Oratorium | Tempore Nativitatis Christi | Feria 1. | Jauchzet, frohlocket, auf preiset etc. | a | 4 Voci. | 3 Trombe | Tamburi. | 2 Travers. | 2 Hautb. | 2 Violini | Viola | e | Continuo | di | Joah: Sebast: Bach | Pars 1<sup>ma</sup>.*

## Part II

*Pars 2 Oratorii. | Tempore Nativit: Xsti | Feria 2 | Und es waren Hirten in derselben etc. | à | 4 Voci. | 2 Travers: | 2 Hautb. d'Amour | 2 Hautb. da Caccia. | 2 Violini. | Viola | e | Continuo | di | Joh: Sebast: Bach.*

## Part III

*Pars 3 Oratorii. | Tempore Nativitatis Xsti | Feria 3 | Herrscher des Himmels erhöre etc. | à | 4 Voci. | 3 Trombe | Tamburi | 2 Traversieri | 2 Hautbois | 2 Violini | Viola | e | Continuo | di | Joh: Sebast. Bach*

## Part IV

*Pars 4 Oratorii | Festo Circumcisionis Christi | Fallt mit Dancken, fällt mit Loben | â | 4 Voci. | 2 Corni da Caccia | 2 Hautbois | 2 Violini | Viola | e | Continuo | di | Joh Sebast: Bach*

## Part V

*Pars 5 Oratorii | Dominica post Festū Circumcisionis | Ehre set Dir Gott gesungen | à | 4 Voci | 2 Hautb. d'Amour | 2 Violini | Viola | e | Continuo | di | Joh. Sebast: Bach.*

## Part VI

*Pars 6 et ultima Oratorii | Festo Epiphaniās. | Herr wenn die stoltzen Feinde schnauben | à | 4 Voci. | 3 Trombe. | Tamburi | 2 Hautbois | 2 Violini | Viola | e | Continuo | di | Joh: Sebast: Bach.*

The *Alto* part for movement 19 in Part II has simply the title *Aria*.

It was copied entirely by [Johann Gottlob Haupt](#) who had also copied BWV 213/3 over a year earlier [see above]. Haupt also copied the beginning (movements 10 to 15) of the Flauto traverso I (*Travers. 1.*) part for Part II, then Bach took over for movements 16 to 23. At the end of movement 17, Bach writes: *Recit Baſſo tacet* (for movement 18) after which he inserts the clef, key signature and the time signature C [!] (see both score samples above). There is no title for movement 19. This is unusual since all the other movements for this part have titles whether the flute is playing or not. The Flauto traverso II (*Travers. 1.*) part copied entirely by Bach has the title *Aria Alto tacet* for movement 19. The Oboe d'amore I (*Hautbois 1. d'Amour*) copied entirely by Haupt (with only a few corrections and additions by Bach – the same is true for all the reed instrument parts below) has after movement 18 the following

notation: clef, key signature, a time signature of 2/4 and a note (a *Kustos* or *Custos* indicating the first note to be played on the next line or page). The title of movement 19 is *Aria*. The Oboe d'amore II (*Hautbois 2. d'Amour*) ends the page with the conclusion to movement 18 after which there is a *Volti seqt.* Over the beginning of movement 19 is the title *Aria*. The Oboe da caccia I (*Hautbois 1. da Caccia*) has for movement 18 simply the title *Recit:* after which are indicated the clef, key signature and a 2/4 time signature with a *custos* for the beginning of movement 19 which follows beneath it with the title *Aria*. The Oboe da caccia II (*Hautbois 2do da caccia*) has movement 18 end at the bottom of the page with a *Volti* indication. Movement 19 begins on the back of this sheet with the title *Aria* at the top. The *Continuo* part, also copied by Haupt, indicates at the end of movement 18 the clef, key signature and 2/4 time signature with a *custos* pointing to the beginning of movement 19 which is entitled *Aria*. The *Organo* part was copied by Friedrich Christian Samuel Mohrheim (FCSM); attended the *Thomasschule* from 1733 to 1736; copied for Bach from September 5, 1733 to March 30, 1736. After movement 18 (*Rec: Basso*) the clef, the key and 2/4 time signatures appear under which movement 19 entitled *Aria* is indicated.

### **Bach's Involvement in the Copy Process**

Although 15 copyists were involved in copying out parts for the entire *Christmas Oratorio*, Bach's participation in this process was limited to the following:

1. Entirely autograph:

Part II, Flauto traverso II

Part V, Violino solo; Organo

Part VI, Organo (transposed, figured)

2. Partially autograph:

Part II, Flauto traverso I, mvts. 16-23

Part IV, Continuo (Doublet), mvt. 41 m59 to mvt. 42

Part V, Soprano, Alto, Tenore, Basso, mvts. 46-53

Part VI, Basso, revision of mvt. 54 m.161 – mvt. 64

Flauto traverso I part for Part II of the Christmas Oratorio BWV 248

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for the Flauto traverso I part of Part II of the Christmas Oratorio BWV 248. The score consists of ten staves of music. Several annotations are present:

- Copyist Haupt finishes mvt. 15 here**: A green annotation pointing to the end of the first staff.
- Bach begins here**: A red annotation pointing to the beginning of the second staff.
- Note C time signature!**: A red annotation pointing to a specific note in the third staff.
- 2/4 added after Bach's death**: A red annotation pointing to a time signature change in the fourth staff.

The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and clefs. There are also some handwritten markings like "Alto" and "Cantata" in the third staff, and "27" in the fourth staff.

Figure 3. Flauto traverso I part [NBA II/6 p. X]

## The Text Booklet for BWV 248

Some unanswered questions are posed by the only existing text booklet for the *Christmas Oratorio*. Not only is its authorship unknown, even its title page does not

conform to normal expectations. The cover page is blank and the title page inside has printed text only on the *recto*, not the *verso* side of the page.

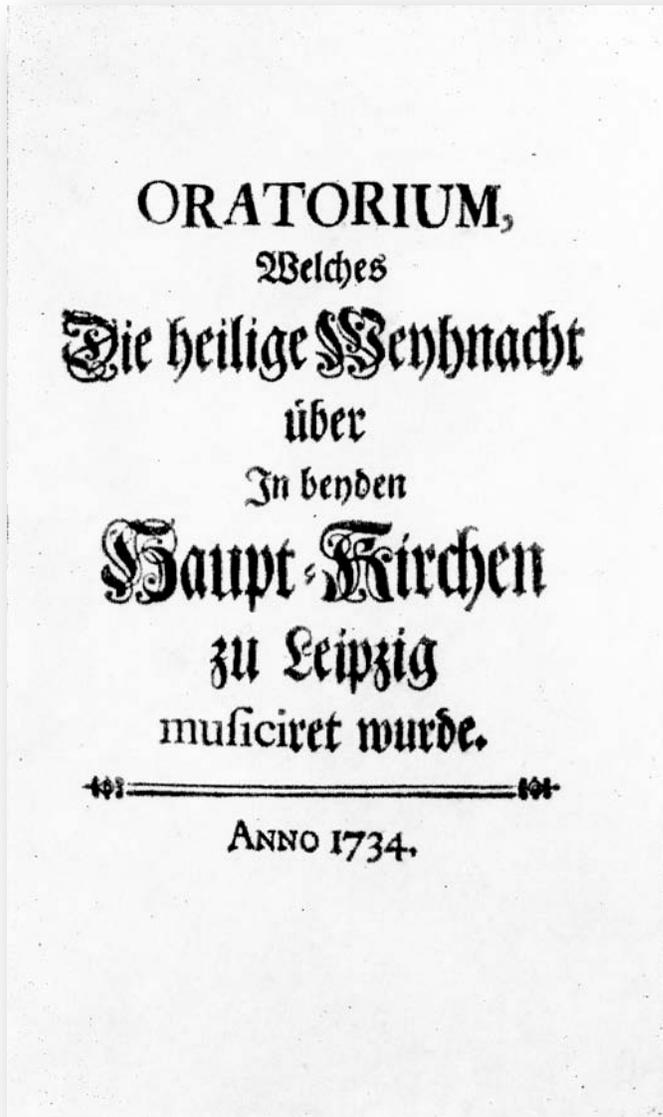


Figure 4. Cover Page of the *Christmas Oratorio*

**The Oratorio  
Which Was  
Performed  
in Both of the Main  
Churches in Leipzig  
during the  
Christmas Holidays**

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**In the Year 1734.**

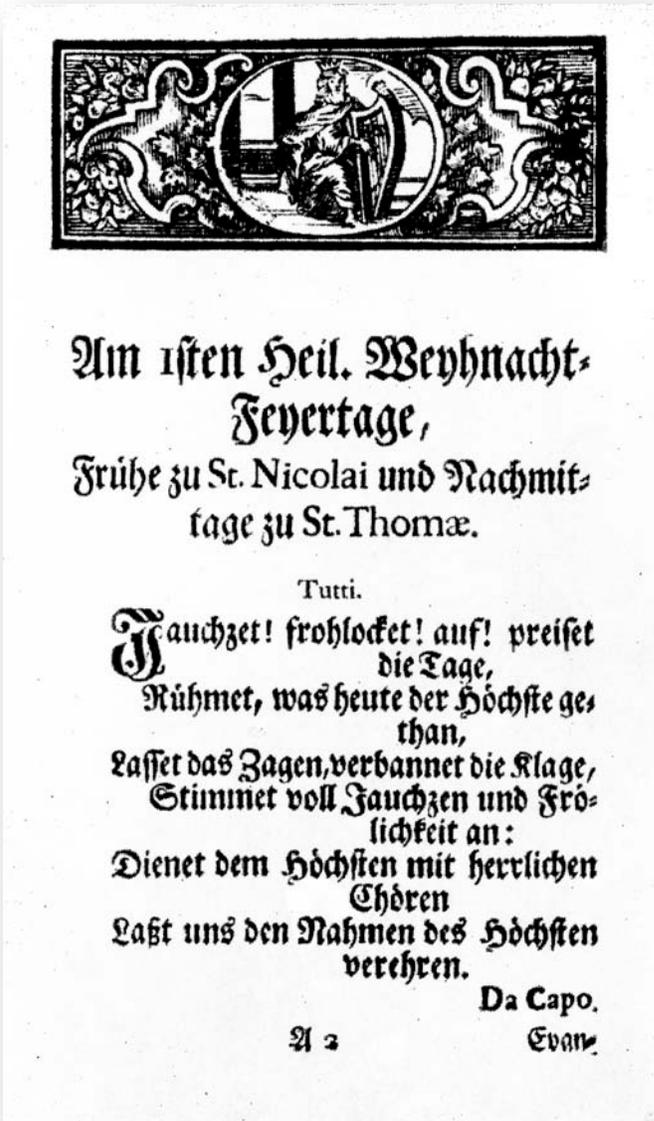


Figure 5. First Page of the *Christmas Oratorio* Text Booklet

**On the First Day of  
Christmas,  
During the Early  
Morning Service in  
St. Nicholas and  
in the Afternoon  
in St. Thomas Church.**

The NBA editors inform us that Bach used an original manuscript source and not the text booklet. It is even quite possible that the text booklet was corrected to make it agree

with Bach's own text as contained in the score and parts.<sup>8</sup> The NBA editors are very insistent that the date and the awkward wording of "musicieret wurde" [= "was performed"] have no bearing on the fact that this booklet was actually used during the first performance:

*Der Textdruck C selbst ist dann offensichtlich zum Mitlesen bei der Aufführung hergestellt worden – der Gedanke an eine nachträgliche Herstellung, den die Formulierung: **Oratorium, Welches...musicieret wurde** nahelegen könnte, wird ausgeschlossen durch die Jahreszahl:*

<sup>8</sup> NBA III/6, p. 209.

*Anno 1734, die in der Anordnung am Fuß der Titelseite nur das Erscheinungsjahr bedeuten kann...ganz abgesehen davon, daß die Aufführung der Hälfte aller Teile in das Jahr 1735 fiel.*

The text booklet was obviously printed in time to be used [by the listeners] during the performance – the notion that this booklet was published after the performance, a notion that is suggested by the wording: *The oratorio which ... was performed* is excluded by means of the date *in the year 1734*, which because of its position at the bottom of the title page can only signify the date of publication...despite the fact, that the performance of half of the oratorio took place during the year 1735.<sup>9</sup>

### **Repeat Performances of the *Christmas Oratorio***

The same sequence of Sundays and Feast Days that existed for the Christmas season in 1734/35 also occurred in 1739/40, 1744/45 and 1745/46, but one can easily imagine that parts of the *Christmas Oratorio* were performed during other Christmas seasons. From the standpoint of the text alone, Part IV, which is unique in this regard, can stand completely on its own and would be the most likely candidate for repeat performance during the years not listed above.

Evidence for repeat performances includes, among other items, an additional continuo part for Part IV with both continuo parts having a figured bass. The greatest probability is that only one continuo part was figured for the first performance and that the second was figured for a later performance with harpsichord but without the organ part being used or that both played together. Both parts were figured by Bach personally. Another indication not easily explained is the existence of a second violin solo part for movement 51. Also unclear is to which performance the entrance of the soprano part at the higher octave in movement 1, mm. 33ff and mm. 89ff can be ascribed. This was not in the original score but was added in the soprano part by someone else, possibly C. P. E. Bach, and then another individual added it to the autograph score (possibly C. P. E. Bach's copyist Michel). Because only a few notes are involved, it is impossible to identify whose handwriting it was.

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<sup>9</sup> *NBA III/6*, p. 209.

## Summary

The evidence suggests quite clearly that Bach, while preparing the *Christmas Oratorio* during the *tempus clausum* between the first Sunday of Advent and Christmas Day, relied heavily on the music from secular cantatas he had composed a year or two before this point in time. One of these cantatas, BWV 213, which he used for the purpose of parody, contained as the third movement a slumber aria “Schlafe, mein Liebster”. The librettist who helped Bach transform this text into a sacred setting in which the Christ child is being addressed has not yet been identified. Although Picander often comes to mind in this context, it is not at all certain that he was involved in this endeavor. Bach may have collaborated with another poet or may even have personally undertaken the task of finding the appropriate words which would resemble closely the poetic structure of the original text.

It is very likely that Bach finished composing the entire oratorio by Christmas Day or certainly by the end of the year 1734, a date which is recorded at the end of each of the six parts of the oratorio in the autograph score. It would appear also that Bach composed these parts in a strict sequence, but the task of copying may not have transpired in such an orderly manner. There were 15 copyists involved and, at times, perhaps even at the last moment, Bach himself had to personally intervene or take up whatever had been left unfinished for some reason or other.

As far as BWV 248/19 is concerned, the evidence clearly shows that Bach, in his autograph score, had no intention of adding a flute part at the higher octave to double the alto voice. This is evident in the title he added to the beginning of Part II in the autograph score: no flutes were indicated! Notable also is Bach’s personal involvement with copying both flute parts for Part II. This could mean that it was a later decision closer to the time of the actual performance which caused him to include these instruments. Curious indeed is the autograph change in the time signature for the first

flute part from 2/4 to C (4/4).<sup>10</sup> Perhaps there was indeed a problem finding a *Thomaner* with a voice strong and healthy enough to handle this aria during the critical Christmas season when almost all the *Thomaner* would be outside every day caroling as *Kurrende* on the streets of Leipzig. Records show that, in order to keep boy *concertists* from losing their voices while participating in these activities, money (*Schonungsgeld*) was paid to select boy sopranos and altos, but primarily later on only to sopranos, if they promised not join the *Kurrende* during the Christmas holidays.<sup>11</sup> Such a problem with his alto *concertist* certainly appears to have been a distinct possibility that Bach may have faced before the first performance of the *Christmas Oratorio* in 1734.

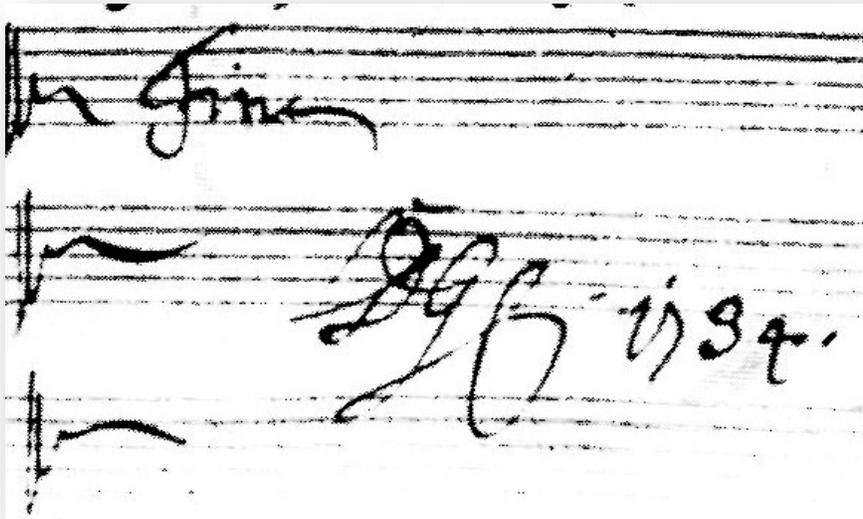


Figure 6. Fine, SDG, 1734 at the end of Part I of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*

<sup>10</sup> See a more detailed discussion of this matter at: <http://www.bach-cantatas.com/Articles/Cut-time.pdf>  
According to Walther (1732), this change would indicate a slower tempo. In this case it would then be appropriate to distinguish the same aria in a church setting (slower) from one that was originally secular (faster).

<sup>11</sup> See the following article for a more detailed discussion of the 'exhausted choir' theory:  
<http://www.bach-cantatas.com/Articles/ScheringFistulanten.pdf>