



and, most recently, Ellen Lockhart have explored similar themes as Smith, including the relationship among music, the sciences of perception and visual culture. *Dreaming with Open Eyes* leaves unclear how its methodology builds on or departs from these earlier lines of enquiry. This minor reservation aside, Smith's illumination of the aesthetic concerns in Arcadian Rome provides an exhilarating way to experience an operatic repertory that modern audiences have often dismissed as opaque. It is sure to inspire new ways of both seeing and hearing this music for years to come.

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DAVID YEARSLEY

SEX, DEATH, AND MINUETS: ANNA MAGDALENA BACH AND HER MUSICAL NOTEBOOKS

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In *Sex, Death, and Minuets* David Yearsley seeks greater understanding of the cultural significance of Anna Magdalena's Notebooks during her lifetime and in generations following. In doing so, he aims to uncover 'previously neglected ethical, professional, familial, and musical values and practices not only of the Bach family, but also of the period's female musicians in general' (xxxiii). In addition to revealing aspects of musical life and the lives of the Bach family, Yearsley brings the attitudes and experiences of contemporary Lutheran women to light through his study of various cultural themes present within the Notebooks: eroticism, marriage, motherhood, bereavement, domesticity and public life. He begins the book with a Prologue about the life of Anna Magdalena Bach (née Wilcke), including her prestigious two-year tenure as a Cöthen court singer in her early twenties, which began shortly before she became Johann Sebastian's second wife in 1721, and introduces the two Notebooks given to her by her husband in 1722 and 1725. Although pieces from these Notebooks have appeared in numerous anthologies and in studies of Johann Sebastian and the Bach family, Yearsley's book provides the most in-depth cultural study of the Notebooks to date and is the first to seriously consider Anna Magdalena's own 'agency in the assembling of, or one might even say, "authoring" of the 1725 Notebook' (xxiii).

The first chapter traces the eighteenth- to twentieth-century reception of Anna Magdalena and her Notebooks in historical encyclopaedias, musical editions and biographies of her husband Johann Sebastian, as well as fictional plays, films and novels about the Bach family. These sources predominantly portray her as a paragon of faith and domesticity, demonstrating that 'the figure of Anna Magdalena remains almost without exception unchanged since her reanimation more than a century ago' (42). Yearsley highlights her historical utility as a symbol of German nationalism, especially during the Second World War: he notes that though not all German wartime consumers of such literature were Nazi sympathizers, 'it is no coincidence that the values embodied in these volumes accorded with Nazi notions of German regeneration through the family' (27). Importantly, Yearsley's examples show that, throughout history, fictional and factual accounts of Anna Magdalena typically focus on her peripheral role as 'the sustenance of male genius' (12–13), specifically that of her husband. This chapter serves as a springboard for the remainder of the book, for Yearsley believes that closer analysis of the Notebooks, and interpretation of them through their historical context, is essential to a more meaningful, nuanced understanding of the music within them and of the lives and experiences of Anna Magdalena and her female contemporaries.



This first chapter, entitled 'Magdalena Mania', gestures towards broader musicological concerns that are well worth exploring. Yearsley claims that, over the last hundred years, 'Anna Magdalena became the most famous wife of a great composer' (2). 'Great' seems to imply 'male' here, and one assumes that Yearsley is aping the language of musicology's male-dominated history for effect (see his acknowledgement of this history on pages 34–35). In any case, I find this claim surprising: Clara Schumann (née Wieck) and Alma Mahler (née Schindler) are surely better known. More to the point, the line – while surely not intended to undergo such scrutiny – points to a larger problem within musicology: while the roles of performer and composer are often, at best, difficult to separate, the ephemeral nature of performance frequently relegates individuals known primarily as performers to a lower tier of historical memory than their composer counterparts. As composers themselves, Clara Schumann and Alma Mahler had more numerous opportunities than Anna Magdalena Bach to create music in, and for, public performance. Similarly, the singer and composer Barbara Strozzi (who never married) occupies more space than Anna Magdalena in twentieth- and twenty-first-century music-history textbooks. Even a male performer such as Farinelli or Senesino is probably best remembered for his collaborations with a Handel, Hasse or Scarlatti. (The fact that I can use their surnames alone, in contrast to figures like Anna Magdalena Bach, is clear evidence of musicology's male-dominated past.) Yearsley himself explores the issue of naming in a substantial section in the Prologue. As he explains, there are many factors at play, including the complex connotational baggage of certain terms (such as 'Mommy') and whether those connotations existed in Anna Magdalena's time or were acquired later on in history. He also devotes some metacognitive discussion to the process of determining the appropriate stance to take as a male feminist (touching, as well, on the issue of men being known by surnames alone). There is no perfect option, so Yearsley opts for the choice that seems to him to be the least affected and least likely to confuse readers: 'I will join the tradition of referring to her as Anna Magdalena, because that is, at this juncture, more than 250 years after her death, the most neutral and least confusing alternative. On marrying Johann Sebastian Bach, she took the patronymic: her given names remain unchanged, and it is by them that she will be called in this book' (xxxiii).

In chapter 2 Yearsley contextualizes a bawdy poem that Anna Magdalena inscribed in the 1725 Notebook. He discusses extant sensual and erotic texts set by Johann Sebastian, and he considers attitudes contemporary musicians, poets, clergy and others had regarding such texts. There is no surviving documentation of the music performed at Anna Magdalena and Johann Sebastian's wedding, but Yearsley provides educated speculation that songs sung there probably revolved around 'themes of youthful brides and older grooms, of relations that quickly evolve from the professional to the personal, of manly prowess and flagging potency, [and/or] of sexual experience and inexperience' (67). Here Yearsley imparts an image of Anna Magdalena as a person with her own sexual thoughts and desires as well as a capacity and a taste for blue humour, in addition to the more familiar picture of a devout Lutheran wife and mother.

The 1725 Notebook contains twelve songs interspersed among assorted keyboard pieces. Four of these focus on mortality, and another four mention death in passing. Yearsley's third chapter considers these and other songs about death Anna Magdalena is known to have performed. Given the Lutheran tenet that salvation upon death is achieved through 'faith alone irrespective of any good deeds' (96), Yearsley explains that such songs – whether sacred or secular – served important devotional functions in daily life for the Bach household. Considering Anna Magdalena's grief over her own lost children, Yearsley ponders whether she might also have 'used the songs of the 1725 Notebook as actual lullabies, that is, whether they were sung by this busy mother and musician for the practical purpose of putting her children to sleep and for comforting them while ill, even mortally so' (111).

The 1722 Notebook contains a fragment of an organ fantasia in Johann Sebastian's hand, a curious inclusion as 'no instrument of the early eighteenth century appears to have been more securely the province of men' (121). In his fourth chapter, Yearsley uses this fragment as evidence that Anna Magdalena may have played the organ. His survey of other female organists from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries is intriguing, but he offers little persuasive evidence – in my view – that Anna Magdalena herself played the instrument. For instance, Yearsley discounts artistic licence in his analysis of a 1723 poetic portrayal of



love-making as an organ duet, claiming it ‘could not have been invented in the first place without the sense that the organ was within a woman’s orbit, and that she could enter the space for making music [the organ loft]’ (139). His most convincing point, however, is his later explanation that a young Anna Magdalena may have taken lessons from her uncle, the organist at a court chapel, ‘not subject to the kinds of stringent gender policing that prevailed in civic settings’ (140). Regardless of whether Anna Magdalena played the organ, Yearsley raises valuable questions here concerning the thorny nature of music-making as leisure versus labour.

The Notebooks also contain music and moral commentary on marriage. Chapter 5 considers courtship and the four Bach daughters who survived into adulthood, focusing on the eldest, Catharina Dorothea, who never married. Yearsley explains that it was a father’s duty (or a mother’s, particularly if she was widowed) to marry off daughters and ensure their prosperous social/financial futures – as evident in interactions between father and daughter characters Schlendrian and Ließgen in Johann Sebastian’s *Coffee Cantata* (BWV211). Refined musical abilities attracted prospective husbands, and Anna Magdalena trained her stepdaughter Catharina Dorothea in the art of singing. Yearsley convincingly challenges long-held understandings of Leipzig civic regulations as all but universally preventing female musicians from performing in public, and he even suggests Catharina Dorothea could have performed the role of Ließgen in informal coffeehouse performances of BWV211.

Unmarried women like Catharina Dorothea often faced financial hardship and relied on the generosity of extended family, as did many eighteenth-century widows. Anna Magdalena was forty-eight when Johann Sebastian died in 1750, with three children still living at home alongside forty-one-year-old Catharina Dorothea and intellectually disabled, twenty-six-year-old Gottfried Heinrich. Yearsley’s sixth chapter explores German patriarchal attitudes towards widowhood – how ‘deprivation [was] presented as a gift to [widows] from God’ (206) – and the spiritual and musical comforts available to widows like Anna Magdalena. Single women had to remain devout even in poverty, and they expressed their resignation by singing chorales in church and at home. Yearsley believes Anna Magdalena would have kept the Notebooks after 1750 and that the death songs discussed in chapter 3 ‘fulfilled a different, though related, purpose during her last years’ (229).

Yearsley concludes the book with a section he calls the ‘Coda’, charting the chronological reception and twentieth-century quotation of the best-known musical work from Anna Magdalena’s Notebooks: the Minuet in G major (BWV Anh. 114), composed by Christian Pezold (but often ascribed to Johann Sebastian). This and the other pieces in the 1722 and 1725 Notebooks hold the key to Yearsley’s unlocking of a more complex understanding of the figure of Anna Magdalena Bach: a devout Lutheran, ‘professional singer, wife, mother, and widow’ who experienced ‘self-sacrifice . . . desire, drama, virtuosity, self-improvement, leisure, learning, mourning and solace’ (244). In contrast with salacious novels written about Anna Magdalena in the past (as described in chapter 1), Yearsley allows us a more intimate glimpse of the human side of Anna Magdalena, one rooted in facts and in which any authorial speculation is acknowledged. Through this window onto the life of one eighteenth-century woman, Yearsley imparts invaluable insight into the multifaceted daily lives of other mid-eighteenth-century German women, covering such aspects as humour, sex, marriage, grief, private and public performance, music-making as leisure and as labour, and domestic devotional life. He elucidates for readers the patriarchal social structures such women were governed by, thoughtfully unveiling this context using a wide base of primary sources such as music, poetry and moral texts.

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