

# The Relationship between

**BWV 244a (*Trauermusik*)**

and

**BWV 244b (*SMP Frühfassung*)**

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This paper proposes to unravel some of the numerous complications that arise from the fact that the autograph score and the original set of parts of the first version (BWV 244b) of the *St. Matthew Passion* (BWV 244) as well as the music for the *Trauermusik* (BWV 244a) are missing. These missing parts could have rather easily solved many of the issues which still remain open to debate and speculation today, particularly the one that could settle the question: “Which of these works came first, the funeral music (*Trauermusik*) for Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen or the early version (*Frühfassung*) of the *St. Matthew Passion* (henceforth simply referred to as ‘*SMP*’)?” An attempt will also be made to present the historical sequence of the discovery of the relationship between these two works and to give a summary of the tentative conclusions that some Bach experts have reached. At the end, a summary will attempt to reach a tentative conclusion. Included in an appendix, there will also be a quick summary comparing the main differences between the *Frühfassung* and the final version of the *SMP* (clean-copy score of 1736 with the revisions that followed it in the form of additional parts).

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## The Hard Evidence

### BWV 244b (SMP Early Version)

The most important document that gives direct insight into Bach's original concept of the *SMP* is a copy of the original score (the latter no longer extant). Although for many years thought to be a copy made by Bach's son-in-law, Johann Christoph Altnickol (1719-1759) during Bach's lifetime, the correct identification of the copyist, along with a better estimate when it was completed, was finally made by Peter Wollny in 2002.<sup>2</sup> By comparing the handwriting with other existing documents which had "JCFarlau" on the title pages, Wollny discovered that Johann Christoph Farlau (born 1734/1735) was the true 'author', more correctly, the copyist of this important, now missing score by Bach. Dating this copy has also been extremely difficult, since no date is indicated on it. Taking into account such factors as the paper watermark which would put it between 1751 and 1754, (Farlau, however, would probably have been too young for this type of task during this time span),<sup>3</sup> the NBA editors (mainly Andreas Glöckner who was responsible for the NBA volume treating this document) consider the following time period as being most likely for the date of this important copy: 1755 until the beginning of October, 1756. A date earlier than 1755 becomes rather unlikely due to Farlau's age (he would be too young). To place the date of this copy during his later stay in Leipzig is also likely possibility, but one which is weakened by the fact that the watermarks of the copy no longer agree with those available for that later time. This leaves 1755 to 1756 as the optimal period where both Altnickol and Farlau are still together. One scenario would be that Altnickol had Farlau make this copy for his own [Altnickol's] use or for someone else. Of interest here also is the fact the Farlau's copy exhibits a handwritten style of notation which closely resembles Altnickol's. This is one reason why this document had been incorrectly ascribed to Altnickol for such a long time before a distinction could be ascertained between copies made by Altnickol and those by Farlau.

### BWV 244a (*Trauermusik*)

In 1728 Bach still held a title connecting him to the court of Prince Leopold von Anhalt-Cöthen: "Capell-Meister von Haus aus" ("Capellmeister still attached to the court"). This title required of Bach, among other responsibilities, to provide a performance of his own music as part of the funeral ceremonies for the prince. When the prince died on November 19, 1728, Christian Friedrich Henrici (1700-1764) alias Picander [henceforth referred to only by his pen name Picander] began, or perhaps had already begun penning his first draft or version of the verses that would be used for the funeral ceremony. A fragment of two handwritten pages dating from 1728 (a more precise dating is impossible) contain a text in

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Wollny, *Tennstedt, Leipzig, Naumburg, Halle – Neuerkenntnisse zur Bach-Überlieferung in Mittelddeutschland*, in the *Bach-Jahrbuch* 2002, pp. 36-47.

<sup>3</sup> Farlau's age would have been less than 20 years old in that time span. Also, he entered the Naumburg City School on October 26, 1750. Beginning in October, 1748, Altnickol held the position of organist at the St. Wenzel Church in Naumburg where he remained until his death in 1759. Beginning late in 1750, but probably more likely in 1751, Farlau may have taken music instruction from Altnickol until Oct 8, 1756 when he entered the University of Jena. Farlau then appeared in Leipzig as an apprentice or aide to a lawyer whose records indicate that Farlau worked for him there from October 1766 to April 1770. Farlau entered the University of Leipzig on October 5, 1767.

the form of a first draft which would subsequently undergo further changes once the complete printed text for the music appeared for use during the ceremony which took place in Cöthen the following year on March 24, 1729. It was called *Trauer=MUSIC* [sic] in the title which also indicates precisely when<sup>4</sup> and where the ceremony took place and that it was performed by the “former Capellmeister, Johann Sebastian Bach.” Picander later had the text printed in his book of poetry *Picanders Ernst-Schertzhaffte und Satyrische Gedichte*, Leipzig, 1729, 1732 and 1748. The text in each of the latter printings is like the original fragment and does not take into account the changes that appear in the text that was performed with music during the actual funeral ceremony which was a formal church service in a Reformed Church called the “Stadt- und Cathedral-Kirchen zu Cöthen” (“the City Church or Cathedral of Cöthen” also called St. Jacob’s Church).

There is further corroborating evidence in the form of a receipt for 230 Thalers found in the Cöthen court treasury accounting books for March, 1729. An accompanying note mentions that Bach received that amount and was there with his wife and one son (probably Wilhelm Friedemann) along with musicians who had come to Köthen for the performances on March 23 and 24 from Halle, Merseburg, Zerbst, Dessau and Güsten. There is little doubt that whatever music was performed on both occasions would have been Bach’s own compositions. Also, it is very likely that the music would have followed the precedent set by the *Trauerode* (BWV 198) for Princess Christiane Eberhardine, wife of August II (the Strong) King of Poland and Elector of Saxony. For this remembrance ceremony which took place in Leipzig on October 17, 1727, Bach had composed music which he would parody (reuse with a different text) other compositions as follows:

BWV 198, 1, 10 [mvts. 1 & 10] → BWV 244a, 1,7 (*Trauermusik*) → BWV 247 (*Markus-Passion*) 1731: “Geh, Jesu, geh zu deiner Pein” and “Bei deinem Grab- und Leichenstein”

BWV 198, 3, 5, 8 → BWV 247 (*Markus-Passion*) 1731: “Er kommt, er kommt, er ist vorhanden“, „Mein Heiland, dich vergeß ich nicht“, and „Mein Tröster ist nicht mehr bei mir“.

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<sup>4</sup> There were actually two funeral ceremonies for which Bach provided his own music. One took place on the evening before the main ceremony, on March 23, 1729. It is not known precisely which music was performed, but it is thought that the music would not have been the same as that given on the following day at the main ceremony.

It can thus be assumed by analogy that Bach used a similar procedure with both BWV 244a and BWV 244b. The final evidence which leads to the conclusion that some of the same music existing in the early form of the *SMP*, BWV 244b, would also have constituted portions of the *Trauermusik*, BWV 244a, is found in the ‘congruence of prosody’, i.e., the existing similarities between the texts of both BWV 244a and BWV 244b that involve verse structure (number, length and distribution of lines, rhymes, repetitions of words or phrases, etc.). The discovery of this connection is credited to Wilhelm Rust, who as early as 1873 made a reference to this observation in the foreword to BGA 20/2. Rust found most of the correspondences, and it was left to Friedrich Smend in 1951 to find the remaining few connections between both works.

Bach’s *Trauermusik* (BWV 244a) consists of four parts or sections. The prosodical correspondences are as follows:

#### Part 1

1. Aria [Tutti] “Klagt, Kinder, klagt es aller Welt” = BWV 198/1 „Laß, Fürstin, laß noch einen Strahl“
2. [Recitativo] „O Land! bestürztes Land!“
3. Aria „Weh und Ach“ = BWV 244/6 „Buß und Reu knirscht das Sündenherz entzwei“
4. [Recitativo] „Wie, wenn der Blitze Grausamkeit“
5. Aria „Zage nur, du treues Land“ = BWV 244/8 „Blute nur, du liebes Herz“
6. [Recitativo] „Ach ja! dein Scheiden geht uns nah“
7. Aria [Tutti] „Komm wieder, teurer Fürstengeist“ = BWV 198/10 „Doch Königin! du stirbst nicht“

#### Part 2

8. [Tutti] „Wir haben einen Gott“ (Psalm 68:21)
9. [Recitativo] „Betrübter Anblick voll Erschrecken“
10. Aria „Erhalte mich, Gott, in der Hälfte meiner Tage“ = BWV 244/39 „Erbarme dich, mein Gott, um meiner Zähren willen“
11. [Recitativo] „Jedoch der schwache Mensch erzittert nur“
12. Aria „Mit Freuden sei die Welt verlassen“ = BWV 244/49 „Aus Liebe will mein Heiland sterben“
13. [Recitativo] „Wohl also dir, du aller Fürsten Zier“
14. „Repetatur Dictum“ = Repeat of Mvt. 8 (Psalm)

#### Part 3

15. Aria “Laß, Leopold, dich nicht begraben” = BWV 244/57 „Komm, süßes Kreuz, so will ich sagen“
16. [Recitativo] „Wie könnt es möglich sein“
17. Aria „Wird auch gleich nach tausend Zähren“ = BWV 244/23 „Gerne will ich mich bequemen“

18. [Recitativo] „Und, Herr, das ist die Spezerei“
19. Aria a 2. Chören [Tutti] „Geh, Leopold, zu deiner Ruh“ = BWV 244/20 „Ich will bei meinem Jesu wachen“

#### Part 4

20. Aria „Bleibet nun in eurer Ruh“ = BWV 244/65 „Mache dich, mein Herze, rein“
21. [Recitativo] „Und du, betrübtes Fürstenhaus“
22. Aria „Hemme dein gequältes Kränken“ = BWV 244/13 „Ich will dir mein Herze schenken“
23. [Recitativo] „Nun scheiden wir“
24. „Aria, Tutti „Die Augen sehn nach deiner Leiche“ = BWV 244/68 „Wir setzen uns mit Tränen nieder“

Some examples of close correspondences can be observed in BWV 244a/19 = BWV 244b/20 where the roles are divided in BWV 244a into ‘Mortals’ vs. the ‘Chosen Ones’ while BWV 244b has a similar type of dialogue between ‘Zion’ and the ‘Believers’. For instance, when the ‘Chosen Ones’ sing “Und schlummre nur ein wenig ein” (“[directed toward Leopold] just fall asleep for a little while”), the ‘Believers’ sing at the same point “So schlafen unsre Sünden ein” (“and so our sins will fall asleep”). It is also interesting to note that many of the arias have essentially the same sequence within each work. It is almost as though the texts for both works were planned in advance to be this way and may have been worked out and written down almost simultaneously or least with the idea in mind that one might serve as a partner for the other. This would allow Bach to compose the music for one while not losing sight of the fact that the same music would be used for the other. Emil Platen stated that “by chance the unusual circumstances surrounding the transmission of sources have posed some serious problems for determining which musical composition came first. On the one hand, we have the complete text (and music) for BWV 244b (*SMP Frühfassung*), but we have no clear indication as to when the first performance had actually taken place; on the other hand, we have the complete text for the *Trauermusik* with the exact date of the first performance, but none of the music has survived.<sup>5</sup> The NBA editor, Ryuichi Higuchi,<sup>6</sup> has, however, warned that the textual/prosodical correspondences do not necessarily mean that the music must have been the same music in both works.

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<sup>5</sup> Emil Platen, *Johann Sebastian Bach: Die Matthäus-Passion*, Bärenreiter, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1997, p. 29.

<sup>6</sup> NBA KB I/34, *Kirchenkantaten verschiedener Bestimmung*, Bärenreiter, 1990, p. 41.

## Theories on the Possible Chronology of BWV 244a & b

One of the earliest indications regarding the dating of the *SMP* (BWV 244b) comes from Carl Friedrich Zelter (1758-1832) whose research turned up a printed copy of Picander's *SMP* text.<sup>7</sup> This led Zelter to conclude that he had found the date for the first performance of the *SMP*. Unfortunately, the date of publication of Picander's text is not a reliable means of ascertaining the actual date of the first performance unless a comment associated with the text directly states this. Such a direct indication, however, is missing in this Picander collection of poetry from 1729. Nevertheless, at the time of Felix Mendelssohn's resurrection of the *SMP* from its long dormancy in 1829,<sup>8</sup> it was believed by many that this event took place a century after its first performance. Rust's theory (1873) is that Bach had already begun working on the *SMP* from a first draft of Picander's text (early in Lent, 1729). When Prince Leopold died in November, 1728, Picander, perhaps already directed to do so by Bach, began penning his first draft of the *Trauermusik* while keeping in mind the *SMP* text's structure and prosody, a first draft of which had already been completed for the Passion music to be performed in 1729. Having both texts available almost simultaneously, Bach would be able to work with Picander on reusing previously composed movements which he would otherwise need to compose anew for the *SMP* and simply substitute a new text for the already existing music. Bach may have been composing parts of each work almost simultaneously early in 1729 during Lent, a 'quiet time' in the Leipzig churches. As the pressure on Bach grew first to finish composing the music for the impending funeral services in Cöthen on March 24, 1729, he had to put aside the larger *SMP* project so that he could devote his attention fully to the smaller work, the *Trauermusik*. After that performance, he still had time to finish composing the *SMP* in order to complete this composition by the time of its first performance on Good Friday, April 15, 1729. Philipp Spitta, who confirms this first performance date of the *SMP* without giving any further evidence, claims that Picander had already compiled the *SMP* text for Bach in 1729.<sup>9</sup> Spitta believes that, before its first performance, Bach and Picander collaborated in bringing about the final version of the Passion text.

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<sup>7</sup> Christian Friedrich Henrici, *Ernst-Schertzhafte und Satyrische Gedichte, Anderer Theil*, Leipzig, 1729, pp. 101-112.

<sup>8</sup> In the latter part of 1823, the young 14-year-old Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy expressed a wish to his grandmother that he wanted to receive as a Christmas present from her a copy of the *SMP*. She obligingly commissioned his friend, Eduard Rietz, to make a copy of this work for her. As it turned out, however, this was accomplished only with great difficulty because Zelter was at first unwilling to grant Rietz permission to gain access to Zelter's copy of the *SMP*, which, *mirabile dictu*, was a copy of BWV 244b and not the later BWV 244 version of the *SMP*. On March 11, 1829, Mendelssohn, after first encountering difficulties with Zelter, but then gaining his support, was able to give the first performance of the *SMP* (no other performances have been recorded) since Bach's death. Zelter added to this momentous occasion by pointing out that a performance of the *SMP* must have taken place by at least 1729, the publishing date of one of Picander's books in which the Passion text first appeared in print. This led people to think that Mendelssohn's performance was timed so that it took place exactly one hundred years after the very first one under Bach's direction.

<sup>9</sup> Philipp Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, first published 1873-1880 and translated into English in 1889 by Clara Bell and J. A. Fuller-Maitland, last published (unabridged version) by Dover, 1992, volume II, p. 505.

Beginning in the 1930s, opinions were being expressed by Percy Robinson, Arnold Schering and Detlef Gojowy in favor of granting the priority for the composition of the music for the *SMP* to the *Trauermusik* (BWV 244a).<sup>10</sup> Bach scholars supporting the opposing view as first presented by Rust and Spitta in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were Friedrich Smend (1951), Paul Brainard (1969), Harald Streck (1971) and Joshua Rifkin (1975) who (the latter) even went so far as to declare the date of the initial performance of the *SMP* to be Good Friday, 1727.<sup>11</sup> Further research by Elke Axmacher and Eric Chafe has extended this date back even more to as early as 1725.<sup>12</sup> Smend, on the other hand, went just as far in the opposite direction to declare that the music for BWV 244a *Trauermusik* had already been composed on November 27, 1728 based upon a receipt which does not, however, necessarily refer to the *Trauermusik*. Both extreme dates, Rifkin's 1727 for the *SMP* (BWV 244b) and Smend's for the *Trauermusik* at the end of November, 1728 make amply clear the diversity of opinion that has existed on this matter and still continues to do so.

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<sup>10</sup> Percy Robinson, *The St. Matthew Passion, and other Bach Inquiries*, *The Musical Times*, 1932, pp. 113-115 and 225-227; Arnold Schering, *Zur Markus-Passion und zur 'vierten' Passion*, *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 1939, pp. 1-32; Detlef Gojowy, *Zur Frage der Köthener Trauermusik und der Matthäuspassion*, *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 1965, pp. 86-134.

<sup>11</sup> Friedrich Smend, *Bach in Köthen*, Berlin, 1951, pp. 82-83; Paul Brainard, *Bach's Parody Procedure and the St. Matthew Passion*, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, XXII, 1969, pp. 241-260; Harald Streck, *Die Verskunst in den poetischen Texten zu den Kantaten J.S. Bachs*, Hamburg, 1971, pp. 132-153; and Joshua Rifkin, *The Chronology of Bach's Saint Matthew Passion*, *The Musical Quarterly*, LXI, pp. 360-387.

<sup>12</sup> Elke Axmacher, *Ein Quellenfund zum Text der Matthäus-Passion*, *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 1978, p. 181ff.; 'Aus Liebe will mein Heiland sterben': *Untersuchungen zum Wandel des Passionsverständnisses im frühen 18. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart, 1984; Eric Chafe, *J. S. Bach's St Matthew Passion: Aspects of Planning, Structure, and Chronology*, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 35, 1982, pp. 49-114; *Tonal Allegory in the Vocal Music of J. S. Bach*, University of California Press, 1991.

**Some important points of contention  
center  
upon the following:**

1. In a letter to Christoph Gottlob Wecker (1701-1774), Bach writes: “Mit der verlangten *Passions Musique* wolte gerne dienen, wenn sie nicht selbstn heüer benöthiget wäre“ („I would gladly give you the Passion music, if it were not needed [here] this year”).<sup>13</sup> From this evidence, some Bach scholars speculate that this offers proof for the existence of the *Frühfassung* BWV 244b before a repeat performance which then took place less than a month later on April 15, 1729. Since the same Passion was not repeated from one year to the next (there was always a change of venue switching between the two principal churches in Leipzig), the next earlier date for a performance of the *SMP* BWV 244b would, if it had already been composed at that time, have to be April 11, 1727.

2. Some Bach scholars think that they can hear in BWV 127 *Herr Jesu Christ, wahr' Mensch und Gott*, first performance February 11, 1725, a precursor to elements that are later found in the *SMP*. They contend that the bass aria, BWV 127/4, shows similarities with the chorus “Sind Blitze, sind Donner” from the *SMP*. Based upon this slim evidence, they conclude that the *SMP* must have been composed around the same time as BWV 127 or it was left in an unfinished state and could not be performed in 1725. There is evidence to support the contention that Bach had tried to compose a Passion with his own music in 1725, but the attempt failed probably as a result of not receiving a suitable text from a poet.<sup>14</sup> As Alfred Dürr has pointed out, the fact that BWV 127/1, for instance, appears again in a somewhat different form in the Passion Pasticcio *Wer ist der, so von Edom kömmt* which in turn, however, points back to different early source other than BWV 127/1 may lead one to consider that this other source could be a Passion, but beyond that everything remains in the area of sheer speculation.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Bach-Dokumente* 1, item 20, letter to Christoph Gottlob Wecker in Schweidnitz, dated March 20, 1729. A footnote indicates that this Passion could be either the *Frühfassung* BWV 244b or Reinhard Keiser's *Markus-Passion* which Wecker, while still in Leipzig, may have heard or performed under Bach's direction.


<sup>14</sup> Andreas Glöckner, *Die Musikpflege an der Leipziger Neukirche zur Zeit Johann Sebastian Bachs*, Beiträge zur Bach-Forschung, Vol. 8, Leipzig, 1990, p. 127.

<sup>15</sup> NBA KB I/8.1-2, p. 72 “Ein Problem ergibt sich aus dem undeutlichen Befund der Quelle G (Übernahme des Eingangssatzes unserer Kantate in das Passions-Pasticcio *Wer ist der, so von Edom kömmt*), die auf eine verschollene Vorlage weist (Quelle[E]). Alfred Dürr erwägt die Möglichkeit einer Verwendung desselben Kantatensatzes in einer anderen Passionsmusik, doch bleiben derartige Überlegungen notwendigerweise im Bereich der Spekulation.“



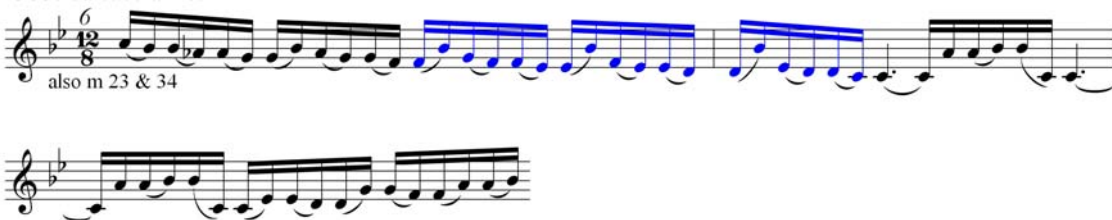
3. Another item for speculation is this mysterious fragmentary sketch:

**From the bottom of the 2nd page (upside down)  
of a regenerated viola part for the Sanctus in D**



note the different articulation (phrasing) between  
this and the final version of the SMP

Violino I                      **SMP BWV 244/65 "Mache dich, mein Herze, rein" Bass Aria**  
Oboe da caccia 1 & 2



also m 23 & 34

This appears crossed out and upside down at the bottom of page 2 of the viola part copied by Johann Heinrich Bach (1707-1783) for a repeat performance of the *Sanctus in D* BWV 232 III most likely Easter 1727. The original score and three doublets Violino Primo, Violino Secundo and one unfigured Continuo part from the original set of parts survive from the first performance on Christmas Day, 1724. All other parts had been lost or lent out by Bach for the next performance of the *Sanctus* which may have taken place on Christmas Day 1726 or more likely at Easter 1727.<sup>16</sup> For the latter performance another new set of parts had to be regenerated, one of which is the viola part in question here. Unfortunately, this fragment is not related to a specific text which would establish a firmer relationship to the *SMP*. On the basis that Bach normally composed movements of a single work in sequence, Joshua Rifkin argued that Bach must have completed the *SMP* BWV 244b by the end of 1726. Arguing against this idea, Eric Chafe claims that Bach worked on the *SMP* in a random, piecemeal fashion, finishing it in time for the Good Friday performance in 1727.

4. Elke Axmacher has uncovered a direct textual relationship between Picander's Passion text and nine Passiontide sermons published by Heinrich Müller (1631-1675), a theologian and church and school overseer in Rostock.<sup>17</sup> Bach had Müller's book in his library and very likely gave it to Picander with the request to set the best meditations into verse form. Picander could also make use of his own Passion-related libretto: *Erbauliche | Gedancken | Auf den | Grünen Donnerstag und Charfreytag | Über den | Leidenden | JESUM, | In einem ORATORIO | Entworffen....*<sup>18</sup> Bach, however, was unable to use Picander's poetic meditations without including portions of the *Gospel According to St. Matthew*. Picander had to change almost everything in his existing texts to make them liturgically suitable. Only the

<sup>16</sup> NBA KB II/1a (Editor: Uwe Wolf) Bärenreiter, 2005, pp 95, 97

<sup>17</sup> Heinrich Müller, *Geistreicher Paßions-Schule*, Frankfurt am Main, 1688; also additional meditations entitled: *Der leidende Jesus Oder: Das Leyden unsers Herrn und Heylandes Jesu Christi*.

<sup>18</sup> contained in the collection: *Sammlung | Erbaulicher Gedancken | über und auf die | gewöhnlichen | Sonn- und Fest-Tage, | in gebundener Schreib-Art | entworffen | von | Picandern. | Leipzig. | Bey Boetius im Durchgange des Rathhauses* pp. 194-206. This book was published in 1725 and the Passion text from it may have been set to music by Georg Balthasar Schott for performance in the Neukirche in Leipzig; see Andreas Glöckner's article listed in an earlier footnote.

text for the final chorus “Wir setzen uns mit Tränen nieder” BWV 244b/68 could be adopted literally from its earlier source.

5. Hans Größ (2000) believes that the music for major sections of the *Trauermusik* was composed before the *SMP*.<sup>19</sup> It is also possible that both the *SMP* and the *Trauermusik* are derived from an older work. The latter notion is supported by the observation that the *turba* choruses for double choruses can readily be returned to their possibly earlier state as works for a single chorus with little difficulty. Bach’s revision and expansion of an older work for single chorus into one for double chorus becomes more plausible when a connection is made with Bach’s assumption of duties as musical director of one of the *Collegia musica* in Leipzig in 1729. With the increase in the number of musicians available to him, Bach would have been able to conduct either work with almost 60 musicians at his disposal. Another interesting speculation arises from considering C. P. E. Bach’s 1769 reconversion of major portions of the *SMP* back to a composition for single chorus in his *Passions-Pasticcio* (H 782). The question worth considering here is: Did C. P. E. Bach do this intentionally with the goal in mind to restore the *SMP* to its former, original condition?

6. Until recently it has been incorrectly assumed that the ‘swallows’ nest’ organ had been repaired in time for the 1736 revision and performance of the *SMP*.<sup>20</sup> Now it appears that it would have been playable for a first performance of the *SMP* in 1727. This organ could then be used for playing the chorale cantus firmus “O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig” in the opening movement. Unfortunately, the description of the work done by Hildebrandt is quite vague and unclear. The proof for the 1727 repair of the ‘swallows’ nest’ organ also rests upon a very general statement Hildebrandt made in a letter to an organist in Sangerhausen: he [Hildebrandt] could not move from near Leipzig to Sangerhausen because the winter weather was too cold. Nothing in the letter states anything about any work on an organ, nor is the special organ at St. Thomas Church mentioned.

Among the more recent Bach experts supporting the April, 11, 1727 date for the first performance of the *SMP* are Christoph Wolff<sup>21</sup>, Martin Geck<sup>22</sup> and Konrad Küster<sup>23</sup> In the NBA KB II/5b report on these issues, Andreas Glöckner examines the pros and cons regarding the issues of chronology and parody. Alfred Dürr simply states that he is not persuaded by the arguments that Gojowy had presented: “Die These, daß die *Trauermusik* das Urbild, die *Matthäus-Passion* dagegen die Parodie darstelle, . . . überzeugt mich nicht” (“I am not at all persuaded by the theory that the *Trauermusik* was the original model with the *SMP* being seen as a parody of the former.”)

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<sup>19</sup> Hans Größ, *Eine neue Hypothese zur Entstehung der Matthäus-Passion und weitere quellenkundliche Anmerkungen zu den Trauermusiken BWV 198 und BWV 244a*, “Bach in Leipzig – Bach und Leipzig,” a conference report, Leipzig, 2000, Leipziger Beiträge zur Bach-Forschung. Vol. 5, pp. 59-68

<sup>20</sup> This information is based on the dates of payments made to the organ builder Zacharias Hildebrandt. See both footnotes at the bottom of p. 35 of the NBA KB II/5b.

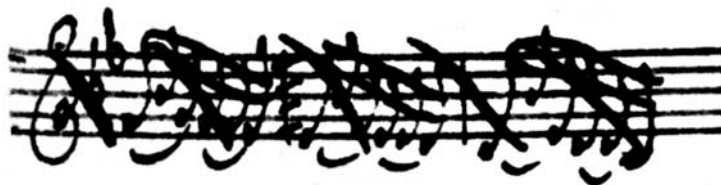
<sup>21</sup> Christoph Wolff/Ton Koopman, *Die Welt der Bach Kantaten*, Metzler/Bärenreiter, 1998/1999, Volume 3, p. 31; Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician*, Fischer/Norton, 2000/2001, pp. 283, 529; on pp. 206-207 of the latter work, Wolff clearly declares the priority of the *SMP* over the *Trauermusik*: “And that Bach [for the *Trauermusik*] turned to the greatest work he had composed till then, the *St. Matthew Passion*, shows his desire to pay homage to his revered prince with the best music of which he was capable.”

<sup>22</sup> Martin Geck, *Bach: Leben und Werk*, Hamburg, 2000, p. 177.

<sup>23</sup> Konrad Küster, *Bach Handbuch*, Bärenreiter/Metzler, 1999, p. 453.

## Summary<sup>24</sup>

As evident from the presentation above, the early history of the *SMP* (BWV 244b) remains rather unclear or uncertain because the normal key sources that could offer definitive answers are lacking. At this point in time we still do not know whether Bach had already planned to perform (or at least had begun composing) a Passion with his own music for Good Friday, 1726, or whether he had planned to reuse the St. Mark Passion (formerly attributed to Reinhard Keiser). What is apparent is that something that year went wrong with his attempt to compose his own Passion. There is no way to tell whether this was due to a poet who was unable to deliver the text in time or whether other untoward circumstances had prevented Bach from reaching his goal. Regarding the fragmentary sketch not in Bach's hand from the first violin part of BWV 244/65 written upside down on the back (second page) of the viola part for the *Sanctus in D* BWV 232III, a fragment which was then subsequently crossed out (not by Bach), the question remains whether this sketch can definitely be related to Bach's work on the *SMP* or whether the reference here is to a different (older) work.



Doubt will have to remain concerning whether the Passion text and this music fragment have a common origin. Alfred Dürr raised this question in regard to the chronology based upon this attempt to link this fragment to its [the *Sanctus*] first performance with a new set of parts at the end of 1726 (Christmas) or 1727 (Easter). This gives rise to several questions which are difficult to clear up or resolve: Is it not possible that the Aria “Mache dich, mein Herze, rein” may have existed before 1729 with a completely different text? Is it really possible that the entire *SMP* could have been completed as early as 1727? Could it also not be that the entry of this aria fragment haphazardly happened to be written down in this odd place when the *Sanctus* was once again to be performed during Easter, 1729?<sup>25</sup> Similar uncertainty exists as well for the arias “Geduld, Geduld, wenn mich falsche Zungen stechen” BWV 244b/35, “Gebt mir meinen Jesum wieder” BWV 244b/42, “Können Tränen meiner Wangen nichts erlangen” BWV 244b/52. At least there is substantial doubt whether text and music originally belonged together. All three of these movements are not in the *Trauermusik* BWV 244a. Particularly the tenor aria (“Geduld,” etc.) appears as if it was derived from a much older source. Perhaps sensing that the wedding of music to the Passion text still needed improvement, Bach felt a strong need to revise the *SMP* substantially in 1736.

In the spring of 1729 Bach saw himself faced with the task of having to compose and perform two large-scale works within three weeks of each other: on March 24th the *Trauermusik* for Prince Leopold in the St. Jacob Church in Köthen and on April 15th the Passion music for the Good Friday Vespers in St. Thomas Church in Leipzig. It was necessary for Bach to coordinate the preparations for both events. We know now that 10 movements of the *SMP* were used in the *Trauermusik* which helped to make this task somewhat easier. Until now, however, the parody relationship between both works has not

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<sup>24</sup> This summary is based in part upon the most recent overview of the literature concerning this subject matter. It is from the section entitled “Zur Entstehungsgeschichte” (“On the History of the Origin [of the *SMP*]”) by Andreas Glöckner contained in the NBA KB II/5b *Matthäus-Passion Frühfassung BWV 244b*, Bärenreiter, 2004.

<sup>25</sup> Alfred Dürr in the NBA KB II/5 *Matthäus-Passion Markus-Passion*, Bärenreiter, 1974, pp. 111-112.

been explained satisfactorily. The question whether the parody process involves a sacred to secular or a secular to sacred transformation becomes irrelevant here when one considers that the *Trauermusik* also was composed for a solemn ceremony which took place in a church.

In Bach's letter to Wecker on March 20, 1729, Bach's reference to needing his *Passions Musique* could mean two things: 1) As stated above, Bach had a Passion (possibly the *SMP*) which he had composed previously or which perhaps Wecker even knew, but Bach intended on using this Passion again very shortly after this letter had been written. 2) Another possible scenario: Wecker had asked Bach to lend him a different Passion whereupon Bach wrote this to Wecker as a protective measure since he [Bach] thought he might still need it (another Passion, not the *SMP*) in some future year, but wrote instead that he still needed it this year to ward off any further inquiries, thus sparing himself the worry of trying to get music which he had lent out back again in time for his own use when he needed it.

It would appear from the above that the safest conclusion for the present time is to think of both the *Trauermusik* and the *SMP* being composed almost simultaneously during early Lent of 1729. The preparation of the texts by Picander, not his early printed versions which underwent substantial changes before appearing as Bach's text, was ongoing beginning with his first draft of the *Trauermusik* soon after Prince Leopold's death and continuing also with the *SMP* text on which both Picander and Bach collaborated closely with Bach making suggestions about other source materials (Müller) which might be helpful. Bach may have shown Picander some of his older arias (with a different text and going back in time even to Bach's Weimar period) so that Picander could create a similar text with a new subject matter. Realizing that he would have many more musicians at his disposal both in Leipzig (members of the *Collegium musicum*) for the Leipzig performance of the *SMP* and musicians from various towns and cities for the *Trauermusik* in Cöthen, Bach could now consider creating an orchestrated work with double chorus as in the first and last movements of the *SMP*. Some of the *turba* choruses may also have been expanded versions of earlier sections from a lost Passion for single chorus only. By using the same music from the *SMP* for the *Trauermusik*, or vice versa, Bach was essentially able to reduce substantially the composing work load he would otherwise have had. To be sure, the recitatives would have been new compositions in each work, but 9 of the 10 solo arias in the *Trauermusik* are also found in the *SMP* and both works have the concluding chorus in common as well. Concentrating on both works within a limited time frame of perhaps at most only a few months, Bach was better able to focus on resolving musical issues related to diction that both works had in common. This was an eminently practical plan of action for Bach to follow in accomplishing his goals.

**Appendix 1**  
**SMP**  
**A Comparison of the Original Version with the Later (1736) Version**

These major changes were undertaken:

1. Division of the original continuo part into two separate continuo parts, each one associated with a different choral, orchestral group
2. Inclusion of a new chorale, “Ich will hier bei dir stehen” BWV 244/17
3. Removing the chorale, “Jesum laß ich nicht von mir” BWV 244b/29a to be replaced with choral movement, “O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde groß” BWV 244/29
4. Change in the orchestration of both the recitative, “Ja freilich will in uns das Fleisch und Blut” and the subsequent aria, “Komm, süßes Kreuz” BWV 244/56, 57 – the lute part is replaced by a viola da gamba part
5. A change in a continuo part made for a later performance (in the 1740s?) where Bach shortened in the Evangelist’s [recitative] part the long notes indicated in both SMP scores BWV 244b (1729) [based upon the Farlau copy] and BWV 244 (1736) [Bach’s own calligraphic score]

Thomas Braatz © December, 2006