

## Georg Philipp Telemann



Georg Philipp Telemann after an engraving by Georg Lichtensteger

### His Autobiography

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This is the entry from Mattheson's *Ehren-Pforte*, Hamburg, 1740:

Here Georg Philipp Telemann speaks directly to us and tells us with choice words in his own clever and easy-to-read writing style about the wondrous coincidental events in his life, particularly in regard to musical matters:

“I was born in Magdeburg on March 14, 1681 and was baptized on the following 17<sup>th</sup> in the Evangelical-Lutheran confession. My father, Henricus [*Heinrich*], was a preacher there at the Church of the Holy Spirit [*die Kirche zum Heiligen Geist*] and died January 17, 1685 when he was barely 39 years old. I was almost 4 years old at the time. My mother, Maria, was also descended from a pastor, Johann Haltmeyer from Altendorf. She died in 1710.

In the elementary schools I learned the usual things: reading, writing, catechism and some Latin; but then I eventually took up playing on my own the violin, flute and zither and entertained my friends with this music without even knowing anything

about notes on a page. When I was ten, I began attending the *Gymnasium*<sup>1</sup> where I received a higher level of instruction from the cantor, Mr. Benedicto Christiani, all the way to the highest level classes taught by the rector, Anton Werner Cuno, and finally also by Mr. N. Müller, the rector at the Cathedral [*Dom*] Gymnasium. The latter was responsible for instilling in me my love for German poetry and literature. All my teachers were very much satisfied with my efforts<sup>2</sup>, or more specifically my ability to comprehend quickly. They gave me good grades for my foundation in Latin, but particularly for my abilities in Greek. And yet, one can really forget a lot without practice!

In music I had learned so much in only a few weeks that the cantor let me be his substitute for singing classes even though many in the class were much better than I. During these classes he would be composing, but whenever he turned his back on us, I would look at his scores and would always find something in them to delight me. But I have no idea why I would get excited about this. In short, I was prompted to snatch up all different kinds of music and write out my own copies of the scores which I would study assiduously and thereby gain greater understanding until, finally, I report this in all honesty, I began composing myself, but without anyone knowing about this.

Meanwhile, using an assumed name, I found a way to get my miserable effort at composition into the cantor's hands and those of his prefect. Then I began to hear in church and on the street the best possible praise for the composer of this score. This emboldened me so much that I, at the age of twelve, got a hold of an opera from Hamburg, *Sigismundus*, and set it to music. It was performed on a hastily erected stage with me singing the role of the hero rather defiantly. I would love to see this score again if I were not in my right mind!

Before I could attain such abilities in music, I first had to get some keyboard instruction, but unfortunately my first and only teacher was an organist who tried to

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<sup>1</sup> a college/university preparatory school

<sup>2</sup> *Fleiß* = hard work

terrorize me with German keyboard tablature notation which I then proceeded to play as stiffly as his grandfather did, from whom he originally inherited it. In my head I heard all sorts of more interesting melodies than were presented to me here. So I decided, after two weeks of torture, to quit these lessons. After this point in time, I never did learn anything more from music teachers.

Oh, but what storms I had to endure because of the opera mentioned above! Hordes of music haters came to my mother and tried to persuade her that I would become charlatan, tightrope walker, minstrel, woodchuck trainer<sup>3</sup>, etc., if I did not stop my involvement with music. The next thing I knew, they had taken away all my scores and instruments. With this they had robbed me of half of my life. In order to cure me of my preoccupation with music even more, they had decided to send me away from Magdeburg to a school in Zellerfeld located in the Harz Mountain region. This probably happened because my music tyrants probably thought that the witches in the Harz Mountains could not stand any music at all.

So, at the age of 13 with a letter of recommendation in hand, a letter addressed to the Superintendent Mr. Caspar Calvör, who was to watch over my studies carefully, a directive which was faithfully carried out, my knowledge of academic subjects was increased, particularly in regard to surveying. But even this fate was to take on the aspects of a Greek play.

After some time had passed, a mountain festival was to take place and the cantor was asked to set to music some poetry that been prepared for him. Unfortunately, he suffered from rather severe gout. Meanwhile I had already confided to one of my fellow students that I knew how to set texts to music. He revealed this to the cantor whereupon I was summoned to him and, upon his request, accepted to complete this task. When the day of the performance arrived, my cantor still could not leave his sickbed. That is why I ended up conducting the music as well. Since I was still not very tall, I had to stand on a small bench so that I could be seen by all the musicians. There were quite a few vocalists and instrumentalists and the music sounded good.

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<sup>3</sup> *Murmelthierführer*

The guileless miners, who were moved more by my small stature than by the harmonious music, wanted to show me their appreciation after the church service was over. A crowd of miners accompanied me home with one of them carrying me on his shoulder. All the while to honor me, I heard them frequently exclaim: “You are a proper little leader who sets the tone for all the others!”

My Latin-teaching custodian, good Mr. Calvör, summoned me to his office and revealed to me the pleasure he had listening to my music and urged me continue my efforts in composing and conducting. He also demonstrated to me the relationship between *Meßkunst*<sup>4</sup> and music – the books and articles that he later wrote prove that he was a master in both. This was enough so that my mother abandoned the promise that she had made to others. This then tempted me to once again to indulge myself in a sort of innocent disobedience by beginning to play my spinet again, trying to figure out basso continuo on my own, and writing down my own set of rules for this. I did this because I did not know that books had already been written on this subject. I also did not want to ask the organist because of the fear that had been instilled in me by the terrible experience in Magdeburg that I still remembered quite clearly. I did not now forget to practice violin and flute as well. For almost every Sunday I prepared a cantata. For the choir I composed motets and for the city musicians all kinds of special event symphonies.

After having spent four years in Zellerfeld in the Harz Mountains, I received a request from the then famous principal of the gymnasium in Hildesheim, Mr. Magister<sup>5</sup> Loßius, to attend his school. From Magdeburg I received permission to do this (I suspect that my patron [Loßius] very likely had written to my mother and her advisors). It was customary for Mr. Loßius to write the libretti every year for one or two plays and have them performed in such a way that the recitatives were spoken but the arias were sung. For the latter I had to compose the music which the listeners probably liked because I was still small and skinny.

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<sup>4</sup> ‘art of measurement’, ‘art of being measured or well-balanced in all things’, or geometry

<sup>5</sup> an academic title

I did not miss any classes unless it happened to be logic class with its “Barbara, Celarent”<sup>6</sup> which I simply could not stand. To get to the point, I kept making my way to the top of the upper form [senior class] of 150 students until I was the third highest ranking student in that class.

I chose as models for study compositions by Steffani, Rosenmüller, Corelli and Caldara, in order to apply what I had learned to my future church and instrumental compositions. I never let a single day go by without putting down on paper at least one staff filled with notes. With the two neighboring musical organizations<sup>7</sup> from Hannover and Braunschweig, where I was frequently a visitor for special festivals and fairs and otherwise as well, I was given the opportunity to learn how to distinguish between the French style on the one hand and the theatrical style on the other. But most importantly I obtained a closer acquaintance with the Italian style. Also, the excellent instrumentalists in these cities stimulated in me the desire to improve my own ability to play these instruments. This would have happened if I had not been

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<sup>6</sup> The words, *Barbara, Celarent* are at the beginning of a mnemonic, nonsensical poem used to teach the figures and moods of the Aristotelian syllogism. One version of such a Medieval Latin poem goes as follows:

Barbara celarent darii ferio baralipton.  
 Celantes dabit is fapesmo frisesomorum.  
 Cesare camestres festino baroco darapti.  
 Felapton disamis datisi bocardo ferison.

Another version reads:

Barbara Celarent Darii Ferioque prioris;  
 Cesare Camestres Festino Baroco secundi;  
 Tertia Darapti Disamis Datisi Felapton Bocardo Ferison habet;  
 quarta insuper addit Bramantip Camenes Dimaris Fesapo Fresison.

The first three vowels in each word give the clues for use in identifying each of the 19 Aristotelian syllogisms known to scholars in the the Middle Ages. The vowels (A, E, I, O) show the quantity and quality of the premises.

<sup>7</sup> *Capelle* = consisting of both choir and orchestra

driven by a strong fire of enthusiasm to acquaint myself with other instruments besides keyboard, violin and flute. Now I also turned to learning how to play the oboe, transverse flute, chalameau/chalumeau<sup>8</sup>, viola da gamba and even the contrabass and the bass trombone.

The director of music, Father Crispus, a Jesuit serving in the Roman Catholic Church, whom I diligently served by singing and playing instruments for his performances, began to like me and after he had attempted in vain with his passionate persuasive powers to urge me to return to the bosom of his church, finally conceded and, in a generous mood, passed me off to the Godehardin Monastery, one of the most important in that region. There I was given the task to prepare all the musical materials for the evangelical church service and I introduced German cantatas to be performed at various points during it. The cantata texts often contained points of religious dispute and I tried to avoid all those which might be offensive to our religion. For this position of responsibility, I received the permission of the otherwise very fussy superintendent, Mr. D. Johann Riemers.

Finally I had had enough of these years of service in a subordinate position<sup>9</sup> and wanted very much to attend a university, so I chose Leipzig University. I then returned to my native city to prepare what was necessary to achieve this objective. I had to take a special examination from which it was determined that I should study law and give up music entirely. This had been my intention anyway and I acquiesced without any objection having firmly intended to become a privy councilor. I left all my scores and instruments behind and traveled from Magdeburg to Leipzig in 1701. On my way there I stopped in Halle and became acquainted with Georg Friedrich Händel where I almost would have started composing again<sup>10</sup>. However, I remained steadfast and arrived in Leipzig with my previous intentions intact. Standing in front

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<sup>8</sup> an early form of the clarinet

<sup>9</sup> *Manteljahre* = years of wearing the cloak/cape as required dress in a church during a performance

<sup>10</sup> *Notengift einsaugen* = to soak up/suck in the poison of musical notation/music manuscripts

of a bulletin board for university students there, I reached an agreement with a handsome, young man to become his roommate. When my baggage was delivered to his apartment, how my heart did jump for joy when I saw all sorts of musical instruments in the corners and walls of this room! Every evening I heard music performed on these instruments. I marveled at all this although I knew that I could play these instruments much better myself.

All the while I had already begun attending lectures which were given by the following professors: Mr. Otto Menken, Sr., Mr. Andreas Mylius, Law, Mr. N. Weidling, Oratory, and Magister N. Calvisius, Philosophy.

Meanwhile my roommate, I do not know how this really happened, discovered by chance between the linen sheets in my suitcase *Psalms 6* which I had set to music. I explained to him why I had composed this and he approved, but then he asked me if he could have it so that it could be performed next Sunday in St. Thomas Church. After hearing this composition, Mr. D. Romanus, the mayor of Leipzig at that time and also a privy councilor liked it so much that he persuaded me to compose something like this once every two weeks, for which I would receive considerable remuneration. He did not promise me that any future advantages would come of this other than that he advised me not to abandon my studies.

Now, when I received a new sum of money from my mother, whose orders I respected, I thought of her, sent back the money, wrote to her about my present circumstances and asked her to change her mind about my music-making. She gave me her blessing for my new endeavor. Now at least I was a musician again even if it was only part-time.

Soon thereafter I took over the direction of operas, about 20 or so, some of which I had requested from Sorau and Frankfurt and for many of which I also composed the

verses. For the Weissenfels Court I completed about four operas and brought the still existing *Collegium musicum* in Leipzig back to life again.<sup>11</sup>

The organ in the New Church was finally finished and I was appointed to the position of organist as well as the director of music<sup>12</sup> in that church. I played that instrument only for the consecration of that instrument. After that I let other students play it and they argued among themselves as to who should get to play it next. Compositions by the excellent Johann Kuhnau served as my models in fugue and counterpoint; however, a constant occupation on my part for the improvement of my melodic movements was accomplished by their careful examination frequently either with my visiting Händel in Halle or his coming here to Leipzig to visit me. We also corresponded with each other often.

Traveling from Leipzig, I managed to visit Berlin on two occasions. There I was able to attend a performance of *Polyphemo* by Giovanni Bononcini and another private performance (my friends brought me in secretly [they kept me hidden] because only few people were allowed to attend) which was performed mainly by high-ranking individuals, among them Margravine from Kassel who sang and who was accompanied on the keyboard; and an orchestra consisting, for the most part, of court conductors<sup>13</sup> and first-chair players<sup>14</sup>. More specifically these were Padre Attilio

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<sup>11</sup> Here Telemann contradicts directly what has generally been asserted by all experts who refer to this part of Telemann's biography. The common contention is that he founded or, as the MGG1 more carefully puts it: "Telemann newly founded the Leipzig *Collegium musicum*". The fact is that such *Collegia musica* (note the plural form) in Leipzig were in existence, sometimes intermittently or often simultaneously (as during J. S. Bach's tenure there) from the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The earliest documentation of these musical groups goes back to 1657 under the direction of Adam Krieger, to 1672 under Johann Christoph Pezel, to the 1680s under Johann Kuhnau, to 1702 under Telemann and to 1708 under Fasch. The *Collegium musicum* which Telemann revived or 'newly founded' has a direct line to J. S. Bach via Melchior Hoffmann, J. G. Vogler, Georg Balthasar Schott while Fasch's *Collegium musicum* was taken over by Johann Gottlieb Görner in 1723.

<sup>12</sup> In this instance *Musikdirector* – a more frequent designation used by Telemann is *Capellmeister*.

<sup>13</sup> In this context *Capellmeister* is a plural form.

<sup>14</sup> *Concertmeister* = concertmasters

Ariosti, the two brothers, Antonio and Giovanni Bononcini, the chief court conductor<sup>15</sup> Rieck, Ruggiero Fedeli, Volümier<sup>16</sup>, Conti, La Riche, Forstmeier, etc.

In 1704 I accepted an appointment as court conductor/music director in Sorau, where His Excellency Count Erdmann von Promnitz resided. The splendid character of this court which had been furnished in a truly royal manner moved me to undertake enterprising projects enthusiastically, particularly in regard to instrumental pieces of which I chose exquisite *ouvertures*<sup>17</sup> with their accompanying movements, because the count had recently returned from France and had grown to love this type of music. I obtained scores by Lully, Campra and other good composers and shifted my efforts to concentrate almost completely on the same style of composition which they represented so that, over a period of two years, I had composed about 200 *ouvertures* in this style.

When the court moved to Plesse, an Upper-Silesian area which the Promnitz family governed, I became acquainted there and also in Krakau with Polish and Moravian music in its true, barbaric beauty. In the common inns of the region, the instruments consisted of a violin which was strapped to the body, tuned a third higher than usual, and which could ‘outscream’ [play with a louder, shriller sound] a normal violin, a Polish bagpipe, a bass trombone and a portative. In fancier inns a portative would not be used, but the first two [Polish violins and bagpipes] were increased in number. I had once heard 36 bagpipes and 8 Polish violins playing together. It is impossible to imagine the fantastic musical ideas they presented between dances when the dancers rested and the musicians improvised music together [‘jammed’] to fill out the time. Anyone who paid very close attention could pick up in 8 days sufficient musical ideas to last a lifetime. In short, in this music there is much that is good if you know how to

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<sup>15</sup> *Obercapellmeister*

<sup>16</sup> This name has been corrupted in German to Woulmyer = Wohlmeyer/Wohlmeier.

<sup>17</sup> The term *Ouverture* in early 18<sup>th</sup> century Germany refers in most instances to a substantial initial movement (usually a French *overture*) followed by a number of individual movements which comprise a suite.

work with this material properly. Later I had composed various concerti and trios in this manner in which I featured a solo Italian bagpipe with alternating *adagio* and *allegro* sections.

There is something remarkable that I do not want to neglect to mention here. Twice the large number of persons serving in this court, even those that might have considered themselves to be especially favored, were fired. I, however, remained. Otherwise music generally took precedence<sup>18</sup>.

Finally, in Sorau, I was able to make a connection with the famous cantor, Wolfgang Caspar Printz. He presented himself as a kind of Heraclitus and I as a Democritus, for he mourned bitterly over the excesses of composers with emphasis on melody at the same time just I ridiculed the artificial, unmelodic affectations of the older masters. Since he still maintained the hope that I would depart from the confusion and nonsense<sup>19</sup> of the former [emphasis upon the melodic element over the contrapuntal], he wanted to inform me, just before my departure to Eisenach in 1708, about a rare secret which I should tell the Duke of Gotha, after receiving from him a certain sum which we would share between us. The secret was this: using music not only to direct all the activities of a foreign minister, a general on the battlefield, etc., but to issue orders as well. But since I could listen only halfheartedly to this presentation, I was robbed of this experience of dabbling in black magic.

Up until this point in my life I felt that I was like those chefs who have a number of pots on the fire, but from which they allow tasters to try only the results from a few of them. But now I intended to prepare a complete meal, that is, to show the world, using my pen, everything that I had learned in regard to instrumental and vocal music. At first this plan was directed primarily toward instrumental music, the various aspects of which I sought to learn and clarify together with Mr. Pantaleon

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<sup>18</sup> a more literal rendering here would be: “music had the prerogative of ‘being part of the first dance’”

<sup>19</sup> *Babel*

Hebenstreit, who played the violin as my subordinate<sup>20</sup> (I was the concertmaster) in the orchestra at both banquet festivities and performances venues at court and whom I cannot sufficiently praise. Although Mr. Hebenstreit had the title of a director, he nevertheless played along in the court orchestra where he also performed on his wonderful instrument<sup>21</sup>. Soon a musical group<sup>22</sup> was gradually formed, after the Duke had expressed his appreciation of several church cantatas that I had presented and for which I sang the solo part. As a result, I received the command to hire the necessary singers, who would then also play the violin for instrumental compositions. After these had arrived at court, I was appointed director of music while still continuing with my duties as orchestra conductor/concertmaster<sup>23</sup>. I must express a word of praise about this *Capelle* which was setup mainly to emulate the French style. This it did so well that I believe it surpassed the famous Parisian Opera Orchestra which I had just recently heard.

I am reminded here of the strong support given to me by Mr. Hebenstreit on the violin. He must certainly be considered one of the best violin players known to me. I remember well whenever we had to play a concert<sup>24</sup> together, I would lock myself in my room with the sleeve of my left arm rolled up and with this arm greased with ointment to strengthen the nerves and would try to improve my technical skill in order to try to hold my own against his superior playing ability. And lo and behold, my playing would improve considerably. Without considering the beautiful compositions which he had composed, it would be easy to imagine the large number of compositions which I supplied. I completed four yearly cantata cycles besides two

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<sup>20</sup> *Concertmeister* = conducting while playing the violin(?)

<sup>21</sup> Hebenstreit is said to be the inventor of the *Cymbal* or *Cimbal*, often called a *Pantaleon* after his first name. It is a kind of dulcimer or extended version of a zither with 185 double strings of metal and gut.

<sup>22</sup> *Capelle* = choir and orchestra that perform in church, but which could also serve in performing secular cantatas or operas elsewhere

<sup>23</sup> *Concertmeister* = the one who leads the orchestra from the first violin position

<sup>24</sup> *Concert* = this could refer either to a concerto or a to a concert

others which were for the afternoon services where a few cantatas were still missing, not to mention the masses, communion music and the psalms. Add to these the *serenatas*<sup>25</sup> for birthdays and name-days for which I also prepared the libretti. There must have been about 20 of these besides another 50 cantatas in Italian and German. How is it even possible to remember all my other compositions for strings and brass instruments?! I placed special emphasis on trios where my method involved making the second part just as important as the first and where the bass moved along with a natural melody and harmony closely associated with the two treble parts so that every note could not be any other note than the one it was. People tried to compliment me by saying that this was my special forte.

From Sorau I traveled to Berlin in 1705 and once again in 1708 to attend the funeral services of the Queen of Prussia and her husband the King respectively. Here I heard the funeral music composed by Mr. Ruggiero Fedeli as well as two operas, *Sieg der Schönheit* and *Roxane*. The first opera was composed by Mr. Gottfried Finger and Mr. Augustin Reinhard Stricker with dances supplied by Mr. Volümier. Mr. Finger was entirely responsible for composing the second opera. Mr. Finger was, at that time, court musician for the Count of Palatine in Breslau, but later a chamber counsel for the Electoral Palatinate whereas Stricker was a royal chamber musician and finally became the director or music/conductor at the Court of the Electoral Palatinate.

In 1709 I married for the first time. My wife, Amalia Louise Julian [Eberlin], was the second daughter of Daniel Eberlin, who had been a ship captain who fought in Morea under the pope's flag against the Turks, later became a librarian in Nürnberg, then a director of music in Kassel and after that served as a teacher of the pages, director of music, privy councilor, supervisor and designated regent in Westerwald at the service of the court in Eisenach, then later yet as a banker in Hamburg and Altenau, and finally as a captain in the country-wide militia in Kassel. He certainly had experienced very adventurous, positive changes of fortune and had a gifted mind, the likes of

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<sup>25</sup> A *serenata* is series of compositions usually for both voices and instruments but sometimes only for instruments.

which are rarely found. In regard to music, he was, as a composer, a learned scholar of counterpoint and could play the violin very well. Proof of this can be found in his trios which were published in Nürnberg [in 1675]. He has also figured out that there are 2000 different ways to tune a violin<sup>26</sup>.

Shortly before my marriage in 1709, I was offered a generous position at court as a court secretary who would also have a seat at the marshal's table, a position I would also have had in Sorau. The reason for this could have been that no position of music director had yet been established since there had not really been true *Capelle*<sup>27</sup> there before, but soon I was the oldest member in my rank because others had passed away or had taken positions elsewhere. In time I was placed in the group among all the other councilors.

I have no idea what it was that caused me to leave such a choice position as the court in Eisenach; but I do remember having once heard back then: "Whoever would want a position where he could stay for the rest of his life, he should settle in a republic." That is why I then obtained a position as music director at the Barfüsser Church in Frankfurt/Main and settled there without knowing a single person. However, this pleasant sense of freedom in one's life replaced fully the loss and suffering I had endured from one specific gentleman and from well-meaning<sup>28</sup> virtuosi. Although my yearly salary was rather substantial, I nevertheless established contacts with nobility and entered into the service of the Frauenstein society where I assumed the supervisory responsibility over their palace, one which was occupied by those involved in the selection and crowning of the Holy Roman Emperor, and where I also had my apartment. Because the members of this Frauenstein society were also administrators of a handsome Bavarian inheritance/trust fund dedicated to providing for the poor, they designated me to be the one who distributes the continuing interest/earnings of

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<sup>26</sup> this refers to the variants of *scordatura*

<sup>27</sup> again *Capelle* here is a combination of vocal and instrumental musicians

<sup>28</sup> *brav* = good

this fund as they accrue. Soon after this I was appointed director of music at the second main Lutheran church, St. Catherine. In addition, I accepted the position of ‘actual’ director of music<sup>29</sup> in Eisenach and had to keep sending scores and parts required for church [sacred] and court [chamber] performances.

When, on my various trips<sup>30</sup> I traveled by chance through Gotha in 1716, I found out that the very skilled director of music, Christian Friedrich Witt, had died and that the position could be offered to me. I was reminded how well situated I was in Frankfurt/Main with a yearly income of 1600 *florins*<sup>31</sup> and so I left Gotha, but then I returned. Good friends detained me until the next postal coach would pass through town. The very loving manner in which this matter was treated, but particularly the advantageous trait exhibited by an incomparable prince (whose musical abilities were not much less than mine) caused me to forget the Main River [where Frankfurt is situated] and accept a position here with a yearly salary of 500 *Reichsthaler*,<sup>32</sup> 2 bushels

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<sup>29</sup> *Capellmeister von Haus aus* = to provide music as a director of music without actually being present

<sup>30</sup> On one of these trips, Telemann was present at the baptism of his godchild, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, in Weimar on March 10, 1714. The connection with Johann Sebastian Bach is described by Christoph Wolff in his *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician*, Norton 2000, p. 134 as follows:

Additional evidence of Bach’s involvement in instrumental chamber music may be found in the performing parts for the Concerto in G major for 2 violins and orchestra by Georg Philipp Telemann, jointly copied by Bach and the violinist Johann Georg Pisendel, a student of Vivaldi’s and later concertmaster at the Dresden court. Pisendel traveled through Weimar in 1709, when from all appearances he and Bach performed this concerto with the court Capelle. Telemann, then Capellmeister at the neighboring court of Saxe-Eisenach, may well have participated in such a performance, or Bach and Pisendel could have played the work with the Eisenach Capelle as well. At any rate, Bach had an opportunity to establish closer professional and personal contacts with Telemann during the latter’s Eisenach years, and he invited Telemann in 1714 to become godfather to his second son, Carl Philipp Emanuel. Carl received his middle name from Telemann, who pursued his godchild’s musical career with great interest and, toward the end of his long life, helped arrange for his godson to succeed him as music director in Hamburg in 1768.

<sup>31</sup> A *Florin*, in Telemann’s lifetime, was the equivalent of 21 *Groschen*. The *Florin* was a silver coin and was also called a *Gulden*. The *Florin/Gulden* had a value of € 63,00. Thus 1600 *Florins* as a yearly salary would equal in buying power (year 2000) € 100 800,00.

<sup>32</sup> A *Reichsthaler/Reichstaler* was the equivalent of 24 *Groschen*. The *Reichsthaler* was a silver coin and was often simply called a *Thaler/Taler* (the ‘h’ was removed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with the German spelling reform;

of wheat, 12 bushels of grain, 12 bushels of barley<sup>33</sup> and 12 cords of wood, the usual access to provide music for numerous birthdays and festivals, and likewise the ability to call upon the choir boys when needed with the potential that all these things could be increased in number in the future with the proviso that the ruler would reward generously all my special musical services to him personally.

In addition to these advantages, the court at [Saxe-]Eisenach also offered me an additional 200 *Reichsthaler*<sup>34</sup> to appear in person as required at certain times still to be determined. Also, at the same time, Duke Ernst August of Weimar had decided on a similar offer to be extended to me, but with the notable extension/directive to use me to supply through the mail certain types of music to all the other Saxon royalty that belong to the Ernestine lineage for which I would receive the title of Director of Music for the Ernestine Family/Lineage. Meanwhile my whining wife, along with the persuasive powers of my relatives and friends, tried by means of pseudo arguments to take my mind off these deliberations. Most people began to believe that I had now received my just rewards for this extremely foolish idea that I had been entertaining that anyone would have likewise felt obligated to carry out: I returned again to Frankfurt.

My musical requirements there included having me fulfill the stipulations of my contract with Eisenach which included some yearly cycles that were still incomplete. Then I completed five [cantata] cycles and increased my series of instrumental compositions which could help me fill out (in addition to those already mentioned) the grand weekly concerts at the Frauenstein Palace that I had begun there. These concerts also gave me a reason to compose the music for the 5 Oratorios [*Davidische*

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etymologically it is related to the English word *dollar*). The *Thaler/Taler* had a value of € 72,00; thus 500 *Reichsthaler* would equal in buying power a current yearly salary of € 36 000,00.

<sup>33</sup> A bushel of grain would normally cost € 65,00. The total grain (wheat, barley, etc.) would probably amount to approximately € 1 700,00 to € 2 000,00.

<sup>34</sup> 200 *Reichsthaler* = € 14 400,00.

*Gesänge*] based on the poetry of the royal Polish Ceremony Advisor, Johann Ulrich König.

I was drawn from Frankfurt to Dresden to attend the marriage of the present King of Poland. There I heard two operas by Mr. Lotti, one by Mr. Schmid and a fourth, in addition to two *serenatas*, by Mr. Heinichen. The main female and male singers were Ms. Lotti, Ms. Durastanti, who is called the ‘Countess’, Ms. Thesi, Ms. Heß, who although she is German is considered just as good as the others, Mr. Senesino, Mr. Bercelli, who can sing clearly all the way up to a high F, Francisco Guicciardi, etc. In addition to the renowned, extraordinary virtuosi in Dresden, I also heard the famous Francesco Maria Veracini perform.

For the joyous festival which took place in Frankfurt on the occasion of the birth of the Austrian Archduke and Prince of Asturia, I presented a comprehensive *serenata*<sup>35</sup> outdoors on a specially constructed platform in the Römerberg section of the city. Among the performers were many excellent virtuosi who had been hired for this occasion. The entire musical group (singers and instrumentalists) consisted of more than 50 persons. Afterwards I dedicated the score to His Royal Majesty. Then I began work on a masterpiece, the *Passion-Oratorio* by Mr. B. H. Brockes, a council member in Hamburg, and also after that had been completed, his *Vergnügen des Gehörs im Frühling*, and finally upon his request a *Wassermusik* after which *Herbst* and *Winter* followed. In regard to the *Passion-Oratorio*: it was performed with a full complement of singers and instrumentalists in Hamburg on the special days of Holy Week. Many important people along with a large number of other listeners were present for this performance, the profits of which were to go to the orphanage. In regard to this performance, something very special should be mentioned: At the church doors there were guards posted who were instructed not to allow entrance of any persons who did

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<sup>35</sup> This *serenata* was composed for the birth of Prince Leopold, son of the Holy Roman Emperor; its title was *Teutschland grünt und blüht in Friede* (the famous 3 trumpet concerto with 2 oboes, strings and timpani by Telemann serves as the opening movement) – the information for this footnote has been supplied by Kim Patrick Clow.

not bring with them a printed copy of the passion. Most of the members of the clergy were assembled and sat near the altar in their pontifical vestments. Subsequently this passion was then performed in the churches and auditoriums of many other cities in Germany.

I must have composed about 20 wedding *serenatas*, for which I had also written the libretti. For many of the latter I had allowed myself so much free reign and excesses that I would seriously doubt that I could write anything like that now. My second marriage to Maria Catharina Textor, the eldest, unmarried daughter of the City Grain Recorder, Mr. Andreä Textor was consummated in Frankfurt/Main in 1714.

The following compositions of mine were published in Frankfurt/Main: *6 Sonatas for Violin and Basso continuo*; *6 Trios for Various Instruments and Bc*; *6 Sonatinas for Violin and Bc*; and a *Small Chamber Music for Keyboard or Other Instruments*.

On July 10, 1721 I was selected to succeed Mr. Joachim Gerstenbüttel, who had passed away, as the next Director of Music of the City Orchestra and Choir<sup>36</sup> and Cantor at the St. John Church in Hamburg. On the subsequent Michaelmas Day, after invitations had been previously sent out, I was ceremoniously initiated/inaugurated at a special event at which I had delivered a speech entitled *Musica in Ecclesia* [“Music in the Church”].

About a year later I had taken over the direction of some operas which were losing their popularity and improved them (libretti and music). Several government officials and members of the nobility had noticed the difference and asked me to supervise with a yearly salary of 300 *Reichsthaler*<sup>37</sup> the performance of new operas, including not only the composition of new music but the libretti as well.

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<sup>36</sup> The term used here is *Director des musikalischen Chors*; in essence this is a position as municipal *Capellmeister*.

<sup>37</sup> 300 *Reichsthaler* = € 21 600,00.

In 1723 I received an offer from Leipzig to replace the ailing Director of Music and Cantor, Johann Kuhnau, who they presumed was approaching death. This was a position that had already been promised to me 20 years earlier. But it suited the City of Hamburg better to deny this request from Leipzig by increasing substantially my living standard [by considerably improving my maintenance].

The Eisenach court, from which I was still receiving a salary of 100 *Reichsthaler*<sup>38</sup> for my position as music director, now appointed me as an official correspondent at a salary of another 100 *Reichsthaler*. My duties for this involved reporting to the court twice a week on any unusual news from my area in the northern part of Germany.

In addition I received in 1726 from the Bayreuth court an appointment as music director. My responsibilities in this instance comprised sending to the court from time to time some instrumental music and once a year an opera. For this I would be rewarded annually with a remuneration of 100 *Reichsthaler*.

In 1729 I received an offer from Russia to establish there a German orchestra and choir<sup>39</sup>. This later became an Italian musical group. The amenities offered by Hamburg and the fact that I had moved my household four times already outweighed the desire to obtain even more extraordinary honors.

My long-planned trip to Paris where I had already been invited several years ago by some of the virtuosi who lived there and had taken great pleasure in [performing] some of my printed music finally took place around Michaelmas, 1737. This trip took 8 months. In Paris I had had engraved in copper for publication, after having received from the king the permission and copyright for 20 years, new quartets (by previous subscription) and 6 sonatas consisting entirely of melodic canons. The astonishing

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<sup>38</sup> 100 *Reichsthaler* = € 7 200,00.

<sup>39</sup> Here, once again, a single word, *Capelle* is used.

manner in which the quartets were played by Messrs. Blauet, transverse flute, Guignon, violinist, Forcroy, his son on the viola da gamba, and Edouard, violoncellist would deserve to be described here at length if only there were sufficient words available to do so. In short, they pricked up the ears of people at the court and in the city so that they became very attentive and, in a short time, I received general approbation which was accompanied by even greater politeness.

In addition I also composed for amateurs two 2-part Psalms with instruments in Latin, a number of concertos, a French cantata, *Polypheme*, a humorous symphony on the popular song about *Père Barnabas*<sup>40</sup>, a score containing 6 trios to be printed after I had left, and finally the 71<sup>st</sup> Psalm as a grand motet with 5 vocal parts and various instruments. This was performed twice in three days in a sacred concert by almost 100 select musicians. Thus I left Paris with a feeling of having achieved great pleasure and in the hope that I would return again in the future.

It is finally time to mention the children from my two marriages. From the first marriage I have only the one daughter Maria Wilhelmina Eleonora born on January 14, 1711. From the other marriage there is a son, Andreas, born on May 25, 1715, now a candidate for a position in the Hamburg government; another son, Hans, born on July 14, 1716, had been a cadet in Danish army during the military campaign along the Rhein in 1735, presently in the service of privy councilor Alefeld; another son, Henrich Matthias, born on August 4, 1717, an apprentice to a druggist, Mr. Mühlrath in Lübeck; a daughter, Clara, born on January 20, 1719; a son, August Bernhard born on July 1, 1721, died on May 2, 1738; a son, Johann Bartold Joachim, born on March 13, 1723, will become a surgeon after he has finished his studies a little longer; a son, Benedict Conrad Eibert, born on September 12, 1724, an apothecary apprentice with my cousin, Mr. Warmholtz, in Stockholm; a son, Ernst Conrad Eibert, born on April 8, 1726, died on December 10, 1727. To summarize: I

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<sup>40</sup> The full title of this popular tune is "La béquille du Père Barnabas".

have seven sons and two daughters. Of these, two sons are deceased so that I still have five sons and two daughters who are still living.

Incidentally, I will add here another list, but this one will be only very approximate. This is a list containing works that I have completed over the past 18 years here. To this list belong the following:

12 cycles [of cantatas]; many long works with trumpets and timpani for high feast days, approximately 700 arias, which I had my students write on the blackboard during singing classes; 19 passions, of which two were very poetic and for one of which, *Seeliges Erwägen [des bitteren Leidens und Sterbens Jesu Christi]*, I wrote the libretto myself; 6 for the mayors' funerals; 12 for pastors' initiations, 3 for jubilees as, for instance, for the Reformation, when almost every church had a different program, for the senior government officials and for the Admiralty; 3 for the consecration of new churches, 2 grand oratorios; 4 compositions for funerals held outside of Hamburg, 30 *serenatas* besides those for weddings and marriage ceremonies; 16 *serenatas* and just as many oratorios for the civilian captains' banquets; 35 compositions for operas performed here such as *ouvertures/preludes, intermezzi, postludes*, and I translated the French libretto of *Omphale* into German and parts of *Sieg der Schönheit* along with adding and/or changing some movements, otherwise none of the other operas [given in Hamburg] can be attributed to me; 2 operas, *Stilico* and *Adelheid [oder Die ungezwungene Liebe]* were sent to Bayreuth; 3 operettas to Eisenach; and an entire series of vocal and instrumental compositions for the former winter concerts; approximately 600 *ouvertures*, trios, concerti, keyboard compositions, figural chorales, fugues, cantatas for amateurs here and in foreign countries.

The following works have appeared in print: *Harmonischer Gottesdienst [oder Geistliche Cantaten zum allgemeinen Gebrauche]*, one yearly cycle for 1 voice, 1 instrument and bc; the continuation of this for 1 voice, 2 instruments and bc; excerpts of arias from another yearly cycle (published by Kisner); music for the evangelical jubilees, 2 cantatas, 6 secular cantatas, humorous arias from the opera *Adelheid; Pimpinon*, an intermezzo; 6 cantatas with a moral for 1 voice and bc; 6 similar cantatas for 1 voice, 1

instrument and bc; 12 sacred canons for 2, 3, or 4 voices; a book of chorales/a hymnal; sonatas without a bass for 2 flutes or violins, methodical sonatas with embellishments for violin or transverse flute and bc; the continuation of the same; the first 7 x 7 and a minuet; the second of the same; *Heldenmusik* [*Musique héroïque*], an *ouverture* and a suite; 6 quartets for transverse flute, violin and viola da gamba or violoncello and bc; new sonatinas for keyboard; 3 methodical trios and 3 humorous sonatas for 2 violins or transverse flute and bc; 26 keyboard fantasias; 12 of the same for the transverse flute without bass; 13 for viola da gamba; *Tafelmusik* [*Musique de table*] for various instruments; 6 quartets or trios with 2 violins or transverse flute and 2 violoncelli; 12 solos for transverse flute or violin and bc; 6 concerti and suites for keyboard instrument and transverse flute; Corelli-like sonatas [*Sonates corellisantes*] for 2 violins or transverse flute and bc; melodic scherzi [*Scherzi melodichi*] for violin, viola and bc; 6 trios for 2 transverse flutes and bc (published in Paris from a manuscript I had happened to take along and where 7 of my works that appeared here in Hamburg were also reprinted); 24 chorales treated as fugues for organ and keyboard; an entertaining mixture or Scottish pieces for keyboard and other instruments; 6 *ouvertures* for 2 violins, viola, 2 horns and bc; *Der Musicmeister* [*Der getreue Music-Meister*], containing all different kinds of musical styles for singing and playing; vocal, instrumental and bc exercises with arias, examples and rules for basso continuo playing; 6 new quartets with instruments (similar to the ones previously mentioned) published in Paris; 6 sonatas with 18 melodic canons for 2 transverse flutes or violin without bc, also published in Paris; fugues in the galant style and short pieces for keyboard; 6 symphonies with 2 violins, 1 horn and bc; a translation from the French of a description of the ‘eye’ organ.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> »Castel, Louis-Bertrand (born in Montpellier, 5 Nov 1688; died in Paris, 19 Jan 1757) was a French mathematician, physicist, journalist and theorist....Castel is recognized for three principal contributions to the development of scientific thought during the 18th century: a theory of gravity, a theory for popularizing science and mathematics and a theory of the correspondence of sound and color. Although the first two of these are retrospective and conservative for their time, the third [*L’optique des couleurs* (Paris, 1740)] is not, and it is the development of this theory and its product, the ‘ocular harpsichord’, that found particular favor with his contemporaries. Castel’s curiosity concerning the relationship of color to sound was initially stimulated by the thoughts expressed in the works of both Kircher and Newton. Building on the hypotheses of Descartes’ theory of light (as modified by Constantijn Huygens) Castel argued that light is a product of vibration, as is sound, and therefore that color and musical tone (being principal manifestations of light and sound respectively) are analogous in nature. Attempting to relate the spectrum of colors to the overtone series in music and extending this relationship to ‘shade’ in both, he devised a chromatic scale of 12 notes, each step of which is analogous to a specific color: C ‘bleu’, C# ‘céladon’, D ‘vert’, D# ‘olive’, E ‘jaune’, F ‘aurore’, F#

I have also been the editor and publisher of some works by good friends: 6 solos for violin and bc by Mr. Graf; 6 duets or trios for 2 violins with or without bc by Mr. Förster; instructions on transposing by Mr. Haltmeier.”



Georg Philipp Telemann

Mattheson’s subscript/couplet following Telemann’s autobiography reads:

People sing the praises of Lully; they speak very highly of Corelli;  
Only Telemann is above all praise.

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‘orangé’, G ‘rouge’, G# ‘cramoisi’, A ‘violet’, A# ‘agate’, B ‘violant’. The construction of a harpsichord that coupled the sounding of pitches with the showing of analogous colors occupied Castel for almost 30 years. Different models were constructed (some using paper strips, others colored glass), but the interest in such an instrument, as well as in the general theory of relating color to sound, waned in France (if not in Germany) soon after Castel’s death.« The preceding is quoted from an article by Albert Cohen/Philippe Vendrix in the Grove Music Online, Oxford University Press, 2009.