



Scalfi, in *The Music of Benedetto and Alessandro Marcello: A Thematic Catalogue with Commentary on the Composers, Repertory, and Sources* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1990). (Benedetto) Marcello's lyricism is often more lyrical, and generally more singable, than Vivaldi's, his ear for assonance sharper. His most memorable essays are, however, his epic cantatas, which mark what may be the peak of emotional expression in the genre, for in some he wrung every ounce of despair imaginable from the medium. Vivaldi was in fact surrounded in Venice by exponents of the cantata – Pollarolo, Biffi, Lotti, Caldara, Gasparini. Yet it appears that he wrote no cantatas for the Venetians.

Talbot discusses a handful of works not by Vivaldi, but only on the basis of their being found in common sources. An initial discussion of Eugen Schmitz's venerable *Geschichte der weltlichen Solokantate* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1914) seems somewhat beside the point. Carolyn Gianturco's seventeen-volume series of facsimiles fills in some important gaps, primarily for the seventeenth century, and many theses of the past generation have probed different portions of the repertory. It is clear, nonetheless, that it would take an extensive collaboration to make a significant dent on the overall cantata repertory. Until such a resource appears, *The Chamber Cantatas* will offer a valuable window on one small portion of this largely elusive quarry.

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EDITIONS

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CARL PHILIPP EMANUEL BACH

THE COMPLETE WORKS, SERIES V, VOLUME 5.1; WORKS FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS I

ED. ULRICH LEISINGER

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While C. P. E. Bach's keyboard music has enjoyed a recent renaissance both in performance and in scholarly literature, how many of us could claim ever to have attended a performance of one of his sacred works? How many music scholars could confidently describe his sacred music style? To be sure, his keyboard works provided a special challenge to find systems into which they could be placed to lend them coherence, and they have variously been placed in the contexts of rhetoric, art theories (mannerism) and the aesthetics of landscape gardening (the picturesque). These keyboard works are now associated with a complexity that emerged from his quest for the freedom of individual expression, an aesthetic that arose from Bach's own aesthetics of performance as laid out in his *Versuch*. His idealized performance is the quintessence of a new subjectivity. As such his keyboard music fits neatly into our own rhetoric of the late Enlightenment as the age that finally achieved artistic autonomy and the self-expression of the individual. In a review of 1787, the German critic Carl Friedrich Cramer likened the shapes of this new art that gains comprehensibility and coherence only through the subjective voice of its creator to a 'tragelaph', the mythological figure that embodied the unreal in classical philosophy. But compiled from a variety of mismatching body-parts, the tragelaph equally became a metaphor for heterogeneity of means. In his sacred music, it seems, Bach does something quite different: he creates fantastic tragelaphs of utter *comprehensibility*; works abounding with an immediately obvious heterogeneity of styles, each one advancing the pleasure of listening through the sheer ease of recognition.



C. P. E. Bach composed the ‘Dank-Hymne der Freundschaft, ein Geburtstagsstück’ in an exceptionally short period of time, a mere twenty-three days in January 1785. While the quick composition points to a commission – Bach probably intended to finish the cantata in time for a patron’s birthday celebrations – the dedicatee’s identity remains speculative, although Peter von Biron, the Duke of Kurland, is a likely candidate. Not only was his birthday on 15 February, but Bach had written a letter during the time he sat composing the ‘Dank-Hymne’ betraying his desire to court the duke’s favour. The cantata was certainly intended for a private, albeit large-scale festivity. Calling for doubled trumpets, horns, oboes and flutes, timpani, strings and a continuo band of at least five players, in addition to eight singers, the performance must have been a costly endeavour bordering on the spectacular. Bach set his musicians to work in a regular alternation of recitatives and arias, framing each of the cantata’s two parts with large tutti choruses. Curiously, he severed the relationship between recitatives and arias by reassigning (in the performance parts) two of the recitatives to a different singer than the soloist of the subsequent aria. In doing so, Bach played into the hands of potential critics such as Johann Georg Sulzer who deemed changes of soloist unseemly if not inspired by the text. From Sulzer’s aesthetic viewpoint, the entire cantata could have been delivered by one and the same soloist as the text’s motivation is unified throughout. However, by distributing his humble panegyrics to the Creator amongst at least five different soloists, Bach created a strong sense of collective worship that seems to feed off the communal act of praise as much as off the text’s actual spiritual implications. It seems almost as if in an act of humanistic worship the holy Trinity – markedly absent here – is replaced by the unity of the addressed Creator and his singing creations. If stylistically, however, the new school of music theory might have found Bach’s choice of vocal distribution archaic, this would by no means have been the largest offence in that direction, for Bach sticks largely to secco recitatives, and his arias are in da capo form. The opening bipartite, monothematic chorus is immediately followed by an accompanied bass recitative that might almost appear to be a homage to his father. It moves straight into a heart-rending aria that displays in its middle section a fabulous amount of literal word-painting: shivering in awe of Jehovah the lower strings’ bows shake across the strings just before they are joined by the upper strings for a unison chromatic descent as the worshipper sinks down into the dust. This stark chromatic descent a moment later accompanies the soloist’s emphatically melismatic ‘Amen’, now reappearing in a daringly bold harmonization true to Bach’s more familiar keyboard excesses. Needless to say, Bach’s painterly ambitions come to full fruition in the soprano aria ‘Der Vogel singt’s den Lüften’, a gallant pastoral lilt with a flute chirping its obbligato part, with roaring lions and crying ravens that would have not seemed out of place in Haydn’s later *Creation*. Bach even manages to infiltrate brief bouts of word-painting into his secco recitatives, such as a sudden lyrical moment setting the words ‘Drum singt dir auch’, thereby possibly defying his contemporaries’ views that accompanied recitative was to be preferred because it offered scope for the ‘paintings of sentiments’. Such very literal word-paintings – even if they brushed the latest thoughts on the mimetic principles of music against the grain by translating into musical sounds the pounding heart and the roaring thunder – are complemented by a more subtle and suggestive language of orchestration. Simple and by no means secretive, yet effective nevertheless, the obbligato bassoon lends Herr Michel’s tenor aria ‘Schon schimmern durch graulichte Nebel’ a sense of the uncanny and the thrill of the unknown.

The transparency of these effects goes hand-in-hand with the more general popular appeal of the work. The opening chorus with its simple, short motives sets the example for a series of very confined numbers, none of which unduly challenges the audience’s attention-span. Both concluding choruses are in strophic form, thereby conjuring up the popular Lieder-style of Bach’s contemporaries such as Zelter and Reichardt. At the same time, however, this choice of style links the cantata to Hamburg’s *Bürgerkapitänsmusiken*, which commonly combined secular, simple musical structures with sacred texts. It might be from this source that Bach took the licence of his array of literal word-painting, as the music for Hamburg’s own *Bürgerwehr* was frequently riddled with the thunderous sounds of battle, and weeping sighs over the dead. In fact, in the concluding chorus to Part I Bach alludes to the final movement of the oratorio he composed for the *Bürgerkapitänsmusik* of 1780. Both use the same chorale setting of the melody ‘Lobt Gott, ihr Christen,



allegleich', one of the better-known chorale melodies. Curiously, Bach sets the chorale mostly soloistically, presenting an imaginative catalogue of accompaniments, while the full chorus sing the grander 'Lobet' episodes. Even simpler, Part II's final chorus is a strophic song in which scale and instrumentation vary from verse to verse and culminate in a tutti panegyric to 'friendship, love and virtue' and, of course, to music. A double humanistic statement as the praise of God for his creation of bliss on earth is sounded with recourse to attractive, yet easily graspable musical means, thereby empowering the listener.

The work's popular nature is reflected in the editor's choice of sources: both the autograph score and an original set of performing parts have recently come to light, but here preference is given to the performing parts, as Bach revised these carefully, thereby leaving behind an invaluable source close to one actual performance. In more general terms it is a long overdue and laudable decision on the parts of the general editorship of the *Carl Philip Emanuel Bach: The Complete Works* project to give sources other than the extant autographs priority. Here, the parts in a copyist's hand are chosen over Bach's autograph, because they reflect Bach's further thoughts and revisions in light of performance. The critical commentary appended at the end of the musical text – another commendable feature of this collected works edition – goes a long way to answering a host of performance practice questions, or at least to assisting musicians to make their own choices rooted in Bach's own performance material. The preface meets the right popular tone, conveying a host of historical contextualization, without descending into the all too common dryness of such texts.

After an enjoyable score-reading session I am certainly convinced that this music warrants both performance and critical attention. Bach, here, appeals through an intricate, yet popular musical language and presents himself as an entirely different persona in this cantata of secular, public worship. His ultimate testimony to a practice of devotion marked most by its easy accessibility is the insertion of his 'Heilig' chorus (highly popular by 1785). Rooted in a local tradition, this antiphonal double chorus was soon famous amongst Bach's contemporaries; he himself thought of it as his swansong. Bach did not include music for the 'Heilig' chorus in his parts for the *Dank-Hymne*, merely providing cues in its place instead. Following the original sources, this edition does not include the chorus either. Let us hope that the volume comprising the chorus will be edited very soon.

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THE COMPLETE WORKS OF FRANCESCO ANTONIO BONPORTI

ED. MAXWELL SOBEL

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Neither celebrated nor entirely forgotten, Francesco Antonio Bonporti (also spelled Bomporto and Buonporti) is perhaps best remembered for J. S. Bach's having transcribed four of his Op. 10 *invenzioni* for violin and continuo. These were then published as Bach's own compositions in volume 45 of the *Bach Gesellschaft* edition. The misattribution was corrected early in the last century, and Bonporti – the possible originator of the term 'invention' in music – has since received steady if not abundant regard from both performers and scholars. One can now find multiple recordings of his motets and later instrumental works, and, in the more recent *Bonporti Edition* series recordings (Dynamic Italy), most of the surviving earlier instrumental works. Two biographies of the composer have been written (Guglielmo Barblan, *Un musicista trentino, Francesco A. Bonporti (1672–1749): La vita e le opere* (Florence: F. le Monnier, 1940) and Antonio